

F. R. LEAVIS AND T. S. ELIOT  
LITERARY CRITICISM, CULTURE AND THE SUBJECT OF 'ENGLISH'

by

DANDAN ZHANG

B. A., M. A.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to look into the Leavis-Eliot relationship, connecting it with the broader discourse of English Studies as a university subject that developed in the first half of the twentieth century. It surveys all the many writings of Leavis on Eliot, to see how Eliot is formative for the theory and practice of Leavis's literary criticism in both positive and negative ways. It conducts a detailed investigation of D. H. Lawrence's significance in relation to Leavis's changing attitude to Eliot, and examines how profound differences in social, cultural, religious and national thinking strengthened Leavis's alliance with Lawrence to the detriment of his relationship with Eliot. These differences are presented as dichotomies between nationalism and Europeanism or internationalism, ruralism or organicism and industrialisation or metropolitanism, and relate to the differences between the two men's views about literary education, the subject of English and the position of the classics in the curriculum. Leavis's increasingly conflicted feelings towards a figure to whom he owed an enormous critical debt and inspiration, but whose various beliefs and literary affiliations caused him much misgiving, results in a deep sense of division in Leavis himself which he sought to transfer onto Eliot.

## **Acknowledgements**

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### List of Editions and Abbreviations Used in the Text

*Writings by F. R. Leavis*

*AK* *Anna Karenina and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967)

*CAP* *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher: Essays and Papers*, ed. G. Singh (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982)

*CE* with Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933)

*DHLN* *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)

*EATU* *Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School'*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1948; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979)

*ELTU* *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969)

*FC* *For Continuity* (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1933)

*GT* *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948, rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974)

*HTTR* *How to Teach Reading: A Primer for Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1932)

*NB* *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation*, rpt. with 'Retrospect' (1950; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963)

*LIA* with Q. D. Leavis, *Lectures in America* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969)

*LIC* *Letters in Criticism*, ed. and introd. John Tasker (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974)

- LP The Living Principle: 'English' As a Discipline of Thought* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975)
- NSMS Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972)
- R Revaluation: Tradition & Development in English Poetry* (1936, rpt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1969)
- TWC Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976)
- V Valuation in Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

*Writings by T. S. Eliot*

- CP 1 The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, vol. 1, eds. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2014)
- CP 2 The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: English Lion, 1930–1933*, vol. 2, eds. Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2015)
- CP 3 The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, vol. 3, eds. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2014)

- CP 4 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929*, vol. 4, eds. Frances Dickey, Jennifer Formichelli and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2015)
- CP 5 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, vol. 5, eds. Iman Javadi, Ronald Schuchard and Jayme Stayer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2017)
- CPP *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969)
- ICS *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, introd. David L. Edwards (London: Faber, 1982)
- LOE 4 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 4: 1928-1929*, eds. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber, 2013)
- LOE 5 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5: 1930-1931*, eds. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber, 2014)
- LOE 6 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 6: 1932-1933*, eds. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber, 2016)
- LOE 7 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 7: 1934-1935*, eds. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber, 2017)
- NT *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber, 1948)
- OPP *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957)
- P 1 *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1, Collected and Uncollected Poems*, eds. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber, 2015)
- TCC *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (London: Faber, 1965)

*Journals*

*S* *Scrutiny*, 1932-1953, rpt. 20 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1963)

## INTRODUCTION: LEAVIS AND ELIOT

In the course of almost sixty years, Leavis admired Eliot, invoked him often, was shaped by him, denied him, yet could never get on without him; as he wrote, to be returned to in chapter 4 below, his ‘only way of dealing with [Eliot]’ was to write endlessly about him (*NSMS*, p. 123). Anthony Kearney gives an accurate summary of Leavis’s attitude to Eliot: ‘Eliot, in Leavis’s terms, was the complete paradox: the man of genius, the timid Bloomsburyite, the independent critic, the establishment figure, the successor to Arnold, the shrinker from life, the spiritual poet who ended in despair, the creative writer and the mere technician’.<sup>1</sup> This thesis looks at Leavis’s life-long and highly complicated engagement with Eliot, focusing on how Eliot’s poetry and criticism were formative to Leavis’s literary, cultural and educational thinking, on why D. H. Lawrence is a key factor in the relationship between the two men, and on how some aspects of the ‘paradox’ indicated by Kearney lead to Leavis’s later marked hostility towards Eliot. The paradox that Eliot represented, and Leavis’s difficulties in dealing with it, are often revealed as entangling contradictions in Leavis’s own thinking, so that in ‘Mutually Necessary’ he wrote:

though I think that *Four Quartets* is important and repays close study, I’m not in the habit of calling it a ‘great poem’. I tell students that we’re without hesitation agreed to call Eliot a major poet because he can’t be called minor.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Kearney, ‘Leavis on Eliot: Personality Versus Intelligence’, *The Use of English*, 40. 3 (Summer 1989), p. 59.

I save 'great' for more satisfying works and for completer successes. (*CAP*, p. 201)

Yet almost immediately this contradictory attitude is displayed: 'Well, I shouldn't deny that in some contexts it's appropriate to call Eliot a great poet. I do sometimes myself' (*CAP*, p. 201).<sup>2</sup> The difficulties of placing Eliot meant that Leavis's lifelong engagement with him was of a most self-demanding kind, and his increasing sense of Eliot as a 'case'—'no creative writer of the greatest kind is a "case", but Eliot remained one to the end' (*TWC*, p. 19), by which Leavis means someone pathologically divided and lacking in wholeness or unity as an individual, to the ultimate detriment of his work—can be read, as we shall argue, as a commentary on Leavis's own internal divisions. Leavis's judgement of Lawrence is far more certain and assured, as he immediately goes on to indicate following the above statement: 'Lawrence ... was a creative writer of the greatest kind' (*TWC*, p. 19, emphasis in original), 'Lawrence is a far greater creative power [than Eliot]' (*TWC*, p. 20), and he states elsewhere that 'Lawrence was the greatest kind of artist—a truth that one may now, after thirty years, utter without an effect of paradox' (*V*, p. 110). Another paradox, however, as we shall see, was that Lawrence was, because of this superiority, far less crucial to Leavis as an object of study on the university English syllabus than Eliot.

Given that, as Michael Black put it in 1975, 'Eliot is the great poet of the century; Leavis is the great critic; it was inevitable that the one should be a central

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Tanner notes and amplifies Leavis's contradictions about Eliot's 'greatness' in his reply to Leavis, "'Mutually Necessary"—A Rejoinder', *New Universities Quarterly* (Summer 1976), p. 320.

preoccupation for the other; the parallel holds as well as such parallels ever do', it is not surprising that many critics have looked at the relationship between the two men's writings.<sup>3</sup> Useful books include those by Vincent Buckley, Robert Boyers and R. P. Bilan, though all of these address this relationship intermittently rather than focus upon it.<sup>4</sup> Critics writing on Leavis are hardly likely not to mention Eliot, though reversely critics writing on Eliot do not always have Leavis in mind, unless the critic has a particular interest in Leavis also, like Bernard Bergonzi. Even so, an important study like that of Ian MacKillop has only numerous merely passing references to Eliot while Bergonzi in his *T. S. Eliot* (1972) and elsewhere, as we shall see, only treats the Leavis-Eliot relationship at most at chapter length.<sup>5</sup> In fact, what is surprising is that there has been no in-depth examination of the relationship between 'the great poet of the century' and its 'great critic' in Black's phrase, a gap that this thesis attempts to fill. In Ronald Hayman's *Leavis* (1976), we do have a chapter entitled 'T. S. Eliot', but we find here essentially a digest of Leavis's criticism of *The Waste Land*, 'Ash-Wednesday' and *Four Quartets*, with paragraphs of quotations from Leavis constituting the bulk of the chapter, which therefore lacks critical engagement.<sup>6</sup> Some of the studies mentioned above and examples to follow are moreover often problematic in the way that they focus predominantly on Leavis's work rather than attending sufficiently to Eliot; thus they obscure the fact that Leavis himself is partially responsible for his later feelings

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Black, 'A Kind of Valediction: Leavis on Eliot, 1929-75', *Universities Quarterly* (Winter 1975), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Buckley, *Poetry and Morality: Studies on the Criticism of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968); Robert Boyers, *F. R. Leavis: Judgment and the Discipline of Thought* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1978); R. P. Bilan, *The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Ian MacKillop, *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism* (1995; rpt. London: Penguin, 1997); Bernard Bergonzi, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Hayman, *Leavis* (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. 137-44.

of 'betrayal' at Eliot's hands because of his very partial readings of Eliot's early essays like 'Blake' and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', as discussed in chapter 2 below (pp. 84-5). Another area of Leavis-Eliot study that deserves more attention is the wider context of the constant dialogue *Scrutiny* attempts to engage in with the *Criterion*, a relationship that in a broader sense becomes as difficult as that between the two editors; although Francis Mulhern's *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (1978) contains discussions of *Scrutiny's* changing attitude towards the *Criterion* (p. 121), among other things including *Scrutiny's* reception of Eliot's poetry (see for example pp. 151, 254-5), plays (p. 151) and literary and cultural criticism (pp. 143, 281), areas that will be revisited in the course of this thesis, his brief treatment (usually one or two paragraphs long) of these areas leaves the complexity of *Scrutiny* and Leavis's preoccupation with Eliot under-investigated.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Mulhern's study shows that many of the *Scrutiny* circle or contributors share a common interest in Eliot (not only the core members such as Knights, Thompson and Harding, but some marginal figures like G. H. Bantock and John Speirs, see for example pp. 281, 288).<sup>8</sup> This will oblige us in what follows to call upon other members of the *Scrutiny* circle, such as D. W. Harding, L. C. Knights, Denys Thompson and Edgell Rickword.

More focussed study of the Leavis-Eliot relationship can be found in a number of journal articles and contributions to collections of essays that include

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (London: Verso, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> We return to Bantock on pp. 240-1 below. In the case of Speirs, in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" he ends his essay by arguing that *Sir Gawain* 'should be as well known to us as Eliot's *Waste Land*: it equally belongs to the great English tradition' (S 16, p. 300). His claim in relation to 'Gawain' that 'there existed in England in the fourteenth century not only a vivid local life but ... a higher degree of *civilisation* than exists anywhere, perhaps, in the twentieth' (S 16, p. 300, emphasis in original), is in accordance with *Scrutiny's* collective effort in promoting a nostalgic 'Bourneism' as discussed on pp. 129, 154-5 and p. 174 below.

those by Kearney and Black already cited, as well as others by Black, Bergonzi, David Gervais and Brian Crick and Michael Di Santo, which I shall return to in the course of the thesis.<sup>9</sup> Bergonzi's article, 'Leavis and Eliot: the Long Road to Rejection', is arguably the most plausible summary of the relationship in question, tracing, as its title indicates, the gradual trajectory of Leavis's growing disillusionment with Eliot, and this is doubtless how many critics would understand the relationship. But this thesis will argue that 'rejection' of Eliot is very far from the case with Leavis even at the end of his life, and despite all the harsh things he says about *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* of 1975. In fact, Eliot remains absolutely crucial to Leavis as the corner-stone of the university study of English, as we have already indicated, and any simple suggestion of final 'rejection' indeed obscures the highly conflicted response to Eliot that Leavis continually displays. Bergonzi indeed, like others, pays the price of only discussing the subject at article length; the result is that not only is the destination the 'long road' is claimed to arrive at questionable, but many stages on it are left out of account. Given the subject's complexities, it can only properly be considered in the context of the much wider set of cultural differences and differences in educational thinking between the two men which are the focus of my chapters 3 and 4 below. The latter chapter examines agreement and opposition between Leavis and Eliot relating to the newly developing field of 'English Studies', a subject which has again been addressed to

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Black, 'Leavis on Lawrence', in Ian MacKillop and Richard Storer, eds., *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 190-224; Bernard Bergonzi, 'Leavis and Eliot: the Long Road to Rejection', *Critical Quarterly*, 26 (1984), pp. 21-43; David Gervais, 'Contending Englands: F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot', in his *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing* (1993, rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 133-55; Brian Crick and Michael Di Santo, 'D. H. Lawrence, "An Opportunity and a Test": The Leavis-Eliot Controversy Revisited', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 38 (2009), pp. 130-46.

only a limited degree in the criticism. Thus Anne Samson's book, which has chapters on all the topics my thesis covers, includes one on 'Leavis and the Growth of English Studies', but this focuses on I. A. Richards's influence on Leavis and offers no detailed reference to Eliot; likewise the chapter 'English as a University Subject' mentions Eliot only once in passing.<sup>10</sup> (Her chapter on Lawrence also only mentions Eliot briefly, whereas for Leavis the two writers were practically inseparable, as we shall see in chapter 2, with Lawrence functioning as Eliot's 'necessary opposite', and her discussion of Leavis's cultural and social criticism draws no parallels with Eliot's social and cultural ideas). *Scrutiny* and Leavis's educational endeavours have attracted a good deal of critical attention, as in the detailed survey of *Scrutiny* contributions to the field by P. W. Musgrave (1973), or Richard Storer's more recent discussions of Leavis's views in particular, whilst more extensive research into 'the *Scrutiny* movement in education' can be found in Christopher Hilliard's *English as a Vocation*, with Steven Cranfield's recent *F. R. Leavis: the Creative University* (2016) focussing on higher education pedagogy in particular.<sup>11</sup> But in all this research, Eliot, though mentioned occasionally, is never treated adequately as someone who not only inspired 'the *Scrutiny* movement in education' but was a constant presence in Leavis's theory and practice of education particularly at university level. This lack of discussion of the Leavis-Eliot relationship within an educational context is also true of those investigations that

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Samson, *F. R. Leavis* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 75-100, 9-33.

<sup>11</sup> P. W. Musgrave, 'Scrutiny and Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 21 (1973), pp. 253-76; Richard Storer, 'Education and the University: Structure and Sources', in Mackillop and Storer eds., *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, pp. 129-46, and 'English, Education and the University', in his *F. R. Leavis* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 95-107; Christopher Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: the 'Scrutiny' Movement* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012); Steven Cranfield, *F. R. Leavis: the Creative University* (London: Springer, 2016). See also Michael Bell's 'Creativity and Pedagogy in Leavis', *Philosophy and Literature*, 40 (2016), pp. 171-88.

approach the subject of education via Eliot rather than Leavis. Thus G. H. Bantock's short book is a sympathetic consideration of the ultimate 'aims', religious and cultural, that underlie Eliot's concept of education, but he makes no mention of Leavis, which is perhaps surprising for a former contributor to *Scrutiny*; whilst the thesis on Eliot and Education by Martyn Hampton only mentions Leavis in a few places in passing.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis opens with a chapter surveying the history of Leavis's engagement with Eliot's writings, that is, Eliot's poetry, essays, journalism and drama, from his earliest publications like *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) up to the studies of the 1970s. Although *New Bearings* was enthusiastic in its support for *The Waste Land*, the bulk of Leavis's attention to Eliot's poetry came to focus on *Four Quartets*, and the dynamics of Leavis's complex and shifting response to this poem are situated here not only in the evolution of Leavis's opinions of Eliot as man and critic, but also in the progression of his own critical practices. Hayman has pointed out that Leavis's four essays on *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* 'could have been written only by a man who had not only been pondering deeply for decades about Eliot's verse but also been discussing it in lectures and seminars' (*Leavis*, p. 137), and we shall see Leavis attempting a final critical mastery of the poem—a procedure which in some ways elevates the literary critic as a more important and 'heroic' figure than the poet himself—that reflects what one might call a lifelong engagement in 'battle' with it. It is worth pointing out here that this thesis on the whole is concerned more with Leavis than with Eliot, though the latter is by no

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<sup>12</sup> G. B. Bantock, *T. S. Eliot and Education* (London: Faber, 1970); Martyn Hampton, "'Planning and Guessing": T. S. Eliot and the Discourse of Educational Reform', unpublished Ph.D. Diss. Univ. of Keele, March 2011.

means neglected, and this is because Leavis's obsession with Eliot as reflected throughout his writing is not returned by the latter: Eliot's direct engagement with Leavis can be regarded as somewhat marginal, and indeed this is one of the reasons that the latter felt aggrieved at and even betrayed by Eliot, as we shall see. Symptomatic of this 'unequal' relationship is the fact that, as Leavis put it in his 1963 'Retrospect' to the republication of *Scrutiny*, 'I don't know that [the researcher] will find a single reference to *Scrutiny*' in the *Criterion*, even though Eliot's magazine is amply referenced in *Scrutiny* (S 20, p. 21). Moreover, part of this sense of 'betrayal' was Leavis's feeling that it was *New Bearings* and his other early works that got Eliot a hearing in the academy in the first place. In Noel Annan's view, 'Leavis knew Eliot spoke with the authority of a saint and was astonished that the saint should not have recognised that in Leavis he had a theologian able to turn the saint's gnomic utterances into coherent dogma'.<sup>13</sup>

Chapter 2 then pursues in detail the implications of Richard Storer's comment that 'Leavis's whole career as a teacher and critic was in a sense founded on insights that he got from Eliot. But it was also founded on the insight that Eliot was not enough. There had to be another "successor" to the tradition—D. H. Lawrence' (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 54). Leavis's elevation of Lawrence above Eliot as a writer is not simply a question of literary-critical principles as commonly applied, but is fiercely passionate and moralistic: the symbolic 'phoenix', after which Lawrence's posthumous book that Leavis reviewed in *Scrutiny* is named, becomes identified with the irrepressible force of 'life' which Leavis identified in Lawrence, the 'vital and sure intelligence' and 'the rare being who is alive in every fibre and has the

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<sup>13</sup> Noel Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), p. 62.

centrality and easy swiftness of genius' as described in 'Genius as Critic' (1961) (*V*, p. 115). The very title of *The Living Principle* evokes the 'phoenix' spirit which Eliot is seen as betraying in that book, which puts him at the opposite pole from Lawrence, with Leavis criticising Eliot's cowardice, life-evasion and sophisticated involvement in the 'modish' London literary world instead of the constant challenge and lack of surrender to it that Lawrence displayed. The Leavis-Eliot-Lawrence triangulation is however impossible to appreciate fully without going into wider cultural and historical contexts involving, for example, questions of social class, nationality, ruralism and modern industrialisation, and these form the material of chapter 3, contexts which have been skimmed in previous critical discussion of this triangulation. As Leavis himself said, to examine the Eliot-Lawrence relationship 'adequately' would be 'to go into a large part of English social and cultural history' (*DHLN*, p. 372).

The aim more generally in fact of chapter 3 is to place the Leavis-Eliot debate in a broader context featuring important polarities such as organicism or ruralism versus industrialism or metropolitanism, and nationalism versus Europeanism or internationalism. As we shall see, Leavis and Eliot share a belief in the importance of the 'organic' agricultural community, but their pictures of what constitutes that community are vastly different. Moreover, although both writers express severe doubts about the development of modern urbanism and industrialisation, Eliot—whom it is difficult to imagine actually living in anything other than a metropolitan society—is able to integrate a series of cultural dichotomies more easily than Leavis can, whose hostility towards modern social and historical trends becomes more marked towards the end of his life. Thus his diatribe against where 'England' is

heading, and the urgent need of national restoration, is demonstrated in the contents and Blake-inspired title of the late book *Nor Shall My Sword*; this more definite and aggressive stance is at one with Leavis's complaint of Eliot's double-talk and cowardice in relation to the latter's outlook on cultural matters. William Walsh's *F. R. Leavis* (1980) contains an excellent chapter on the educational and critical concerns of Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment*, touching on aspects like 'national consciousness' and on how 'elements in Eliot's personality, American, Establishment, sexual and religious in a formal sense', as well as his being 'an irritating Francophile', led to a 'distort[ed] and diminish[ed]' estimation of his achievement in Leavis's eyes, while Lawrence had none of these defects (pp. 168-71).<sup>14</sup> Walsh however does not attend to later Leavis writings/lectures such as 'The Americanness of American Literature' (1952), or 'Luddites? or There is Only One Culture' (1966) and ignores several other relevant *Scrutiny* essays.

Mulhern's *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* mentioned above also contains discussions of the cultural criticism of Leavis and other *Scrutiny* figures; the section entitled 'Versions of the Modern Crisis' runs through key pieces by Leavis, Harding and Thompson in *Scrutiny* that attack the cinema, advertising and other mass cultural manifestations, noting the journal's approving attitude towards the 'organic community' in the era of 'machine civilisation' (*The Moment*, pp. 59, 60). There is no substantial comparison with Eliot's thoughts on advertising, 'organicism' and industrialisation, as carried out in this thesis, beyond is a short discussion of Bantock's review of Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (*The Moment*, pp. 288-9). Mulhern's more recent book *Culture/Metaculture* contains discussion

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<sup>14</sup> William Walsh, *F. R. Leavis* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), pp. 47, 165, 168.

of Leavis and Eliot's cultural criticism in two short sections titled 'Leavis's Critical Minority' (pp. 15-8) and 'Eliot's Whole Way of Life' (pp. 51-4), but their breadth indicates that the analysis is also comparatively limited, to things like *Scrutiny's* unhappiness about Eliot's emphasis on the 'unconscious character of culture' (p. 54), to be returned to in my chapter 3 (see for example pp. 147, 161, 173).<sup>15</sup> More recent books by Gary Day and Genevieve Abravanel that discuss Leavis and the 'culture question' or the relation between culture and nationhood, either give little attention to Eliot, in the former case, or treat the two writers in relative isolation in the latter, ignoring the dynamic dialogue between them.<sup>16</sup> This is also the case with Guy Ortolano's study of Leavis's debate with C. P. Snow over the 'two cultures' in his *The Two Cultures Controversy*, where Eliot is treated as a subordinate figure; thus his presentation of Leavis's ideas on education has no relevant comparison to Eliot (for example, pp. 128-32, 250-2).<sup>17</sup> Likewise Anne Samson's discussion of Leavis's ideas on organic culture and his attacks on mass civilisation (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 34-61) ignores the frequent references to and quotations from Eliot in such writings as *Culture and Environment* and 'Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture'; that Eliot was no less a cultural commentator than Leavis, whatever their differences, is indicated by his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), as well as by other works like *The Idea of a Christian Society* and several *Criterion* commentaries that will be discussed where relevant in chapter 3.

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<sup>15</sup> Francis Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Gary Day, *Re-Reading Leavis: Culture and Literary Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Genevieve Abravanel, *Americanising Britain: The Rise of Modernism in the Age of the Entertainment Empire* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (2009; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

Profound differences over cultural issues lead further to divergent ideas on the question of education and specifically literary education as part of pre- and post-war national reform, the focus of chapter 4. Apart from the criticism relevant to this subject noted above, Walsh mentions Leavis's attacks on traditional academic approaches in his later writings (1952-1970), in which, as we shall see, he shares some common ground with Eliot, and though he also notes the Eliot-Leavis debate on Irving Babbitt as educationalist (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 133), he does not extend this polarity in their opinions. Mulhern's section 'Revolution on Education?' (*The Moment*, pp. 100-14) has no mention of Eliot's importance for Leavis in this area, whilst the section on 'Leavis and Lawrence' mentions Eliot briefly twice (*The Moment*, pp. 292, 297n). Bergonzi's *Exploding English* (1991) offers discussion of Leavis's importance for literary criticism and literary education in Britain, and how he developed English as a university subject, transplanting literary criticism from 'the profession of letters' and 'firmly root[ing]' it 'in the academy', whilst also analysing the nationalistic elements involved in the study of English literature.<sup>18</sup> But again Eliot's educational ideas are not subject to any comparison even though Bergonzi notes Eliot's opposition to English as a university subject and the syllabus inclusion of contemporary writing (*Exploding English*, p. 80), and there is no reference to any of Eliot's relevant essays such as 'Modern Education and the Classics', *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* and others. Ian Mackillop and Richard Storer's edited work *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents* and the latter's *F. R. Leavis* also feature Leavis as a university teacher, the purpose of the former book, as the editors put it in their Introduction, being 'to restore some texture to the

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<sup>18</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, *Exploding English: Criticism, Theory, Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 56.

discussion of Leavis ... The instance of neglect we have had particularly in mind in preparing this book has to do with our understanding of Leavis as a teacher' (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 1-2). We are given information about Downing College's entrance examination papers, and an account of the college environment surrounding Leavis, with some extremely valuable seminar and supervision notes taken by Leavis's former students, such as Charles Winder, including references to Eliot and seventeenth-century English literature which are relevant to my chapter 4.<sup>19</sup> The 'education' chapter contributed by Storer to the volume focuses exclusively on Leavis's *Education and the University* and its source texts in *Scrutiny*, whilst I extend the discussion from this text to equally important writings by Leavis such as *English Literature in Our Time and the University*. Storer revisited the pedagogical scope of Leavis's critical methods and ideas about higher education and provided a more detailed account of the institutional milieu surrounding the establishment of an English School in *F. R. Leavis* (pp. 95-107), but discussion of Leavis's education-related works is still restricted, given the large body of relevant materials, one reason why chapter 4 is the longest in my thesis. Whilst Eliot as we have noted was a major impetus behind 'the *Scrutiny* movement in education', he actively challenges the educational ideals relating to English Studies that Leavis and his circle advocate: we therefore have the irony that Eliot's work and ideas should have a crucial place in the university English syllabus, according to Leavis, whilst Eliot forcibly rejects the teaching of English literature at university level (nor does he seem to believe in it as a school subject either, as we shall see). Thus my chapter

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Charles Winder's 'Leavis's Downing Seminars: A Student's Notes' (pp. 71-91), and Ian Mackillop's 'Rubrics and Reading Lists' (pp. 53-70), in MacKillop & Storer eds., *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*.

compares writings by Leavis such as ‘How to Teach Reading’, ‘Mr. Eliot and Education’, *Education and the University*, to name only a few, with Eliot’s ‘Modern Education and the Classics’, ‘The Classics and the Man of Letters’, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* and a great deal of other works to examine how much use Leavis makes of Eliot in his pedagogy whilst fundamental differences in cultural outlook discussed in chapter 3 result in significant differences in, for example, the importance of classic and foreign literatures to education.

I noted above how surprising it seems that there has been no monograph-length study focused on the Leavis-Eliot relationship. I think this has something to do with the fact that when Leavis died in 1978, and when therefore his complete career could be grasped and an overview of his relation with Eliot (and of course of other subjects) might be taken, he was about to undergo a period of being seriously out of fashion. What was seen as his elitism and his lukewarm attitude towards the extension of university education at a time when expansion in the sector was widely supported seems to set him against contemporary developments, and a book like *Nor Shall My Sword* plainly shows an anti-liberalism that is caused by many aspects of youth and student culture. Equally relevant is the emergence and development of post-structuralism and modern ‘theory’ with its focus on the impossibility of judgments of value being anything other than ideologically determined, tending to oppose a literary critical procedure that was all about establishing, forcefully, such judgments. Leavis was, moreover, a ‘great white male’, and such new pluralistic interests in, for example, race and gender easily switched the attention of the academy elsewhere. The same is of course true of Eliot, who also underwent something of a fall from favour in the 1970s and 80s for similar reasons, a fall that

was practically inevitable given his triumphant status as poet and critic in the middle part of the century. In the last decade or so, however, in a new political and ideological climate, these writers have come back into prominence, particularly Eliot. The recent monumental Ricks-McCue edition of Eliot's poetry, the ongoing multi-volume publication of Eliot's *Letters*, and perhaps above all the enormous online compilation of Eliot's *Complete Prose*—all resources which this thesis is in a position to make use of—are clear evidence of this. One result of much more Eliot becoming available is a growing sense of how extensive his contributions to wider cultural/political issues were, in fields like education, economics, agriculture and so forth. Moreover the Eliot-Leavis relation itself is emerging as an issue claiming the academic attention it deserves, as with the international conference themed 'Leavis and Eliot as Literary and Cultural Critics' held in September 2015 at Downing College, Cambridge. This thesis therefore hopes to make a contribution to a timely field of study, though given that things like Eliot's *Letters* and *Prose* are still mid-publication, it can hardly hope to have the last word.

## 1 LEAVIS'S READING OF ELIOT

In *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), which appeared in the same year as *Scrutiny* began publication, Leavis is clear that Eliot is not only the most important contemporary poet writing in English, but that his literary criticism is just as significant, and has achieved a revolution not only in the type of questions criticism should be asking of poetry but also in its re-evaluation of literary history and 'tradition'. In the 'Prefatory Note' to *New Bearings* he declares his 'indebtedness to a certain critic and poet' (*NB*, p. 13), and although this figure is not named at this point, by the end of the opening chapter it is clear that Eliot, who is the first of only a few critical sources quoted in the book, on page 17, is the figure Leavis is indebted to. The first chapter ends on the idea that it is Eliot's poetry and criticism predominantly that 'has made a new start, and established new bearings' (*NB*, p. 28). The new start is the reintroduction of values such as 'wit, play of intellect, stress of cerebral muscle' (*NB*, p. 16) into poetry, the Romantic/Victorian prejudice that poetry is written out of the 'soul'—a prejudice that leads to, or is the result of, an evasion of contemporary existence and a seeking in poetry of 'a sanctuary from the modern world' as with Matthew Arnold (*NB*, p. 23)—thus being contested. Nineteenth-century poetry, Leavis argues, generally creates a 'dream world', and it is part of Eliot's new start that he is 'alive in his own age' (as I. A. Richards had argued, *NB*, pp. 17, 19), and his work declares the poet's responsibility to 'expose[] himself freely to the rigours of the contemporary climate' and not try to escape from it as Tennyson did (*NB*, p. 21). This assessment of the literary tradition and of where it has gone wrong—'a study of the latter end of *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* leads to the conclusion that something has been wrong for forty or fifty years at

least' (*NB*, p. 14)—mirrors Eliot's own rethinking of the 'tradition' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919); indeed, Leavis openly declares in this chapter that his attack on the nineteenth-century 'dream world' has been anticipated by Eliot's remarks in the essay 'Andrew Marvell' (1921), where 'wit' is also saluted as a quality in urgent need of poetic reclaim.

Chapter 3 of *New Bearings* is Leavis's detailed examination of Eliot's poetry, largely focussed on *The Waste Land* as Eliot's most significant work, but *New Bearings* is in fact the last as well as the first of Leavis's books to prioritise *The Waste Land* in this way. Leavis's subsequent writings on Eliot's poetry address, almost exclusively, the later work: 'Ash-Wednesday', 'Marina', the 'Coriolan' poems and above all *Four Quartets* (though some earlier poems like 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia che Piange' also feature in his later lectures and essays). In fact, Leavis later confessed of *The Waste Land*: although 'we were right in the 1920s to be immensely impressed by that now famous and familiar poem ... I think we attributed a status as an organic work to it that it doesn't justify, and a representative significance it hasn't' (*ELTU*, p. 112). The lack of a 'representative significance' is explained later in this same volume in the way that *The Waste Land* 'hasn't the breadth of significance claimed and asserted by the title and the apparatus of notes': in particular, man-woman relations depicted in the poem are characteristically debased, which is typical of the 'highly personal' attitude 'we know so well from the earlier poems'—'the symbolic Waste Land makes itself felt too much as Thomas Stearns Eliot's' (*ELTU*, p. 140; for a very similar judgement see Leavis's *LIA*, pp. 40-1). It was the inability of the poem's raising a 'personal conviction' to the level of 'general validity' or 'inevitability' that Leavis later

identified as one of the flaws in *Four Quartets* (*LP*, p. 248). The failure of man-women relations in Eliot, which Leavis will ultimately castigate as ‘anti-life’, contrasts markedly with D. H. Lawrence’s depiction of the same subject (see chapter 2 below), and Leavis’s view that in *The Waste Land* ‘the organisation ... was not organic in the way promised by the local life of the parts’ was vindicated ‘when, later, we were told that the arrangements of the constituents into a poem was Pound’s work’ (‘T. S. Eliot’s Influence’, *V*, pp. 123-4).

When *New Bearings* goes on to consider the later work of Eliot (that is the writings which had been published before the book appeared in 1932), Leavis’s response anticipates rather than differs from much of his later criticism on Eliot. He had already noted in an essay of 1929, ‘T. S. Eliot—A Reply to the Condescending’, despite the appreciative admiration for *The Waste Land* there, that there is now ‘less certain agreement’ about developments like Eliot’s ‘classicism’ and its relation to things ‘outside of literature’ (*V*, p. 15). In *New Bearings* Leavis seems to be frankly dismayed by the ‘Ariel’ poems, which he sees as too clearly at the service of a Christian ethos, but this response does not apply to ‘Ash-Wednesday’ because any Christian belief in this poem is attended by ‘doubts and self-questionings’ (*P* 1, pp. 85-97; *NB*, p. 106), just as in ‘Marina’ we have simultaneously a poetry of vision as well as the precariousness of that vision (*NB*, p. 109). The struggle between affirmation and doubt in ‘Ash-Wednesday’ validates this poem in the seriousness of its self-examination and self-scrutiny, presenting what Leavis calls ‘a problem in the attainment of a difficult sincerity’ (*NB*, p. 98), and the notion of ‘sincerity’, as we shall see, becomes a corner-stone in Leavis’s thinking about Eliot. To call the poem a ‘spiritual exercise’, a ‘disciplined dreaming’ (not the evasive dreaming of

the Victorians) or ‘a training of the soul’, as Leavis does, enables him to salute the ‘directed effort that distinguishes this poetry from [Eliot’s] earlier’. *The Waste Land* in Leavis’s view had no ‘progression’ (*NB*, p. 87), but ‘Ash-Wednesday’ is making a great effort to progress somewhere, as in the ascent of the stairs in part III (*P* 1, p. 91; *NB*, p. 104). The Christian content therefore seems to be no obstacle to Leavis’s appreciation of the poem, because the poem is fundamentally a record of the honesty or sincerity of a mind that will not smooth over the difficulties that arise in the strenuous journey that is being undertaken. This honesty guarantees the result in ‘a most subtle poetry of great technical interest’, a belief that Leavis owes to Eliot’s own belief that “‘technique’ was a problem of sincerity’ (*NB*, p. 99) as argued in the latter’s essay on Blake, where ‘this honesty never exists without great technical accomplishment’ (*CP* 2, p. 187). The constant discussion of ‘Ash-Wednesday’ in terms like ‘exercise’, ‘training’, ‘effort’ and so forth implies a strenuous poetic gymnastics that Leavis had already identified in the energy and ‘athleticism’ of *The Waste Land*, and that results in poetic rhythms that ‘have so much more life than those of Ariel poems’ (*NB*, p. 101). In this vocabulary Leavis is again following the example of Eliot’s estimation, in a *Criterion* review, of his own generation, ‘which is beginning to turn its attention to an athleticism, a *training*, of the soul as severe and ascetic as the training of the body of a runner’ (emphasis in original, *CP* 2, pp. 835-6; for more of Leavis’s following this example, see *NB*, pp. 96, 104).

It is not the Christian landscape therefore that the poem offers, but the poetic energy and indefatigability in confronting its difficulties, and the vitality this gives to the verse, that Leavis is drawn to in his reading of ‘Ash-Wednesday’. This

approach, as we shall see, clears the way for not just Leavis, but his *Scrutiny* associates also, to continue to endorse Eliot in his post-1927 Anglo-Catholic career and its climax in *Four Quartets*. Mulhern, for example, has noted Harding's effort to accommodate the growing religious concerns in his comments on Eliot's 'Ash-Wednesday', *The Rock* and later 'Burnt Norton' where 'religious submission' is either accepted as 'the submission of maturity' (*S* 5, p. 173) or bypassed with Harding's counter-stress on the 'originality' in 'technique, interest and stance' and Eliot's 'linguistic achievement' (*The Moment*, p. 151; *S* 3, pp. 180-3; *S* 5, p. 175). As for 'Ash-Wednesday' specifically, if we look at a late work like *Lectures in America* (1969), the appreciation of the poem there is very little different from that in *New Bearings*, over thirty years earlier. At the conclusion of the Eliot chapter in *New Bearings*, 'Ash-Wednesday' and 'Marina' are regarded as 'more disconcertingly modern than *The Waste Land*', and more to be recommended to the attention of young poets, who 'are likely to find that the kind of consciousness ... has a close bearing upon certain problems of their own' (*NB*, pp. 109-10). Leavis does not suggest what these problems might be, but it seems that to him Eliot is offering a model for the sincere mind's inevitable debate with itself in the fragmented condition of the modern age. The point is clarified at the end of Leavis's chapter on Hopkins, another religious poet whose lesson for today consists not in his subject-matter but in 'a technique so much concerned with inner division, friction, and psychological complexities in general [which] has a special bearing on the problems of contemporary poetry' (*NB*, p. 156). 'Inner division' and the poet's 'heroic' struggle with it will become a major feature in Leavis's reading of *Four Quartets* as well, discussed below.

As noted at the outset, Leavis's admiration of Eliot is not only for him as a poet, but also as a critic. He noted in a *Scrutiny* review of December 1947 how, after *The Sacred Wood* appeared in 1920, 'for the next few years I read it through several times a year, pencil in hand' (*S* 15, p. 58). In a later essay 'T. S. Eliot as Critic', originally appearing in *Commentary* in 1958, Leavis spoke again of *The Sacred Wood* and *Homage to John Dryden* as showing 'a fine intelligence in literary criticism' (*AK*, p. 178). Indeed, there has been much debate on the degree of dependence on Eliot's criticism in Leavis's own early work. As Bilan points out, there are those such as René Wellek and Bergonzi who think that Leavis's *Revaluation* and *New Bearings* are a development of Eliot's views on poetry<sup>1</sup>, but he himself notes that there are some areas of disagreement in Leavis's criticism with Eliot, such as his different assessment of Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' and *Cantos* in *New Bearings* and in the debate over Lawrence (*The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis*, pp. 86-7, p. 89; *NB*, p. 112, 126). What is undeniable however is that it was the combination of the poet-critic in Eliot that was so important to Leavis: 'what gives Eliot his acuteness as a critic of poetry and poetic development in the seventeenth century is his diagnostic (and creative) concern with the state of things in 1920'; thus Eliot's criticism 'brings home to one with peculiar vividness the nature of a living relation between the past and the present' (*ELTU*, p. 87). Since this aspect may immediately bring to mind Eliot's talk of the

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<sup>1</sup> Wellek ('The Literary Criticism of Frank Raymond Leavis') argues that *New Bearings* is 'the exposition, development and application of Eliot's point of view', and *Revaluation* 'can be described as an application of Eliot's methods and insights to the history of English poetry', in Carroll Camden ed., *Literary Views: Critical and Historical Essays* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 177-8; Bergonzi: 'the evaluations that Eliot puts forward ... were systematised by F. R. Leavis in *Revaluation*, a book which is largely an expansion of hints offered in Eliot's essays on Marvell and the Metaphysical poets' (*T. S. Eliot*, pp. 87-8).

need to understand ‘the present moment of the past’ and so on in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ of 1919, which is probably the most celebrated of his early essays, it is important to note that Leavis is not thinking of this essay here, and that indeed he becomes increasingly hostile to it, ultimately regarding it as being ‘incoherent, self-contradictory and equivocal’ in his 1966 lecture ‘Eliot’s Classical Standing’ (*LIA*, p. 31). In the same lecture, Leavis made it clear that it was the three essays published in *Homage to John Dryden* in 1924 rather than the famous 1919 essay that exemplified, to repeat his phrase, Eliot’s ‘acuteness as a critic of poetry and poetic development in the seventeenth century’ (*LIA*, p. 38; see also ‘T. S. Eliot’s Influence’, *V*, p. 122). When Eliot’s *Selected Essays* of 1932 was reviewed in *Scrutiny*, the reviewer Edgell Rickword began by welcoming especially the inclusion of ‘the three essays from the crucial *Homage to Dryden* pamphlet’ (*S* 1, p. 390), whilst Leavis, scanning ‘several years of the likely journals’ for his teaching on contemporary poetry, found that ‘the helpful review or critique almost always showed the influence of *Homage to John Dryden*’ (*V*, p. 13). Leavis’s essay on ‘English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century’ that opens the December 1935 issue of *Scrutiny* begins with a tribute to Eliot as achieving a complete reorientation in the valuation of poets of that period (*S* 4, p. 236), and notes in particular Eliot’s ‘extraordinarily pregnant and decisive essay on Marvell’ (*S* 4, p. 246).

This enthusiasm for Eliot’s early essays (as opposed to his later ones) became a *Scrutiny* orthodoxy, as Rickword’s account in the same review shows: ‘Mr. Eliot’s earlier work seems to me more valuable than his later’ because the later essays on cultural and religious issues like ‘Thoughts After Lambeth’, are a ‘dilution’ of Eliot’s qualities, showing that he is ‘not outstanding as a “thinker” as he is as a

literary critic ... the intelligence displayed in the later essays might be matched by several of his contemporaries; the literary sensibility of the earlier essays is not matched by any of them' (*S* 1, p. 392). Even the later 'literary' essays, like that on Baudelaire (1930), are flawed for Rickword because of Eliot's overstepping the line between literary and moral considerations; he thus quotes Eliot's statement that 'the true claim of Baudelaire as an artist is not that he found a superficial form, but that he was searching for a form of life' as an instance of the subordination of aesthetic considerations that 'marks a cleavage between Mr. Eliot's earlier and later criticism' (*CP* 4, p. 158; *S* 1, p. 391). Leavis was to be much more severe about Eliot's critical development: in his review of *After Strange Gods* in the September 1934 issue of *Scrutiny*, for example, he fiercely attacks the literary judgements exhibited in this book that are derived from Eliot's 'ascend[ing] the platform of these lectures only in the role of a moralist', to quote Eliot's own words there (*CP* 5, p. 15). For Leavis, in fact, 'the [literary] criticism [in *After Strange Gods*] seems painfully bad' (*S* 3, p. 185), and ever since 'the religious preoccupation has become insistent' in Eliot's work, his 'critical writings have been notable for showing less discipline of thought and emotion, less purity of interest, less power of sustained devotion and less courage than before' (*S* 3, p. 186). In an echo of Rickword, Leavis finds the frequency of Eliot's 'references during the past half-dozen years to Baudelaire and Original Sin' to be extremely 'distasteful' (*S* 3, p. 190). *After Strange Gods* seems admittedly to be an extreme case in its moralising elements, provoking serious doubts not only in Leavis (largely for its treatment of D. H. Lawrence; see my following chapter) but later in Eliot himself. Whilst Leavis can negotiate Eliot's doctrinal positions in his reading of Eliot's poetry, as shown by

his treatment of 'Ash-Wednesday', he is less willing to employ a 'delicate' handling (to use an adjective Leavis frequently employs) of Eliot's criticism.

We see this in Leavis's review of Eliot's volume *Essays Ancient and Modern* in the June 1936 issue of *Scrutiny*. Leavis opens with the painful 'apprehension' that 'every new prose book' of Eliot that appears creates in those critically indebted to him an apprehension, fulfilled in the present volume by the inclusion of Eliot's most recent essay on Tennyson, an essay Leavis regards as 'the worst essay in literary criticism that Mr. Eliot has yet published' (*S* 5, p. 84). Leavis attacks the essay fiercely, writing that it suffers from a 'flabbiness ... [which] is pervasive', a 'vulgarity of phrasing' and a 'critical indolence'. Eliot's judgement that Tennyson 'had the finest ear of any English poet since Milton' (*CP* 5, p. 323) is specifically challenged: 'actually, Tennyson's feeling for the sounds of words was extremely limited and limiting' (*S* 5, pp. 85-6). For Leavis, Eliot's response to Tennyson is evidence of his critical abilities being impaired by his commitment to 'a definite ethical and theological standpoint' (quoting from Eliot's essay 'Religion and Literature' in the same volume under review, *CP* 5, p. 218); any effort in 'serious literary criticism', which for Leavis is the foundational discipline, can 'lead outside itself to wider intellectual and spiritual concerns' but the process cannot 'move in the opposite direction' (*S* 5, p. 88). What is crucially important is Leavis's argument that Tennyson's limited 'ear' was the result of his education in classical literature; he maintains as 'axiomatic that it is only in one's own language that one's sensibility can ... be educated' (*S* 5, p. 86). Here he is contesting Eliot's position in another essay in *Essays Ancient and Modern*, 'Modern Education and the Classics', where the latter rejects the teaching of English Literature as a university subject

while insisting rather on the educational value of ‘the classics’ (*S* 5, p. 87; *CP* 5, pp. 340, 341). That Leavis titles his review ‘Mr. Eliot and Education’ indicates this underlying concern, which will be focussed on appropriately in chapter 4 below.

It is plain that Leavis’s thinking about literary criticism and its merits cannot be divorced from much broader cultural, educational and social factors, which will be attended to throughout this thesis. As we shall consider in chapter 2, he came to regard Lawrence as a finer critic than Eliot, and gradually dismissed most of Eliot’s criticism except a handful of early essays as noted above; in an essay of 1968, he argues:

Eliot is not freely a critic at all; in fact, he lacks most of the gifts one thinks of as making a critic. He is a distinguished critic only over an extremely narrow range; his good criticism bears immediately on the problems of the ‘poetic practitioner’ ... in the years around 1920. (‘T. S. Eliot and the Life of English Literature’, *V*, p. 130)

At the same time, the narrowness of Eliot’s focus can also be seen as part of his strength as a critic. In *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (1969), Leavis returns to the ‘cluster of essays’ on the seventeenth century ‘which makes [Eliot’s] critical achievement momentous’, focussing on the famous phrase ‘dissociation of sensibility’ (*CP* 2, p. 380) from ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ essay of 1921 and its ‘essential and pregnant felicity’ in summing up ‘the profound change in civilisation’ that occurred in that period (*ELTU*, pp. 70-1). ‘Pregnant’, as we saw in Leavis’s comment on the Marvell essay above, is one of the key terms in his

commendation, implying a stimulation to a further growth of ideas (in the reader's mind) that are not necessarily spelt out by Eliot himself. Leavis continues that in one review and one 'tercentenary address' (that is, the essays on 'The Metaphysical Poets' and 'Marvell' respectively), Eliot provided 'what amounts in effect to a quintessential history of English poetry—one both revolutionary and compelling' (*ELTU*, p. 78). Once again, 'the essays are marvels of pregnancy', and contain 'a highly compressed charge of perceptions, intuitions and suggestions ... complex, packed and delicately organised' (*ELTU*, p. 78).

Applauding Eliot in this way, Leavis is defending the essays in question against the criticism launched by J. B. Leishman in his study of Donne, *The Monarch of Wit*, a 'representative' book by 'an Oxford scholar' who, in a 'mode of argument so blindly beside the point' cannot 'understand what a critic, a real and supremely original one, is saying' (*ELTU*, p. 74). Leishman accuses Eliot of having based his argument on too narrow a base of metaphysical poetry, describing his essays as being written out of 'certain limitations which the author nowhere admits'—that is, as pieces of journalism rather than scholarship which are moreover prejudiced by Eliot's own practice as a poet (quoted in *ELTU*, pp. 74, 76). Leavis often places his defence of Eliot as critic in an opposition to other critical practices; his remark in a *Scrutiny* article of 1935 that Eliot's 'best criticism stands as an exemplar and a criterion of rigour, relevance and purity of interest' (*S* 3, p. 384) is prompted by his worry that I. A. Richards's study, *Coleridge on Imagination*, is 'heading completely away from any useful path' in straying from literary criticism into philosophical material (*S* 3, p. 402), thus betraying any 'purity of interest'. In the following *Scrutiny* of June 1935 he attacks F. W. Bateson's *English Poetry and*

*the English Language* for its decision not to discuss the work of Eliot and Yeats, arguing that significant literary history can ‘be accomplished only by a writer interested in, and intelligent about, the present’, and by one who is concerned to ‘determine what of English poetry of the past is, or ought to be, alive for us now’ (S 4, p. 98). The absence of any sense of the interaction of present and past makes Bateson’s book for Leavis ‘academic’ in the worst sense (S 4, p. 96). Bateson countered in a letter appearing in the September 1935 *Scrutiny*, where he defends historical literary ‘scholarship’ as a discipline separate from literary ‘criticism’; he even questions Eliot’s *The Sacred Wood*, accusing some of the essays of a ‘regrettable capriciousness’, and some of Eliot’s observations of ‘reckless[ness]’ and a general ‘indifference to the requirements of scholarship’. According to Bateson, evidence of the latter is shown, amongst other things, by Eliot’s ‘attribution’ in his essay on Marlowe of some lines to Kyd which ‘is still entirely conjectural’ (S 4, pp. 184-5). As revealed in his reply, Leavis found such remarks on Eliot merely displaying Bateson’s ‘pedantry’ (S 4, p. 187).

This argument between, for Leavis, a living criticism and what is a dead scholarship is suggested as early as his 1929 essay ‘T. S. Eliot—A Reply to the Condescending’, where he contests a reviewer’s preference for the work of George Saintsbury to Eliot’s *For Lancelot Andrewes*: ‘it is because of Mr. Eliot that such erudition as Dr Saintsbury’s does not merely overwhelm us, and makes us feel that life is not long enough to take literature seriously ... it is [Eliot] who has heartened us and shown us the way to a study of literature that may hope to produce something other than mere accumulation’ (V, p. 16). These issues will be pursued in chapter 4 below, but it can be pointed out here that it was the ‘highly compressed’,

‘quintessential’, ‘pregnant’ procedures of Eliot that powered his criticism, as opposed to those of the professional academic who spends a lot of time and energy on the ‘accumulation’ of facts, hence often straying into irrelevant, and for the student, disheartening ‘context’, as opposed to the close reading that literary criticism should be. The type of critical attitude and method represented by Eliot, and Leavis’s taking his ‘best criticism ... as an exemplar and a criterion’ (*S* 3, p. 384), are accepted as axiomatic in the wider *Scrutiny* circle. A brief review of volume 3 of the journal, which covers the second half of 1934 and the first half of 1935, for example, shows this in the countless incidental tributes to and evocations of Eliot the critic: at the outset of Chapman’s essay on Hardy (*S* 3, p. 22), then in the epigraph to an essay on economics (*S* 3, p. 37), then in a review of George Barker (*S* 3, p. 84), followed by a reference in L. C. Knights’s review of a book on Shakespeare (*S* 3, p. 88). Wherever literature is being discussed, approving references to Eliot’s early criticism are likely to turn up (see further in the same volume, pp. 136, 151-2, 157, 219-20, 306ff., 341-2, 382ff., 409). One of the final pieces in this volume, a review of a book by Arnold Haskell on ballet, even quotes Eliot’s observations on this subject on every page (*S* 3, pp. 425, 426, 427)! It is as if to join the *Scrutiny* club, an admiration for Eliot, or at least the realisation that he has set the critical agenda, is compulsory. However, this does not mean that Eliot’s observations are always endorsed unconditionally; so we find James Smith contesting some of Eliot’s observations on Chapman (even though, he noted, Eliot is ‘by far the most understanding and sympathetic’ of recent Chapman critics, *S* 3, pp. 341-2), John Speirs dissenting from Eliot’s enthusiasm for Pound’s *Cantos* (*S*

3, p. 410), and Leavis challenging Eliot's positive estimate of the poetry of Marianne Moore, which shows Eliot's critical 'decline' (*S* 4, pp. 87-90).

Eliot's critical significance for Leavis and *Scrutiny* accounts for the fact that there is as much, if not more, discussion of Eliot the critic rather than the poet in the early years of the journal; in fact, founded in 1932, *Scrutiny* coincided with something of a lull in Eliot's poetic output, until the appearance of 'Burnt Norton' in 1936. Richard Storer has noted that Leavis 'seems generally to have lost interest in new poetry after 1935' until the appearance of 'East Coker'; his 1941 review of this poem 'marks the beginning of the end of his career as a poetry reviewer' and 'after this [Eliot] became ... more or less the only modern poet Leavis was interested in writing about—over thirty years later he was still preoccupied with *Four Quartets*'.<sup>2</sup> As Leavis says of *Four Quartets* in 'T. S. Eliot's Influence', 'it came ... when one was settling down to the conclusion that there was nothing more to be expected ... [it] gave us the unexpected: a wonderful new product of [Eliot's] genius' (*V*, p. 126). Again, this does not mean that discussion of Eliot's early poetry is completely absent from *Scrutiny* at this time; Leavis's review of a series of recent volumes of poetry in June 1934 entitled 'Auden, Bottrall and Others' proves the point. Leavis finds in the majority of these poets 'a distinctively modern mode of contemplating life' that derives from 'the use of anthropological themes in *The Waste Land*' (*S* 3, p. 73), arguing for particular 'reminiscences' of Eliot in the work of Edwin Muir (*S* 3, p. 74) and for the absence in that of Auden of the critical faculty that enabled Eliot to subject his poetry to effective self-editing (*S* 3, p. 79). H. A. Mason, in a review of 'Poetry 1934', too, finds 'the dominance of Eliot as an

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<sup>2</sup> 'Leavis as Critic of New Poetry: Uncollected Reviews', in MacKillop and Storer, eds., *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, pp. 26, 27.

emotional and technical stimulus even on poets who would claim to be opposed to him', suggesting 'whole passages' in several of the poets, particularly Conrad Aiken (*S* 3, p. 406), Robert Fitzgerald and Theodore Spencer (*S* 3, p. 409), as 'unrelated paraphrase' (*S* 3, p. 405). In the following year, Mason argues that Stephen Spender's concerns in his volume *The Destructive Element* 'remain in the same form the concerns to be found in *The Waste Land*' (*S* 4, p. 208).

Before we discuss Leavis's response to Eliot's later poetry in *Scrutiny* and his post-*Scrutiny* writings, a subject which is at the heart of the Leavis-Eliot relationship, there is another aspect of the relationship between the two to consider, that is the two figures as editors of literary journals. From the outset, *Scrutiny*, a journal 'seriously preoccupied with the movement of modern civilisation', as its opening 'Manifesto' put it, was aware that it had allies in the field, one of which was the *Criterion*, 'the most serious as it is the most intelligent of our journals' in *Scrutiny*'s view (*S* 1, p. 3). There were, however, important differences, two of which were *Scrutiny*'s focus 'especially upon educational matters' (*S* 1, p. 3), and the *Criterion*'s insistence on communication with Europe via the regular 'Chronicles' from other countries. The second difference identified here throws some light on the arguably insular nature of *Scrutiny* as compared with the *Criterion*, in areas concerned with national culture, tradition and education, in spite of Henri Fluchère's occasional reports on the French literary and intellectual scene (e.g., *S* 1, pp. 219-33; *S* 2, pp. 239-46; *S* 5, pp. 234-42).<sup>3</sup> This last difference is highly operative in Leavis's criticism of Eliot's work from *New Bearings* onwards,

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<sup>3</sup> Leavis argued that *Scrutiny* did indeed have a European reach in its 'attention given to foreign literatures' in defending the journal and himself from the charge of 'Francophobia' ('A Retrospect', *S* 20, pp. 7-8), but this 'attention' is notably limited compared to that in the *Criterion*, and we return below to several instances of what might be called anti-Europeanism and 'Francophobia' in Leavis.

as we shall see. Moreover, the ‘high price’ of the *Criterion* is seen to limit its influence and circulation, and already the opening *Scrutiny* ‘Manifesto’ is criticising in it ‘a certain tendency to substitute solemnity for seriousness, and, during the last two years, a narrowing of its interests’ (*S* 1, p. 3). Later in the year Leavis was to be much more severe on the *Criterion*’s preference for a ‘dead, academic kind of abstract “thinking”’ that characterised many of its contributors, even though such criticism was not extended to the editor himself, whose contributions still show some ‘real thinking’ but are ‘too spare’ (*S* 1, p. 214). Indeed, *Scrutiny* is in a fairly constant dialogue with the *Criterion* in the 1930s, and it puts Eliot’s journal, and the way it is heading, under scrutiny, as it does Eliot’s own body of work. Bergonzi seems to totally identify with Leavis’s criticism of the *Criterion*, commenting that it ‘was always something less than a living cultural force’ due to Eliot’s maintaining ‘the coterie spirit that he had picked up as assistant editor of the *Egoist*’ (*T. S. Eliot*, p. 81). Its selective if uncertain sense of a ‘potential readership’ contrasts with *Scrutiny*’s being ‘directed at a wide but identifiable audience’, and with its focus on ‘a recognisable set of issues’, namely the place of English literature and its criticism and study within ‘the realities of mass culture and industrial civilisation’ (*T. S. Eliot*, p. 81). For Bergonzi, this mission meant that *Scrutiny* had ‘an influence throughout the English-speaking world’, whilst the *Criterion* ‘remained infertile’ (*T. S. Eliot*, p. 82). Roger Kojecky counters this however with evidence of the *Criterion*’s subscription list ‘which, though never more than 800, was worldwide, and consisted largely of people unknown to Eliot’, reaching to

countries and regions like Japan, India, Egypt, South America and the United States.<sup>4</sup>

One of Leavis's complaints, as he reflected upon the 1930s in 'Retrospect of a Decade' in the June 1940 *Scrutiny*, was that he found the *Criterion* gave far too much space to the left-wing poets in vogue at that time who 'incongruously cock[] their snooks at *Scrutiny* from the pages of the *Criterion*' (*S* 9, p. 72); Q. D. Leavis joins Leavis's attack later in the same volume, bombarding 'the rash of the exhibitionistic imposters who displayed in the *Criterion*' (*S* 9, p. 174). On the contrary, in an article significantly entitled 'The Responsible Critic' that appeared in the penultimate issue of *Scrutiny* in Spring 1953, Leavis noted how his own journal 'challenged the estimate from the start with steady criticism'—that is, the exaggerated estimate of Auden, Spender, Day Lewis 'and the rest' at a time when the *Criterion* 'gave the movement, a "gang-movement" if ever there was one, the freedom of its review pages' (*S* 19, pp. 181-2). Early in June 1933 in 'This Poetical Renaissance', Leavis had complained about a Faber 'blurb' on Stephen Spender, namely 'if Auden is the satirist of this poetical renaissance, Spender is its lyric poet', arguing that 'whoever was allowed to write it knew nothing about poetry' (*S* 2, p. 70). This anticipates his above censure of the *Criterion* and Eliot's support for the new generation of poets, given that, according to Jason Harding, it was actually Eliot who wrote the 'blurb'.<sup>5</sup> A further aspect of *Scrutiny*'s objections to Eliot's journal can be found in its retrospective 'Valedictory' in the final issue:

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<sup>4</sup> Roger Kojecky, *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber, 1971), pp. 16, 226.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Harding, 'Publishing', in Jason Harding ed., *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), p. 77.

for though we didn't anticipate the positively hostile non-recognition of our existence that, together with the steady encouragement of what may be called the Auden ethos and milieu, was to characterise the *Criterion* for the remainder of its existence, we hadn't judged the *Criterion* to be anything but a depressing failure to justify its name. (S 19, pp. 254-5)

But the relation between *Scrutiny* and the *Criterion* was rather strained from the outset, as we have seen from both the approving and disapproving comments reported in the first volume of the former, above.

A more personal import can be found in Eliot's initial encouragement of Leavis to write a pamphlet for the *Criterion Miscellany* and his later 'silence' over it following "'one or two" changes' to it that Leavis was requested to make (Mackillop, *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism*, p. 186).<sup>6</sup> Leavis thereafter published four essays in *Scrutiny* based on the pamphlet, and though Mackillop thinks 'Eliot may have seriously thought of publishing Leavis's pamphlet', its 'tone', which 'was rare in the literary arena', may 'have made him nervous' (*F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism*, p. 188).<sup>7</sup> This instance of Eliot and *Criterion*'s unsupportiveness may have been especially difficult to Leavis at a time when he had lost his probationary

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<sup>6</sup> See also Eliot's *Letters* for correspondence between them about this pamphlet; for example in October 1931 Leavis writes that 'the difficulty is to find time' because 'I live by teaching, & that means doing a great deal; & at present I am trying to put into a shape that I could bear to publish some work with a scholarly enough appearance to offset the damage my very precarious academic status will suffer when my book on modern poetry [*New Bearings in English Poetry*] comes out (i. e. after Christmas). The proposed pamphlet won't raise my "stock" here, which (I have been told) is "very low"' (*LOE* 5, p. 709n). Eliot replied asking Leavis to continue with the pamphlet 'in what spare time you have' and 'trusted' that 'the *Criterion* may receive a review copy of your forthcoming book' (*LOE* 5, p. 709).

<sup>7</sup> As Mackillop notes, Leavis's pamphlet 'provisionally titled' 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet?' appeared in *Scrutiny* between May 1932 and March 1933 as four essays: 'The Literary Mind' (May 1932), 'What's Wrong with Criticism?' (September 1932), 'Under Which King, Bezonian?' (December 1932), and 'Restatements for Critics' (March 1933). See *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism*, p. 186.

lectureship in Cambridge; as he wrote to Ronald Bottrall at the time, 'I'm faced with a void' (*F. R. Leavis: a Life in Criticism*, pp. 119, 127-30). Later in October 1933, Eliot turned down Knights's invitation to review Middleton Murry's *Blake for Scrutiny* (*LOE* 6, p. 659); when Knights further invited Eliot in December 1933 to review Leavis's *For Continuity* Eliot declined again, noting he was not the 'appropriate person' for reviewing the book because 'I am, and the *Criterion* is, to a considerable extent involved in Leavis's criticisms' (*LOE* 6, p. 774). Indeed Eliot's correspondence with figures such as Pound, Richards and Edith Sitwell reveals a wider antipathy towards Leavis among Eliot's circle which may have had its effect upon Eliot. For example, Pound writes in characteristic anti-Semitic vein to Eliot in December 1934:

the Leavis louse attempt to beslime his letters ... by flattery of real authors/ e/g/ spewing his Whitechappel spittle upon the Sitwell, in effort to aggrandise his putrid self, and trying to make the pore bdy/ stewddent think that our Olympianity wd/ notice his sizzle. (*LOE* 7, p. 421n)

Richards, in an undated letter to Eliot referring to Leavis's attack on him in 'Dr. Richards, Bentham and Coleridge' (*S* 3, pp. 382-402), asks

What *is*, indeed, the matter w. Leavis? I've not been informed except through that article. I suppose it was just my turn (as his last friend here in the faculty!) You mind what you do, it will be your turn before long! (*LOE* 7, p. 628n, emphasis in original)

Richards's warnings turn out to be true, in the light of the growing intensity of Leavis's attacks on Eliot. Nevertheless, the editors of Eliot's *Letters* uphold Eliot's 'support for the place and importance of *Scrutiny*' despite the fact that 'FRL was often his antagonist over the years'; an instance is Eliot's July 1942 letter to Sir Malcolm Robertson of the British Council where he is 'perturbed ... by the prospect of *Scrutiny* coming to an end':

while I have often had occasion to criticise *Scrutiny* and its Editor, Dr. Leavis of Downing College, I should consider its disappearance as a grave misfortune. It is the only serious and heavyweight literary and general periodical left, and if we are to direct any cultural propaganda toward the highest intellectual layer of foreign countries we must be able to show evidence of our own cultivation of art and thought, under whatever difficulties. (*LOE* 6, pp. 113-4n)

Indeed, Eliot subscribed to *Scrutiny*, writing to Leavis on 24 February 1932 that 'I am much interested in the project of *Scrutiny*, and if I can be of any use in interesting possible contributors and subscribers I shall be very glad' (*LOE* 6, p. 113).

Leavis's fullest and most damning indictment of Eliot as editor can be found in the essay 'T. S. Eliot's Influence', where he attacks the 'Rightishness' of the *Criterion* as 'decidedly ... unpleasant', as well as the seeming contradiction of its encouraging 'the Auden ethos': 'does this mean that Eliot had ... some belief in criticism as an interplay of diverse judgements, a vitally formative clash of

opinions? No, it means rather that he believed in nothing' (*V*, p. 125). In the same essay, Leavis accuses Eliot of a 'civilised duplicity', or 'urbane equivocation', in, for example, his tribute to Robert Bridges (the implication is that Eliot was surely aware of Bridges's true and unimpressive quality as a poet) in a *Criterion* obituary (*V*, p. 126). 'Lawrence didn't get one', Leavis adds in an ominous aside (*V*, p. 126). Here Leavis is accusing Eliot of wanting to conform to the establishment in praising the deceased Poet Laureate, 'who had been in so distinguished a social-cultural way institutional' (*V*, p. 126); indeed, this aspect of Eliot as Leavis conceives it becomes the central protest in his estimation of him, noting 'he had no belief strong enough to make him resist social pressures' (*V*, p. 125). Leavis continues:

he was taken up in the early twenties by Bloomsbury ... and found nothing questionable in its pretensions to be both an intellectual and a social élite ... If he ever had an impulse to assert a bold independence of Bloomsbury, or of any later derivative social-literary milieu to which he belonged, he had no difficulty in suppressing it. (*V*, p. 125)

At the heart of Leavis's response in *English Literature in Our Time and the University* is the contradiction in Eliot of his 'docile adhesion to Bloomsbury' which he was 'essentially not, in his genius, in resonance with', though 'as a social person he was' (*ELTU*, p. 138). For Leavis, Eliot 'can't have been without some troubling awareness [of this] but he was not a whole man, and the coterie influence ... certainly confirmed in him the inner disorder, and the lack of self-knowledge that went with it' (*ELTU*, pp. 138-9). This is an important issue because in *The*

*Living Principle*, which contains Leavis's final and most extensive examination of Eliot in his reading of *Four Quartets*, the sense of its author's inner division and lack of 'wholeness' is at the core of Leavis's approach. Here, Eliot's

dividedness remains irremediable; in the non-poetic life in which it gives him patent satisfaction to be an 'eminent man of letters', a social value, the distinguished Editor of the *Criterion*, and a successful playwright, he can't escape the inner contradiction and the basic equivocation. (*LP*, p. 206— from the same volume see also the comments on pp. 249 and 241, the latter referring to Eliot's 'gift of double-talk as Editor of the *Criterion*')

Relevant to this type of protest was Leavis's later hostility towards 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', which is not in evidence in earlier essays like 'Literature and Society', in the Winter 1943 issue of *Scrutiny*, where Leavis regards the essay as not only having given the death-blow to 'the Romantic tradition' of 'inspiration and the individual genius', but as setting up the proper dialectic between the individual writer and the 'organic order' of the literary tradition, to expose the false emphasis, in the previous 'Marxising decade', on the relation between the individual writer and material and economic forces (*S* 12, pp. 2-3). However, in *Lectures in America*, this essay is convicted of an 'attitudinising ... implicitly addressed to the intellectual coterie-world in which [Eliot] has been formed'; Leavis adds, 'the same is true of the element of exhibitionistic sophistication to be found in his early verse' (*LIA*, p. 40). Leavis's objections to 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' are caused by a number of deep divisions between him and Eliot which shall

be pursued elsewhere in this thesis; one of these is a difference of belief in what constitutes the significant 'tradition', which for Leavis is the native English line of literature rather than any of 'Eliot's nonsense' about 'the mind of Europe' (*ELTU*, p. 167). The essay confirms Leavis's charge of an Eliot who is too concerned to please and to posture, an aspect of Eliot he only gradually realised: 'How completely Eliot was, socially, of Bloomsbury I myself didn't realise for many years. But I was very innocent' (*ELTU*, p. 137, emphasis in original). However, such an accusation against Eliot is already anticipated in D. W. Harding's *Scrutiny* review of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), a book that is flawed by the limitations of the lecture format because it involves too much pleasing of the audience, so that 'it is seldom that [Eliot's] probing is deep enough or his formulations accurate enough to be completely satisfactory' (*S 2*, p. 289). Eliot's dependence on and desire to please an audience is the ultimate reason for the disaster, as seen by Leavis, of his plays, which will be discussed below.

Leavis's longest discussion of Eliot's criticism is, as the title of the essay suggests, 'T. S. Eliot as Critic', originally published in *Commentary* in November 1958 and which is supposedly a review of Eliot's collection of essays *On Poetry and Poets*, published the previous year. A good deal of the essay, however, goes over the ground noted above, applauding *Homage to John Dryden* and, to a lesser degree, *The Sacred Wood*, attacking 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', and arguing for the corrupt nature of many of Eliot's (and the *Criterion*'s) judgements on contemporary writers because of his compromised standing with Bloomsbury and the literary 'establishment'. Much of the essay targets Eliot's theory of impersonality in his 'Tradition' essay, which in Leavis's eyes 'absolv[es] the artist

from the need to have lived—the need to be a fully living individual wholly committed to life’ (*AK*, p. 181). In maintaining ‘the pressure of the artistic process as something apart from the pressure of the living—the living life and the lived experience’, Eliot’s theory ‘portends an inner thwarting disorder, a profound vital disharmony that has defeated intelligence in the artist and made any but a strained and starved creativity impossible’ (*AK*, p. 181). René Wellek has suggested the limitations of Leavis’s concept of ‘life’, which ‘brings out the limitations of [his] concept of literature and the narrow range of his sympathies’; it stands for a ‘realistic art’ which makes Leavis ‘suspicious of’ other forms of art which are ‘playful, rococo, ornamental, aesthetic, formalistic’:

Leavis’s taste is rooted in nineteenth-century critical realism ... He is really deeply hostile to what could be called modernism or avant-garde: to Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Auden, Dylan Thomas, to almost every author who has become prominent in the last thirty years. He clings ... to the discoveries of his youth: Conrad, Lawrence, Hopkins, the early Eliot. (‘The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis’, p. 190)

Bergonzi meanwhile has commented on the theory of impersonality as ‘an inevitable response to the pervasive literary climate of subjectivism, inspiration, and self-expression’, defending Eliot from Leavis’s condemnation because ‘he certainly could not have foreseen in 1919, when his essay appeared in the little-read pages of *The Egoist*, that its doctrines were going to become an academic orthodoxy’ (*T. S. Eliot*, pp. 61-2). In accusing Eliot’s theory as being ‘anti-life’

Leavis as often has Lawrence in mind as the counter-example, and we shall return to the essay in the following chapter, but there are also some comments on the matter supposedly in hand in Leavis's 'review', that is Eliot's later essays in *On Poetry and Poets* itself, that are relevant to our discussion of cultural and educational issues in chapters 3 and 4 below. In taking Eliot's statement of the division in the artist in 'Tradition'—'the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates' ('T. S. Eliot as Critic', *AK*, p. 181; *CP* 2, p. 109)—as pathological, 'an inner thwarting disorder', Leavis anticipates the way he was to see *Four Quartets* through such a lens in his late examination of the poem in *The Living Principle*, discussed below.

The publication of 'Burnt Norton' in the *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (1936) begins the crucial phase of Leavis's re-engagement with Eliot as a poet. Although this volume was not reviewed in *Scrutiny* by Leavis himself but by D. W. Harding, it is a review Leavis makes frequent favourable reference to in his later writing on the *Quartets*. A good deal of Harding's review focuses on the discussion of 'Burnt Norton'. According to Harding, Eliot's 'mastery of language' enables him to replace abstract concepts like 'regret' and 'eternity' with a new conceptualisation of such themes, 'equally abstract but vastly more exact and rich in meaning', because of the 'assimilation and communication of experience' that the language achieves (*S* 5, pp. 174-5). The whole poem is a 'newly-created concept', made possible by the 'presentation of concrete images and events' on the one hand and by its rejection of 'ready-made concepts' on the other—at this point Harding quotes the passage beginning with 'Neither from nor towards ...' (*S* 5, p. 175; *P* 1, p. 181).

Harding insists several times that 'Burnt Norton' is 'the greatest of linguistic achievements' (*S* 5, p. 175) in its search after something much more than the everyday discourse of abstraction, and it is this, amounting to an 'approach to technical perfection' (*S* 5, p. 176), that Harding features, rather than any religious content, context or position in the poem. Thus 'Burnt Norton' 'makes no statement ... It is no more "about" anything than an abstract term like "love" is about anything: it is a linguistic creation' (*S* 5, p. 175). Harding's reading of the poem is endorsed by Leavis in a footnote to his essay on Henry James in the following issue of *Scrutiny* (*S* 5, p. 417), and although it will take some time before Leavis himself engages directly with *Four Quartets*, Harding's appraisal already anticipates what will be Leavis's own approach to this first instalment of the poem.

The *Quartets* as a whole began to emerge with the publication of 'East Coker' in March 1940.<sup>8</sup> Again, this was not reviewed in *Scrutiny* by Leavis, but by W. H. Mellers. Mellers is first struck by the evidence of the very 'first page' of the poem that 'we have before us the work of a real poet' (in distinction to some of the other volumes considered in his review) (*S* 9, p. 298) and recognises Eliot's characteristic 'moral integrity' and 'seriousness of mind' on show in the poem (*S* 9, p. 300). But while noting the 'genuine and distinguished movement' of the poem's opening section, he suggests that 'it is perhaps the most spineless, the most nerveless, the most painfully weary movement in which a distinguished poetry has ever been created', and the poem as a whole is 'the most gloomy verse that Mr. Eliot has given us' (*S* 9, pp. 298-9). Moreover, 'East Coker' is 'in essence passive', full of the

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<sup>8</sup> Eliot stated in an interview with John Lehmann for the *New York Times Book Review* on 29 November 1953 that 'it was only in writing "East Coker" that I began to see the *Quartets* as a set of four'. The interview is reprinted in Bernard Bergonzi, ed., *T. S. Eliot: 'Four Quartets': A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 23.

‘bitterness of disillusion’, ‘limp’ and ‘weary’ (*S* 9, pp. 298, 300). That poetry should display a ‘search for the soul’s joy’ (*S* 9, p. 300) appears to be an axiom held by the reviewer that counts against ‘East Coker’, a belief that anticipates Leavis’s later position in *The Living Principle* with regard to the *Quartets* as a whole. But Leavis’s two pieces of writings elsewhere on ‘East Coker’ during the same time period disclose his effort to accommodate the wearisome elements. One is a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which, refuting a hostile commentary on Eliot’s poetry as ‘the poetry of disdain’ and on Eliot as ‘the embalmer of the nearly dead’, Leavis accuses the commentator of having ‘exhibit[ed] a complacent ignorance of the nature of [Eliot’s] genius and of the nature of the techniques in which that genius is manifested’ (*LIC*, p. 31).<sup>9</sup> The other is his 1941 review of ‘East Coker’ in the *Cambridge Review*, where Leavis agrees with Mellers’s suggestion of the poem as a means of ‘intimate inner exploration’, emphasising that the poet’s ‘personal note’ is ‘delicately’ approached, taking the form of a ‘sincere’ search for a ‘firm apprehension of a reality’.<sup>10</sup>

Leavis’s own detailed consideration of the *Quartets* in *Scrutiny* begins with his review of ‘The Dry Salvages’, published in the Summer 1942 issue. Beginning with the fact, ‘one gathers’, that Eliot is writing a series ‘to be completed in a fourth poem’, Leavis expresses admiration for the ‘magnificent intelligence’ on show so far in the series which is devoted ‘to keeping as close as possible to the concrete of sensation, emotion and perception’ (*S* 11, p. 60). Whilst admitting that in Eliot’s later poetry ‘there is no pretence that the sensibility is not Christian’ (*S* 11, p. 60),

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<sup>9</sup> Anonymous, ‘Mr. Eliot’s Confession’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 September 1940, p. 472; Leavis’s reply to this commentary is titled “‘East Coker’” in *Times Literary Supplement* on 21 September 1940 (p. 483) and was reprinted in *LIC*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>10</sup> F. R. Leavis, “‘East Coker’”, *Cambridge Review*, 21 February 1941, p. 268.

Leavis admires what he calls Eliot's 'discipline of continence'—that is that 'the poetry from "Ash-Wednesday" onwards doesn't say, "I believe", or "I know", or "Here is the truth"' (S 11, pp. 60-1), but rather shows the struggle in apprehending a higher order: 'what in fact we have is nothing of the order of affirmation and statement, but a kind of tentatively defining exploration' (S 11, p. 63). Admitting that "'Illumination" ... is no simple matter', Leavis distinguishes Eliot from Dante: the 'difference from Dante is extreme', and Eliot's tentativeness is the equivalent of 'a technique for sincerity—for giving "sincerity" a meaning' (S 11, p. 61). As we have noted, the idea of 'sincerity' is important in Leavis's thinking about the *Quartets*, and it appears to be of particular significance given the pressure arising from Eliot's clear 'insincerity' in Leavis's eyes as editor of the *Criterion* and so on, as discussed above. In endorsing enthusiastically Harding's discussion of 'Burnt Norton' as a re-conceptualisation of 'eternity', Leavis interprets the poem as a rejection of the orthodox 'conceptual currency' of Christianity as well as the 'routine commonsense world' through its sincere admission of the 'unseizableness' and 'elusiveness' of the transcendental concept it is recreating (S 11, p. 66). Thus Leavis comes to see 'The Dry Salvages' as a poem concerned with 'dissolving the habit-created "reality" of routine experience and commonsense'; whilst he admits that the 'hints' and 'guesses' about transcendental experience do finally resolve themselves here into the dogma of the Incarnation, he argues that Eliot's statements of belief may 'imply a theological context, [but] their actual context is the poem', and 'nothing is gained from the point of view of either poetry or religion by an abandonment of one context for the other, or by any approach that refuses or ignores or relaxes the peculiar discipline that the poetry is' (S 11, p. 71). Moreover, Leavis

insists that any such 'affirmation' must, 'by the reader of the poem, be referred back to what has gone before' (*S 11*, p. 71), and by this Leavis clearly means the need to keep in mind the first three Quartets as a totality. What the total poem offers so far is a strenuous spiritual exploration and re-exploration, and affirmation itself is subject to constant scrutiny, doubt and contemplation even in the act of arriving at it.

It is significant that 'the extraordinary vitality of language' in the series of poems is only considered in a footnote (*S 11*, p. 68), which discloses Leavis's major concern as thematic, that is to address and safeguard the poem from 'theological' appropriation. Such an undertaking is based on what Leavis sees as the poem's perception of 'a profound and acute apprehension of the difficulties of [Eliot's] age'; Eliot believes that any 'simple re-imposition of traditional frames', whether Anglo-Catholicism or 'classicism', is impossible (*S 11*, p. 71). The type of 'stamina' with which the poem 'makes its explorations into the concrete actualities of experience below the conceptual currency' (*S 11*, p. 71) and the corresponding expectation on the reader brings us back to Leavis's remarks on Eliot's 'athleticism' considered in relation to 'Ash-Wednesday' at the outset of this chapter (above, p. 19). As Leavis writes, 'with all its positive aspiration and movement, it is at the same time essentially a work of radical analysis and revision, endlessly insistent in its care not to confuse the frame with the living reality, and heroic in its refusal not to accept'; therefore, what Eliot's work ultimately offers is a tireless attention to 'the living reality' in all its complexity, which, even for the believer, should remain paramount, together with the realisation that old orthodoxies, vocabulary and 'frames' can no longer address the complexity of the contemporary situation (*S 11*,

p. 71). In this sense, Eliot's poetry offers a lesson in sincerity and scrutiny to his contemporaries, whatever their beliefs: 'to feel an immense indebtedness to Eliot, and to recognise the immense indebtedness of the age, one doesn't need to share his intellectually formulated conclusions, his doctrinal views, or even to be uncritical of the attitudes of his poetry' (*S 11*, p. 71). Therefore, it does not so much matter whether one shares Eliot's 'answers' or not; what counts is Eliot's statement of the problems of the contemporary world here and in poems like 'Difficulties of a Statesman' and 'Triumphal March', which all illustrate 'the unrealities of politics and public affairs, the conventional importances, the loss of ends in the bustle of getting things done, the usurping and frustrating complication of the machinery [of committees and so forth]' (*S 11*, p. 64). According to Leavis, after studying Eliot's poetry, 'it would be impossible to come away with a crudely simplifying attitude towards the problems facing the modern world' (*S 11*, p. 71). Like D. H. Lawrence, which is somewhat ironic given Leavis's habit of stressing the unlikeness between the two writers, Eliot 'pre-eminently has stood for the spirit in these brutal and discouraging times' and 'it should by now be impossible to doubt that he is among the greatest poets of the English language' (*S 11*, p. 71). Vincent Buckley has argued that Leavis's 'refus[al] to have dealings with any working of intelligence that is not expressed in and through the concrete' is a limitation, preventing him from 'openly extend[ing] his critical findings into the business of living; for it disqualifies him from following certain of the poets into the theological or philosophical territories from which their poetry derives some of its power, and into which it leads'; he also contends that 'theological and philosophical discourse is inevitably, in some sense, abstract', and 'the poetry of Eliot, or Blake, or Dante, for

example, prompts the reader to reflection on life in terms of that discourse' (*Poetry and Morality*, p. 179). Buckley's comment anticipates the dangers of and points to the reasons behind Leavis's reading of *Four Quartets* from a strict a-philosophical viewpoint that stresses how the poem is only successful in those passages that are grounded in what he understands as a 'concrete', living reality, as we shall see in *The Living Principle*.

Leavis's noting in this review, relating to 'Ash-Wednesday', of 'how easy it would be with the aid of a Dante primer, to work out an illuminating commentary that would save grateful readers the trouble of understanding the poem' (*S* 11, p. 61), is echoed by other members of the *Scrutiny* group in their writing about *Four Quartets* and the shortcomings of critical interpretation after the series was completed by 'Little Gidding' in 1942. Mason's review of Raymond Preston's study *'Four Quartets' Rehearsed* (1946) is an example, in which he repeats many of Leavis's points, such as the poem being 'a triumph of *intelligence*' (Mason's emphasis), in terms of its use of "concrete" images of immediate feeling and sensation', as well as 'a triumph of *continence*' (Mason's emphasis) which cannot be 'even roughly summed up as a statement or an affirmation' (*S* 14, p. 68). He finds that Preston's book is faulty because it uses a 'theological approach' to the poem; for him the whole point of the *Quartets*, on the contrary, lies in its 'refusal to identify the positions won in the course of exploration with the accepted framework of orthodox belief' (*S* 14, p. 68). Mason argues that it is Preston's mistake to think that 'Eliot was in a position similar to that of Dante' and to regard the poem as primarily a religious allegory, as well as to spend 'so much time quoting from St John of the Cross' (*S* 14, p. 69). Thus, Preston's book substitutes 'a body

of conventional thought for the fresh original thought of the poet' and 'save[s] the reader the trouble of reading the poem' (S 14, p. 70). Mason's review clearly repeats many of Leavis's positions; unsurprisingly, he ends by quoting extensively from Leavis's review of 'The Dry Salvages', while referring back to relevant but unspecified 'articles which have appeared in *Scrutiny*' as a correct approach for 'those ... who profess a faith' in reading the poem (S 14, p. 71).

'Little Gidding' (1942), the final Quartet, was reviewed in *Scrutiny* by Harding, and although this review seems to be more of a perfunctory paraphrase of the poem compared with Leavis's discussion of 'The Dry Salvages', it ends with a notable acclamation that 'for me it ranks among the major good fortunes of our time that so superb a poet is writing' (S 11, p. 219). Harding is less concerned to stress Eliot's 'contenance' or to underplay the progressive element in the poem; for him, the final section of 'Little Gidding' suggests 'a serene and revitalised return from meditation to one's part in active living', with the poem's section on 'the children in the apple-tree' (P 1, p. 209) indicating how 'being reconciled to death and the conditions of life restores the golden age of unfearful natural living and lets you safely, without regression, recapture the wonder and easy rightness of certain moments, especially in early childhood' (S 11, pp. 218-9). The fact that Harding does not quote the final lines of the poem, with their emphasis on the Quartet's Christian and pentecostal consummation, emphasises how his reading of the poem becomes like a Wordsworthian celebration of childhood and 'unfearful natural living' (S 11, p. 218). This seems more sentimental than Leavis's 'living reality', and actually approximates Eliot to D. H. Lawrence in its talk of 'unfearful natural living'. As we shall see, Eliot's reliance on the natural world directly contradicts,

in Leavis's mature consideration of the poem, its attempt to apprehend and present a supernatural order.

The following issue of *Scrutiny* printed a letter from R. N. Higinbotham, which objected to Harding's review and disparaged *Four Quartets* for a number of weaknesses, including being cliché-ridden, portentous and insincere, all of which result in a poem where the 'intellectual material is not felt enough' (*S* 11, pp. 259-61). It was Leavis rather than Harding who replied to the above letter, and this gave him the opportunity to discuss Eliot's poem again. Arguing against Higinbotham that in the *Quartets* 'intellectual formulation emerges from the experiential matrix' (*S* 11, p. 264), rather than being separate from it, Leavis insists that individual phrases cannot be dismissed by being plucked out of their context within the poem's 'whole organisation' (*S* 11, p. 265). He agrees with Harding that 'Little Gidding' is 'far happier' than most of Eliot's poetry (*S* 11, p. 218), accusing Higinbotham of being 'one of many people who like their poetry miserable' and who would see it as 'a final outrage if [Eliot] started turning happy on them' (*S* 11, pp. 266-7). Perhaps most significant, however, are Leavis's suggestions on the type of exercise for the reader the *Quartets* represents—'a matter, not only of much attentive re-reading of the whole sequence, but of meditation and disciplined self-searching' (*S* 11, p. 267). The reader 'must re-read the whole, and question his experience, again and yet again'; thus Eliot's later poetry 'exacts of the reader who proposes to feel that he has mastered it a far more difficult and moral readjustment' than that provided by 'sanctioned and respectable *clichés* of feeling and attitude' (*S* 11, p. 267). Leavis suggests that there is no final judgment or 'grasping' of the poem, but that the poem is always open for constant revisiting and re-exploration—it

scrutinises not only the newly grasped ‘answers’ each time but the reader also (*S* 11, p. 267).

When all four constituent poems of the *Quartets* became available, Leavis’s judgment of it as a whole continues to be enthusiastic, and the point that the poem compels the reader to look into his/her own experience, acting as a stimulus for ‘self-searching’, remains vital in his approach to it. But by the time *The Living Principle* appears, the idea that there can be no final ‘mastery’ of a poem that is an experience of constant exploration seems to be abandoned, replaced by an attack based on Leavis’s sense that by now he *has* mastered the poem. Not only does he revoke the idea that the poem is ‘exploratory’ (‘by the time Eliot came to write *Four Quartets* ... he knew where he was going to arrive’, *LP*, p. 209), but he also discounts exploration on the part of his own reading, announcing that ‘I know my mind about the complete poem’ (*LP*, p. 173). This confidence in a final (and often negative) judgement has at last been achieved, as Leavis insists, through his many readings of the poem. There has obviously been a thorough change in Leavis’s judgment compared with that he made on the poem’s immediate publication, where both the poem and the reader’s response are seen as much more open, tentative and exploratory. In a *Scrutiny* essay published in Spring 1943, ‘Education and the University’, subtitled ‘Considerations at a Critical Time’ (later published as a separate book), Leavis expresses acclamation of a poem that seems not to know where it is going to arrive:

this is the age, not of Dante or of Herbert, but of T. S. Eliot; and Eliot’s genius, which is of the kind that makes a poet profoundly representative,

runs to that marvellous creative originality in the use of language because he cannot, for the ordering of his experience in poetry of directly religious preoccupation, make anything like that direct use of a received doctrinal frame or conceptual apparatus which for Dante or Herbert was natural or inevitable—though the aspiration of Eliot’s poetry is given in the declared Anglo-Catholicism and classicism of his prose. (*S* 11, p. 167)

Reviewing Balachandra Rajan’s edited collection of essays *T. S. Eliot: a Study of His Writings by Several Hands* in the December 1947 issue of *Scrutiny*, Leavis pointed out the dangers and consequences of applying a misleading ‘frame’ to Eliot’s work in academic work of this type. What he finds most alarming in the volume is ‘the general tendency in the literary-academic world today to substitute ... elucidation for criticism’ (*S* 15, pp. 63-4). He continues, when ‘the elucidatory approach is Anglo-Catholic ... the dangers are greatest’, typified by E. E. Duncan-Jones’s essay on ‘Ash-Wednesday’, which ‘turns the poetry into something like illustrations of acceptances, poetical formulations of antecedently defined attitudes and beliefs’, thus denying the poet’s ‘genius’ and depriving the poetry of ‘its astonishing (and disturbing) life’ (*S* 15, p. 64). Even Helen Gardner’s ‘scrupulous and sensitive commentary’ on *Four Quartets* is guilty here, ‘abet[ting] the reader’s desire to arrive without having travelled’ (*S* 15, p. 64), a complaint that has appeared before: Leavis’s idea that the *Quartets* is above all things a stimulus to a ‘disciplined self-searching’, where the reader ‘must ... question his experience, again and yet again’ (*S* 11, p. 267), is still evident here, and ‘elucidation’ seems, on the contrary, to be taken as a means of possessing and controlling the poem and reassuring and

calming the reader. Rajan's own essay in this volume, according to Leavis, is 'the extreme instance of the divorce of elucidation from criticism' (*S* 15, p. 64); dismissing the 'repose' and even 'sweetness' Rajan identifies in passages of the poem, Leavis expresses preference for Harding's stress, in his review of 'Little Gidding' discussed above, on the elements of 'futility, isolation and guilt' in the poem (*S* 15, p. 65). For Leavis, 'the striking defect of sensibility' and the 'failure in tone and touch' in Rajan's account misrepresent a poem which is, 'one would have thought ... for the reader exposed to it, destructive of all easy complacencies' (*S* 15, p. 65). In the concluding sentence, Leavis summarises how the book 'contains some respectable things, but it seems to me calculated in sum to promote, not the impact of Eliot's genius—a disturbing force and therefore capable of ministering to life—but his establishment as a safe academic classic' (*S* 15, p. 67). In a lecture of 1956, discussed in detail in chapter 4, Eliot too attacked this tendency of substituting criticism with 'explanation' in contemporary criticism ('The Frontiers of Criticism', *OPP*, pp. 109-10), a principle in congruity with his early conception of 'the integrity of poetry' as referred to in the Preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood*, namely that 'when we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing', though Eliot's declaration of his having 'passed on to another problem ... that of the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times' explains the dwindling of Eliot's critical eminence in Leavis's eyes (*CP* 3, p. 413).

Another aspect of the Rajan review also however anticipates some of Leavis's later charges against Eliot. Whilst agreeing with the essay by M. C. Bradbrook about the inadequacies of Eliot's later criticism, Leavis takes a different track from

her, arguing that what is at issue is not primarily an increasingly authoritarian orthodoxy, but a development of limitations that, ‘on a pondered appraisal’ (*S* 15, p. 60), can be seen in the early criticism. Here for Leavis, Eliot’s critical practice as a poet prevents him from appreciating ‘the relation between literature and life’ in a wider sense and with a ‘sure rightness’, this being ‘a qualification possessed pre-eminently by D. H. Lawrence’ (*S* 15, p. 60); such a judgment can be compared with Leavis’s later talk of Eliot’s ‘extremely narrow range’ as a critic mentioned above (see p. 25). One way of Leavis’s establishing the comparison between Eliot and Lawrence in this essay is addressing the two men’s views on Swift: where Eliot, in his essay on Tourneur, seems to assent to, or at least not question, Swift’s opinion on ‘how loathsome human beings are’, Lawrence on the contrary sees such an opinion as a symptom of Swift’s own ‘terribly extreme’ malady (*CP* 4, p. 203; *S* 15, p. 61). In short, unlike Eliot, ‘Lawrence stood for life, and shows, in his criticism ... an extraordinarily quick and sure sense for the difference between that which makes for life and that which makes against it’ (*S* 15, p. 61). Leavis’s comparison of Eliot and Lawrence as critics, and his judgement that the latter is superior, is in fact already traceable in his review of *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* in the December 1937 issue of *Scrutiny* (*S* 6, pp. 352-8). Although in this later review Leavis still mentions Eliot as a ‘great critic’ several times, this ‘defect’ becomes equally, if not more, significant (*S* 15, p. 61). This subject will be pursued in the following chapter. What should be noted here is Leavis’s development of the idea of dividedness in Eliot, in that although his criticism, compared with Lawrence’s, may be divorced from ‘life’, his poetry nevertheless remains ‘capable of ministering to life’.

The staging and publication of Eliot's play *The Cocktail Party* in 1949 confirmed Leavis's worst fears about Eliot. The play received a hostile review in *Scrutiny* from John Peter, who carried out a series of 'structural criticisms' concerning the 'inept' relationship between the everyday and spiritual worlds that are brought together in the play, a defect that 'the flaccidity of the verse', its being of 'so poor a quality', does little to compensate for (*S* 17, pp. 65-6). Leavis's verdict on the play is even harsher, which will be attended to in more detail in the following chapter, because it is situated in the context of Leavis's ongoing comparison between Eliot and Lawrence; nevertheless, it is appropriate to point out that for Leavis, Eliot's play and the type of 'cocktail civilisation' it speaks of is something that can only induce 'contempt and boredom' in 'the reader who has ... found serious work to do in the world and is able to be unaffectedly serious about it' (*S* 18, p. 70). In this essay significantly titled 'Mr. Eliot and Lawrence', Leavis speaks of the play as showing such a 'shocking essential ignorance ... of the possibilities of life' that it disqualifies its author to be critical of Lawrence in the way he is—the latter, as seen by Leavis, grasped those 'possibilities' on every level (*S* 18, p. 70). Leavis especially objected to Eliot's unfavourable criticism of Lawrence in *After Strange Gods*, as we shall see. In the following issue of *Scrutiny*, Autumn 1951, Leavis replied to a letter from Robert D. Wagner which took Eliot's side in attacking Leavis's position in the Eliot-Lawrence debate. This reply is important here because Leavis not only uses the tag (with exclamation) 'author of *The Cocktail Party!*', as a summary reproof but enlarges on his objections to the play in a somewhat obsessive manner (Wagner had not even mentioned the play in his letter):

I judge ... the play to be, in effect, a self-deceiving apologia for an ordinary 'social' worldliness—for the relation to the spiritual values that is characteristic of (say) the modish literary world. And into this defeat by the play ... the artist seems to me to have been betrayed by his radically rejecting attitudes towards life; for these, as conveyed by the play, express so contemptuous a valuation ... What I judge with complete conviction is that *The Cocktail Party* exposes a poverty of experience, a lack of knowledge of life which is only to be got by living, which makes the ability of the author to pronounce as he does on Lawrence a matter for ironical contemplation. (*S* 18, p. 142)

We practically have here in a nutshell the later extended objections to the *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* (Bergonzi's complete silence about *The Cocktail Party* and Leavis's response to it is one reason why the trajectory of his 'long road to rejection' is open to question). As has already been indicated, Leavis was very sensitive to Eliot's affiliation with 'the modish literary world' and his behaviour in response to it; what seems to be an unprovoked outburst against *The Cocktail Party* thus raises wider issues about Leavis's battle with the literary establishment which will be pursued in chapter 3.

Whilst Leavis's hostility towards Eliot increases unmistakably in the latter half of his life, there is yet no sign at this stage that it extends to *Four Quartets*. He remarks in *Scrutiny* in the Winter issue of 1949

to take ... what Mr. Eliot's poetry has to give is to be educated into a new understanding of the nature of precision in thought, and at the same time to experience intimately an emotional and spiritual discipline. And this holds, irrespective of whether or not the reader subscribes to Christian doctrine (*S* 16, p. 344).

This judgment is bolstered by many of his associates: for example, for another contributor to *Scrutiny*, the *Quartets* is 'probably the greatest poetry in our time' (*S* 17, p. 350). All the judgments in *Scrutiny* about the *Four Quartets* 'are all the more remarkable for coming from a self-consciously non-Christian point of view', as Martin Dodsworth suggests.<sup>11</sup> In his argument with Wagner above, even when taking Lawrence's side in the case, Leavis remains convinced of the 'genius manifested in *Four Quartets*', and the 'quickening insight into the nature of thought' and the 'real vitality' in relation to thinking that it promotes (*S* 18, p. 141). This evaluation challenges Wagner's response to the poem which implies a more serene, contemplative attitude in the reader; Leavis's objections to the effect of the 'elucidatory' method in his review of Rajan, as discussed above, is of some relevance here in that both discount the unsettling and testing effect on the reader the poem conveys. Dodsworth adds to his comment above that the 'very subtlety' of *Scrutiny*'s 'non-Christian' appreciation of *Four Quartets* 'made it difficult to maintain' (*T. S. Eliot in Context*, p. 357), and as we shall see it is certainly not maintained in Leavis's final confrontation with the *Quartets* as its world-denying Christianity becomes a serious obstacle to him.

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Dodsworth, 'Contemporary Reviews', in Harding, ed., *T. S. Eliot in Context*, p. 357.

The later issues of *Scrutiny* show therefore an engagement with Eliot's poetry and its critical reception after the appearance of the *Quartets*, unlike the earlier issues' primary engagement with the criticism, though the latter is not forgotten, particularly Eliot's writing on Henry James, *Hamlet*, Donne and other Metaphysicals, Massinger and so forth (see, for example, *S* 15, pp. 68-70, *S* 17, pp. 200-1, *S* 18, pp. 56-9, 221-2, 242-3); there is even an article in the Winter 1951-2 issue on "The Dissociation of Sensibility", which, while concerned to challenge Eliot's 'influential critical observation' at some length (*S* 18, p. 175), shows its ongoing status. After *Scrutiny*'s close in October 1953 Leavis continued to deliver his views on Eliot in a series of books and lectures, the latter including some given in the United States in 1966 (published as *Lectures in America*, 1969), the Clark Lectures of 1967 (published as *English Literature in Our Time and the University*, 1969), and his longest and most critical examination of *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought* (1975) which is the culmination of his views, as well as various other lectures and essays. 'Eliot's Classical Standing', a lecture included in *Lectures in America*, is a general overview of Eliot's poetic and critical career, ending with a short tribute to the *Quartets*—'that work I obviously can't offer to examine now'—that describes it as an 'astonishing feat of sustained creative integrity' (*LIA*, p. 53). Leavis concludes the lecture by quoting approvingly a paragraph from his own review of 'The Dry Salvages' drafted more than twenty years ago (which has been discussed above, pp. 42-5). This gesture seems to be revealing in several ways. Not only does it indicate that Leavis's view of the *Quartets* had not changed over more than two decades, but it also confirms Leavis's habit of repetition in his voluminous writings, as well as his self-

sufficiency as a critic, with the absence of any great influence from others in his interpretative readings, apart from *Scrutiny* colleagues like Harding. In *English Literature in Our Time*, Eliot is considered at greater length; the focus of one of its lecture/chapters is on, to quote the title, ‘Why *Four Quartets* Matters in a Technologico-Benthamite Age’ (*ELTU*, pp. 109-32). For Leavis, *Four Quartets* ‘matters’ for a number of reasons, but the principal one perhaps is that it sets the reader a serious intellectual and emotional self-examination, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In reading the poem, ‘the whole being is involved, and one is compelled, in the taking, to achieve a new realisation of the nature of experience ... It involves one’s basic attitudes and one’s habits of thought and valuation’ (*ELTU*, p. 129). Leavis immediately continues:

that is what I mean by saying that no one could take the communication of ‘Burnt Norton’ and not know, with decisive force, that the spiritual Philistinism of the world we live in is menacingly anti-human, or inertly accept a ‘rising standard of living’ as an adequate account of human ends and needs. (*ELTU*, p. 129)

It is significant that Leavis singles out ‘Burnt Norton’ here, a quartet that is the least doctrinal or has the least explicit Christian elements, being the one which Leavis, even towards the end of his life, showed least objection to. That the *Quartets* is anti-Philistine is a basic tenet of Leavis, both in the general sense that it offers a literary experience that is fundamentally different from the type of easy satisfactions offered by modern culture, and in aspects like its “Honours List”

evocation of our world' in 'East Coker' III and its attack on 'worshippers of the machine'—a phrase denoting 'the distinctive mark of our civilisation'—in 'The Dry Salvages' I (*LP*, pp. 204, 217). In *English Literature in Our Time* Leavis also quotes from Eliot's 'Difficulties of a Statesman' to expose the vices of the 'Technologico-Benthamite Age' (*ELTU*, pp. 123-4); another contemporary essay 'T. S. Eliot and the Life of English Literature' (1968) also salutes the 'Coriolan' poems and 'East Coker' for their evoking, with an intensity of 'protest and despair', the world of committees, newspaper leaders and government machinery that promotes 'no higher end ... than a rising material "standard of living"' (*V*, p. 141). As for what Eliot would cling to in the world of machinery, namely his religious beliefs, Leavis remains tolerant insofar as 'how different his religious poetry is from what his theologising expositors tend to make it' (*ELTU*, p. 125). Once again he quotes from his original review of 'The Dry Salvages' to insist on, to repeat his earlier phrase, Eliot's 'discipline of continence', that 'the poetry from "Ash-Wednesday" onwards doesn't say, "I believe", or "I know", or "Here is the truth"', but is exploratory and 'sincere' in its admitting to the difficulties and elusiveness of 'affirmation' and belief (*ELTU*, p. 125). He repeats the idea that even when, at the close of 'The Dry Salvages' with the 'Christian note becoming stronger', we arrive at the Incarnation, the 'context' of the poem 'gives it something of an interrogative force' rather than the sense of secure attainment (*ELTU*, pp. 130-1).

Both *Lectures in America* and *English Literature in Our Time* contain a great deal of adverse criticism of Eliot which, as noted above, does not yet extend to the *Quartets* (the latter book also contains a chapter on Lawrence as 'The Necessary Opposite' to Eliot, pp. 133-58, which shall be considered in the following chapter).

Among the charges against Eliot, some are familiar: his subjecting himself to Bloomsbury (*ELTU*, p. 102), his ‘embarrassing plays’ and their intention to gain a public accolade which ‘a man of his kind of distinction should surely not be very much concerned for’ (*ELTU*, p. 119); later Leavis becomes more explicit, remarking that the plays are the product of ‘Eliot’s inner disorder and insecurity’ in which ‘his genius didn’t function; their unconscious falsity makes them repellent’ (*ELTU*, p. 146).<sup>12</sup> Leavis also comments on the disabling absence of ‘human love’ in Eliot’s *oeuvre*, apart from the exceptions of ‘La Figlia che Piange’ and ‘Marina’, re-using his own sentence from *Lectures in America* that ‘the general truth about him is that he can contemplate the relations between men and women only with revulsion or disgust—unless with the aid of Dante’ (*ELTU*, p. 141; *LIA*, p. 42). Since ‘Marina’ ‘resonates’ with Shakespeare’s *Pericles*, Leavis feels justified in arguing that ‘Eliot overvalued what Dante had to offer him; he might have got from Shakespeare ... a great deal that Dante couldn’t give him’ (*LIA*, pp. 49-50); this comment illustrates a much broader split between the two men along national/European lines, a topic that has been noted above and will be further discussed in chapter 3. Leavis’s damning judgement on ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ in *Lectures in America* has previously been noted; he continues to argue against Eliot’s theory of ‘impersonality’ in *The Living Principle*. There, reversing Eliot’s famous dictum (*CP 2*, p. 109) into the statement ‘between the man

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<sup>12</sup> On this point, Leavis is aware that his former ally Harding, in his *Experience into Words*, differs from him, being ‘more sympathetic to the Eliot I don’t like than I am’ in his estimation of *The Cocktail Party* (*LIA*, p. 50). Harding’s defence of Eliot’s wish to ‘keep alive a suggestion of the supernatural all through the play’ is to Leavis ‘a surprising indulgence’; he himself on the contrary thinks this type of ‘resort to the “supernatural” in such a context is both indefensible and betraying: it reveals in Eliot an inner pressure towards the worst kind of insincerity, that which is unconscious’ (*LIA*, p. 51).

who suffers and the mind which creates there can never be a separation', Leavis insists that to pretend otherwise means 'to absolve the artist from responsibility towards life' (*LIA*, pp. 31-3), a charge he repeats in the essay 'T. S. Eliot's Influence' (*V*, p. 122). The implication is that the 'sincere' poet, and moreover the 'sincere' critic, needs to speak out of a deep sense of personal conviction.

It is significant that in these lectures from the 1960s, *Four Quartets* seems to be absolved from Leavis's attacks on the deficiencies in Eliot; what is more significant and also interesting is that the deficiencies seem even to empower the poem, because Eliot's social 'insecurity' and his inner divisions become part of the 'heroic battle'—the struggle with the self—the poet actually conducts in the poem: 'to say "heroic" is to recognise the peculiar inner resistances and disloyalties and subversions the genius had to contend with' (*ELTU*, pp. 119-20; also in *LIA*, p. 30). Given Leavis's indictment of Eliot's 'weakness' outside his poetry, describing him in 'T. S. Eliot's Influence' as 'without courage, without conviction, without faith', there is no wonder that in the same essay Leavis can eulogise *Four Quartets* as a 'truly paradoxical creative achievement', for 'to what a rare kind of courage, what resolution and stamina, it after all testified!' (*V*, p. 126). But between the mid-late 1960s and the appearance of *The Living Principle* in 1975, Leavis's response to the *Quartets* underwent a significant change, despite the fact he still finds much to admire in it. The defects apparent elsewhere in Eliot are now glaringly there in the poem too; moreover, what is also conspicuous is Leavis's own encounter with the poem as an almost 'heroic' quest to realise his own ideal of the literary-critical procedure towards the end of his career.

The very form of Leavis's essay in *The Living Principle* is suggestive: four lengthy sections, one per Quartet, titled simply 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry Salvages' and 'Little Gidding', as if Leavis is rewriting the poem in his own prose, and thus offering a definitive reformulation and recreation of it—compare 'I know my mind about the completed poem', quoted above (p. 49). This is a key instance of what Richard Storer has argued: that 'Leavis actually challenges the conventional understanding of the different functions of "creative" and "critical". Criticism for Leavis was creative rewriting' (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 3). One of the fundamental things Leavis now 'knows' about the poem is how divided and self-contradictory it is, characteristics that reflect Eliot's lack of 'wholeness' as an individual. The various attempts to apprehend the 'still point' (*P* 1, p. 181), the world beyond time that the poem sees as the only reality, offer 'kinds of satisfaction which the reader who truly honours [Eliot] with the attention he demands has to judge adversely—kinds of satisfaction at odds with the profound human need the poem actually reveals' (*LP*, p. 160). Further, the poem's insistence 'that the spiritual must be thought of as the absolutely "other"—the antithetically and excludingly non-human' makes Eliot's hopes appear entirely 'spectral' (*LP*, p. 188): 'the painfully developed or enforced offer of apprehension is illusory: the real to be apprehended is nothing' (*LP*, p. 203). The poet's skilful use of art and great mastery of language, which make the *Quartets* 'a living creative continuity' (*LP*, p. 197), in aiming to elevate the 'non-human' reveal the essential contradiction of the poem, and thus the whole enterprise 'is desperate' (*LP*, p. 200). Moreover, Eliot is 'doomed to frustration by the inability to recognise the nature of the plight ... that makes the effort to escape to which he dedicates himself seem the only kind that

offers hope. Inability, effort and frustration ... are all aspects of the same disorder: the inner conflict bred by irremediable self-division' (*LP*, p. 203). The 'self-division' is illustrated in the fact that whilst the *Quartets* (as with earlier poems by Eliot, particularly 'La Figlia', 'Marina', 'The Hollow Men') contain some passages that show, in their notes of 'poignant wistfulness' or 'tender longing' (as in 'Burnt Norton' IV), the 'profound human need', it refuses to accept such a 'need' elsewhere in the sequence by reverting to its customary cowardly 'escape'; thus, 'thwarted tenderness and aspiration' come up constantly against 'the element of ...anti-life in [Eliot's] basic disposition' (*LP*, pp. 181-3). In short, the poem demonstrates Eliot's 'imprisonment in his own sick plight' (*LP*, p. 233).

So far, it seems a reasonable question to ask whether Leavis's account is literary criticism, amateur psychologising, *ad hominem* defamation or merely a statement of unbridgeable difference in belief, though he claims in his writing that his response *is* based on an attentive and specific examination of the language of the poem; that is, that his method is a literary critical one.<sup>13</sup> Bilan has commented that, in relation to Leavis's examination of Henry James's novels, his criticism 'often operates in a border-land between the realm of strictly literary criticism ... and a controlled kind of biographical-psychological speculation about the nature of the author's life', and he agrees that the criticism of Eliot shows a similar 'deflection of critical interest' (*The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis*, p. 171). I agree with Bilan that Leavis 'often' crosses the frontiers of literary criticism into other territory, a notorious example being his references to Eliot's confessional visit to

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<sup>13</sup> Patricia Waugh remarks on Leavis's *ad hominem* procedure against Eliot in his essays of the 1960s and 70s in 'Legacies: from Literary Criticism to Literary Theory', in Harding, ed., *T. S. Eliot in Context*, p. 383.

his house in Cambridge which determines his later reading of the second part of 'Little Gidding'; the heavily personal implications for Leavis of the poem here have been commented on by his students like Steven Cranfield, as will be discussed further in the Conclusion to this thesis. Leavis's literary-critical analysis is however on show when he quotes from the passage beginning 'Now the light falls/Across the open field' and the following section describing the village scene in 'East Coker' I (*P* 1, p. 185), arguing that 'the major quality of the poet is manifest in the vivid completeness of the immediacy. This, we can't fail to recognise, is a creative master of the English language ... We feel the rhythmic livingness as, in the particular rightnesses, inseparable from the felicities of evoked concreteness and actuality' (*LP*, p. 193). By contrast, the opening of 'Little Gidding', with its 'Midwinter spring' context and its pilgrimage motif (*P* 1, p. 201), is judged to have 'no poetic strength ... of any kind', and a 'curious inertness continues to prevail ... there seems to be no life here in the rhythm and tone' (*LP*, p. 254). Leavis's negative judgement on the latter passage is the outcome of the fact that Eliot is using the natural scene merely as a 'metaphor' for 'the postulated transcendental apprehension' (*LP*, p. 254), rather than presenting 'the vivid ... immediacy' of the natural world in its own right, and he argues that on many occasions in the poem Eliot in evoking the transcendental 'has no resource but to appeal metaphorically to natural glories as they impress living "human kind" ... in a way that implicitly denies the completeness of his actual dependence' (*LP*, p. 253). He gives other instances of this, such as the 'Whisper of running streams' passage from 'East Coker' (*LP*, p. 206; *P* 1, p. 189), the 'kingfisher's wing' passage from 'Burnt Norton' (*LP*, p. 182; *P* 1, p. 183) and the evocations or memories of childhood at

the end of 'Burnt Norton' and 'Little Gidding' (*LP*, pp. 230, 247; *P 1*, pp. 184, 209).

Leavis summarises as follows:

the evocation that Eliot presents as a gleam and resonance of the transcendent is actually an evocation of life—the life that is 'merely living'. All the evocations he depends on to precipitate what may pass for a concrete apprehension ... are similarly evocations of life. It couldn't have been otherwise: Eliot, in assuming that it can be, is a victim of self-deception; the self-deception implicit in his undertaking—to which no undivided man could have lent himself. (*LP*, pp. 230-1)<sup>14</sup>

Leavis recognises other means of presenting the transcendental in *Four Quartets*, such as in the image of the Chinese Jar in 'Burnt Norton' (*P 1*, p. 183), but he judges these as an unequivocal failure because they do not make use of a natural 'vividness'. In response to this we might say that, for example, the kingfisher of 'Burnt Norton' IV (*P 1*, p. 183) or the village—'dark in the afternoon'—of 'East Coker' I (*P 1*, p. 185)—are always stressed as subject to time and transience, contrasting with a supernatural realm that is always 'still', meaning both stable and permanent. Indeed, in the second passage here Eliot could well be pointing to the famous words of St Paul, 'for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face' (Corinthians 13: 12); in other words, Eliot's use of 'nature' as a necessary but imperfect medium of spiritual illumination has a long religious

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<sup>14</sup> One is reminded of F. W. Bateson's 'roguish question', as quoted by Christopher Ricks: 'what could be more abstract than Leavis's use of the word "concrete"?' *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber, 1988), p. 257.

ancestry rather than merely testifying to the individual 'sick plight' of T. S. Eliot. But even if we accept Leavis's basic position, that this poem is a testimony to 'life' no matter what Eliot has in mind, the idea that the only successful passages of the poem, the real evidence of the 'creative master', are those in which descriptions of the natural are satisfactorily conducted seems to be nothing more than an asserted Leavisite value-judgement: indeed, wherever in the *Quartets* Eliot turns to his 'postulated transcendental apprehension', Leavis asserts by contrast poetic weakness. Bilan puts it thus, that Leavis 'overstates his own "case" against Eliot both by being rather selective in the passages he chooses to analyse (he ignores some key affirmative parts of the poem) and by exaggerating [sic] the negative implications of other passages' (*The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis*, p. 279).

Another major charge Leavis makes against the *Quartets* concerns its paradoxical attitude towards language. Quoting the passage from *The Waste Land* that 'I have heard the key/Turn in the door once ...' (*P 1*, p. 70) as evidence of Eliot's 'sick' state of 'self-enclosure', Leavis argues that in the later poem 'he remains in prison through *Four Quartets* to the end. The prison is the selfhood' (*LP*, pp. 183-4). But to Leavis 'human creativity' itself means 'to know that the nightmare of hopeless self-enclosure *is* a nightmare, and, if irresistible and lasting, an insanity' (*LP*, p. 186, emphasis in original), and a poem is necessarily an act of communication in a public medium, a language, itself 'a living creative continuity' (quoted above). Eliot portrays in 'East Coker' I the ghost rustics dancing in the field (*P 1*, pp. 185-6), describing them, according to Leavis, as 'yokels, clumsy, crude, gross and incapable of the spiritual or cultural graces'; Leavis, however, argues 'it was they who created the English language—robust, supple, humanly sensitive and

illimitably responsive and receptive—and made possible in due course Shakespeare, Dickens and the poet of *Four Quartets*' (*LP*, pp. 196-7). Linguistically too, therefore, Eliot's poem is inescapably caught up in the life it would deny. Leavis's sweeping assertion that 'language' (*all* language, one might ask?) is 'created' in the popular sphere represents deep differences of cultural thinking from Eliot, which go back far in his writing to, for example, *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (see *ELTU*, pp. 34-5, 181) and the *Scrutiny* essays of the early 1950s and even earlier, and which will be discussed in chapter 3. It can be noted here that Leavis attributes Eliot's 'blindness to the nature of languages' to the fact that he was American (*LP*, p. 222); his refusal to acknowledge cultural continuities and an indebtedness to the distant, immemorial rural tradition resulted from a similar source: 'for [Eliot] was, however much more subtle, a fellow-countryman of Pound, and shared the American blankness, the inability to recognise the evidence—the fact—of the kind of human world that has vanished' (*LP*, p. 197). This last assertion can be associated with the remark he made in a *Scrutiny* review of 1951, namely 'I am a fellow-countryman of D. H. Lawrence' (*S* 18, p. 68, emphasis in original), the implications of which are pursued in chapter 2. Leavis argues that we live in an Americanised modernity that knows nothing of, or disowns, the English rural past, and Eliot thus becomes symptomatic: 'consideration of the plight his poetry reveals sharpens our understanding of our civilisation' (*LP*, p. 197).

In describing Eliot's deficiencies in *The Living Principle* it is not Lawrence but William Blake, a figure that Leavis regarded as Lawrence's great mentor, who features as a counter-example, as he will do in other instances to be discussed later

in this thesis; Leavis had already entitled his 'Discourses' of 1972 *Nor Shall My Sword*, the 'Introductory' to which discusses at length how Leavis has in mind 'the Blake corroborated and reinforced by Lawrence ... when I contend that what desperately needs to be emphasised in the present plight of mankind is the essential human creativity that is human responsibility' (*NSMS*, p. 19). In *The Living Principle* Leavis continues to argue that Blake fully realised the life-enhancing status of creativity, and what this creativity owes to its popular sources: 'the creative power and purpose don't reside within his personal self-enclosure; they are not his property or in his possession' (*LP*, p. 185). At the same time, Blake's 'belief in human creativity' upholds the artist's 'pride ... as a virtue', which contrasts with Eliot's dispiriting stress on humility (*LP*, p. 185). What surfaces here is 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' again, with its stress on the poet's 'continual self-sacrifice' and 'continual extinction of personality' (*CP 2*, p. 108), which Leavis quotes in order to contrast with and praise the Blakean assertion of the artist's 'identity' (*LP*, p. 186); *Four Quartets* is further flawed because it is all about 'the illusoriness of identity' (*LP*, p. 242). Eliot's salute in 'East Coker' V to 'men whom one cannot hope/To emulate' (*P 1*, p. 191) shows clearly and revealingly to Leavis that Eliot 'is not thinking of ... poets or artists or persons who are in human terms creative in any way' but of co-religionists of a saintly or ascetic or life-denying kind (*LP*, p. 213). For Leavis, however, the men who cannot be emulated can only be those of creative 'genius', and

their genius depends on their humanity ... human creativity [is] concentrated in them, so that they represent supremely the distinguishing

characteristic of life ... I am invoking the truth that Blake invoked in the avowal I have quoted so often—an avowal the anti-Eliotic bearing of which gets an emphasis in [Blake's dictum] 'Jesus was an artist'. (*LP*, p. 213)<sup>15</sup>

Ultimately Leavis is contesting Eliot on his own territory of religion or what constitutes a 'religious' sense of the world, 'the comparison between Eliot and Blake' removing the concept of religion from the negativity of the former poet and awarding it to the faith in 'human creativity' of the latter, for 'the apprehension and belief [Blake] spoke out of and acted on were religious ... in what other way, indeed, could one evoke the force of "religious" as it needs to be evoked for my purpose?' (*LP*, p. 236).<sup>16</sup>

Repeatedly in the *Quartets* Eliot offers a self-diagnosis which is evidence for Leavis that he recognises, at least to some degree, his lack of wholeness, his anti-life position, his own 'sick plight'. This is especially the case in the famous imitation *terza rima* passage in 'Little Gidding', with its accusations about the 'shame' and 'awareness/Of things ill done and done to others' harm', and so forth (*P* 1, p. 205). The depiction of the tube-passengers in part III of 'East Coker', with 'behind every face the mental emptiness deepen[ing]/Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about' (*P* 1, p. 189), is, Leavis argues, Eliot's projection of his own ultimate attachment to a spiritual 'void', a guilty confession of his own

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<sup>15</sup> This aphorism is taken from Blake's engraving of 'the Laocöon group as God, Satan and Adam struggling in the toils of Nature', where 'Jesus and His Apostles and Disciples were all Artists' is written on the right of the plate. See David Fuller ed., *William Blake: Selected Poetry and Prose* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), p. 356.

<sup>16</sup> It is ironic that in an essay of 1945, "'Thought" and Emotional Quality: Notes in the Analysis of Poetry', with Leavis still in the aftermath of his enthusiasm at the *Quartets*' appearance, Eliot and Blake should have been discussed together in terms of the 'easy, obvious and cogent continuity' that exists between their poetry (*S* 13, p. 71), though this essay was later reproduced in *The Living Principle* (pp. 71-93) with the last three paragraphs on Eliot and *Four Quartets* being cut.

betrayal of what creativity and being human is (*LP*, pp. 204-5). Likewise the passage on the ‘folly’ of old men from the same Quartet (*P* 1, p. 188) ‘is in the first place self-accusation’ (*LP*, p. 202). Leavis borrows a phrase from Harding’s review of ‘Little Gidding’ in the Spring 1943 issue of *Scrutiny*, the ‘pressure of urgent misery and self-disgust’ (“‘We Have Not Reached Conclusion’”, *S* 11, p. 217), seeing it as Eliot’s major motivation for writing the *Quartets* and indeed for all his work, just as from the ‘guilt’ in failure and ‘contemptuous revulsion’ from the self he created ‘The Hollow Men’ (*LIA*, p. 44). We are here approaching the tricky question of Eliot’s ‘sincerity’ in the poem. In spite of all the deficiencies and contradictions that have been exposed so far, Leavis still finds that there is a great deal to admire in the *Quartets*, with passages testifying to Eliot as a ‘major poet’, such as the opening of ‘East Coker’, as noted above. To Leavis, the ‘urgent question’ that drives the poem is ‘What *can* I affirm?’ (emphasis in original), and this commits Eliot

to the profoundest and completest sincerity he can achieve, and his poetic technique, with its astonishing diversities of originality, is a technique for that. One way of intimating the rare kind of value the poem has for us is to say that it provides us with an incomparable study of what, in its most serious use, is meant by ‘sincerity’—a word we cannot do without. (*LP*, p. 209)

But he no sooner says this than he starts to undermine the concept of sincerity: ‘sincerity ... was a peculiarly difficult achievement for Eliot’, given his inner

dividedness and its consequences that the poem only fitfully seems to recognise; this comment indicates that it is not clear whether it is an ‘achievement’ that Eliot really achieved or not. Indeed, Leavis immediately suggests that there may be an ‘insincerity’ in the poem that ‘can be unconscious’ (*LP*, p. 211). Some of the most hostile pages in *The Living Principle* then follow, where Leavis attacks the ‘Twenty years largely wasted .../Trying to learn to use words’ passage of ‘East Coker’ and what follows (*P* 1, p. 191), with its exploration of ‘failure’, and where he is irate about the ‘comprehensive assertion of human nullity’, the ‘anti-Blakean sense of the human’, Eliot’s ‘wrongness and perversity’ and ‘blindness to the nature, conditions and significance of human genius’ and so on (*LP*, pp. 212-3). The judgement this leads to, inevitably, is that the ‘wrongness’ of some passages of the poem would not have occurred ‘if the conditions making a profound and difficult sincerity possible for [Eliot] had obtained with any sureness’ (*LP*, p. 215).

Furthermore, there are many moments in Leavis’s reading when he brings forward Eliot’s ‘habit of subtlety’ in the poem, his ‘talent for being equivocal’, which relates to ‘his gift of double-talk as Editor of the *Criterion*’ (*LP*, p. 221). At the close of ‘The Dry Salvages’, the ‘theological affirmation’ of the Incarnation (*P* 1, p. 200) is treated much more severely by Leavis than it was in his earlier readings (see above, pp. 42-3): ‘we have to recognise that the emphatically firm explicitness is, for us, not acceptable, it is so clearly addressed by the divided man in an admonitory way to himself’ (*LP*, p. 249). Throughout the poem, Eliot’s insistence on ‘the Eternal, the really real, the end that gives meaning’ never becomes anything ‘more than a matter of mere personal affirmation’, so that ‘he has not ... achieved what he clearly supposes himself to have achieved—he has not made the

affirmation as the poem makes us aware of it more compelling, more charged with cogent force' (*LP*, pp. 222-3), as opposed, one might think, to the 'affirmation' and 'cogent force' of Leavis's own reading. Thus the 'arrival at such affirmation as he intends' has not been made 'inevitable—inevitable for the reader who is not "there" already' (*LP*, p. 223). What we have is not a poem achieving a universality, an impersonality, of vision, but a record of a highly personal (if symptomatic) plight, as we have seen, and the 'subtle mastery' of Eliot's language 'lends itself insidiously' to a would-be consummation that might trap the unaccomplished reader. Leavis presents himself in *The Living Principle* as someone who has benefited from 'many readings' of the *Quartets* (*LP*, p. 223), but the illegitimacies of the poem 'may escape one's critically articulate recognition for a number of readings' because of their subtlety and complexity: 'the very wealth of compelling evidence that a great poet is at work makes one slow to perceive that an adverse judgement is challenged' (*LP*, pp. 226-7). Elsewhere, Leavis will talk of the poem's "'musical" sleight' (*LP*, p. 191), and how its power throws the reader 'deep into regions of the equivocal', with their 'special hazards and temptations' (*LP*, p. 160); it thus becomes 'for us of great importance to cultivate a vigilant critical awareness' in dealing with it (*LP*, p. 177). To speak metaphorically, we see here how *Four Quartets* becomes challenging territory for the Leavisite reader as he enacts a kind of knightly quest through it, resolutely facing and overcoming its dangers and temptations.

Thus Leavis's own journey through the *Quartets* in *The Living Principle* is conducted as a response to this challenge, as exemplified by a passage of

commentary occurring at the outset in relation to the first part of 'Burnt Norton':  
Eliot's

implicit appeal for our corroboration is a challenge to the profoundest responsibility of judgement, and ... this responsibility may compel us to reserves and questionings, and even to a 'No' ... Such a reaction means a correspondingly sharpened and sensitised attention in the reading of what comes after. (*LP*, pp. 164-5)

By 'East Coker', Leavis reveals, Eliot's 'dismissing judgement passed on the world of time and on life that involves time' means that 'my own tribute to Eliot's genius must be a profoundly convinced "No"' (*LP*, p. 191). To the religious allegory that comprises part IV of the same Quartet, 'my "No" is as emphatic as the quatrains' (*LP*, p. 208). In response to Eliot's mistaken choice of the 'men whom one cannot hope to emulate', as noted above, Leavis recognises 'for myself ... a challenge to make ... the contrary—the fiercely rebutting—positive affirmation' (*LP*, p. 214). In affirming the Blakean sense of the 'religious' against that of Eliot, Leavis insists on his role as reader-critic in resisting the poem as something offering a significantly wider guidance (to be pursued in later chapters of this thesis):

the critic as I conceive him ... addresses a non-specialist educated public, and, if it is weak, can't separate his critical preoccupations from the problem of strengthening it and making it capable of decisive influence. That is, writing—as a critic must who aspires to matter—out of the civilisation I live

in, I judge those preoccupations to be inseparable from a concern for the university as society's essential organ for the regenerating and maintaining of the educated public ... I will state the upshot of the foregoing considerations in this way now: there is no acceptable religious position that is not a reinforcement of human responsibility. (*LP*, p. 236)

This 'explicitness', Leavis continues, 'is compelled on us by *Four Quartets*. To say this, while of course it amounts to a basically adverse judgement, is also a tribute' (*LP*, p. 237). The idea that 'criticism is at the same time a tribute' runs throughout Leavis's commentary: Eliot's poem 'affects the reader profoundly, and one's disagreement is profound: it compels one to attempt the most cogent presentment of one's own positive position that one can achieve' (*LP*, p. 228).

Denis Donoghue has seen Leavis's reading of Eliot, and specifically the encounter with *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle*, as 'the representative type of a serious engagement with modern literature', where 'the power we ascribe to the poem is answered by another power, that of a reading adequate to it in principle and by intention, if inadequate in the event'; Donoghue continues, 'I don't know what the power of a poem means unless it means the degree to which it demands from the reader a response similar in kind'.<sup>17</sup> By 'inadequate in the event' Donoghue means that Leavis's reading is not to be accepted as a correct interpretation of the poem, but that its justification lies in the sincerity, application and earnestness by which it is undertaken, a kind of monumental striving which 'answers' that in the poem itself. Ultimately the differences between Eliot and

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<sup>17</sup> Denis Donoghue, 'Leavis on Eliot', in *England, Their England: Commentaries on English Language and Literature* (London: Univ. of California Press, 1988), pp. 332-3.

Leavis disclosed in *The Living Principle* go beyond any 'prescribe[d] limits' of literary criticism: 'the dispute between the two men is, to put it directly, a dispute about values and belief' (*England, Their England*, p. 346). Against Eliot's Anglicanism we have a 'sensibility at work' in Leavis which is 'that of a great Nonconformist', and 'there is no official name for the kind of criticism or the kind of reading' which this results in; Leavis's 'fervour' derives from 'passions that dominated English life for the first time in the seventeenth century', a century which, as noted several times in this thesis, is as critical a focus for Leavis as it was for Eliot (*England, Their England*, pp. 348-9). For both men, in Donogue's words, 'everything since that century has been a footnote to its text', and the 'fury in [Leavis's] words' on Eliot's poem 'has its provenance not in modern criticism but in the seventeenth-century controversies about belief and atheism, natural reason, and revelation' (*England, Their England*, p. 349).

What we have then in *The Living Principle* is a critical judgment that is an equal and opposite reaction to the poem itself, a 'No' born out of the 'profoundest responsibility of judgement', or that is 'as emphatic as' the verse it opposes, a 'fiercely rebutting ... positive affirmation' to set against Eliot's negative affirmation. Therefore, Leavis's four-part essay in *The Living Principle* becomes nothing less than a corrective critical 'double' of the original poem, and, in its mission to safeguard what may be a 'weak' 'non-specialist educated public' from being taken in by the *Quartets*, it suggests a status for the essay no less than the poem's own. Leavis's writing here does not present itself as an interpretation of the poem, or as one voice in a literary-critical debate where interpretation will vary over time; it presents itself as a final truth, born out of the 'profoundest' conviction—'I

know my mind about the completed poem’—and the implication is that wherever *Four Quartets* is read Leavis’s essay should attach to it as its inseparable, corrective other. The fact that no other literary critic is mentioned in his long treatment, apart from a quotation or two from Harding, strengthens the idea that criticism has always been, for Leavis, a ‘responsible’ personal encounter (for example, in *S* 19, p. 176) though admittedly he does occasionally refer to one or two cultural philosophers and theorists in *The Living Principle* like Marjorie Grene and Michael Polanyi for support.<sup>18</sup> We agree however with Bilan that the purpose of Leavis’s ‘new sympathy towards philosophers’ is to enlist them ‘in his own cause’, and his ‘quoting passages from the works of these philosophers is not a proper substitute for a lucid argument of his own’; thus ‘Leavis’s position is not as fully, or systematically, worked out as it needs to be if he is going to make a decisive positive answer to Eliot’ (*The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis*, pp. 284, 286). As Leavis’s ‘scrutiny’ of the *Quartets* develops, there is indeed a growing sense that he is measuring himself, not only as a critic alongside the *Quartets*, but also as a man, committed to ‘life’, to the idea of the development of the human being over time (as against ‘Eliot’s equivocal way of dismissing “development” and “evolution”’, *LP*, p. 235), and ultimately to a ‘sincerity’ finer than Eliot’s own. In the essay ‘T. S. Eliot’s Influence’, Leavis brings forward Eliot’s readiness and desire, as critic,

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<sup>18</sup> For some discussions of Grene and Polanyi’s influence on Leavis’s philosophy, see Anne Samson, *F. R. Leavis*, pp. 70-4 and Michael Bell, *F. R. Leavis* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 110. Samson pointed out that Grene and Polanyi’s ‘attack on the Cartesian-Newtonian world picture which [Leavis] hated, a world picture which placed individual and society, body and mind, subject and object, fact and value, in opposition to one another’ enabled Leavis ‘to elaborate his arguments for the centrality of English within the university, and provided a justification based on their theory of knowledge for his definition of the subject’, involving ‘a complex of terms including “life”, “creativity”, “individuality”, “responsibility”’ (p. 70). Bell however argued briefly that ‘it is rather in their a-philosophical aspects that Polanyi and Grene provide an analogue to Leavis’s conception of critical discourse’ (p. 110).

to keep in with his public: ‘he was certainly not given to any tactless intransigence of sincerity—his status as an institution mattered very much to him’ (*V*, p. 125). It is highly possible that Leavis, who always saw himself as an outsider, and who spent his life fighting against various institutions, as we shall see, has in mind, by contrast, his own proudly upheld ‘tactless intransigence of sincerity’, and what it has cost him.

This does not mean, as we have remarked, that Leavis did not change his views about the *Quartets* over time—as Eliot himself said, ‘the experience of a poem is the experience both of a moment and of a lifetime’ (*CP* 3, p. 711). ‘Sincerity’ is rather, as Leavis would see it, exercising the fullest critical ‘responsibility’ at the time of writing. With a poem like *Four Quartets* which Leavis, as its contemporary, first experienced as it was published serially, change of valuation is inevitable; his early applause for the poem in *Scrutiny* is related to the fact, as *The Living Principle* puts it, that ‘one couldn’t, when there was only “Burnt Norton”, foresee the complex totality of which we now see it as the introductory part’ (*LP*, p. 208). His commendation in his review of ‘The Dry Salvages’, as discussed above, is doubtless due partly to the fact that ‘Little Gidding’ had yet to appear, because it is this final one of all the *Quartets* that least appeals to Leavis. Indeed, *The Living Principle* allocates the least space (only fourteen pages) to ‘Little Gidding’, easily less than half the space given to the first and third of the *Quartets*. According to Leavis, Eliot is more ‘relaxed’ and secure in ‘Little Gidding’, having arrived at the Incarnation at the end of ‘The Dry Salvages’ as the foundation which the final and much more doctrinal Quartet, with its chapel setting, builds on. The result of this greater assurance in the poet is, for

Leavis, 'a poetic inferiority too sustained to be doubted' (*LP*, p. 250). An example illustrating this, as we saw, is the 'Midwinter spring' opening passage which has 'no poetic strength ... of any kind' (*LP*, p. 254).

As Leavis judges, the only section of 'Little Gidding' of any value is from part II, the Eliotic encounter with the 'familiar compound ghost' (*P* 1, pp. 203-5), 'so much the most impressive thing in the whole quartet as to be a foil' to the rest of it, Leavis maintaining that 'the general poetic inferiority of "Little Gidding" can be justified convincingly in checkable terms of literary criticism' (*LP*, p. 250). But whether the passage in question is 'most impressive' because of its poetry, or because of its subject-matter, and in what way the former judgement is 'checkable', are problematic questions Leavis simply ignores. That this passage had a profound personal import to Leavis is an issue we shall return to in the Conclusion to this thesis. The poetic 'vividness' of the passage arises from its subject-matter, the life-experience it records, rather than from any stylistic considerations, as is clear from Leavis's comment: 'the imagery ... presents so much evidence of the value to the poet of his firsthand experience as an air-raid warden ... that experience was a rude and salutary exposure to life—a kind of exposure necessary to a life-fearing potential major poet' (*LP*, p. 256). For Leavis, in the dialogue with his double here Eliot stages a ritual of 'self-accusing and avowed self-exposure'; the 'shame' the protagonist experiences is in fact a final confession of all the inadequacies he has been charged with in *The Living Principle*, his 'fear of life', his lack of faith in creativity, his evasion hitherto of 'self-recognition' (*LP*, pp. 261-2). 'In this magnificent passage [Eliot] comes near to escaping' the spiritual 'prison' he has been in throughout the poem (*LP*, p. 258), but of course the escape fails because

Eliot subsequently pursues his doctrinal path in 'Little Gidding': 'but there will be no permanent escape from prison; the unequivocal recognition of motives late revealed and of things ill done and done to others' harm won't be maintained' (*LP*, p. 262). Having delivered this verdict, Leavis ceases his examination of 'Little Gidding', with no discussion of its final three parts, which to him is unnecessary. His disagreement here with Harding is particularly telling: Harding's 'too ready ... sympathy for the Eliotic ethos' leads him into what is, 'in a fundamentally disastrous way, a misreading' of the passage we are discussing (*LP*, pp. 256, 257). For Harding, as Leavis remarks with reference to his review of 'Little Gidding' in the Spring 1943 issue of *Scrutiny*, the revenant who suffers in the infernal/purgatorial flames of torment is intended to represent 'the dreary bitterness in which a life of literary culture can end if it has brought no sense of spiritual values', a state which the narrator of the passage is concerned to learn from and not himself fall into—'There but for the grace of God go I' (*LP*, p. 257; *S* 11, p. 216). Leavis rejects vehemently this interpretation, or rather the fact that Harding, with his Eliotic 'sympathy', does not challenge it:

how can any life that it is not deplorably and reprehensibly a misdirection to call a life of literary culture *not*, one exclaims, bring a sense—bring, by what it essentially is and must be, a cultivated and heightened sense—of spiritual values? (*LP*, p. 257, emphasis in original)

For Leavis the true 'literary' life, as the highest calling, is by definition synonymous with the spiritual, and once again Blake comes into the discussion at this point to

secure the argument (*LP*, p. 258). Leavis's reading itself, in this final encounter with T. S. Eliot, is evidence of the heights to which 'literary culture', properly so-called, can and must attain.

In his lecture 'Two Cultures' (1962), Leavis speaks of the 'collaborative-creative' process of literary criticism, 'in which the poem comes to be established as something "out there", of common access in what is in some sense a public world' (*NSMS*, p. 62). A critic's personal judgement, in the 'laboratory' conditions of 'talking with my pupils', takes the form of a question—'This is so, isn't it?'—which 'expects' an answer in the form "yes, but—" the "but" standing for qualifications, reserves, corrections' (*NSMS*, p. 62). Out of this dialogue not only is the individual's judgement refined but becomes something beyond the merely personal, entering the 'public world' as the fruit of consensus. Moreover, it is in such a procedure that 'the nature of the existence of English Literature' is demonstrated as 'a living whole that can have its life only in the living present, in the creative response of individuals, who collaboratively renew and perpetuate what they participate in' (*NSMS*, p. 62). This chapter began with the idea that it was essentially the great poet, like Eliot, who could 'renew and perpetuate' the English literary tradition, for example by reviving, as much through his poetry as his criticism, the poets of the seventeenth century, but now, given the scarcity of such figures in the modern era, it is the 'creative response' of university readers that keeps the tradition alive. Rather as in Roland Barthes's essay of a few years later, the responsibility of 'creation' has passed from author to reader, and the treatment of *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* reads not only like a death-blow given out to the author but an elevation of the reader, in this case Leavis himself, to the giver

of 'life'.<sup>19</sup> Much of this thinking, of course, pre-dates 'Two Cultures' by many years—in *Education and the University* (1943), Leavis's first fully formulated 'sketch' for an English School, to quote from its subtitle, Leavis speaks of literary analysis as 'a constructive or creative process ... a re-creation in which, by a considering attentiveness, we ensure a more than ordinary faithfulness and completeness' (*EATU*, p. 70). Here it is reiterated that analysis seeks 'to attain a complete reading of the poem—a reading that approaches as nearly as possible to the perfect reading'; for the 'literary student' there is 'the one right total meaning that should commonly control his analysis' (*EATU*, pp. 70, 72). In the 1940s Leavis was still unconditionally enthusiastic about *Four Quartets*, as evidenced by his reprinting his review 'T. S. Eliot's Later Poetry', with its final statement that Eliot 'is among the greatest poets of the English language', as an appendix to *Education and the University* (*EATU*, p. 104); it was however to take him almost thirty years to produce 'the perfect reading' of what was now a radically imperfect poem.

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<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text: Essays*, sel. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-8.

## 2 D. H. LAWRENCE: 'THE NECESSARY OPPOSITE'

'Our time, in literature, may fairly be called the age of D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot' ('Mr. Eliot and Lawrence', *S* 18, p. 66). Leavis's attitude towards, and changing estimate of, Eliot is inseparable from his judgement of Lawrence, and the two early essays from the *Cambridge Review* that stand at the head of the collection *Valuation in Criticism* indicate that this twin sense of the literary age is there from the start of Leavis's career. In the essay on Lawrence, Leavis views him through the lens of Eliot's essay on Blake from *The Sacred Wood*, as Bergonzi has said ('Long Road', p. 29): like Blake, Lawrence 'had the same gift of knowing what he was interested in, the same power of distinguishing his own feelings and emotions from conventional sentiment, the same "terrifying honesty"' (*V*, p. 17). Not only is Leavis practically quoting from Eliot here (compare 'a peculiar honesty [in Blake], which ... is peculiarly terrifying' and 'Blake ... knew what interested him' from Eliot's 'Blake' essay (*CP* 2, pp. 187, 189), but he paraphrases another Eliot observation about Blake's resistance to conventional thinking (*CP* 2, p. 189), thus making Lawrence, in Leavis's eyes, a successor to Blake. In another early pamphlet on Lawrence published in 1930 and collected in *For Continuity* (1933), Leavis had repeated this stance of his essay, identifying a type of 'community between Blake's and Lawrence's preoccupations ... they might both be said to have been concerned with the vindication of impulse and spontaneity against "reason" and convention' (*FC*, p. 113). If to begin with Leavis sees Eliot and Lawrence as a kind of 'team' he then increasingly discovers a crucial divergence between them, and so arrives at wanting to keep them together but as 'necessary opposites' to each other, using Lawrence to expose the deficiencies of Eliot in a way typically declared in the

chapter entitled 'The Necessary Opposite' in *English Literature in Our Time and the University*: 'in talking about Eliot I have again felt myself to be talking about Lawrence too—indeed, primarily about Lawrence. The contrast was always implicit, and the purpose: to evoke the strength that wasn't Eliot's' (*ELTU*, p. 154). The 'contrast' was underlined in Leavis's thinking by the severity of Eliot's own judgement of Lawrence as man and writer, which, 'serving as it does, and so ironically, to bring out the nature of Lawrence's genius and achievement ... can be made to serve a good purpose' (*DHLN*, p. 29). If in 'talking about Eliot' Leavis is often talking 'primarily' about Lawrence, then this present chapter continues our discussion of Leavis and Eliot by approaching the subject via a third figure, Lawrence, who is inseparable from the discussion.

This triangulation is critically an old story and no one who gives even a glance at Leavis's writings on Lawrence can fail to see how preoccupied with Eliot, and with Eliot's judgements on his fellow-writer, Leavis is; indeed, for some critics this preoccupation is a distraction from what should be Leavis's task, the discussion of Lawrence alone, which 'would have been far more effective without this squabble'.<sup>1</sup> But the short treatments this subject has received in the criticism suffer from a lack of wider contextualisation that illuminates how this is a much bigger issue for Leavis than solely the comparative evaluation of the merits of the two writers in question. Leavis's whole sense of the English cultural tradition, from which, in a crisis time of rural-industrial transition, Lawrence emerges, is set in his

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<sup>1</sup> Crick and Di Santo, 'D. H. Lawrence', p. 143. Crick and Di Santo also refer to Middleton Murry's review of Leavis's *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, anonymously published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, where Murry argued that too many pages of the book 'are spent on unnecessary polemic'. See Richard Rees ed., *Poets, Critics, Mystics: A Selection of Criticisms Written Between 1919 and 1955 by John Middleton Murry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1970), p. 83.

writing in competition with Eliot's metropolitan, sophisticated, American-Europeanised position, and a full evaluation of Leavis's sense of the relation between the two writers will have to take into account, for example, *Culture and Environment* and many other cultural writings as well as Leavis's remarks on *After Strange Gods*. As Leavis himself noted in relation to the 'conditions' governing the Eliot-Lawrence question, 'to examine these conditions adequately would be to go into a large part of English social and cultural history' (*DHLN*, p. 372). This context will, in fact, be developed in the following chapter, but the critical writing hitherto available on the Leavis-Eliot-Lawrence relationship also reveals in its patchy coverage a neglect of the more immediately literary concerns in Leavis's investigations. Thus although one might basically agree with Bergonzi's assessment of Leavis's attempt to maintain a 'delicate balance of opposing forces ... as a means of preserving his allegiance to both Eliot and Lawrence' in the 1930s ('Long Road', p. 31), his rapid critical tour around some of the relevant material omits a good deal that reveals the complications of this debate. Leavis clearly identifies with Lawrence in an intensely personal way in terms of class, nationality and outsider status in a manner that he cannot do with Eliot, because of the latter's participation in the establishment of the London literary world. This personal investment is reflected in the fact that interest in the Eliot-Lawrence debate is something that tends to be restricted to Leavis alone, and is not generally shared by the wider *Scrutiny* circle. Richard Storer, in his sketch of the Eliot-Lawrence complex in Leavis's thinking, compares its explosiveness with that of a 'nuclear reaction', indicating briefly how Leavis, 'although ... the son of a Cambridge

businessman rather than a Nottinghamshire miner', felt 'he had more in common with Lawrence, culturally, than he had with Eliot' (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 56, 62).

As noted above, any division between Eliot and Lawrence at the outset is disguised in Leavis because his endorsement of the latter is expressed in terms that are clearly taken from Eliot's tribute to Blake. But importantly, Eliot's 'Blake' essay is in two parts: the first salutes Blake's individuality, freedom from convention and 'honesty', but the second warns of the disadvantages inseparable from this insular or 'Robinson Crusoe' stance, which is seen by Eliot as a form of eccentricity and marginalisation from the European tradition. The 'naked vision' is powerful and effective in Blake's shorter poems, Eliot argues, but the eccentric philosophy as well as the private mythology of the longer works is damaging: 'what [Blake's] genius required, and what it sadly lacked, was a framework of accepted and traditional ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own, and concentrated his attention upon the problems of the poet' (*CP* 2, pp. 190-1). After this passage Eliot immediately refers to Dante as adopting in his major poetry precisely an authoritative theology and thus providing the ideal merging of individuality and tradition. In *English Literature in Our Time and the University*, Leavis maintains that 'Eliot's essay on Blake is a distinguished one' (one of the few with this status in Leavis's eyes, we might note), but then adds 'at one time it seemed to me that [it] made the important points', a view he now rejects in his seeing Blake as paramount in representing 'the sense of human responsibility' as a protest at our 'technologico-Benthamite' age, a position which Eliot's essay can hardly be said to support (*ELTU*, pp. 106-7). But the 'important points' it made to Leavis 'at one time' never included the significant checks on

individualism that make up the second half of Eliot's essay, and if Leavis was blind to these he could hardly have been so to the fact that these reservations in what was the penultimate essay in *The Sacred Wood* of 1920 are emphasised by Eliot's placing an essay on Dante himself as the last piece in the collection, thus continuing the theme of how in his words 'Dante is a classic, and Blake only a poet of genius' (*CP* 2, p. 191), and so how Dante was Blake's own 'necessary opposite', a polarity ignored by Leavis.

It is therefore difficult not to accuse Leavis of a deliberate blindness in even the qualified assent to Eliot's 'Blake' essay, just as his positive response to 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in the essay 'Literature and Society' of 1943 (above, p. 37) mixes strangely with his loudly voiced disgust at Eliot's theory of impersonality, disgust which is to intensify in Leavis's later writings on Eliot's criticism. Mulhern notes that 'how soon and how consciously Leavis rejected Eliot's notion of "impersonality" is not clear', between his praise of it in the 1929 article 'T. S. Eliot—A Reply to the Condescending' and its attack on it in 'T. S. Eliot as Critic' in 1958 (*The Moment*, p. 130). It could be said that part of Leavis's growing disaffection with Eliot as critic, indicated in the previous chapter, is due to his own partial readings of Eliot that result in an early enthusiasm that will later inevitably feel itself betrayed. In his 'Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence', which appeared in *Scrutiny* in September 1932 (*S* 1, pp. 189-91), Leavis suggests that what is really important about Lawrence is the model his life provides rather than the books themselves:

here was a man with the clairvoyance and honesty of genius whose whole living was an assertion of what the modern world has lost ... He himself—the personality behind the best stories—was a less equivocal incitement than these to the recovery of what has been lost. The man appears saner than the art. (S 1, p. 190)

Harding's recollection testifies to how Lawrence's status as a writer would change in Leavis's eyes from what is implied here: 'I know that Leavis in those early days viewed Lawrence with moderate respect but with a clear sense of his limitations and aberrations, certainly without giving him anything like the importance he gave him later' (quoted in Mackillop, *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism*, p. 425). Admitting the work is flawed, Leavis emphasises above the supreme figure of the man that lies within it, and in pronouncing that '[Lawrence's] art bears a peculiarly close relation to the man—"the man who suffered"—and that is its importance' (S 1, pp. 189-90) he is not only quoting without direct acknowledgement phrasing from 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (CP 2, p. 109) but turning the entire argument of Eliot's essay, and its theory of 'impersonality', upside down. Where Eliot is referred to directly in this essay is when Leavis complains:

it is a suspect wisdom that dismisses [Lawrence] in fear or revulsion or contempt. That is why some who a good while ago formed the habit of taking the *Criterion* seriously, now, when they compare the obituary attention given to Harold Monro with that which was given to Lawrence, feel a kind of final depression. (S 1, p. 190)

The absence of a proper obituary for Lawrence in the *Criterion* was to cause continuous annoyance to Leavis for the rest of his life, and he refers to it in his writing again and again.

When Lawrence died on 2 March 1930 E. M. Forster produced an obituary notice in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, acknowledging Lawrence as ‘the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation’.<sup>2</sup> This remark gave rise to Eliot’s reply in a letter of 5 April, questioning the ‘sense’ of Forster’s comment: ‘unless we know exactly what Mr. Forster means by *greatest*, *imaginative*, and *novelist*, I submit that this judgment is meaningless’.<sup>3</sup> In 1930 Leavis kept silent on Eliot and Forster’s dispute over Lawrence, presumably out of his respect for Eliot as ‘an incomparably better critic than myself’ (*FC*, p. 111), together with his belief, one that ‘hardly needs arguing’, that there is not enough concern with ‘intelligence’ and ‘civilisation’ in Lawrence’s writings (*FC*, p. 135), contending that Lawrence’s ‘preoccupation with primitive consciousness and “the old blood-warmth of oneness and togetherness” [and] his concessions to “ideas” and “mind”’ showed ‘as little more than lip-service’ (*FC*, p. 135). But more than two decades later, in his monograph *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955), Leavis’s attitude to the ‘affair’ has altered. Here Leavis confessed that he had had ‘pleasure and relief’ after reading Forster’s ‘perfectly judged obituary salute’, and found Eliot’s reply to Forster ‘comic’ if not ‘lamentable’ (*DHLN*, pp. 10, 11). Storer has also noted Leavis’s ‘uncomfortable[ness]’ ‘at this early stage’ with ‘passages of abstract sermonising about spontaneity, impulse, primitive consciousness and so on, which occasionally

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<sup>2</sup> E. M. Forster, ‘D. H. Lawrence’, *Nation and Athenaeum*, 29 March 1930, p. 888.

<sup>3</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘D. H. Lawrence’, *Nation and Athenaeum*, 5 April 1930, p. 11; rpt. in *CP* 4, p. 108.

interrupt the narrative of the novels and also fill ... *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*' and his later 'working-out of this problem' in the 1955 monograph (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 63). Reflecting on Leavis's essays attacking Cambridge-Bloomsbury elitism, one can understand why Forster's statement that 'now [Lawrence] is dead, and the low-brows whom he scandalised have united with the high-brows whom he bored to ignore his greatness' would be particularly appealing to him, confirmed by Clive Bell's support of Eliot's position in the debate.<sup>4</sup>

Leavis's dissatisfaction with the *Criterion*'s 'obituary attention given to Harold Monro [compared] with that which was given to Lawrence' seems influenced by John Heywood Thomas's article 'The Perversity of D. H. Lawrence', which appeared in the 1930 edition of the *Criterion*, and began in what seems like a very complimentary obituary mode: 'D. H. Lawrence has died before we could tell him how much we admire the profound seriousness of his work'. Thomas continues that Lawrence 'satisfied our sense of the volcanic possibilities of life' and that 'we loved him for the crystalline hardness of his dark soul, because there is no tenderness in his world, nothing but the ruthlessness of a soul never at rest, always tormented by its own growth' (*Criterion* 10, pp. 5-6).<sup>5</sup> However the rest of Heywood's article, the 'main body' of which 'was written before D. H. Lawrence died' (*Criterion* 10, p. 6), is an ironic and mixed account of Lawrence's 'tormented' battle with his soul, with both approving and critical remarks on this, concluding with observing the ineradicable restlessness of a soul whose 'progress is the mere

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<sup>4</sup> Forster, 'D. H. Lawrence', p. 888; Clive Bell, 'D. H. Lawrence', *Nation and Athenaeum*, 19 April 1930, pp. 76-9.

<sup>5</sup> John Heywood Thomas, 'The Perversity of D. H. Lawrence', *Criterion* 10 (October 1930), pp. 5-22.

horror of standing still' (*Criterion* 10, p. 22). To describe Lawrence, however admirably, under the title-word of 'perversity' was doubtless enough to cause 'final depression' in Leavis, as in his comment on the *Criterion* above.

Another cause of complaint was Eliot's review of John Middleton Murry's critical biography of Lawrence, *Son of Woman*, in the issue of July 1931, where Eliot supports Murry in a series of charges against Lawrence which will be restated, notoriously, in *After Strange Gods* (1934). In the review Eliot judged that Lawrence 'never succeeded in making a work of art', failing in 'generalising ... correctly' his numerous sensations, thus being incapable of '*ériger en lois ses impressions personnelles*' (*CP* 4, p. 314), a critical formula of Remy de Gourmont which Eliot supports (as also in 'The Perfect Critic', *CP* 2, p. 262). (Eliot's influence is seen incidentally in Leavis's also supporting this formula in 'T. S. Eliot—A Reply to the Condescending' (*V*, p. 15), as does the *Scrutiny* reviewer of Eliot's *Selected Essays 1919-1932*, Edgell Rickword (*S* 1, p. 392)). As opposed to Leavis's emphases above on Lawrence's 'honesty' and sanity as an individual, Eliot finds in his review of Murry a deeply flawed human being struggling with what Murry identifies as the 'emotional dislocation' of a powerful 'mother-complex', with Lawrence's 'Parent Love' chapter in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* amounting to a self-portrait:

The son gets on swimmingly for a time, till he is faced with the actual fact of sex necessity. He gleefully inherits his adolescence and the world at large, without an obstacle in his way, mother-supported, mother-loved. Everything comes to him in glamour, he feels he sees wondrous much, understands a whole heaven, mother-stimulated. Think of the power which a mature woman thus

infuses into her boy. He flares up like a flame in oxygen. No wonder they say geniuses mostly have great mothers. They mostly have sad fates.

For Murry, ‘there is Lawrence’s history’.<sup>6</sup> The outcome of this was, remarks Eliot, Lawrence’s self-deceiving belief in his own rightness, ‘an appalling narrative of spiritual pride, nourished by ignorance’ (*CP* 4, p. 314). This is shown for Eliot in his ‘philosophy of human relations’, which is a search in the life as well as writings for a spiritual union between two persons, betraying a ‘craving for greater intimacy than is possible between human beings, a craving irritated to the point of frenzy by [Lawrence’s] unusual incapacity for being intimate at all’ (*CP* 4, p. 316). Repeating a passage from *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*—‘one of the novels which I have not read’, Eliot confesses—which Murry quotes in his book, Eliot sees it as Lawrence’s own confession, remarking that ‘such complacent egotism can come only from a very sick soul’ in reference to its refusal to recognise that ‘other men and women have needs of their own’ (*CP* 4, p. 316). The basic problem, and here Eliot is repeating the position of his near-contemporary essay on Baudelaire (1930), was Lawrence’s refusal to recognise that ‘the love of two human beings is only made perfect in the love of God’ (*CP* 4, p. 317); the necessary ‘prescription ... is only to be found ... in Christian discipline and asceticism. To this Lawrence could not and would not come; hence his relapse into pride and hatred’ (*CP* 4, p. 318). As the ‘Baudelaire’ essay puts it, ‘to understand ... the sexual act as evil’ relates it to a religious

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<sup>6</sup> John Middleton Murry, *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Cape, 1931), pp. 176, 189; D. H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), p. 149.

conception that is the only thing that ‘distinguishes the relations of man and woman from the copulation of beasts’ (*CP* 4, p. 162).

Eliot does acknowledge the ‘marvellous passages’ to be found on occasion in Lawrence’s writings (*CP* 4, p. 314) and admits the power of this ‘great tragic figure’, an attraction which he wonders if Murry has altogether succeeded in exorcising in his book (*CP* 4, p. 318), and promises to make acquaintance with Lawrence’s *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, ‘one book, which I have not read, but which I judge ... to be worthy of the importance which Mr. Murry assigns to it’ (*CP* 4, p. 317). That Eliot did read the book shortly afterwards is indicated in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) by his approval of the book and Lawrence’s views on education, a subject that is to be discussed in chapter 4 below. Leavis waited until his review of Lawrence’s *Letters*, edited by Aldous Huxley, which appeared in *Scrutiny* in December 1932 (*S* 1, pp. 273-9) to answer Eliot’s charges fully, and to protest about his support for Murry’s views in the *Criterion* piece. Noting Eliot’s ‘passionate moral condemnation of Lawrence’ (*S* 1, p. 273) and the charges against him of egotism, ignorance, inability to create a work of art and his possessing ‘a very sick soul’, Leavis counters with a picture of a Lawrence who is ‘normal, central and sane to the point of genius, exquisitely but surely poised, and with a rare capacity for personal relations’ (*S* 1, p. 275). Leavis also adds that the *Letters*, from which ‘one could extract a small book of literary criticism’, show that Lawrence was ‘the finest literary critic of his time’ (*S* 1, p. 276), a judgement that knocks Eliot off the perch that had previously been reserved for him in Leavis’s thinking, as indicated by remarks such as before reading Eliot ‘some of us feel that we never read criticism before’ (‘T. S. Eliot—A Reply’, *V*, p.

13) and ‘there could be no more effective awakener of the intellectual conscience than Mr. Eliot’ (*V*, p. 18). In making this case Leavis quotes scattered remarks by Lawrence on Joyce, Bennett, Mansfield and Georgian poetry; he also endorses (which he will do several times in the future) Lawrence’s attack on the ‘classicism’ that Eliot was in the vanguard of reintroducing into the practice and theory of contemporary literature—‘this classiosity is bunkum, but still more cowardice’ (*S* 1, p. 277), though Crick and Di Santo argue that this attack is directed at Murry and that ‘Eliot was very much a secondary target, lumped in with a catalogue of other editors and reviewers who shared Murry’s views’ (‘D. H. Lawrence’, p. 133). Moreover, Leavis sides with Lawrence over the issue of Bertrand Russell’s educational deficiencies, agreeing with him that what Russell needed was more contact with ‘life’, rather than ‘an education in the classics’, which was Eliot’s remedy (*S* 1, p. 277; *CP* 3, p. 623n). This however is part of a much wider debate on education that we shall consider in chapter 4.

Most significant of all, perhaps, is Leavis’s claim that Lawrence is ‘essentially religious’ in a way that exposes the inadequacy of Eliot’s own ‘religious utterances’: religious in his reverence for ‘life’ together with his belief ‘in something “beyond his fellow-men”’, and a belief in sexuality (‘I always labour at the same thing, to make the sex relation valid and precious, not shameful’—a statement by Lawrence which Leavis quotes in his review, *S* 1, p. 278) that exposes Eliot’s negative assessment of the ‘sexual act as evil’ in the ‘Baudelaire’ essay of 1930 (*CP* 4, p. 162) and elsewhere, which Leavis also quotes (*S* 1, pp. 277-8). Although the review is entitled ‘D. H. Lawrence and Professor Irving Babbitt’, the latter receives only one incidental reference (*S* 1, p. 276), and it would seem far

more appropriate had the review been called ‘D. H. Lawrence and Mr. T. S. Eliot’. As a final irony (and an irony against Leavis himself, given what we have said of the ‘Blake’ essay above and his grasp of it above), Leavis notes: ‘in fact, Mr. Eliot might have found in an essay on Blake included in a book called *The Sacred Wood* some admirably said things that might have been said of Lawrence’ (S 1, p. 274). What is surprising, perhaps, is that the issue of *Scrutiny* in which Leavis’s review appears opens with his editorial, “‘Under Which King, Bezonian?’”, (S 1, pp. 205-14), which we return to in the following chapter, where Leavis continues to salute Eliot’s contributions to the *Criterion*, as opposed to those of his contributors:

the Editor’s spare—too spare—contributions almost always exhibit the uncommon phenomenon of real thinking turned upon the ‘underlying issues’ ... Let us ... express now the general regret that the name of the *Criterion* has become so dismal an irony and that the Editor is so far from applying to his contributors the standards we have learned from him. (S 1, p. 214).

Perhaps the phrase ‘almost always’ here is a reference to Eliot’s blind spot about Lawrence.

Lawrence’s ‘ignorance’, points out Eliot in the review of *Son of Woman*, is the result of a lack of ‘true education’, the purpose of which

is to develop a wise and large capacity for orthodoxy, to preserve the individual from the solely centrifugal impulse of heresy, to make him capable of judging

for himself and at the same time capable of judging and understanding the judgments of the experience of the race. (*CP* 4, p. 315)

As is evident, ‘orthodoxy’ is the one important and indispensable constituent of Eliot’s notion of ‘true education’, an idea that was already expressed in the ‘Blake’ essay as ‘a framework of accepted and traditional ideas’ noted above (*CP* 2, pp. 190-1). Eliot’s valuation of Lawrence points to his belief in an ultimate value, which ‘is only to be found—and only in our time with great difficulty if at all—in Christian discipline and asceticism’, and which Lawrence failed to recognise: ‘it would seem that Lawrence only differed from the “vast majority of intellectuals” in his greater intellectual vision; in a fluctuating ability of diagnosis, without the further and total ability of prescription and régime’ (*CP* 4, p. 318). Leavis however regards surrender to ‘orthodoxy’ as a death-blow to spontaneity and sincerity of art as well as to intelligence. In “‘Under Which King, Bezonian?’”, directly opposing Eliot’s views in the Murry review, Leavis states that it is difficult to ‘determine what precisely orthodoxy is’ (*S* 1, p. 206), and ‘Anglo-Catholicism and Royalism ... do not convince us that they are taking up an effective attitude towards the problems. The impressive statement, in the abstract, of a coherent position is not enough’ (*S* 1, p. 213). The *Criterion* is a quarterly which indulges itself in

the dead, academic kind of abstract ‘thinking’, especially when the ‘thinker’ (incapable of literary criticism) stands in a general, abstract way for ‘order’, ‘intelligence’ and the other counters, all of which are worth less than nothing if not related scrupulously to the concrete. (*S* 1, p. 214)

Even the title *Criterion* became an irony as Leavis found that the editor did not apply to his contributors the standards *Scrutiny* itself had learnt from him (*S* 1, p. 214).

These judgements were explored in a review of the above number of *Scrutiny* by 'Ille Ego' in the *New English Weekly*, who noted that although *Scrutiny* 'obviously derives' from Eliot, it has by now discovered that 'its aforesaid god has feet of clay' due to Eliot's adoption of Christianity, and that 'it would like to transfer half its allegiance to D. H. Lawrence'.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, however, 'the composite divinity of *Scrutiny* is a chimera. Eliot's head and Lawrence's tail do not fit together at all' ('Readers and Writers', p. 282). 'Ille Ego' argues that the 'chimera' *Scrutiny* seems to be making out of the two writers is a sterile proceeding; 'a synthesis between Lawrence and Eliot ... is possible', but only if Leavis (who is mentioned by name) could truly understand the prescription of Blake—a writer he merely 'flirts' with—that 'in order to redeem the Contraries ... we must first destroy the Negation' ('Readers and Writers', p. 282). Although 'Ille Ego' hardly explains this position any further, what he seems to complain about at bottom in *Scrutiny* is a stance which 'is very definitely non-committed' and of which the wavering between Eliot and Lawrence is a prime symptom: 'the half-hearted method ... which consists in standing on the bank and avoiding the plunge' ('Readers and Writers', p. 282). The implication is that if *Scrutiny* seeks a reconciliation between the two writers,

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<sup>7</sup> Ille Ego, 'Readers and Writers', *New English Weekly*, 5 January 1933, p. 282.

this can only be achieved by a much more radical and thorough ‘Blakean’ examination of the relations between them.<sup>8</sup>

Leavis found this an occasion to go beyond the Eliot-Lawrence question and to restate the fundamental position of *Scrutiny* which ‘Ille Ego’ had obviously called into question, replying to ‘Ille Ego’ in ‘Restatements for Critics’, the editorial of the March 1933 number of *Scrutiny* (*S* 1, pp. 315-23). This will be the concern in chapter 3 of this thesis, but what is of relevance here is Leavis’s insistence that ‘Mr. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence both ... demand serious attention’ (*S* 1, p. 320) and that this attention, as manifested by the literary critic, cannot swallow either of them whole—to do so would be ‘to insult both of them ... by gross incomprehension’—but requires an intelligence that is ‘discriminating’ and a matter of ‘delicate receptivity’ (*S* 1, pp. 316-7). Leavis applauds Eliot for originating this approach: ‘it is part of our great debt to Mr. Eliot that he has made it so plain that there can be no easy way or simple solution’ (*S* 1, p. 316). He even manages to endorse a quotation from Eliot’s review of *Son of Woman*, as noted above, on the need to ‘preserve the individual from the solely centrifugal impulse of heresy, to make him capable of judging for himself, and at the same time capable of judging and understanding the judgements of the experience of the race’ as chiming with his own sense that ‘the truly living sensibility cannot be content to be merely individual

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, thirty years later Al Alvarez opened and closed his Introduction to his well-known anthology *The New Poetry* by looking back on Leavis’s declaring the newness of Eliot and Pound in *New Bearings* and by contesting Leavis’s belief that Lawrence and Eliot ‘represent the two warring and unreconcilable poles of modern literature. The best contemporary English verse ... shows that their influences can be creatively reconciled ... the openness to experience, the psychological insight and integrity of D. H. Lawrence would, ideally, combine with the technical skill and formal intelligence of T. S. Eliot’. ‘The New Poetry or Beyond the Gentility Principle’, in *The New Poetry*, sel. and introd. Al Alvarez, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 21, 31-2.

and merely free', but has to embrace social and cultural responsibility (*CP* 4, p. 315; *S* 1, p. 316). Significantly, however, Leavis omits Eliot's immediately preceding clause: 'what true education should do ... is to develop a wise and large capacity for orthodoxy' (*CP* 4, p. 315). Leavis's quoting from 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (an essay that is still positive to Leavis at this stage, with hostility towards it growing later, see in this thesis on pp. 16-7, 22, 37-8, 59-60, 67) further supports the individual's need to embrace the 'tradition' that lies outside him (*S* 1, p. 316). At the same time, Leavis again laments the failure of the *Criterion*—which 'Ille Ego' had at least by implication preferred over *Scrutiny*—to fulfil its editor's critical prescriptions, particularly in the reliance of its contributors on parading 'the recognised abstractions according to rule', but also in its 'grave and persistent lack ... of critical sensitiveness to contemporary literature' (*S* 1, pp. 316-7). As for Lawrence, admitting that his writings do show an 'inconsistency'—although 'all his writing exhibits reverence as a fact, a fact of honesty, strength and sensitiveness'—Leavis again looks to the man as revealed in the *Letters* as an exemplum not only of the 'religious sense' but of 'health, courage and vitality': in him 'the human spirit explored, with unsurpassed courage, resource and endurance, the representative, the radical and central, problems of our time' (*S* 1, pp. 317-9). The later part of the essay proclaims culture and individuality as more than the effects of a Marxist economic determinism, and comes back to a kinship between Eliot and Lawrence as asserting, 'in their different ways', resistance to the contemporary materialist environment, a kinship more important than a 'simplifying dialectic' that would see them both primarily as "products" of capitalist civilisation' (*S* 1, pp. 321-2).

'Ille Ego's reply to Leavis, in the *New English Weekly* of 30 March 1933, is an aggressive attack, laced with a heavy irony, on *Scrutiny's* quest, in Leavis's words from his article, to 'persuade an effective "contemporary sensibility" into being' (S 1, p. 319).<sup>9</sup> 'Ille Ego' finds 'feebleness' in this conception as 'it is redolent of that very disintegration against which Lawrence was fighting' ('Readers and Writers', p. 570). He also shows contempt for Leavis's remark, quoted above, that Eliot and Lawrence 'both ... demand serious attention', arguing that if this is all *Scrutiny's* position amounts to then the emphasis on half-heartedness in his first *New English Weekly* article can be confirmed, only here with considerably more force: the editor of *Scrutiny* 'represents the latest phase of debased aestheticism: aestheticism that is without the courage of its own essential flippancy, that is incapable of seriousness' ('Readers and Writers', p. 571). The crucial importance and serious function of literary criticism in Leavis's thinking, which shall be examined in chapter 4, is simply rejected without hesitation by 'Ille Ego', for whom 'scrutinising' is identified with 'sterility' ('Readers and Writers', p. 571); perhaps the main interest of the diatribe that is closely related with the theme of the present chapter is the suggestion that Eliot was 'far the poorer in organic sensibility, and by nature more timid of experience' than Lawrence was, a judgement Leavis would certainly come to accept. For 'Ille Ego', 'the significance of Lawrence is still undiminished, because he has cleared the way towards the religion of the future', whilst Eliot's embrace of revealed religion is a 'retrogression', because of which Eliot 'will shortly cease to possess anything but a technical literary significance' ('Readers and Writers', p. 570).

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<sup>9</sup> Ille Ego, 'Readers and Writers', *New English Weekly*, 30 March 1933, pp. 570-1.

Leavis would hardly support this dismissal of Eliot, however much he might agree with the retrogressive direction of Eliot's thinking through his embrace of orthodox religion. In his review of Eliot's *After Strange Gods* (1934) in the September 1934 issue of *Scrutiny*, he plainly declares that religion has hampered Eliot's value as a literary critic (see above, pp. 22-4). Leavis's review is titled 'Mr. Eliot, Mr. Wyndham Lewis and Lawrence', and he mainly focuses on Eliot's treatment of Lawrence as a 'test' of Eliot's continuing critical capacity, admitting that in *After Strange Gods* Eliot 'exhibits something much more like a critical attitude [than in the review of *Son of Woman* discussed previously]; there has obviously been a serious attempt to understand [Lawrence] in spite of antipathy' (*S* 3, p. 186). However, the reliance on Middleton Murry as witness against Lawrence has now been replaced by one on Wyndham Lewis, in his so-called 'exposure' of Lawrence in *Paleface*, a commentator, Leavis judges, as 'unqualified' to assess Lawrence 'as anyone who could have been hit on' in his complete lack of any 'religious sense' and his 'unrestrained egotism' (*S* 3, p. 188). On the whole therefore Eliot fails the 'test', his attitude to Lawrence still 'being so largely and revealingly uncritical' in the repetition of the charges against him of snobbery, 'an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking' and the accusation of Lawrence's being 'a soul destitute of humility' (*S* 3, pp. 187-8; the latter two quotations are repeated from *After Strange Gods*, *CP* 5, pp. 42, 43). Leavis returns to the irony of Eliot's charge of 'sexual morbidity' against Lawrence (*CP* 5, p. 42) given that his 'own attitudes with reference to sex have been ... almost uniformly negative—attitudes of distaste, disgust and rejection' and comments again on Eliot's 'distasteful' references 'during the past half-dozen years to Baudelaire and Original Sin' (*S* 3, pp. 189-90).

If Eliot's more 'serious attempt to understand' does result in his speaking of Lawrence 'with respect', as for instance in the estimation that he is 'a very much greater genius ... than Hardy' (CP 5, p. 42), and if certain books like *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, which by now Eliot has fulfilled his pledge above to read, are praised in *After Strange Gods* (CP 5, p. 43), for Leavis such approval in some ways only makes things worse because it reveals Eliot's responding to Lawrence 'so equivocally':

this equivocality, this curious sleight by which Mr. Eliot surreptitiously takes away while giving, is what I mean by the revealingly uncritical in his attitude towards Lawrence. It is as if there were something he cannot bring himself to contemplate fairly. (S 3, p. 189)

In this last sentence we have a reminiscence of Eliot's early essay on *Hamlet*—'*Hamlet* ... is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art' (CP 2, p. 125), a comment that Leavis will return to attack later in his career (see below, pp. 119-22). Thus we seem to have found in Eliot's response to Lawrence here the seed of Leavis's growing doubts about Eliot's hypocrisy and double-facedness which have been discussed in chapter 1 (above, p. 70). It is true that such a charge is only mentioned briefly here, and that Leavis ends his review with the admission, for example, that Eliot can make out a 'strong case' for his charge of a 'spiritual sickness' in Lawrence, given that in no-one in the modern world as it is can 'health ... anywhere be found whole' (S 3, p. 191). In short, even if Eliot's performance as a literary critic in *After Strange Gods* is

‘painfully bad’ (*S* 3, p. 185), Leavis shows a feeling that is more of sorrow than anger. I have already noted in chapter 1 how the third volume of *Scrutiny*, covering the years 1934-35, where Leavis’s review of *After Strange Gods* appeared, is something of a culmination in the frequency of the journal’s references to Eliot’s literary criticism, and how Leavis still regarded Eliot’s ‘best criticism ... as an exemplar and a criterion’ even if that best did not survive into the period of Christian orthodoxy. I have also pointed out in chapter 1 how for Leavis the ‘reorientation’ in our appreciation of seventeenth-century poetry is the achievement of Eliot and developed further by Leavis himself in volumes such as *New Bearings* and *Revaluation: Tradition & Development in English Poetry* (1936), which examines the ‘tradition’ as it runs from ‘The Line of Wit’ to Keats (the chapters had previously been published as separate articles in *Scrutiny*). Likewise, Leavis’s emphasis on ‘the poetry of the present ... as the decisive, the most significant, contemporary life of tradition’ (Introduction to *R*, pp. 1-2) would be unthinkable without Eliot’s formulation of the relationship between tradition and contemporaneity in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’. Therefore Eliot is a flawed idol then, but even though his significance as a critic has now been seriously impaired, it is still impossible to dismiss him and he is still been upheld.

Eliot’s estimation of Lawrence in *After Strange Gods* remains a continuous irritation to Leavis. In his review of *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* in the December 1937 issue of *Scrutiny*, which was penned more than three years after the publication of *After Strange Gods*, Leavis’s attention is still focused on Eliot’s volume rather than the volume in hand: the review indeed informs us little of *Phoenix*, though the book confirms Lawrence as ‘the finest

literary critic of our time' (S 6, p. 352). Leavis appears to be more concerned to still rebut Eliot's previous charges at every stage: that Lawrence was incapable of 'thinking', that he had no sense of humour, or faculty for 'self-criticism', and lacked education and 'social training' (S 6, pp. 352-5). What is as bad for Leavis, as indicated above, is Eliot's reliance upon such figures as Wyndham Lewis to confirm his judgment on Lawrence; here in attacking Lewis, 'a Wyndham Lewis who comes out for Hitler', Leavis endorses Lawrence's own criticism against him (S 6, p. 357). After countering Eliot's preferred writers like Lewis (and Pound and I. A. Richards) over Lawrence as examples of the 'highly educated and fastidious', Leavis revealingly confesses: 'I hadn't intended to end on this note', but it is clear that the battle with Eliot is the most important thing in his mind, strong enough to defeat his original intentions, and the review indicates that it has been reanimated by an essay of Eliot's in the volume *Revelation* (1937), to which 'my attention has just been drawn' and where admittedly Eliot 'treats Lawrence ... still more respectfully than in *After Strange Gods*' (S 6, pp. 357-8). In the essay, Eliot acknowledges approvingly Lawrence's anti-modernity, his 'really extraordinary capacity for being exacerbated by the modern world of enlightenment and progress', and how, as opposed to this, 'he wanted a world in which religion would be real' (*ICS*, p. 187). Lawrence's rejection of contemporary 'secularism', illustrated for example by his 'scepticism towards science', and his search for a religion located at a deeper level than mere morality may have been a 'mistaken attempt', but 'was the result of an awareness of something very important ... that religion is not, and never can survive as, simply a code of morals' (*ICS*, pp. 187-8). Lawrence's 'great value' as an opponent of the modern secular age cannot, however, prevent Eliot from seeing his

faults and the false 'religion' he upheld as deriving again, as in *After Strange Gods*, from the fact that he was 'uneducated', where being educated means, among other things, 'some understanding of one's own ignorance' (*ICS*, p. 185). Here Eliot contrasts Lawrence unfavourably with another figure in search of false religion, Irving Babbitt, 'an educated man, as well as a highly well-informed one' (*ICS*, p. 185). This provokes a furious paragraph from Leavis on a Babbitt who was 'obtuse in his dogged and argumentative erudition' (*S 6*, p. 358), which anticipates the Leavis-Eliot debate over the definition of true education in chapter 4. Thus the so-called 'review' of Lawrence ends with a short blunt paragraph summarising the case against Eliot:

how can Mr. Eliot thus repeatedly and deliberately give away his case by invoking such standards? It is an amazing thing that so distinguished a mind can so persistently discredit in this way a serious point of view. (*S 6*, p. 358)

Although Leavis clearly and emphatically disagrees with Eliot about Lawrence, he acknowledges, as he had in his review of *After Strange Gods*, that 'the case that Mr. Eliot argues does, at its most respectable, demand serious attention' (*S 6*, p. 357). But it is the company that Eliot keeps in making that case that degrades it, and that causes Leavis such dismay. Here as elsewhere in the review of *Phoenix* we are made more aware than before of Leavis's belief in a conspiracy of 'our ruling literary intellectuals' against Lawrence; indeed, his review begins with a page attacking 'the literary world today (I mean the milieu in which fashions are set and worn and the higher reviewing provided for)' for ensuring that

Lawrence is 'decidedly out of favour' (S 6, p. 352). There are notes of discontent against inhabitants of this 'milieu' like Peter Quennell (whose opinions about Lawrence had already been attacked by Q. D. Leavis in an earlier issue of *Scrutiny*, S 5, p. 98) and against the 'Bloomsbury' attitude to Lawrence (S 6, pp. 352, 354, though ironically it was a member of the group, E. M. Forster, who had spoken on behalf of Lawrence against Eliot, above, p. 87). In the *Phoenix* review, there is a stronger feeling than before about how much Lawrence is an 'outsider' and how much Leavis sympathises with this position, and how the literary establishment has constructed a boundary beyond which Lawrence is exiled. Storer also states that Lawrence's experience of Cambridge and repulsion at 'the lifestyle of the privileged intellectuals he met there' was 'highly significant for Leavis' because it 'encouraged Leavis to think of himself and *Scrutiny* as representing an alternative, more Lawrence-inspired, Cambridge' (F. R. Leavis, p. 55). This identification between Leavis and an 'alternative' Cambridge had already been stimulated by Eliot's disparaging statement in his review of *Son of Woman* to the effect that

had Lawrence been sent to a public school and taken honours at a university he would not have been a jot the less ignorant; had he become a don at Cambridge his ignorance might have had frightful consequences for himself and for the world, 'rotten and rotting others'. (CP 4, p. 315)

Both Leavis and his wife thought that Leavis himself was being referred to here; in Queenie Leavis's words, Eliot's 'prize piece of defamatory spite', when challenged, led to his 'retreat[ing] in the most cowardly way' and claiming that 'nothing could

have been further from his intention' than such an insinuation. As if, she adds, 'there was any other don at Cambridge or anywhere else then, who had written favourably of Lawrence!' (quoted in *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism*, p. 192).<sup>10</sup> That Eliot's comment above imprinted itself on Leavis is shown by the fact that he used it as one of the epigraphs for his later study *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955), discussed below. Even in the early days of Leavis's most unconditional admiration for Eliot, we have some sense of polarisation between these two figures, with Eliot being seen within the establishment 'milieu', rather than, as a distinguished intellectual, sitting alongside Leavis to seriously argue his case whatever the differences between the two. This amounts to a sense of Eliot's betrayal that we have already seen Leavis feeling in chapter 1, in his charge of Eliot's incrimination in the wrong kind of critical company. As Anthony Kearney has noted, 'much of Leavis's disappointment with Eliot clearly rested on a sense of betrayal. Eliot ought to have been a more consistent ally in the battle for standards and the creative life; instead he lapsed, becoming a failure and finally a "case"' ('Leavis on Eliot', p. 59).

After his attention to the Eliot-Lawrence relationship in the 1930s, there is a lull in Leavis's discussion of it for the next ten years or so, though certainly there is never a lull in his attention to Eliot, as we have seen in chapter 1. The production of *Four Quartets* renewed Leavis's belief in Eliot the poet, and perhaps it also mitigated the unacceptableness of Eliot's anti-Lawrentian attitudes and distracted Leavis's attention from them. Indeed, we saw in chapter 1 how in reviewing 'The Dry Salvages' Leavis not only claimed Eliot as 'among the greatest poets of the English

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<sup>10</sup> See also Sean Matthews, "'Rotten and Rotting Others"—D. H. Lawrence and English Studies', *Studies in English Language and Literature* 47 (1997), p. 63.

language' but reaffirmed the kinship between him and Lawrence as 'pre-eminently [standing] for the spirit in these brutal and discouraging times' (above, p. 45). However we also noted in chapter 1 the clear contrast in Leavis's 1947 review of the Rajan collection of essays (above, p. 50) between an Eliot who, in his critical remarks such as those on Swift and further on a series of modern writers he approves of, including Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes and Henry Miller, shows 'the desire ... to "do dirt" on life' and Lawrence: 'Lawrence stood for life, and shows, in his criticism ... an extraordinarily quick and sure sense for the difference between that which makes for life and that which makes against it' (*S* 15, pp. 61-2). Thus Lawrence's criticism has a 'health and rightness' that Eliot's lacks (*S* 15, p. 62). Yet, 'in spite of the radical nature of the major weakness that has been indicated, [Eliot] remains a great critic', the best of his work representing 'powerfully and incisively the idea of literary criticism as a discipline—a special discipline of intelligence' (*S* 15, p. 62).

This comparison between Eliot and Lawrence in the review of Rajan represents a preliminary dispute before the opposition between the two writers is roused acrimoniously in Leavis's consciousness in the late 1940s, so that even the qualifying estimation of Eliot in the final sentence of the previous paragraph began to be eroded. In the March 1949 issue of *Scrutiny*, Leavis prints a letter from H. Coombes, which he said would serve instead of a note he was planning to produce himself protesting at recent comments on Lawrence in the Press and elsewhere. Coombes, says Leavis, has done his job for him in gathering a mini-compendium of comments attacking Lawrence from recent books by writers like Empson, Spender, Henry Miller, and so on, and Coombes urges *Scrutiny* to take up the task

of challenging such widespread assault: 'if *Scrutiny* doesn't do something about it, who else is likely to?' (S 16, p. 47). In the headnote introducing Coombes's letter, Leavis challenges a recent comparison in the *TLS* of the 'crudity' of Lawrence's attitude to sex compared with that of Maupassant, and also notes a recent charge in the *New Statesman* of Lawrence's being a 'clinical case' (S 16, p. 44)—a diagnosis Leavis himself would later make of Eliot of course. Leavis promises that *Scrutiny* will return 'in an early number' to give a proper appraisal of Lawrence (S 16, p. 44), and indeed in the early 1950s Leavis begins the serious undertaking of looking in detail at Lawrence's fiction: thus a three-part review of *Women in Love* begins in volumes 17 and 18 of *Scrutiny* (S 17, pp. 203ff., 318ff., S 18, pp.18ff.) followed by a similarly extensive examination of *The Rainbow* (S 18, pp. 197ff., 273ff., S 19, pp. 15ff.).

If Coombes's letter indicates how Lawrence and *Scrutiny* are in the same boat, an outcast writer being rescued by a solitary non-establishment journal, then other events of the late 1940s confirm this situation and Eliot's compromising position within it. The issues are fully engaged with in Leavis's 1951 review 'Mr. Eliot and Lawrence' (S 18, pp. 66-73), which considers Father William Tiverton's (also known as Martin Jarrett-Kerr) *D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence* and Richard Aldington's *Portrait of a Genius, But ...*, and which features the observation quoted in the opening sentence of this chapter. Since the review postdates Leavis's detailed consideration of Lawrence's fiction as indicated above, he is now in a position to claim that Lawrence is not only a finer critic than Eliot, but 'in creative pre-eminence ... Lawrence appears to me so decidedly the greater genius' (S 18, p. 66). Moreover,

in logical stamina, the power to pursue an organising process of thought through a wide and difficult tract, with a sustained consistency that is at the same time a delicate fidelity to the complexities of the full concrete experience, Lawrence seems to me to be superior to Mr. Eliot (yes, to the author of *Four Quartets*). (*S* 18, p. 71)

Leavis's comments are prompted by Eliot's Foreword to Tiverton's volume, which Leavis accuses of not repenting of his characteristic fault-finding with Lawrence, even though Eliot now finds that the time is due for giving Lawrence 'serious critical attention', as well as for critical books like Tiverton's that promote this type of attention (*S* 18, p. 66). But for Leavis Eliot's present views on Lawrence, if expressed 'less offensively', are 'the more insidious—and the more insidious because associated with a recommendatory approach' (*S* 18, p. 67). He thus quotes from the Foreword a passage on Lawrence's 'ignorance' and lack of 'ratiocinative powers' which echoes similar charges in *After Strange Gods*, and indeed much of the review is a revisiting of that earlier piece of 'offensive' criticism.<sup>11</sup> Leavis is concerned to insist, as in the passage quoted above, on Lawrence's 'power ... of thought' and intelligence, on an education and social training that is in no way inferior to that offered by Harvard (*S* 18, p. 69) and on Eliot's complete failure to understand, as an American, the 'persistent cultural tradition' of English Nonconformism that, in its 'earnestness and moral seriousness', provided the background out of which Lawrence's intelligence, or 'strenuous intellectual

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<sup>11</sup> Eliot, Foreword to Martin Jarrett-Kerr [Father William Tiverton], *D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 10, 9.

inquiringness', proceeded (*S* 18, p. 69).<sup>12</sup> 'I am a fellow-countryman of D. H. Lawrence', Leavis proclaims (*S* 18, p. 68, emphasis in original), declaring that to examine and understand the conditions that enabled Lawrence as a writer 'would be to go into a large part of English social and cultural history' (*S* 18, p. 69)—a subject to be discussed in the following chapter.

As a 'fellow-countryman' of the English novelist, Leavis as we have already seen shows an antipathy towards America and its modern civilisation that we shall return to, particularly in the following chapter. This might be summarised by a passage (one of several similar) from his late book *Nor Shall My Sword* where he describes how 'unintoxicating' he finds 'our imminent tomorrow' that America represents, with its 'triumphant technology ... the high standard of living and the life-impooverishment—the human emptiness; emptiness and boredom craving alcohol' (*NSMS*, p. 60). What he sets against this is a Lawrentian vision:

who will assert that the average member of a modern society is more fully human, or more alive, than a Bushman, an Indian peasant, or a member of one of those poignantly surviving primitive peoples, with their marvellous art and skills and vital intelligence? (*NSMS*, p. 60)

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<sup>12</sup> Philip J. Waldron judges that Leavis 'exaggerates' in claiming that Lawrence benefited from a 'better education ... than any other he could have got' (*S* 18, p. 69), arguing that Lawrence's 'university education gave him little and he rejected it with great bitterness', whilst the education given by his religious background 'certainly disposes of the ubiquity of the strong intellectual tradition that Dr. Leavis thinks always to be found in English Congregationalism. Whatever leads people to bring their children to join total abstinence societies, it is not a religious tradition favouring "strenuous intellectual inquiringness"', as Leavis argued. In 'The Education of D. H. Lawrence', *Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association* (November 1965), p. 239.

Leavis's remarks evoke Lawrence's position in *The Plumed Serpent*, where America is seen as

the great death-continent, the great No! to the European and Asiatic, and even African Yes!...Plucking, plucking at the created soul in a man, till at last it plucked out the growing germ, and left him a creature of mechanism and automatic reaction, with only one inspiration, the desire to pluck the quick out of every living spontaneous creature,<sup>13</sup>

though admittedly *The Plumed Serpent* was in Leavis's words 'the only [novel] that I found difficult to read through' and Lawrence's least 'remarkable' novel (*DHLN*, p. 77-8). Elsewhere in Lawrence however there is much of the same, as in *Studies in Classic American Literature* where America is the 'great melting pot' in which people, or rather the 'escaped slaves', are dislocated from their origins:

men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within. Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealised purpose. Not when they are escaping to some wild west.

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<sup>13</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, ed. Ronald G. Walker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 110.

Thus ‘the essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted’.<sup>14</sup>

As noted in chapter 1, Leavis turned the tables on Eliot by returning the charge of ‘ignorance’ against him in a spectacular onslaught on *The Cocktail Party*, Eliot’s most damnable work in Leavis’s eyes:

I am not, then, impressed by any superiority of religious and theological knowledge [i.e., in comparison to Lawrence] in a writer capable of exposing what is to me the shocking essential ignorance that characterises *The Cocktail Party*—ignorance of the possibilities of life; ignorance of the effect the play must have on a kind of reader or spectator of whose existence the author appears to be unaware: the reader who has, himself, found serious work to do in the world and is able to be unaffectedly serious about it, who knows what family life is and has helped to bring up children and who, though capable of being interested in Mr. Eliot’s poetry, cannot afford cocktail civilisation and would reject it, with contempt and boredom, if he *could* afford it. (*S* 18, p. 70, emphasis in original)

Eliot is also seen as the major reason why Lawrence has had to wait for so long to get a fair hearing. According to Leavis, Eliot represents the ‘essential opposition in person’ (*S* 18, p. 66); this anticipates the later table-turning by which Leavis sets up Lawrence as the ‘necessary [and superior] opposite’ to Eliot. Leavis’s remarks on ‘the wonderful lucidity and complete convincingness’ of Lawrence’s recipe for ‘the

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<sup>14</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1977), pp. 12, 14, 12, 68.

conditions of health and wholeness in the psyche' (*S* 18, p. 71), as displayed in his *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, also anticipates, by contrast, how Leavis will increasingly insist on the dividedness of Eliot's own psyche, as discussed in chapter 1 in the exposition in 'T. S. Eliot as Critic' and in *The Living Principle*. In short, apart from his other qualities, Leavis sees Lawrence as an expert in psychic health, and Eliot as an instance of a corresponding disability. This malaise is not Eliot's alone: immediately following on the Tiverton review, Leavis reviewed in *Scrutiny* a couple of works relating to Ezra Pound (*S* 18, pp. 74-7), finding in Pound's work a 'hatred and the will to reduce life to what can give excuse for hatred and contempt and disgust', adding as symptom of this that 'Pound, like Eliot, dislikes Lawrence and is drawn to Wyndham Lewis—who also dislikes Lawrence' (*S* 18, p. 77). One of the omissions of Bergonzi's essay and staging of 'the long road to rejection' is its ignoring of this important Pound emphasis, and also his failing to pay any attention to the abhorrence Leavis felt towards *The Cocktail Party* and its significance.

We mentioned briefly in chapter 1 the response Leavis's review of Tiverton provoked in the form of a letter of complaint, entitled 'Lawrence and Eliot', from Robert D. Wagner, who is not so much concerned to defend Eliot *per se* as to 'question the inference that a genuine understanding of Mr. Leavis's much-maligned favourite would inexorably draw all men of good will on to the Laurentian bandwagon' (*S* 18, p. 137). For Wagner, Lawrence's elevation of, and Leavis's support for, 'spontaneous-creative fullness of being' above the operations of 'mental consciousness' contest 'an attitude towards life which has managed to survive in the Western world for about 2500 years', and which is 'the spiritual

cornerstone of our Greco-Christian heritage' (Aristotle's remarks on 'contemplation' are quoted in illustration of this) (*S* 18, pp. 137-8). The latest instalment of this heritage, for Wagner, is *Four Quartets*. Wagner then argues that a characteristically modern loss of faith in the human commitment to mental consciousness and a belief in 'reversion to animal impulses' is principally exemplified in Lawrence, quoting a passage from *Women in Love* that 'for to desire is better than to possess', and commenting that this position is 'to some of us ... an abomination, a wilful despoiling of mankind's ideal possibilities' (*S* 18, p. 138-9).<sup>15</sup> The charge against Leavis is ultimately that his 'Lawrence v Eliot' outlook is too narrow and too personalised: 'to attack Mr. Eliot personally for his opinions is not only in poor taste; it is poor criticism, for it misses the fundamental disagreement between Lawrence and Mr. Eliot' (*S* 18, p. 139). That 'disagreement' is between something much more far-reaching of which Eliot must be seen as 'representative'—in his own terms, the 'mind of Europe'—and those who wish to overthrow these centuries of civilisation.

Of course, for Leavis the opposition between Eliot and Lawrence is representative too (but in a different way), rather than being a simple case of two individuals being set against each other. In 'The Americanness of American Literature', published in *Commentary* in 1952, he continues the America-England debate noted in the review of Tiverton: Eliot, though of 'immensely greater gifts and finer intelligence, was, after all, a fellow-countryman of Pound', a Pound who 'had so little sense of what a living cultural tradition is, so little sense of the organic' (*AK*, p. 151). It is this lack of a living 'tradition' that results in Eliot's 'record in

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<sup>15</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 332.

respect of D. H. Lawrence; not his disliking Lawrence and judging him adversely, but the nature and manner of the dislike, and the terms of justification alleged' (*AK*, p. 151). This 'blindness to [Lawrence's] genius' is the visible part of a much wider ignorance that results from national origins and is expressed in, for example, Eliot's failure noted above to grasp the significance of English Nonconformism (*AK*, p. 151). Indeed, we have seen the charge of an 'American' ignorance of cultural continuity and again 'blindness' being repeated later in Leavis's diagnosis of the weakness of *Four Quartets* (see above, p. 66). Leavis was later to denounce vehemently Harry T. Moore's edition of Lawrence's *Collected Letters*, the Introduction to which shows its American editor to be 'in a disabling way of which he has no suspicion ... a complete foreigner in regard to the England to which Lawrence ... so essentially belonged' (*AK*, p. 168).

By the time therefore that Leavis extended his examination of Lawrence's novels and tales in *Scrutiny* into his book-length study *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955), his obsession with the Eliot-Lawrence controversy had been truly rekindled in him. Eliot's Foreword to the Tiverton volume had brought back all his temper against *After Strange Gods*, *The Cocktail Party* had confirmed his worst doubts about the *milieu* Eliot identified with, and Leavis's work on the native English line of humbly born, non-metropolitan novelists, like Jane Austen and George Eliot, celebrated in the 1948 volume *The Great Tradition*—a tradition to which Lawrence clearly belonged—enabled him to see a Lawrence further empowered by such a heritage. In *The Great Tradition*, Leavis not only used a passage from *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* as an epigraph for the book, but also quoted extensively from these, and from *Fantasia of the Unconscious* in the later part of the chapter on George Eliot,

contending that ‘there [is] no name later than Conrad’s’ except Lawrence’s ‘to be included in the great tradition’ (*GT*, p. 35). Concluding the chapter, Leavis confirms again that ‘what I think and judge I have stated as responsibly and clearly as I can. Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Conrad, and D. H. Lawrence: the great tradition of the English novel is *there*’ (*GT*, p. 39, emphasis in original). Ten years after the cessation of *Scrutiny*, in his 1963 ‘Retrospect’, Leavis could assert the journal’s achievement in having directed criticism of the English novel, the ‘main creative force of modern literature’: ‘*Scrutiny*, it may fairly be claimed, established a new sense of the kinds of critical approach called for by significant fiction—fiction that is serious art—and a new idea of the history and tradition of the novel in English’ (*S* 20, p. 13). In *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* Leavis states that from the nineteenth century onwards ‘the poetic and creative strength ... of the English language goes into prose fiction’, and that poetry becomes a ‘marginal affair’, this relation between the two genres being something even Eliot’s poetic achievement could not ‘reverse’, adding that this is ‘an irony to the insistent leading part played by Eliot in retarding the recognition of Lawrence’. It is as if Eliot’s weakness as a writer is also shown by his inability to prevent the decline of the genre he is the primary exponent of (*DHLN*, p. 18).

*D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* is, like much of Leavis’s work, a recycling and repetition of a great deal he had already published, so that the outpouring of condemnation of Eliot we find particularly in the Introduction and the opening chapter comprises familiar objections, and the book reprints as Appendix the *Scrutiny* review of Tiverton’s book discussed above, ‘Mr. Eliot and Lawrence’

(*DHLN*, pp. 367-77). Vincent Buckley, writing shortly after the book was published, noted how the

tendentious account [of Eliot], offered so early in the book, may lead us in advance to expect that [Leavis's] account of Lawrence's achievement will be an exaggerated one; for it may lead us to suspect that Lawrence's work is being set up as the completely realised norm from which Eliot so disastrously defects. And I for one find this suggestion most unsatisfying.

(*Poetry and Morality*, p. 207)

Indeed from the book's epigraphs onwards, which include Eliot's statement from the *Son of Woman* review noted above speculating about 'had [Lawrence] become a don at Cambridge' and so on, as well as Lawrence's 'And I am English, and my Englishness is my very vision', we have all the familiar objections: Eliot's approval of Murry, his incrimination within 'Bloomsbury', the questionable conduct of the *Criterion* with regard to Lawrence, the accusation in *After Strange Gods* of Lawrence's lacking a sense of humour (from the Introduction, *DHLN*, pp. 10-3); then from the opening chapter Eliot's unselfconsciously ironic charge of Lawrence's 'sexual morbidity', his shameful reliance on Wyndham Lewis, the Tiverton Foreword, 'the human and spiritual nullity' of the plays, especially *The Cocktail Party*, the accusation of Lawrence's lack of intelligence which is rather a 'failure of intelligence in [Eliot] himself' (*DHLN*, pp. 23-9). Scattered throughout the book, in various formulations, is the observation that Lawrence has 'a reverence for life, sensitive human feeling, and what seems to me a religious ... sense of

human dignity' (*DHLN*, p. 298n), which is in serious contrast to an Eliot whose 'attitude to life is ... one of distaste and disgust' (*DHLN*, p. 27).

One thing that is new in the book is Leavis's estimation of Lawrence's novella 'St Mawr' as a finer treatment of *The Waste Land* theme of the corruption of modern civilisation than Eliot's own poem, which is perhaps an early symptom of his later devaluing of *The Waste Land* referred to in chapter 1 (*DHLN*, p. 271). John Middleton Murry, in his review of *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, was sceptical of Lawrence's place in "the great tradition" of the English novel, as Dr. Leavis understands it', which can be achieved 'only by a great deal of manipulation' (*Poets, Critics, Mystics*, p. 84); furthermore, the discussion of 'St. Mawr' was a 'striking example' of the process whereby, 'in his effort to vindicate for [Lawrence] the position of the supreme artist ... of the same order as Shakespeare' Leavis 'unduly exaggerates the perfection of some ... of Lawrence's work' (*Poets, Critics, Mystics*, pp. 86-7).<sup>16</sup> This is part of more widespread charges Murry makes: 'never has [Leavis] been so prodigal of eulogy; never quite so pugnacious in downing the opposition, which consists, for Dr. Leavis, not only of those who have been in any way publicly critical of Lawrence's work but even of the novelists who have had the misfortune to be contemporary with him' (*Poets, Critics, Mystics*, p. 83). Thus Rico in 'St Mawr' is used as 'a symbol of [Leavis's] critical detestations', namely, the 'unnecessary divagation against Bloomsbury' and its successors (*Poets, Critics, Mystics*, p. 90; see *DHLN*, pp. 289-90). In sum, Murry states, 'for all his genuine reverence for Lawrence's genius, he cannot refrain from using him as a weapon of

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<sup>16</sup> This review was first published in *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 1955, and was reprinted in *Poets, Critics, Mystics*, pp. 83-90.

offence against those whom he regards as literary enemies' (*Poets, Critics, Mystics*, p. 90).

What comes through louder than ever in *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* is the idea of Eliot's guilt in the wilful defamation of Lawrence, and how the literary establishment has been only too willing to follow this lead: 'the sad and undeniable fact is that Eliot did all that his immense prestige and authority *could* do to make the current stupidities about Lawrence look respectable' (*DHLN*, p. 23, emphasis in original). Leavis further adds that the 'company' of Lawrence's defamers has been made through Eliot 'immensely more effective in enmity' towards him 'than it could otherwise have been' (*DHLN*, p. 26n).<sup>17</sup> This company now includes not only Bloomsbury and the 'higher reviewing' but the British Council, which published Kenneth Young's pamphlet *D. H. Lawrence* in 1952, which repeats the charges of inverse snobbery against Lawrence (though without suggesting there is any debt to Eliot here), as in 'his dogmatic insistence that he alone held the truth about the universe surely reflects a deep-seated feeling that he had missed the fruits of the normal public school and university education, which gave his literary contemporaries a breadth of knowledge and an assurance which he always lacked'.<sup>18</sup> This is an illustration to Leavis 'of the disgraceful way in which the influence, prestige and resources (derived from public funds) of the British Council are employed to the injury of the real interests of English literature' (*DHLN*, p.

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<sup>17</sup> Crick and Di Santo argue however that Leavis's accusation of Eliot's lead in the defamation of Lawrence 'does not square with all the relevant facts', given that the *Criterion* published three short stories and two essays by Lawrence, and that Lawrence noted in a letter that he was 'relieved' to find a publication that 'has some guts' in accepting his work ('D. H. Lawrence', p. 132).

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Young, *D. H. Lawrence*, published for the British Council and the National Book League (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), pp. 16-7. The revised edition of 1960 includes Leavis's *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* in its Bibliography, with the note 'this includes a brilliant analysis of *Women in Love* ... but the book as a whole pays exaggerated and indiscriminate tribute to its subject' (p. 50).

363n). Leavis further observes that the Council's publications on Virginia Woolf and Eliot himself feel no need to point out the snobbery of the former and the 'implicit snobbery of *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*' (DHLN, p. 364n). *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* ends with a broadside:

the British Council, the Third Programme, the organs of literary opinion and the universities, form a comprehensive system which has successfully brought the function of criticism—to distinguish the real artist and secure backing for him, to place the uncreative and to maintain critical standards—into abeyance. There is no need to ask why English literature for so long has had so little new life to show. (DHLN, pp. 365-6)

It is plain that Eliot is the target throughout because his attitude to Lawrence is deemed as a prime symptom and cause of this situation.

By the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Leavis's preferring of Lawrence to Eliot in terms of 'creative pre-eminence' and his polemic against the latter's lack of intelligence about Lawrence have become fully consolidated. We have already looked in chapter 1 at Leavis's analysis of Eliot's weaknesses as a critic in 'T. S. Eliot as Critic' (1958), an essay presenting itself as a review of *On Poetry and Poets*, and the references to Lawrence here are relatively few but predictable, either as proof that literature can only be produced by a 'distinguished individual', despite Eliot's 'doctrine of "impersonality"' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' which 'is insidiously designed to eliminate this conception of the artist' (AK, p. 179), or as the key instance of Eliot's 'consistently disastrous'

evaluation of his contemporaries in Lawrence's being set below Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Woolf and even David Garnett (*AK*, pp. 185-9). Leavis's lecture 'Lawrence After Thirty Years', given in 1960, offers, as its title implies, a retrospective survey of Lawrence's changing reputation, and is thus the occasion for another parading of Leavis's by now extremely familiar charges against Eliot (including the *Criterion*'s consistent snubbing of Lawrence and the exchange between Forster and Eliot on Lawrence's death noted above). Leavis looks back on his own early 'unintelligent treatment of Lawrence' (*V*, p. 103)—presumably his undervaluing of the 'art' as opposed to the 'man' in 'Reminiscences' and the 1930 'D. H. Lawrence' pamphlet (above, p. 86)—and now rejoices in Lawrence's 'established recognition as a great writer' (*V*, p. 105). This goes in the lecture in parallel with Leavis's explanation of the 'antithesis' he draws between Eliot and Lawrence as something that goes beyond 'literary history' into two fundamentally opposed 'conceptions of "art"' (*V*, p. 106), though these are now not related to nationalist concerns. Leavis sees Eliot within a Flaubertian tradition of setting the 'perfection' of art against 'the meanness and insignificance of life', whereas for Lawrence art is at the service of life and 'his creativity came directly out of his living' (*V*, p. 107). Needless to say, the theory of impersonality in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'—'the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates' (*CP* 2, p. 109)—comes in for another attack (*V*, p. 107). Earlier in *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* Leavis had seen 'Eliot's "standing-off" from life' as 'certainly not a less intense or a less radical sickness of the spirit than Flaubert's' (*DHLN*, p. 26). For Vincent Buckley, 'the only thing one can do with this statement, offered as a judgment of a writer *tout court*, is to deplore it' (*Poetry*

*and Morality*, p. 206). This seems to be a plausible comment as Leavis offered no justification for this judgment, and it contradicts with the ‘life’ Eliot represented as Leavis’s early more detailed writings were trying to establish (see, for example, the ‘essential and pregnant felicity’ of Eliot’s essays on Marvel and the Metaphysical poets, pp. 25-6).

In what clearly anticipates Leavis’s later treatment of *Four Quartets* in the pointedly and arguably ‘Lawrentian’ entitled book *The Living Principle* (see above, pp. 61-79), Leavis sees the impersonality theory ‘play[ing] down the need for the artist to be a person with the courage of life and the responsibility of his experience in its living wholeness’ (*V*, pp. 107-8). Moreover, in ‘Lawrence After Thirty Years’ we again see anticipations of his later insistence on Eliot as a pathological ‘case’—his aestheticism registers ‘a lack of unity and wholeness in the artist and critic, and a consequent distrust of the life in himself ... a malady that had its manifestations in the artist’s inner division and disharmony and his accompanying fear of life’ (*V*, p. 109). That the ‘poetic strength of the English language’ has gone since the Victorian age into the novel rather than poetry leads Leavis to declare *The Waste Land* to be inferior, not now to ‘St Mawr’, but to *Women in Love*, ‘one of the world’s major creations’ (*V*, p. 110). Yet Leavis gives no grounds for this assertion other than that Eliot’s poem is not ‘a very compelling organic whole’; one might argue that the antithesis Leavis sets up between the two writers here reaches its most summary and reductive judgement, in his assumption that a blunt comparison between two works so dissimilar can serve much useful purpose (*V*, p. 110). What is also important here is Leavis’s approval of Lawrence’s repetitiousness: ‘he brought out from time to time different formulations of the same conviction’ (*V*, p.

110). It is as if Leavis's own marked repetition of the same positions many times in his writing deliberately follows Lawrence's practice here, and that 'aestheticism' and aesthetic craft are ultimately less important than having important messages to earnestly reiterate.

After all the discussion above, it would be a shock to come across a piece by Leavis on Lawrence that does not feature Eliot as fundamental opposite, but this is the case with 'Genius as Critic', a review of the reprint of *Phoenix* that appeared in the *Spectator* in March 1961. Indeed, apart from the tribute to the 'vital and sure intelligence' of Lawrence as critic displaying an 'un-Eliotic freedom of utterance', Eliot is not mentioned there at all (*V*, p. 115). Yet, when the review ends with a stress on 'the extraordinary range and comprehensiveness of Lawrence's cultural and intellectual equipment', and salutes his being 'at home' with all the major European literatures and being 'inward with all the intellectual forces—Nietzsche, Tyler, Frazer, Bergson, Freud—that were active in the contemporary European mind', it is impossible not to think that Eliot is being knocked off his perch as the prime embodiment in twentieth-century English letters of what he himself called 'the mind of Europe' (*CP* 2, p. 107). As Leavis spells out, Lawrence 'was most emphatically an Englishman, but if any great writer of this century may be said to have written out of Europe—as *of* Europe—it was Lawrence' (*V*, p. 118, emphasis in original). The idea of Lawrence's Europeanness was developed in Leavis's Downing College seminars according to the student notes taken by Charles Winder between 1957 and 1960 when he was an undergraduate at Downing:

trouble is that Dickens was essentially uneducated; note how Lawrence with the same class-status was so much more educated, he's in possession of the whole European heritage, much more than T. S. Eliot; he read everything. What Eliot said about Shakespeare finding out more of the civilisation of Ancient Rome from North's 'Plutarch' than a scholar could find during a life spent in the British Museum can be applied to Lawrence. Lawrence had an intense interest in life, see his excitement about Greek Tragedy; this marks him off from Dickens.<sup>19</sup>

In the comment about 'Nietzsche, Tyler, Frazer, Bergson, Freud' we see the suggestion that Leavis is sympathising with Lawrence's living, contemporary Europe, as opposed to a Europe that was defined, in Eliot's later essays like 'What is a Classic?', 'The Unity of European Culture' and 'Virgil and the Christian World', by its classical and Christian foundations.

We thus arrive at the Clark Lectures of 1967, published as *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (1969), with its chapter focusing on the discussion of Lawrence as 'The Necessary Opposite'—the phrase featured in the title of this chapter—to an author who with *Four Quartets* still 'matters' a great deal in a 'Technologico-Benthamite Age'. But there is still a great deal attacking Eliot in Leavis's by now extremely familiar views: 'that the creative Eliot could not draw on any wholeness of being, or free flow of life, has consequences for criticism, and the "social" poverty of spirit—the unheroism (it led him to call Lawrence a

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Winder, 'Leavis's Downing Seminars: A Student's Notes', in MacKillop & Storer eds., *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, p. 88. Eliot's comment about Shakespeare and Plutarch is from 'Tradition and Individual Talent' (*CP* 2, p. 108).

snob)—was a manifestation of the disunity, the disability, the inner disorder that characterised him ...’ and so on (*ELTU*, p. 139). What is new about the discussion is Leavis’s ‘illustration’ of the opposition through ‘the opposed critics on *Hamlet*’, to quote the subtitle of chapter five of the book (*ELTU*, p. 135), a discussion that continues into Leavis’s final chapter of ‘summing up’ (*ELTU*, p. 161). The opposition centres on Eliot’s discussion of Shakespeare’s play as illustrating his life-denying aestheticism (following on the ‘Flaubertian’ flaw in Eliot in ‘Lawrence After Thirty Years’ discussed above) compared with Lawrence’s commentary on the play which ‘comes out of a completer and profounder intelligence about life than Eliot’s, and a different sense of the relation between art and life’ (*ELTU*, p. 161). For Leavis, Eliot ‘is curiously unsatisfactory [as a critic] where intelligent comment on literature requires a responsive and delicate sense of life’ (*ELTU*, p. 150); this unsatisfactoriness leads him to pronounce in his famous essay on *Hamlet* that the play is ‘an artistic failure’ because there is no adequate ‘objective correlative’ for Shakespeare’s inner emotion (‘*Hamlet*’, *CP* 2, pp. 124, 125). For Leavis, this judgment posits the successful artwork in terms of an exact and therefore mechanical equivalence; here he highlights Eliot’s phrase on ‘the complete adequacy of the external to the emotion’ (*ELTU*, p. 152). Such a formula constricts the play ‘so that one can feel there is nothing in it that one can’t clearly and finally see’, discounts its poetic suggestiveness and ‘reduces significance to what a theatrical producer can understand’ (*ELTU*, pp. 151-3). Likewise, Eliot’s judgement that a successful *Hamlet* would have been ‘intelligible’ and ‘self-complete’ suggests to Leavis an art of what he calls a ‘neatly and comfortably determinate significance’, betraying the limitations of Eliot’s classicism in its

upholding of aesthetic considerations of clarity and form (*ELTU*, p. 153). For Leavis, true creative intelligence (as ironically, however, *Four Quartets* itself shows) is manifested in its portrayal of the author's 'whole being', which unavoidably includes things that can never be 'brought wholly' to the light (*ELTU*, p. 154), a phrasing that is from Eliot's *Hamlet* essay (*CP* 2, p. 125). The very struggle to produce, and to respond to this in one's reading, is for Leavis a key point it seems both of literature and of criticism.

It is at this point that Lawrence's remarks on *Hamlet* in his *Twilight in Italy* are brought into the argument as a counter-value, and here Leavis introduces this topic with the remark that 'in talking about Eliot I have again felt myself to be talking about Lawrence too—indeed, primarily about Lawrence' (*ELTU*, p. 154). The fact that Lawrence is talking about a performance—an Italian 'peasant troupe playing *Amleto*'—not about the relation between play and writer, immediately means that Lawrence is concerned with the relation between literature and 'life', a life he treats with 'a profound respect' and 'quick sympathetic insight', with no sense of patronising the humble players (*ELTU*, p. 155). But Lawrence focuses on the play as well, and it 'doesn't occur to [him] to think the play an artistic failure', or that it is devoid of significance (*ELTU*, p. 155). The play rather illustrates 'a great change in the European psyche', which is a growing lack of confidence in the self, shown in the contrast between Hamlet's father and the son; the latter 'in his "involuntary soul" (Lawrence's phrase) has decided *not to be*—decided that the will to be King, Father and Supreme I (ego) in his turn isn't in him' (*ELTU*, p. 156, emphasis in original).<sup>20</sup> The young Hamlet is therefore of the modern, or 'post-

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<sup>20</sup> D. H. Lawrence, 'The Theatre', in *Twilight in Italy and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Eggert (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), p. 145.

Medieval' world (*ELTU*, p. 164), an anticipation of 'the greater will towards self-destruction' in 'this great mechanised society', which is 'self-less' as it 'works on mechanically and destroys us' (*ELTU*, p. 165—here Leavis quotes from 'The Lemon Gardens' in *Twilight in Italy*).<sup>21</sup> Here the play acts as a commentary on the life we ourselves are living. Whilst admitting that Lawrence's views can be argued with, Leavis finds his response to *Hamlet* entirely more productive than Eliot's: 'who today will suggest that such a significance can't, therefore, be in the play, or that, because the significance can't be brought into the "sunlight" [quoting Eliot, *CP* 2, p. 125], the play is an artistic failure?' (*ELTU*, p. 164). Having introduced aspects of the critical argument over the play, Leavis spends the rest of his summing up in discussion of its implications for the university syllabus and study of English, which we return to in chapter 4 below.

As we noted in chapter 1, Lawrence is surprisingly absent from Leavis's onslaught on the *Quartets* in *The Living Principle* of 1975, where the 'necessary opposite' tends to be Blake, though *The Rainbow* is briefly brought in to offset the 'reductivism' of Eliot's portrayal of the rural population in 'East Coker' I (*LP*, p. 195). But the absence of the customary opposition is rectified in the near-contemporary volume *Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence* (1976), the opening pages of which use Eliot as a foil in a number of familiar ways. Summarising his position in *The Living Principle* concerning *Four Quartets* and 'the contradiction at its heart', namely how Eliot through 'his creative art in using the English language ... denies human creativity' (*TWC*, pp. 17-8), Leavis insists on the creativity and 'thought' (a word used twice in the book's title)

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<sup>21</sup> D. H. Lawrence, 'The Lemon Gardens', in *Twilight in Italy*, ed. Paul Eggert, p. 125.

to be found in Lawrence, especially in the face of Eliot's assertion that Lawrence was 'incapable of what is ordinarily called thinking' (*TWC*, p. 15). Leavis argues that Eliot's own poetry is hostile to 'thought', quoting Eliot's remarks in the 'Blake' essay about the necessity of 'concentrat[ing] ... upon the problems of the poet' (which requires the adoption, as with Dante, of 'a framework of accepted and traditional ideas') as exemplifying Eliot's aestheticism that is life-denying and lacks 'unity and wholeness' (*CP* 2, pp. 190-1; see above, pp. 121, 123-5). This aestheticism, according to Leavis, is further confirmed in Eliot's 'exasperating Francophil mannerisms' as a critic (*TWC*, pp. 17-9). Several pages later he notes Lawrence 'was neither a Frenchman nor a Francophil' (in spite of his being emphatically 'of Europe' as remarked in 'Genius as Critic' above), and indeed Eliot himself 'owes little or nothing in his major poetry to the French poets of the later nineteenth century' (*TWC*, pp. 31-2). This last statement might seem an astonishing claim on Leavis's part, though for him Eliot's 'major' poetry tends to include only that composed after *The Waste Land*, as we have seen. Then Leavis continues that 'the poet to whom [Eliot] owed his great debt' is Shakespeare, and of course Lawrence, as his essays on Shakespeare in *Twilight in Italy* again show, was peculiarly attuned to Shakespeare also, and is, like the great novelists of the nineteenth century, a 'successor' of Shakespeare's (*TWC*, pp. 31-2). Having positioned Lawrence and Eliot on the same ground, Leavis can now judge between them in a predictable manner before tracing Lawrence's 'thought' in various of his works in the rest of the volume: by the end of the opening chapter Lawrence is established as having the 'dramatic power' and 'ease' with all types of humanity (which is crucial for a novelist—and indeed playwright) that Eliot so strikingly

lacked, and in the latter's case 'you can reduce his limitations to those two lacks' (*TWC*, p. 32). Leavis is quite explicit in *Thought, Words and Creativity* about what the 'defeatist' Eliot's main value to him now is: he 'matters in a major way because he is impressive enough as a creative writer to bring out by contrast the greatness and rarity of the genius who was *not* defeated—who demonstrates so marvellously what intelligence is' (*TWC*, p. 18, emphasis in original). By the end of Leavis's life (and indeed for a long time previously) Eliot's importance seems to lie primarily in his being a foil to display Lawrence's greatness, though there is another side to this argument, a final twist perhaps, with which we can pursue the self-division in Leavis himself (a state he repeatedly applies to Eliot) that is addressed towards the end of chapter 4 and in the Conclusion to my thesis.

### 3 LEAVIS AND ELIOT: TWO CULTURES

‘There are those who think D. H. Lawrence the greatest man of our time’ (*CE*, p. 94). This early judgement of Lawrence is not from Leavis’s literary-critical writings, but from the book of cultural analysis he co-wrote with Denys Thompson in 1933, *Culture and Environment*. The book is an account of the disaster that has overtaken modern culture through machine mass-production, consumerism and the marketing that goes with it; above all, through the new ‘science’ of advertising which aims to persuade people ‘to buy what they do not want, and to want what they should not buy’ (*CE*, p. 26), or again to ‘sell the public what it does not want’ (*CE*, p. 24). The result is a corruption in leisure practices, including the practice of reading, where the powerful advertising of, for example, the Book Society offers the public inferior best-sellers, as well as the widespread assumption that a rise in the standard of living is judged in material terms alone (all these would be lifelong preoccupations of Leavis). Throughout the book, the cost of these developments involves ‘The Loss of the Organic Community’, to quote the title of the chapter where Lawrence is discussed (*CE*, pp. 93-8), and Leavis and Thompson find a model of that lost community above all in the works of George Bourne, the pseudonym of George Sturt, *Change in the Village* and *The Wheelwright’s Shop*.<sup>1</sup> Bourne not only shows us a lost world of rural traditions and pre-machine manufacture where workers could take satisfaction in the skilled crafts they practised, but also in which there were ‘rich traditions of recreation and leisure’ (*CE*, p. 68).

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<sup>1</sup> Bourne and Sturt are often used interchangeably as authorial names, as by several writers mentioned in this chapter, where the use of ‘Bourne’ is preferred throughout.

Lawrence is seen as following in the tracks of Bourne's celebration of, and lament for, this lost world. The authors tend to quote not from his novels (apart from a few references to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), which as we have seen did not figure much in Leavis's early estimation of him, but from his essay 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside' that appeared in the *New Adelphi* in 1930 (and was reissued in the *Architectural Review* at the same time under the title 'Disaster Looms Ahead').<sup>2</sup> Here Lawrence attacks the 'ugliness' of modern building, the 'miles and squares miles of red-brick "homes"' that are disfiguring England 'like horrible scabs' ('Nottingham and the Mining Countryside', p. 293, quoted in *CE*, p. 97). At the same time, Lawrence was 'so sensitive to the ugliness of the environment because he had so vivid a realisation of what was lost', together with his vision of 'a new human health and wholeness' (*CE*, p. 95). He is, to repeat the opening quotation above, 'the greatest man of our time' because

he did more than anyone else to awake and spread a realisation of what has happened. He devoted his splendid genius to making it impossible for us to ignore the nature of our loss. After reading him it is impossible to talk easily about a rising 'standard of living'. (*CE*, p. 94)

Lawrence however does not offer 'a complete solution to the problems raised in connection with *The Wheelwright's Shop*' (*CE*, p. 98); the whole tide of machinery, consumerism and advertising cannot be addressed solely with an improvement in

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<sup>2</sup> This essay was reprinted under the title 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside' in *D. H. Lawrence: Late Essays and Articles*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 287-94.

the standards of architecture. But the fact that Lawrence is the principal voice speaking out against the most significant developments of our time is a reason why, even in the early 1930s when in Leavis's eyes he was not yet seen as a greater literary genius than Eliot, his pre-eminence in Leavis's later thinking is already suggested. Eliot's writing could simply not demonstrate a similar significance.

Interestingly, however, Eliot still occupies an important position in *Culture and Environment*. The fact that the two criticisms of modern advertising given in the opening paragraph above (*CE*, pp. 24, 26) are quotations taken from articles appearing in the *Criterion* indicates this.<sup>3</sup> Leavis and Thompson also quote from Eliot's own 'Commentary' in the *Criterion* for October 1931: 'agriculture ought to be saved and revived because agriculture is the foundation for the good life in any community' (*CE*, p. 137; *CP* 4, p. 359). Eliot is arguably as much against mass-production and its associated modern developments as Leavis and Thompson are, and his consistent support for an agricultural revival is closely linked with the rise of the organic movement in the 1930s and 40s, as Jeremy Diaper has shown.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Leavis and Thompson find support for their claims about the pernicious effect of advertising in E. A. Mowrer's *This American World*, a 'most interesting essay [which] ... makes an admirable introduction to the study of the drift of modern civilisation' and which, as they note, was published by Faber with a Preface by Eliot (*CE*, p. 26). The common position Eliot and Mowrer share, that Europe in Eliot's words 'has contracted a malady the germs of which were bred in her own system' and that America only accelerated the process of 'Americanisation' (*CP* 3,

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<sup>3</sup> Eliot's 'A Commentary' in *Criterion* (December 1928), rpt. in *CP* 3, p. 536; Roger Hinks, 'Artful Publicity', *Criterion* 8 (December 1928), p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> "'A Wrong Attitude Towards Nature': T. S. Eliot and Agriculture", [unpublished] Ph.D. dissert. Univ. of Birmingham, 2015.

pp. 490-1), are endorsed by Leavis and Thompson with their quoting a paragraph from Eliot's *Criterion* 'Commentary' where England is seen as succumbing 'altogether to the method which first became conspicuous in America', which was itself 'the first victim' rather than 'inventor' of the process (*CP* 3, p. 536; *CE*, p. 26). A year before *Culture and Environment* appeared, in *New Bearings*, Leavis had found in *The Waste Land* a commentary on the state of modern culture, with the fact of the poem's drawing on a multitude of myths and traditions indicating the failure of any single tradition 'robust' enough to preside over the others; in particular, the poem for Leavis diagnoses the cost of modernity's being 'uprooted' from the soil of immemorial ways of life associated with a rural culture (*NB*, p. 78), a charge against modernity already indicated in Leavis's approval of a handful of other modern poets like Hardy, Blunden and Edward Thomas in their focus on 'the traditional life of the English countryside' (*NB*, pp. 52-6, 59-64). On this René Wellek observed:

the emphasis on life in the sense of the concrete and immediate is connected with Leavis's concern with the English provincial rural tradition which he apparently finds in Shakespeare, in Bunyan, in Jane Austen, George Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence, all countryfolk of a sort to which the Londoners, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, provide a foil of learned urban poetry. ('The Literary Criticism', p. 190)

This chapter will develop the opposition between the rural and the cosmopolitan as Wellek picked up on and that between Lawrence and Eliot in this

context. Eliot and Lawrence are clearly united for Leavis at this stage in their preoccupations and in sharing them with him, but this chapter will go on to explore how and why Leavis comes to see Eliot as radically diverging from him in the appeals to culture and tradition that both men repeatedly make. Clearly Eliot's disparagement of Lawrence played an important part in this divergence; thus Leavis's disapproval of *After Strange Gods* (1934), discussed in the previous chapter, is wholly concerned with its attack on Lawrence, and surprisingly makes no reference to the fact that Eliot's book begins with his praise for the rural communities of the American South and the authentic culture they preserve in opposition to contemporary urban life, with Eliot lamenting 'the immense pressure towards monotony exerted by the industrial expansion of the latter part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century' and attacking the modern worship of 'economic determinism' (CP 5, p. 18). But as well as his dismay at Eliot's treatment of Lawrence, perhaps Leavis could not fully support what remains in *After Strange Gods* Eliot's rather qualified response to ruralism, his call for 'a proper balance between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural development' (CP 5, p. 20), plus his warnings about indulging 'a sentimental attitude towards the past' (CP 5, p. 19). Such an attitude would see tradition as something 'immovable' and 'hostile to all change', and the mistaken aim would be 'to return to some previous condition which we imagine as having been capable of preservation in perpetuity, instead of aiming to stimulate the life which produced that condition in its time' (CP 5, p. 19). In any such stimulus religion would be crucial, or a 'unity of religious background' (CP 5, p. 20), and it is of course Eliot's Christian orthodoxy that, as we see below, is one of the main divisions between his cultural

outlook and that of Leavis. The latter also came to be associated with that type of sentimental nostalgia that Eliot warned against, as we see later in this chapter in his needing to challenge charges of being a 'Luddite'.

But in spite of emerging differences, Eliot and Leavis shared much of a common outlook in the early 1930s in relation to the opposition indicated in the title of Leavis's pamphlet of 1930, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*. Leavis, in arguing that literary discrimination is increasingly difficult to practise in an age when the 'variety' of cultural offerings is 'overwhelming' with regard to the expansion of publishing and the Press, the development of new media and internationalisation ('the boundaries are gone, and the arts and literatures of different countries and periods have flowed together'), quotes Eliot approvingly from his essay 'The Perfect Critic': 'when there is so much to be known, when there are so many fields of knowledge ... when everyone knows a little about a great many things, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to know whether he knows what he is talking about or not' (*FC*, p. 31; *CP* 2, p. 267). In the face of this bewildering variety, the reader 'must have a great deal more done for him', however this 'doing' is not taking place through the proper educational channels (see the following chapter) but through faulty organisations like the Book Society again (*FC*, pp. 32, 33). Leavis rejects new forms of entertainment like cinema and broadcasting as 'mainly a means of passive diversion ... [making] active recreation, especially active use of the mind, more difficult' (*FC*, p. 21), a position that echoes Eliot's complaint in his 'Marie Lloyd' essay (1923) about the disappearance of participatory modes of recreation:

when every theatre has been replaced by 100 cinemas, when every musical instrument has been replaced by 100 gramophones, when every horse has been replaced by 100 cheap motor-cars, when electrical ingenuity has made it possible for every child to hear its bedtime stories from a loud-speaker, when applied science has done everything possible with the materials on this earth to make life as interesting as possible, it will not be surprising if the population of the entire civilised world rapidly follows the fate of the Melanesians. (*CP 2*, p. 420)

The Melanesians, we are told, are ‘dying from pure boredom’ (*CP 2*, p. 420). However, Leavis never mentions this essay in his writing, an omission returned to below (p. 149). The direction in which culture is heading is all part of the increasing ‘mass-production and standardisation’ and machine and advertisement domination which *Culture and Environment* will return to analyse, but the focus of Leavis’s pamphlet is its consideration of the damage this standardisation is doing to the elite minority, now categorised by the term ‘high-brow’, a term which is ‘an ominous addition to the English language’, and one that could not be applied to, for example, Shakespeare, who wrote ‘plays that were at once popular drama and poetry that could be appreciated only by an educated minority’ (*FC*, p. 38). This anticipates Eliot’s admiration in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) for the ‘several levels of significance’ found in Shakespeare’s plays, stimulating his own desire to write multi-level drama ‘which could cut across all the present stratifications of public taste’ (*CP 4*, p. 691). ‘Culture has always been in minority keeping’ (*FC*, p. 13), Leavis admits, but the difference today is that this minority is

aware of operating not simply in an ‘uncongenial’ but a positively ‘hostile’ environment, of which the dismissive tag ‘high-brow’ is a symptom (*FC*, p. 38). Works like *The Waste Land* ‘are read only by a very small specialised public and are beyond the reach of the vast majority of those who consider themselves educated’, but this is not the fault of writers like Eliot, but of the march of philistine progress which forces serious writers into a smaller and smaller public sphere (*FC*, pp. 38-9). Power lies elsewhere, and ‘the powers that rule the world’ are hostile to culture, making it ‘inevitable that work expressing the finest consciousness of the age should be so specialised as to be accessible only to the minority’ (*FC*, p. 39).

Leavis’s pamphlet ends pessimistically: ‘the prospects of culture, then, are very dark’ (*FC*, p. 44), a position soon to be echoed in *New Bearings* where *The Waste Land* can only speak to a minority of readers, indicating the fragmentation of modern culture and the isolation of the ‘high-brow’; at this point in history Eliot’s poem cannot be ‘universal’ like the poetry of Dante, or a work like *King Lear* (*NB*, p. 88). In *New Bearings* the outlook for poetry generally is very gloomy in modern culture, given that today’s reader ‘has lost the education that in the past was provided by tradition and social environment’ (*NB*, p. 171). Mention of ‘education’ indicates, of course, the only solution to the problem, to be pursued at length in the following chapter, the role of ‘university English’ and its reaching out to the public in addressing the situation, a role Leavis and the *Scrutiny* circle are dedicated to promoting, as Brian Dolje describes: ‘within the tendency represented by Richards, Leavis, and the *Scrutiny* movement, exposure to works of literature was presented as an antidote to the reduction of all meaning and value to quantitative money exchange’, with English studies becoming ‘the repository of a “national

conscience” which aspired to shape and control the mutations of the national popular imagination and thus resist the “blind” and otherwise “uncontrollable forces” which the system had itself unleashed and exploited’.<sup>5</sup> We might note that the subtitle of *Culture and Environment* is *The Training of Critical Awareness*, where such a training (and Leavis and Thompson’s book is in fact intended as a textbook to be used in the class-room) will enable the fraudulent claims and language of advertising to be exposed. In *Culture and Environment* we have the claim that the ‘tradition of literature’ and its survival are intimately linked with the broader traditions whose loss the book laments:

at the centre of our culture is language, and while we have our language tradition is, in some essential sense, still alive ... But if words are our chief link with the past they depend for their life, vigour and potency on being used in association with such traditions as the wheelwright’s and that represented by old Turner [the ideal workman of the old order in Bourne’s *Change in the Village*]—such traditions as died when George Bourne’s shop became a garage and his Surrey village a suburb. (*CE*, pp. 81-2)

Now, however, that language is being ‘debased ... instead of invigorated by contemporary use’ such as advertising, then

it is to literature alone, where its subtlest and finest use is preserved, that we can look with any hope of keeping in touch with our spiritual tradition ...

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 15.

But the literary tradition is alive only so long as there is a tradition of taste, kept alive by the educated.

Hence we have the importance of ‘a good critic, or a cultivated person of sure judgment’ (*CE*, p. 82). The authors compare such a critic—an individual who is, however, dependent on a wider critical community that ‘constitutes a surer taste than any individual can pretend to’—to the wheelwright who practises a craft that is not his alone but represents ‘the experience of ages’ (*CE*, p. 82), but they do not explain how and why ‘language’ must depend on traditional crafts in order to maintain its ‘vigour’, nor why the language of modernity (even if ‘debased’ by advertising) cannot have a vigour of its own.

In *New Bearings*, indeed, much of Leavis’s applause for Eliot’s poetry came from the fact that Eliot was ‘alive in his own age’ (*NB*, p. 19)—a comment that seems highly ironic in retrospect, given that as we have seen Leavis came to be highly doubtful about Eliot’s commitment to ‘life’—and that he sought to ‘expose[] himself freely to the rigours of the contemporary climate’ and not try to escape from it as Tennyson did (*NB*, p. 21), as well as other Victorians like Arnold, who sought in poetry ‘a sanctuary from the modern world’ (*NB*, p. 23). But we noted in chapter 1 how Leavis’s enthusiasm for *The Waste Land* was curiously short-lived, and how he refers to it very little after *New Bearings*, and even if, as noted above, he saw the poem as itself diagnosing the loss of a rural culture (*NB*, p. 78), then that message was to come through much more loudly in the work of George Bourne and D. H. Lawrence.

However, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* does not yet formulate solutions, educational or otherwise, and ends rather on the ‘hope’, one that is ‘unwarranted, possibly’, that ‘what we value most matters too much to the race to be finally abandoned, and that the machine will yet be made a tool’ (*FC*, p. 46). In the meantime, upon the cultured minority

depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition ... In their keeping ... is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent. (*FC*, p. 15)

But for this minority to flourish we need a cultural health that involves the whole ‘race’, or, as he puts it in the editorial to the third issue of *Scrutiny*, “‘Under Which King, Bezonian?’”:

a culture expressing itself in a tradition of literature and art—such a tradition as represents the finer consciousness of the race and provides the currency of finer living—can be in a healthy state only if this tradition is in living relation with a real culture, shared by the people at large. The point might be enforced by saying ... that Shakespeare did not invent the language he used. (*S* 1, pp. 207-8)

We have seen in chapter 1 Leavis making the same comment about Shakespeare's language in his attack on Eliot's depiction of the 'yokels' in 'East Coker', who might be described as the 'people at large' of Shakespeare's England, and Leavis clearly feels that Eliot never grasped the 'living relation' between an elite culture and the healthy popular culture that must support it. His charges against Eliot's 'aestheticism', discussed in chapter 1, see Eliot (and also Ezra Pound) as relying too much on the European literary tradition, or 'mind of Europe', as the matrix for his work, rather than on the 'real culture' that embraces an entire people. This culture is synonymous with 'an art of living ... developed in ages of continuous experience, of relations between man and man, and man and the environment in its seasonal rhythm' which 'the progress of the nineteenth century destroyed, in country and in town'; what was destroyed in fact (to repeat a phrase that has been used in *Scrutiny* before, and will be again) was 'the organic community' (*S* 1, p. 208). The main concern of "'Under Which King, Bezonian?'" is to attack Marxist concepts of 'culture', based on the 'romantic worship of mechanical efficiency', which are at the opposite pole to a world like George Bourne's when 'work was not, as it is now for so many, the antithesis of living' (*S* 1, p. 208). Eliot's 'Commentary' remark quoted above on agriculture as 'the foundation for the Good Life in any society' is repeated (*S* 1, p. 210), though the *Criterion* as a whole does not convince Leavis that its classicising programme can be a solution to the problems 'culture' is facing, given 'the dead, academic kind of abstract "thinking"' it features which confuses or even inverts such ideas like 'order' and 'intelligence'; this thinking however is in contrast as we have seen (p. 31) to its editor's own 'too spare' contributions (*S* 1, pp. 213-4). Nor do the people who run *Scrutiny* itself feel

that ‘we, more than anyone else, have a solution to offer’, beyond insisting that ‘the essential problems should be faced’, and that the solution can only lie, as is hinted in the editorial’s closing paragraph, with the reform of education (*S* 1, p. 214). But whether this can effect a wholesale revival of a lost ‘organic’ culture, or simply bolster an elite minority, is very problematic.

Raymond Williams, though generally sympathetic to Leavis’s educational thinking and his crucial part in the development of English Studies, regarded his putting ‘the responsibility’ of the guardianship of culture ‘upon literature, or more accurately upon criticism’ as a narrowness and elitism of outlook that showed ‘a damaging arrogance’ or a ‘pseudo-aristocratic authoritarianism’.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Leavis’s nostalgic ‘concept of a wholly organic and satisfying past, to be set against a disintegrated and dissatisfying present, tends in its neglect of history to a denial of real social experience’ (p. 281), not only in its excluding from ‘the so-called organic society the penury, the petty tyranny, the disease and mortality’ and so on (p. 278), but also in its unbalanced ignoring of certain ‘evident improvements’ in work, education and social organisation that modern developments have brought with them (pp. 278-9). Williams also has a chapter in his book on Eliot’s cultural thinking, and notes the well-known passage in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* where Eliot argues that the term ‘culture’

includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), pp. 273, 281.

sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar. (p. 250; *NT*, p. 31)

For Williams, this is also inevitably narrow and partial, and clichéd; ‘Eliot’s categories are sport, food and a little art—a characteristic observation of English leisure’ (p. 250). What is interesting about Eliot’s observation is the place he finds in his definition of ‘culture’ for the amusements of a modern urban society, reminding us that, in spite of much hostility to modern popular culture which he shares with Leavis, there are aspects of such a culture he seems to be prepared to embrace (a distinction we will return to below). When he argues in *Notes* that the survival of the ‘higher’ culture is ‘dependent upon the health of the culture of the people’ (*NT*, p. 35), he echoes Leavis’s statement above that ‘a culture expressing itself in a tradition of literature and art ... can be in a healthy state only if this tradition is in living relation with a real culture, shared by the people at large’, but what the two men understand by the culture of the ‘people’ seems to be very different. However there is not any hint of Eliot as a ‘populist’ in cultural terms, as we see there is much in his writing that offsets the acceptance of, for example, ‘a cup final, the dog races, the pin table’ as noted above, and of the ‘mob’ that results from a modern liberal democracy as in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, which we will discuss below. A comment from ‘The Function of Criticism’ of 1923 may be regarded as just as typical: ‘the possessors of the inner voice ride ten in a compartment to a football match at Swansea, listening to the inner voice, which breathes the eternal message of vanity, fear and lust’ (*CP* 2, p. 461).

In many ways Eliot's response to the lost rural world and its crafts and 'organicism' is more hard-headed and less 'sentimental' than that of Leavis, and an interesting sidelight on this can be provided by leaping ahead twenty years or so to Eliot's play of 1954, *The Confidential Clerk*. Here, Sir Claude Mulhammer's acquiescence in 'the terms life imposes upon you' (*CPP*, p. 466)—in his case following his father into the family's financial business rather than pursuing his youthful dreams of being a potter—is mirrored in his son Colby's entering the same business as the 'confidential clerk' and sacrificing his desire to be a professional organist. The discussion between the two men that closes Act I of the play (pp. 463-8) ends with Colby declaring 'I'm really interested by the work I'm doing/And eager for more', the two men then getting down to work by 'run[ning] through the figures' in advance of tomorrow's meeting rather than Sir Claude going off to indulge his former dreams by 'sit[ting] for a while' with his china collection (pp. 467-8). This acceptance to the world of business rather than 'craft' contrasts interestingly with the paragraph Leavis and Thompson quote from Bourne's *The Wheelwright's Shop* (*CE*, pp. 74-5), where the description of the death of the father and passing down of the 'old-fashioned' family business are tinged with sentimental feelings, a tone that enters Leavis and Thompson's biting sarcasm on the machine world. Graham Hough warned in 'Crisis in Literary Education' (1964) that the 'enormous revulsion from a world dominated by industry and science and large organisations', and the reversal to 'the never-never-land of the organic society with those happy peasants Dr. Leavis, Richard Hoggart, and David Holbrook' is a dangerous denial of 'the course of history'; if we are 'exhilarated by an outlook that consists mainly of automatic negations and routine nonconformities', which is the

state that 'literary education' has for 'many years' tended to produce in us, then 'we shall all soon be as dead as the old wheelwright's shop'. Later in Hough's essay Leavis is again associated with the 'sentimentalities' of the 'idealisation of some pre-lapsarian unity of culture, a hazy and unfocused appeal to pre-industrial civilisation, with all the cruel realities left out'.<sup>7</sup> Williams supports this point in noting that what Bourne, Leavis and Thompson eulogise and attack in *Change in the Village*, *The Wheelwright's Shop* and *Culture and Environment* involves

a surrender to a characteristically industrialist or urban, nostalgia—a late version of mediaevalism, with its attachments to an 'adjusted' feudal society. If there is one thing certain about 'the organic community', it is that it has always gone. Its period, in the contemporary myth, is the rural eighteenth century. (*Culture and Society*, p. 277)

'The taking of aspects for wholes', he adds, is 'the basic intellectual fault' in *Culture and Environment* (p. 278), and whilst it is true that 'a number of new kinds of unsatisfying work have come into existence; a number of new kinds of cheap entertainment; and a number of new kinds of social division', against these 'must be set a number of new kinds of satisfying work; certain evident improvements, and new opportunities, in education; certain important new kinds of social organisation' (p. 279).

In Leavis's attack on the state of the Press in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*—'when we consider ... the processes of mass-production and

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<sup>7</sup> Graham Hough, 'Crisis in Literary Education', in *Crisis in the Humanities*, ed. J. H. Plumb (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), pp. 96, 100-1.

standardisation in the form represented by the Press, it becomes obviously of sinister significance that they should be accompanied by a process of levelling-down' (*FC*, p. 18)—he was anticipated by judgements in several of Eliot's *Criterion* 'Commentaries'. In fact, the *Criterion*'s reverting to a quarterly appearance after a brief phase of appearing monthly (May 1927 to March 1928) was seen by Eliot as a defiance of journalistic 'levelling-down', given that quarterly publication is seen as 'opposing some of the tendencies of contemporary life' and is 'obsolete to the popular mind' (*CP* 3, p. 417). The magazine thus attempts to reproduce 'some of the characteristics of the quarterly reviews of a hundred years ago' which have 'languished in this century of rapid production and consumption' (*CP* 3, p. 59). In January 1930 Eliot accuses the popular Press of diverting the reader's mind 'with shallow discussions of serious topics' in order to 'destroy his wits with murders and weddings and curates' confessions, and to reduce him to a condition in which he is less capable of voting with any discrimination at the smallest municipal election, than if he could neither read nor write' (*CP* 4, p. 5). This suggestion that reading itself, the literacy that has arrived through universal education, can be positively counter-productive is an idea that Eliot and Leavis share. It is indicated by well-known comments by the former such as 'it is the half-educated and ill-educated, rather than the uneducated, who stand in [the poet's] way: I myself should like an audience who can neither read nor write' (*CP* 4, p. 690) and by the examples quoted in the 'Education' chapter of *Culture and Environment*, such as Bourne's comment that 'one of the ablest, most intelligent, men in my shop could not read or write', as well as by Hilaire Belloc's observation, quoted in *Culture and Environment*, that before the Education Act of 1870 reading

had been put to better, if sparer, use, in concentrating on such things as *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible: 'the difference between the old England and the newer is that people have by now fallen into a habit of *perpetual* reading, which in the better days the great mass of English men and women did not' (*CE*, p. 104, emphasis in original).<sup>8</sup> In the 'Substitute-Living' chapter of *Culture and Environment* the authors examine the compensation for the routine of an unfulfilled working life offered by 'perpetual reading' in the form of popular novels, including romance and detective fiction, and the popular Press (*CE*, pp. 99-103). The account draws heavily on Q. D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), and when Eliot based a July 1932 *Criterion* 'Commentary' on this book we again get a clear indication of how much at this stage he has in common with the Leavisite position in his condemnation of 'the pernicious habit of novel-reading':

we may say that it was only to be expected that when the whole public had been taught to read, it would choose to read very poor stuff; that the taste of the mob can never be much elevated, because of its invincible mental laziness; and that the Athenian crowd would never have applauded Aristophanes if it had experienced the pleasures of Mr. Noel Coward and the cinema. (*CP* 4, p. 489)

Eliot agrees with Q. D. Leavis's argument that 'the great majority of novels ... as the great majority of films' are there 'to provide day-dreams' (*CP* 4, p. 490), and adds in his own phrase that this is 'a disease of society' (*CP* 4, p. 491). The

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<sup>8</sup> Hilaire Belloc, 'The Commercialisation of Books', *New Statesman*, 29 March 1930, pp. 808-9.

doubtful value of literacy *per se* is underlined in his comment that ‘in a properly organised world the vast majority of novels such as are published today would not be published, because there would be no market; the people who read them would have something better to do than to read’ (CP 4, p. 490). But in terms of what can be done about this situation, Eliot has a very different outlook from Leavis. His insistence that ‘we cannot expect any merely political or social change to raise the artistic sensibility of the public, to stimulate the flowering of artistic talent or to inaugurate a world of beauty’ (CP 4, p. 492) anticipates his scepticism about any form of cultural ‘planning’ in the later *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (see below), as does the suggestion throughout the ‘Commentary’ that a healthy culture is inseparable from religion (CP 4, pp. 490, 491, 492). Although the statement that the blight of reading won’t be cured ‘until you can give [the people] either religion, or to each man a job in which he can be passionately interested, or both’ (CP 4, p. 492), might seem to meet Leavis’s warnings about the damaging routine of modern employment to some extent, as might the remark that ‘periods of great art ... seem always to have arisen’ when ‘some fortunate relation ... appears between the individual and community’ (CP 4, p. 491), Eliot never develops these suggestions, and the whole article is characterised by an unwillingness to make any predictions or assurances.

The article is at its most definite in rejecting the cultural theorising of other schools like ‘the Marxian theory of literature’ (CP 4, p. 494), a position Leavis would also share. But what this ‘Commentary’ clearly does not show is any belief in or nostalgia for a lost culture of the people, fostered by the old craft communities when man was in harmony with ‘the environment in its seasonal rhythm’ in

Leavis's phrase; in other words, there is no craving for the 'organic community' in Leavis's understanding of the term. For Eliot, the 'people' at any stage of history are hardly to be distinguished from the 'mob' they are always liable to become, even in ancient Athens. In his review of Pound's *Letters* several years later, Leavis took exception to a similar remark he quotes from Pound to the effect that 'the Greek populace was PAID [sic] to attend the great Greek tragedies, and darn well wouldn't have gone otherwise, or if there had been a cinema', arguing that this showed a 'barbarian' mind's inability to understand 'what a culture was at all' in its lack of belief in an integrated cultural past (*S* 18, p. 76). One interesting aspect of Eliot's 'Commentary' on Q. D. Leavis's book is his suggestion that it is however in the drama that we have 'one form which might gain new life in a new age' (*CP* 4, p. 491). This is related to Eliot's belief that in drama might be unified the elite-popular stratifications of taste as mentioned above, and that drama retains a link with age-old cultural ritual which is not dependent on a debased literacy.<sup>9</sup> Ironically it was to be precisely Eliot's dramas like *The Cocktail Party* which confirmed Leavis in his belief in Eliot's unpardonable elitism.

Of course in recent years there has been a good deal of work by David Chinitz, Nancy Hargrove and others claiming that Eliot himself represents a crossing of the 'cultural divide' in his embrace of popular culture alongside the tribute to the 'mind of Europe'—Virgil, Dante, Baudelaire and so on—that his work embodies.<sup>10</sup> Leavis never considers the possibility of this aspect of Eliot—there is no reference for

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<sup>9</sup> On the connections between drama and ritual in Eliot's thinking, see David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 105-27.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Duvall Hargrove, *T. S. Eliot's Parisian Year* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2009); David Trotter, the chapter on 'T. S. Eliot', in *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 125-58.

example in his criticism to works like ‘Marie Lloyd’, ‘Sweeney Agonistes’ nor, obviously, the scurrilous early poetry only published since Leavis’s death; in other words, no reference to the sources from which a popular Eliot might be retrieved. Likewise Eliot’s affection for the detective story contrasts with Q. D. Leavis’s reference to it as a ‘detrimental diet’ because ‘a habit of fantasising will lead to maladjustment in actual life’, as quoted in *Culture and Environment* (CE, p. 100).<sup>11</sup> But even if Eliot could be seen as unifying, to some degree, different cultural worlds, this would hardly impress Leavis, whose ideal of unity—the ‘organic community’—is emphatically nostalgic and pre-industrial; that Eliot’s popular culture has its roots in entertainments characteristic of a modern urban culture, jazz, music-hall, detective fiction, radio, even, in spite of Eliot’s demurs, cinema itself, as in David Chinitz’s account in *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide*, would only count further against him. Indeed, Leavis’s tendency to divide cultures, such as rural culture and industrial/technological culture, was displayed notoriously in the ‘two cultures controversy’ with C. P. Snow which we return to later (pp. 171-3). Ortolano has distinguished Snow’s idea of ‘modern civilisation’ from Leavis’s in his *The Two Cultures Controversy*, which points up Eliot’s more balanced view on both: ‘for Snow modern civilisation was *industrial civilisation*’ having ‘its origins in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ and bringing ‘material prosperity and social opportunity to the majority of the population’, whereas for Leavis, ‘modern civilisation led to *mass civilisation*: it has its origins in the seventeenth century, and it displaced a unified culture that had previously flourished’ (*The Two Cultures Controversy*, p. 11, emphasis in original).

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<sup>11</sup> Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), p. 53.

*Scrutiny*'s high seriousness could hardly accept this side of Eliot—thus, Boris Ford, in his review of Eliot's *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1942), is disparaging about 'that side of him that confesses to a taste for music-hall' and for Kipling: 'Mr. Eliot should never have lowered himself to advocating a revival of interest in such a writer' ('A Case for Kipling?', *S* 11, p. 33). Leavis had already attacked Kipling in 'Mass Civilisation' for being a forerunner of the corruption produced by advertising on the English language (*FC*, p. 23). Chinitz in fact explicitly rejects the 'tradition, beginning with Leavis himself, of reading Eliot as a proto-Leavis' in the distaste for modern popular culture supposedly shared by the two men (*Cultural Divide*, p. 154), but it is significant that in Chinitz's reading there is no sense that we have in Eliot the 'unity' of his disparate interests. Thus Chinitz ends his account of the Eliot who 'transgressed the cultural divide' with the claim that it is this Eliot who 'is needed today ... if Eliot is to matter at all', and that 'the portentous, the elitist, the mandarin Eliot'—that is the one absorbed in writers like Dante and Baudelaire—is completely out of sympathy with today's progressive readership: 'we who have inherited this Eliot do not need him and so reject him' (*Cultural Divide*, p. 189). It was rather in D. H. Lawrence that Leavis found the unifying figure of a powerful intellectual with a man of the people, a combination which he certainly felt did not apply to Eliot.

Throughout the *Criterion*'s lifetime the increasing corruption of the literary Press was a concern of Eliot's, as illustrated by a comment contributed by Hugh Gordon Porteus in October 1938: 'more and more the bad example of the daily Press is being followed, so that the monthlies and quarterlies tend to be mere extensions of the bright, newsy miscellanies on which the tired business mind

makes its breakfast'.<sup>12</sup> The state of the contemporary Press was of course of particular concern in the setting up of a new journal like *Scrutiny*, whose opening 'Manifesto' indicated the difficulties facing any 'serious critical journal' and how even the 'survivors' have had to 'lower[] their level of appeal', the 'more blatant signs' of this being 'gossiping essays, inferior criticism, competitions and crossword puzzles' (*S* 1, p. 2). *Scrutiny*, we are told, 'will be seriously preoccupied with the movement of modern civilisation' (*S* 1, p. 3), 'preoccupied' because the alarming direction of that movement is clear, as illustrated in the contemporary *Culture and Environment*. Whilst the *Criterion* must still be spoken of with respect as 'the most serious as it is the most intelligent of our journals', its price, tone and 'narrowing of its interests' in recent years (reflecting its editor's increasing orthodoxy) limit its influence significantly (*S* 1, p. 3), a comment indicating Leavis's reservations about Eliot as editor that have been discussed at greater length in chapter 1.

In *Scrutiny* cultural diagnosis of the type we have discussed so far in this chapter is pervasive: thus the opening review of the first volume, by Q. D. Leavis, features four works by the American commentator Stuart Chase, who examines 'the drift of the modern world' into a machine-culture that creates 'a breach of cultural continuity' ('A Middleman of Ideas', *S* 1, pp. 69-70). An example is, in words quoted from Chase, the 'decline of handicraft' in printing, along with the vast proliferation of reading matter made possible by machines 'turning out five miles of paper in one spasm, at a speed greater than man can walk' (*S* 1, p. 70). The result is that

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<sup>12</sup> Hugh Gordon Porteus, 'Periodicals, English', *Criterion* 18 (October 1938), p. 166.

the more he (the householder) reads, the more illiterate he becomes ... He stands goggle-eyed before a thousand advertising campaigns pulling him in as many directions. The sense of quality, durability, value, which was strong in his less lettered grandfather, has well-nigh evaporated from his more lettered self. (*S* 1, p. 70)<sup>13</sup>

This observation picks up on several things dear to the *Scrutiny* cause: the negative effect of advertising, the nostalgia for the pre-machine culture, and the belief that literacy can be a positive evil—which as we have seen is shared by Eliot and others—if given the wrong kind of thing to consume. Chase is especially valuable to Q. D. Leavis as a ‘middleman’ communicating the details of sociological research to ‘the ordinary cultured man’, and American commentators are in the vanguard of this needful communication, whereas in England this role is vacant because of the academic obscurantism of the universities, who ‘would cut [someone like Chase] instinctively’ (*S* 1, pp. 71, 73). We do have according to Q. D. Leavis ‘distinctly bogus’ middlemen like H. G. Wells, but he serves a crudely progressive agenda (*S* 1, p. 72). The attack on academia, and its lacking a communicative function with the wider educated community, is as we shall see a further constant *Scrutiny* complaint.

However, Leavis’s own review of three novels by John Dos Passos in the second issue of *Scrutiny* under the heading ‘A Serious Artist’ indicates a different and less complimentary response to America, and one that remains fundamental to

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<sup>13</sup> Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines* (1929; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 234-5.

him. Although in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* he had attacked ‘Americanisation’ without attacking America itself for producing it, finding that what it represents is predominant here in Europe too, his attitude towards America generally tends to be far more dismissive. Gary Day has pointed out in *Re-reading Leavis* that Leavis used America in both a metaphorical and metonymic manner; as an exaggerated metaphor for a modernity that indicates ‘what is happening to and going to happen to English culture’ (p. 34) and metonymically in the way he ‘extrapolates the whole of America from one part of it’, the representative modern town (p. 35). In ‘A Serious Artist’ he notes the ‘agonised vacuity’ of modern American existence, which ‘it is [Passos’s] distinction to convey so potently’ (*S 1*, p. 178), but argues that the novelist’s limitation lies in not being able to offer anything convincing to put in its place, and this is related to his ‘show[ing] nothing like an adequate awareness of—or concern for—what has been lost’ (*S 1*, p. 177). This is related to the author’s American nationality—‘In America the Western process has gone furthest, and what has been lost is virtually forgotten’; more generally, ‘when one speaks of the old popular culture that existed in innumerable local variations people cannot grasp what one means’ (*S 1*, pp. 177, 178). That old culture—represented by the inevitable phrase ‘the organic community’—is a subject which, asserts Leavis, the present review is ‘no place to try and explain’, but which can be indicated by directing the reader to *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and the ‘works of George Bourne’ (*S 1*, p. 178). It will be a good while before Leavis attacks Eliot for a similar type of cultural amnesia which is peculiarly American—instances of which have been seen in previous chapters—but it is interesting that the seeds are already in place as early as the outset of *Scrutiny*. ‘A Cure for

Amnesia' was indeed the title of an essay by Thompson in the June 1933 issue of *Scrutiny* which exemplified the fact that 'it is part of *Scrutiny*'s policy to make Bourne's work better known' (*S* 2, p. 10), an essay which outlined the vision of 'organic community' found in that work in contrast to phoney books on rural life like those by Henry Williamson (*S* 2, p. 2). The essay ends by quoting the Eliot observation which has almost become a mantra (see on pp. 93-4, 96): 'to preserve the individual from the solely centrifugal impulse of heresy, to make him capable of judging for himself and at the same time capable of judging and understanding the judgments of the experience of the race'.<sup>14</sup>

It is unnecessary to point to all the examples in the first years of *Scrutiny* that illustrate its 'policy to make Bourne's work better known' (*S* 2, p. 10), but their frequency is also indicated by their occurrence in unexpected places, such as in Leavis's 1933 review of work by James Joyce that was eventually incorporated into *Finnegans Wake*. Here Leavis argues that the so-called 'internationalisation of language' in Joyce is a 'cosmopolitan' phenomenon which is a 'symptom of dissolution', for a healthy language, like a healthy culture, has to be 'rooted in the soil'; the 'strength of English ... was formed when the English people who formed it was predominantly rural', and for 'how much richer the *life* was in the old, predominantly rural order than in the modern suburban world one must go to the now oft-cited George Bourne ... for an adequate intimation' (*S* 2, pp. 198-200, emphasis in original). This anticipates Leavis's later attacks on cosmopolitanism,

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that in another essay 'Advertising God' of 1932, Thompson in attacking the 'adman' as a 'parasite ... swollen so dropsically that its parent is dwarfed' (*S* 1, p. 241) referred again to Eliot's *Criterion* 'Commentary' of 1928 on the 'flimsy structure' of 'the material prosperity of modern civilisation', which 'depends upon inducing people to buy what they do not want, and to want what they should not buy', an observation repeated in *Culture and Environment* and quoted at the head of this chapter (*CP* 3, pp. 536-7).

as will be discussed below. It may be, as Hilliard has commented, that of the *Scrutiny* circle it was Thompson who was the most fervent supporter of ‘rural life and customs’ and who ‘drafted the chapters’ in *Culture and Environment* on the organic community and on Bourne, but this should not mean that Leavis was not also a fully signed-up member of the Bourne club (*English as a Vocation*, p. 49). His letter to the *Spectator* thirty years later, headed ‘The Organic Community’, protesting against Maureen O’ Connor’s charges of his ‘romancing about the past’, or his positing a ‘roseate prehistory’ to the era of technological progress, refers to Bourne as authentic documentation that ‘there once was an organic community’ (*LIC*, pp. 100-1).<sup>15</sup> He is indeed concerned to stress elsewhere, as in ‘Luddites? or There is Only One Culture’ of 1966, that his and Thompson’s organicism was devoid of picturesque clichés: ‘the use to which we put Bourne had nothing William Morrisian in it; neither of us, I may say, went in for folk-dancing—or pubs’ (*NSMS*, pp. 84-5). The significance of writers like Morris for Leavis was much more serious and non-recreational, as in his attack on C. P. Snow’s ‘crass Wellsianism’, or the belief in the progressive and materialist benefits of science as part of the ‘two cultures’ debate: Snow

dismisses ... Dickens and Ruskin, and all the writers leading down to Lawrence. Yet ... it was Ruskin who put into currency the distinction between wealth and well-being, which runs down through Morris and the British Socialist movement to the Welfare State. (‘Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow’, *NSMS*, pp. 57-8)

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<sup>15</sup> Maureen O’Connor, ‘No Longer the Local’, *Spectator*, 3 May 1963, p. 586. Leavis’s reply appeared a week later.

Collini indeed has pointed out that in quoting ‘the Lawrentian maxim “nothing matters but life”’ in ‘Two Cultures?’ (*NSMS*, p. 53), ‘Leavis’s language at this point is almost a direct echo of Ruskin’s famous maxim ... “there is no wealth but life”’.<sup>16</sup> This indication of a Ruskinian Leavis strengthens the position of Eliot’s disagreement with Leavis over the ‘life’ that can be found in the rural past, as indicated by his dissociating himself from any ‘neo-Ruskinian’ position which we will return to below (see p. 159).

Since Eliot’s scattered comments in the *Criterion* and elsewhere do indicate as we have seen that, contemporaneously with Leavis’s own development, he too believed in rural/agricultural restoration and had grave doubts about the unrestrained extension of urban (and suburban) living, it is important to establish in more detail how Leavis’s ‘organic community’ differs from Eliot’s blueprint for a rural community, a fuller picture of which Eliot gave in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939).<sup>17</sup> Here Eliot attacks the effect of an advanced industrial society—and ‘Britain has been highly industrialised longer than any other country’—to ‘create bodies of men and women ... susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob’ (*ICS*, p. 53), partly through the means of an ‘increasing organisation of advertisement and propaganda’ (*ICS*, p. 66). The rejection of ever-increasing

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<sup>16</sup> Stefan Collini, ‘Introduction’ to *Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow* by F. R. Leavis (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), pp. 18-9. The Ruskin quotation is from *Unto This Last* (1862), ed. Clive Wilmer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 222.

<sup>17</sup> Among other relevant Eliot observations are a 1938 ‘Commentary’ in the *Criterion* where he expresses the belief that ‘real and spontaneous country life ... is the right life for the great majority in any nation’ (*Criterion* 17, p. 483, rpt. *CP* 5, p. 613); in a later ‘Commentary’ he writes again that ‘it is necessary that the greater part of the population ... should be settled in the country and dependent upon it’ (*Criterion* 18, p. 60, rpt. *CP* 5, p. 649); elsewhere in an essay in *Christendom* of 1940, ‘The English Tradition’, he writes that the ‘natural habitat’ of the English is the ‘small rural community’ (*Christendom*, December 1940, pp. 226-7).

urbanisation goes hand-in-hand with Eliot's upholding the rural parish, or 'small and mostly self-contained group attached to the soil', as his model of community and settlement, but even whilst he does this he insists that he holds no nostalgia for any 'idyllic picture' of the rural past (*JCS*, p. 59). Eliot's rejection of the rural idyll that was prominent in much writing and cultural production of the 1930s, ironically often fuelled by advertising, has been documented by Steve Ellis, though Ellis does not consider Leavis's relation to this debate.<sup>18</sup> Although Eliot looks back beyond English rural settlement to primitive societies in which 'the operation of a social-religious-artistic complex' is something 'we should emulate upon a higher plane', he does this also 'without sentimentalising the life of the savage'; indeed, this primitive 'complex' is merely a stage on the road once more to Christian religion, as Eliot expands on in his remarks on D. H. Lawrence:

the struggle to recover the sense of relation to nature and to God, the recognition that even the most primitive feelings should be part of our heritage, seems to me to be the explanation and justification of the life of D. H. Lawrence, and the excuse for his aberrations. But we need not only to learn how to look at the world with the eyes of a Mexican Indian—and I hardly think that Lawrence succeeded—and we certainly cannot afford to stop there. We need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers saw it; and the purpose of reascending to origins is that we should be able to return, with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation. We need

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<sup>18</sup> See the section 'Landscape Polemics in the 1930s' in Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in 'Four Quartets'* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 93-122.

to recover the sense of religious fear, so that it may be overcome by religious hope. (*ICS*, p. 81)

The sense that modern urban humanity has become deadened and desensitised to the powers of nature is a central theme of 'The Dry Salvages' (1941), the third of the *Quartets*, but there too a need to reawaken a sense of awe in the face of a hostile, pagan nature is essentially prefatory to the stimulus this will provide to the Christian hope that will be a refuge from these powers. In other words, in Eliot's thinking here, there are three concepts, the primitive, the urban and the Christian, and this is different from the relevant dualism of Leavis/Lawrence, where the primitive is used as an end in itself to offset the deficiencies of modernity, as we have seen in a remark from Leavis already quoted in chapter 2 above: 'who will assert that the average member of a modern society is more fully human, or more alive, than a Bushman, an Indian peasant, or a member of one of those poignantly surviving primitive peoples, with their marvellous art and skills and vital intelligence?' (*NSMS*, p. 60), a remark which, however, to Collini sounds 'more than a little wilful' and 'seem[s] tendentious and unconvincing' ('Introduction', *Two Cultures?*, p. 23). This remark evokes not only Lawrence, but Stuart Chase again, whose book *Mexico* (1932), one of the four works by him noted by Q. D. Leavis in the review mentioned above, contrasts unfavourably in her words the modern American city with 'a large Mexican village forming part of a small economic region with a handicraft culture' (*S 1*, p. 71).

Eliot's refusal to 'sentimentalise' either primitive peoples or even the rural organisation which is his social and national model in *The Idea of a Christian*

*Society* is in accordance with his scepticism about social and secular achievement generally—in short his postlapsarianism—which is marked throughout the book, his warnings of the temptations of ‘speculation on a possible Christian order in the future to tend to come to rest in a kind of apocalyptic vision of a golden age of virtue’. As opposed to more optimistic pictures of social restoration Eliot insists that even a Christian society can only ever be ‘a sordid travesty of what human society should be’ (*ICS*, p. 79). In fact the ‘peculiar gloom’ at the heart of Eliot’s *Idea* is the main focus of the review of the book which appeared in *Scrutiny* in December 1939 from D. W. Harding (*S* 8, p. 312). For him, Eliot’s lack of belief in social progress, together with the historical record of the Church as hostile to progressive thinking (*S* 8, p. 311), appears to much qualify the fact that ‘Mr. Eliot implicitly agrees with much that has been expressed in *Scrutiny* for the last seven years’, notably ‘the lowering of standards in literature and “culture” in the narrower sense’ and ‘the substitution of a mob led by propaganda in place of a community’ (*S* 8, p. 310). But the problem of Eliot’s Christianity overshadows the review so much that Eliot’s ‘dismay at the plight of agriculture’ (*S* 8, p. 310) gets merely a passing mention by Harding, and in any case, as we have noted, Eliot’s ruralism, whilst believed in, tends to be dour and uncompromising compared with the craft-and-community version we find in many contemporary writings, with Eliot being careful to dissociate it from any idyllic or, in his phrase, ‘neo-Ruskinian’, picture (*ICS*, p. 60). The subject of education also features in *Idea*, and we shall return to it in the following chapter.

During and after the Second World War, the cultural divergence between Leavis and Eliot starts to become clearer, ironically at a time when the appearance of *Four*

*Quartets* had revived Leavis's respect for Eliot the poet. Eliot's commitment to what he calls 'The Unity of European Culture' becomes a prominent theme in his writing, at a time when that unity, threatened by warfare, was being further weakened by the waning of Christian belief and the diminishing of the importance of the classics in the educational curriculum. Eliot had always, of course, been an upholder of 'the mind of Europe', famously in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (*CP* 2, p. 107) and in other earlier essays like that on Marvell (1921), where 'Marvell's best verse' is seen as 'the product of European, that is to say Latin, culture', and where Eliot goes on to discuss poems like 'To His Coy Mistress' in relation to the classical tradition (*CP* 2, pp. 309, 311-2). The difference with Leavis is indicated by the latter's noting, in his 'Literature and Society' (1943), how this placing of Marvell is only half the story, and that 'his refinement involves no insulation from the popular', the merging between 'popular' and 'literary culture' marking the 'advantages enjoyed by the literary writer' through the whole period of English literature 'from Shakespeare to Marvell' (*S* 12, p. 9). Leavis's essay is among other things a lament for the fact that 'there was, in the seventeenth century, a real culture of the people' that no longer exists today, illustrated above all in the work of Bunyan (*S* 12, p. 7). Chris Baldick has pointed out how the 'ideological traditions' which encompass Bunyan, English non-conformism and the 'civilising work of Methodism' were already saluted in Q. D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public*, and how such a tradition comprised Eliot's 'declared enemies', and indeed Eliot's sense of what has been lost at this time, and who and what might remedy this, is very different from that of the Leavises.<sup>19</sup> It can be summed up in his

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<sup>19</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 176-7. Although towards the end of his study Baldick mentions the ultimate 'political

concluding words to ‘The Unity of European Culture’, published in 1946, where he calls on ‘men of letters’ across Europe to

try to save something of those goods of which we are the common trustees; the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2000 years. In a world which has seen such material devastation as ours, these spiritual possessions are also in imminent peril. (*NT*, p. 124)

This essay, originating in ‘broadcast talks to Germany’ at the end of the war (*NT*, p. 9), was reprinted as the Appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), a volume where Eliot is concerned to stress that ‘culture’ cannot be thought of aside from religion—indeed, ‘the culture of a people [is] an *incarnation* of its religion’ (*NT*, p. 33, emphasis in original)—nor can a programme for its revival—at a time during living memory when ‘the culture of Europe has deteriorated visibly’—be ‘planned’ by governments or international agencies like the United Nations (*NT*, pp. 108-9, 14-5). On the contrary, ‘culture is something that must grow; you cannot build a tree, you can only plant it, and care for it, and wait for it to mature in its due time’ (*NT*, p. 119). If *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* is short on ‘planning’, its major emphasis lies in promoting the idea that a healthy culture is federal, in the sense that British culture is vitalised by, and mutually vitalises, flourishing and separate regional cultures, and in turn contributes to and receives from the culture of Europe:

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divergence ... between the high-church Eliot and the nonconformist Leavises’ (p. 231), he tends to discuss the common concerns between them rather more, given that by 1932, the closing date of his history, this serious divergence lay in the future.

For the health of the culture of Europe two conditions are required: that the culture of each country should be unique, and that the different cultures should recognise their relationship to each other, so that each should be susceptible of influence from the others. And this is possible because there is a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling and behaviour, an interchange of arts and of ideas. (*NT*, p. 119)

Eliot's Europeanness had never had any attraction for Leavis, partly because of its associations with Christianity and also because of the educational implications of the crucial 'legacy' of Greece and Rome, and what this meant for the study of English literature. This aspect will be discussed in the following chapter. Eliot's Europeanising agenda is also fundamental to *Four Quartets*, for example in the conspicuous Latinity of much of the poem's diction (announced at the very start of 'Burnt Norton' with 'abstraction', 'speculation', 'eructation' and so on), a gesturing towards Europe and classic style that sites the poem's English within the context of 'European literature as a whole' (see 'What is a Classic'?, *OPP*, p. 69), as discussed by Steve Ellis (*The English Eliot*, pp. 11-2, 14-5), but significantly this linguistic aspect plays no part in any of Leavis's appreciations of the poem, as discussed in chapter 1. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* also nowhere talks about the important roots of English culture in the rural folk tradition, which is a key Leavis insistence. For David Gervais, Eliot subordinates regional to national culture: 'he saw "the regions" mainly as servants of a classically centered, metropolitan culture' (*Literary Englands*, p. 135). He argues that there are some 'more constructive

suggestions [in *Notes*] with which both Leavis and Bourne might have found common ground' in, for example, Eliot's emphasis that 'what is wanted is ... to grow a contemporary culture from the old roots' (*NT*, p. 53; *Literary Englands*, p. 135), but he dismisses any element of 'constructive[ness]' in both Leavis and Eliot: 'in objecting to [Eliot's presentment of the past] Leavis is appealing to a world that is not wholly real to himself either', the two sharing 'a familiar sense of enforced distance from the past, that each rationalised ... in his particular way' (*Literary Englands*, p. 139). Moreover, if Eliot's 'coupling of man and woman/And that of beasts' in 'East Coker' (*P* 1, p. 186) 'suggests prim distaste, despite its attempted frankness', Gervais thinks Leavis is 'reductive in an opposite direction': his 'over-anxious[ness] to think of rural life as intrinsically life-enhancing', his deliberate ignorance of certain aspects of the real English rural life makes one 'suspect[] that Leavis would have preferred something more like the mellow "realism" of *Adam Bede* to a realistic picture of the disease and distress of sixteenth-century peasant life' (*Literary Englands*, p. 139); further, 'even the potent word "life" can be used to insulate ourselves against some of the more disturbing things which life is usually felt to comprise' (p. 142).

*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* received not surprisingly a very cool reception in *Scrutiny*, even if Leavis did not review it himself, albeit it was given the honour of a three-part 'symposium' being based upon it—an opportunity in fact to attack it from three separate viewpoints—beginning with G. H. Bantock's 'Mr. Eliot and Education' in the March 1949 issue (*S* 16, pp. 64-70), which shall be considered in the following chapter. The other two contributions to the 'symposium' are fiercely critical about what is seen as Eliot's 'aloofness', or the

‘refusing, with splendid dignity, to commit oneself to anything practical’ (L. A. Cormican, ‘Mr. Eliot and Social Biology’, *S 17*, p. 7). Cormican repeatedly talks about ‘the slackness of Eliot’s mind’ (*S 17*, p. 6) in *Notes* and ‘the vagueness of his terms’ (*S 17*, p. 10). He also complains about Eliot’s neglecting the opportunity that ‘his special training and position’ give him to talk about cultural relationships between England and the United States, rather than his focusing on cooperation between the European universities, since ‘the future of culture will depend to some extent on the degree in which England and the United States influence each other and pool their mental resources’ (*S 17*, p. 9). The final contribution, from D. F. Pocock, is even more hostile and dismissive (and much shorter, with the bare title ‘Symposium on Mr. Eliot’s *Notes* (III)’): ‘one of the many impressions the book leaves is that of its sterility’, and in it ‘Mr. Eliot appears to have written off the world as one of his own bad jokes’, a charge that can also be levelled (as Leavis would agree) at *The Cocktail Party* (*S 17*, p. 273). Too disengaged to convince anyone who does not already agree with Eliot, the book’s analysis is superficial and its scholarship ‘inadequate’; compared with the ‘earlier promise’ of Eliot’s critical writings we have a degeneration ‘into wilful hopelessness which can only appear as a subtle complacency’ or ‘source of bewilderment’ to the reader (*S 17*, p. 276).

The importance of the European cultural agenda is also evident in essays by Eliot like ‘What is a Classic?’ (1944) and ‘Virgil and the Christian World’ (1951). The former reminds us that

as Europe is a whole (and still, in its progressive mutilation and disfigurement, the organism out of which any greater world harmony must

develop), so European literature is a whole, the several members of which cannot flourish, if the same blood-stream does not circulate throughout the whole body. The blood-stream of European literature is Latin and Greek. (*OPP*, pp. 69-70)

The latter essay, as its title suggests, talks about the continuity of the European cultural tradition, and how ‘we are all, in so far as we inherit the civilisation of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire’ (*OPP*, p. 130). These essays were included in Eliot’s collection *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), the subject of a review-essay by Leavis the following year titled ‘T. S. Eliot as Critic’, the hostility of which towards Eliot has been noted in chapter 1 (pp. 38, 40). Leavis’s assessment ends with a dismissal of ‘such characteristic things as “What is a Classic?”’ as ‘academic’ in a negative sense, displaying ‘the sense of an intensity of intellectual energy, devoted by the critic and exacted of the reader, incommensurate with any upshot of defined, organised and profitable thought’ (*AK*, p. 196). Throughout Leavis’s essay Eliot is convicted of a ‘radical conventionality of judgement’ (*AK*, p. 185) which shows in a series of works and authors ‘backed’ by him, or given house-room in the *Criterion*, who are for Leavis second-rate; they include Kipling, Charles Whibley, Hugh Walpole, David Garnett, Auden and Irving Babbitt. Eliot’s critical support, it is suggested, is frequently determined by the desire to keep in with ‘an English social world of the “best people”’ (*AK*, p. 187), an establishment coterie whose disastrous attraction for Eliot in Leavis’s eyes we have already discussed in chapter 1. Leavis does not openly refer to Eliot’s European agenda in his essay, but the fact that ‘What is a Classic?’ like the rest of *On Poetry and Poets*,

offers no ‘profitable thought’ is certainly connected with Eliot’s slighting of the authentic (and threatened) English cultural tradition of the type dear to Leavis as discussed in this chapter. Eliot’s work does not show ‘any sense of the real problem’:

that problem as it must have appeared to an engaged and realising mind, livingly aware of the state of things in England, and intent on a serious response to the challenge. It seems to me that there was nothing more adequate behind the *Criterion* than the general idea of a great European review; the idea as it might have been formed in (say) Irving Babbitt’s lecture room. What Eliot learnt from Ezra Pound or Wyndham Lewis or the social-literary world in which he formed his notion of England didn’t help him to anything better. (*AK*, p. 194)

Eliot’s idea of Europe, itself academic and inspired by ‘the born academic’ Irving Babbitt, ‘obtuse in his dogged and argumentative erudition’ (‘The Wild, Untutored Phoenix’, *S* 6, p. 358), goes hand-in-hand with the ‘notion of England’ held by a shallow socialite.

In an essay of 1918 on Henry James, Eliot declared that ‘the final perfection, the consummation of an American’ is to ‘become, not an Englishman, but a European—something which no born European, no person of any European nationality, can become’ (*CP* 1, p. 648), but the idea of entry into this European community never impressed Leavis. For him, Eliot’s American origin could only be a disqualification for a correct cultural understanding of the contemporary

‘problem’, which by contrast is so evident in the work of Lawrence. In the 1951 attack on Eliot’s Foreword to the Tiverton volume, discussed in the previous chapter, Leavis declared that ‘Lawrence knew every day of his life in intimate experience the confrontation, the interpenetration, of the old agricultural England with the industrial; the contrast of the organic forms and rhythms and the old beauty of humane adaptation with what had supervened’ (S 18, pp. 69-70). This intimacy with a ‘living and central tradition’, in Eliot’s phrase, is exactly what the latter insists Lawrence so disastrously lacked in *After Strange Gods* (CP 5, p. 31), though for Eliot the tradition is the very different one of religious orthodoxy. For Leavis Eliot’s claim arises from his ‘ignorance of the English cultural history, of the English civilisation, that is illuminated in E. T.’s *Memoir of D. H. Lawrence*’ (S 18, p. 70), a work that for Leavis will ‘always remain an un superseded classic’ (S 18, p. 73), and one that, as his review of *Phoenix* had already claimed, will lead few of its readers to claim ‘however expensive their own education ... that they had a better one than Lawrence had’ (S 6, p. 355). ‘E. T.’, the pen-name of Jessie Chambers, Lawrence’s youthful sweetheart on whom the Miriam of *Sons and Lovers* is based, describes in her memoir the rich legacy of literature and reading that Lawrence and his circle enjoyed, evoking in Leavis’s words ‘the extraordinarily active intellectual life enjoyed by that group of young people of which Lawrence was the centre’ (S 18, p. 69). Chambers describes the weekly visit Lawrence and she made to the Eastwood Mechanics’ Institute library ‘to choose the books for our respective families’, and especially in her chapter ‘Literary Formation’ gives a sense of the very wide range of particularly nineteenth-century prose, poetry and philosophy read by Lawrence and his circle, not only English writers but French, American and

Russian: Lawrence ‘seemed to read everything’.<sup>20</sup> But this reading, as Chambers indicates, involved the whole family, and her farmer parents and brothers, members of the local Congregational chapel as was Lawrence’s family, were enthusiastic readers of novels like *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, *Jane Eyre*, *Vanity Fair*, which ‘took the household by storm’ and *Anna Karenina*, introduced to the Chambers family by Lawrence: ‘he said it was the greatest novel in the world, and we revelled in it, father, my brother and I’ (see for example in Chambers’s book on pp. 18, 63, 98, 114).

There were moreover play-readings at home, like that of *Macbeth*, with the father taking the part of Macduff (p. 108), and while Lawrence was helping Chambers’s brother one summer to thatch haystacks he read ‘Virgil’s *Georgics* to him, translating from the Latin’ (p. 107). Chambers’s *Memoir* thus reveals the rich literary experience of this chapel-going community but also the rural environment of Higgs Farm in which it was rooted, interspersing the literary record with accounts of ‘pure adventure’ in Lawrence and his friends’ exploration of the local countryside (pp. 96-7). For Leavis, as we saw in the previous chapter, Eliot’s talk of Lawrence’s ignorance and lack of education is totally unjustified, and merely reveals his failure to understand the Nonconformist tradition that Lawrence derived from. Leavis also stresses the fact that Lawrence and his circle ‘met and talked and read in a setting of family-life such as, to judge from *The Cocktail Party*, Mr. Eliot cannot imagine to have existed’, a family-life ‘quite finely civilised’ (S 18, p. 69). *The Cocktail Party*, with its shallow metropolitan milieu, is the complete antithesis for Leavis to the genuine civilisation, rooted in the soil of the provinces, which the

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<sup>20</sup> E. T. [Jessie D. Chambers], *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Jessie D. Chambers (1935; rpt. London: Cass, 1965), pp. 92-3, 123.

work of Lawrence and his associates reveal at the time Leavis's interest in Lawrence and his tradition was gathering to a climax. As Collini has remarked, for Leavis Eliot was 'too cosmopolitan, too little rooted in England. Leavis notoriously insisted on the closest connection between such "rootedness" and the capacity to experience "life" in its greatest richness', and his accusation that 'Eliot is too much of an intellectual' (*AK*, p. 194) suggests that 'there is something simultaneously shallow and un-English about such a role'.<sup>21</sup>

The charge against Eliot of having 'so little sense of what a living cultural tradition is, so little sense of the organic', is repeated in 'The Americanness of American Literature' (1952), and is here directed at Pound as well as his 'fellow-countryman' Eliot (*AK*, pp. 150-1). The charge of Eliot's being a 'fellow-countryman' of Pound is first made in Leavis's reply to Wagner's letter discussed in chapter 2 (*S* 18, p. 143; see above, pp. 112-3), but the disqualifications this charge implies go right back to Leavis's review of Don Passos as discussed above. The perspective of Eliot's being ignorant of the true England and attached to a fake establishment England intensifies in Leavis's writing during the 1950s as his attack on the literary elements that make up that establishment becomes more and more bitter: the quality Sunday papers and their reviewers, the BBC, the British Council, the 'academic' exclusiveness of the universities and so on. An early taste of this can be found in his remarks on the British Council publication by Eliot's close friend John Hayward, *Prose Literature Since 1939*, a book that combines some ironic remarks on *Scrutiny* with salutes to writers like Cyril Connolly, Edith Sitwell, Maurice Bowra and David Cecil. Here Leavis is described as 'the cold, intellectual

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<sup>21</sup> Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), p. 37.

leader of a minority group of Cambridge critics' and *Scrutiny* a 'hypercritical but bracing magazine'.<sup>22</sup> For Leavis

nothing could be worse for the prestige and influence of British Letters abroad than Mr. Hayward's presentment of the currency-values of Metropolitan literary society and the associated University *milieux* as the distinctions and achievements of contemporary England. (*S* 15, p. 313)

A review in the Winter 1951-52 issue of *Scrutiny* continues in a similar vein of attack on the fact that

the valuations, the ethos and the criteria promulgated through the weeklies, the Sunday papers and the BBC, are provided by the British Council (financed out of public funds) with further means of imposing themselves and with a kind of institutional authority. (*S* 18, p. 225)<sup>23</sup>

This bitterness against the present world of 'high' culture is thereafter a constant in Leavis, exemplified in his 1966 piece mentioned above 'Luddites? or There is Only One Culture', which one might put beside Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* as summing up the two authors' views on the culture question in the later stages of their careers.

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<sup>22</sup> John Hayward, *Prose Literature Since 1939* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> From Leavis's earliest criticism the anti-establishment tone is plainly apparent, as in the essay 'What's Wrong with Criticism?' of 1932, which attacks institutions like the Royal Society of Literature, English Association, BBC and so on (*S* 1, pp. 132-46).

Before this lecture however, in ‘Two Cultures?’ in 1962, Leavis had already been involved in cultural debate with C. P. Snow, a detailed account of which is given in Stefan Collini’s two Introductions to the latter’s Rede Lecture, ‘The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution’ (1959), and the former’s response ‘Two Cultures? Significance of C. P. Snow’ (1962), which appeared later in the *Spectator* and caused a storm of comments.<sup>24</sup> The debate centred on the two cultures ‘of the natural scientists’ on the one hand and ‘of what [Snow’s] lecture sometimes referred to as “the literary intellectuals”, sometimes as “the traditional culture”’ (Collini, *Two Cultures?*, p. 3) on the other. Displaying ‘an antipathy to “literary intellectuals”’, Snow esteemed H. G. Wells as ‘the least nostalgic of great writers’ who ‘has deliberately spent much of his intelligence in making plans for the years ahead’ (Collini, *The Two Cultures*, p. xxiii, quoting Snow).<sup>25</sup> Collini comments that, in relation to Snow’s critical antipathies, his ‘review of Wells contains unmistakable evidence suggesting that Leavis was one of the Cambridge critics he had in mind’, being also unhappy about Leavis’s placing of Eliot above Wells (Collini, *The Two Cultures*, p. xxiv). As Collini summaries, Snow thinks ‘the gulf of ignorance between the two cultures and the educational arrangements that, especially in Great Britain, perpetuated this divide’ was a barrier to any improvement in ‘mankind’s fundamental needs’, and ‘the literary intellectuals, representatives of the traditional culture, were largely to blame for this deplorable

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<sup>24</sup> Collini provides further information about responses received by the *Spectator* in relation to this debate in his two Introductions to *The Two Cultures* by C. P. Snow (1993; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. xxxvii, and *Two Cultures?*, pp. 8-9, 26; for responses beyond the orbit of the *Spectator*, as by American critics like Lionel Trilling and others, see the latter, pp. 26-7. See also in Ortolano’s *The Two Cultures Controversy*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>25</sup> Quotations from Snow are from the first part of his review of Wells’s *An Experiment in Autobiography*, ‘H. G. Wells and Ourselves’, in *The Cambridge Review*, 19 October 1934, pp. 27-8. The second part of this review appeared in the same journal on 30 November 1934, p. 148.

situation' (Collini, *Two Culture?*, p. 4). Eliot, like Leavis who later attacked Wells in several *Scrutiny* essays like 'Babbitt Buys the World' (*S* 1, pp. 80-3), is not optimistic about scientific/technological antidotes to cultural decline, Snow later contrasting 'the dire tones of Eliot and Leavis', in Ortolano's phrase, 'with the optimism of [Ernest] Rutherford in the 1930s' (*The Two Cultures Controversy*, p. 93).<sup>26</sup> The debate between the 'two cultures' is anticipated in the late nineteenth century between such figures as T. H. Huxley and Matthew Arnold, as Collini notes: Huxley draws a sharp contrast between literary and scientific education, whereas Arnold's 'category of "literature" ... embrace[s] not mere *belles-lettres* but all great classics including Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*' (pp. xvi-xv).<sup>27</sup> Collini suggests in fact that before the nineteenth century the human mind seems more able to integrate the two cultures, exemplified by 'the Enlightenment's great intellectual monument, *L'Encyclopédie*' which 'did not represent human knowledge as structured around a division corresponding to the later divide between "the sciences" and "the humanities"' (p. x). This is congruent with Eliot's discussion of the 'dissociation of sensibility' in the essay 'The Metaphysical Poets' (*CP* 2, p. 380), though we can see that Eliot predates this 'fissure' or 'dissociation' to the seventeenth century. For Eliot, one aspect of the greatness of the metaphysical poets, such as Chapman and Donne, is that in them 'there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling' (*CP* 2, p. 379),

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<sup>26</sup> Snow's comment is from his 'The Age of Rutherford: the Birth of the Atom', *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1958), pp. 76-81.

<sup>27</sup> Here Collini compares Huxley's 'Science and Culture' with Arnold's 'Literature and Science'. Stefan Collini, 'Introduction' to *The Two Cultures* by C. P. Snow. T. H. Huxley, 'Science and Culture' (1880), rpt. in his *Science and Education: Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1893), pp. 134-59; Matthew Arnold, 'Literature and Science' (1882), rpt. in R. H. Super ed., *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. x (Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1974), pp. 52-73.

suggesting that the rational and sensuous in human beings were then integrated with one another, an idea that we will see in the next chapter Leavis approves of (see on pp. 248-50).

What we have in the lecture ‘Luddites?’ is something very different from Eliot’s Europeanism, his linkage of culture with religion, his stress on the importance of the family and scepticism about State planning, but the two authors can be said to be united in their alarm at contemporary conditions and in their confessed inability to offer any easy ‘solutions’: to insist on the problem is the major thing. For Leavis the cultural establishment and its influence, embodied in ‘the “magazine sections” of the Sunday papers’, was the opposite of a true centre of intellectual ‘consciousness for the community’, which only the reformed university could provide (*NSMS*, pp. 95, 98). The influence and prestige of the ‘Sunday papers’, which operated within present-day universities themselves, are an alarming symptom of the general ‘levelling-down that goes with standardisation’ which Leavis had been criticising since *Culture and Environment* (*NSMS*, p. 95). On a popular level this was mirrored in the general ‘meaninglessness, or human emptiness’ of existence for most people in a world where work was automatic and unfulfilling, the only relief from it being a leisure that was itself passive and meaningless, contaminated by the work (automation and technology) it was a refuge from, but promoted in the 1950s and 60s under the banner of a rising ‘standard of living’. The result is a series of Leavis’s familiar complaints in his later writings: congested roads, transistor radios, fish and chips, holidays in Spain, the ‘telly’ (*NSMS*, pp. 86-7).

Leavis is concerned, however, to defend himself against charges of being a ‘Luddite’ or of a nostalgic Bourneism—a mix of folk-dancing, the Old Style Pub, ‘the old wheelwright’s shop’—that were frequently made against him (*NSMS*, pp. 84-5). Elsewhere he contests the claim that he lives in ‘a never-never land of the past’ (*NSMS*, p. 188)—indeed such charges kept harassing him in the later years, and we noted earlier his letter to the *Spectator* denying any inclination of ‘romancing about the past’, or positing a ‘roseate prehistory’ in the era of technological progress (see above, p. 155). Leavis does insist that the pre-industrial world has gone forever, and that the clock cannot be turned back; as he asserts, he has ‘hardly mentioned’ Bourne ‘these thirty years’ (*NSMS*, p. 94). The problem of resurrecting a meaningful culture under modern conditions, of combating the ‘immensely and insidiously powerful forces’ of the technologico-Benthamite age, will require a ‘devotion of purpose and energy’, a ‘sustained collaborative effort of creative intelligence’ (*NSMS*, p. 94). Our primary link now with the lost heritage—our mainstream ‘continuity’, to use a key Leavisite term—lies in the English language, and the literature that enshrines it; therefore, the essay concludes that the only hope resides in a reformed English School within a reformed university system (to be discussed in the following chapter), where its object of study keeps the past alive in the present and instils the habit of strenuous critical analysis that will have a wider cultural benefit. As ‘a centre of consciousness for the community’ the university will create and sustain the ‘educated public’ which the BBC and the London weeklies and ‘quality’ papers are unable to do, and which can be the force of cultural regeneration ultimately at all levels of society (*NSMS*, p. 98). But this enterprise will be extremely challenging to put into operation.

In his ‘Luddites?’ lecture Leavis makes it plain that ‘I speak ... as an Englishman, and my “engaged” preoccupation with the idea of the university has a British context, the tight little island of Mr. Harold Wilson’s premiership and Lord Robbins’s Report on Higher Education’, although he is gratified to hear from ‘many Americans’ saying that ‘we face in essence one and the same problem’ (*NSMS*, p. 96). Eliot, of course, had no such mission for the ‘tight little island’ nor for the role of the universities within it; he belonged indeed to that ‘metropolitan literary world’ which Leavis castigated in an earlier lecture, ‘Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow’, the symptoms of which were the BBC, weeklies like the *Listener* and *New Statesman*, “‘intellectuals” of the system’ like Snow himself and the British Council, whose booklets on British writers ‘reveal that the ethos, the sense of values, the critical enlightenment it serves are those of what I have called the metropolitan literary world’ (*NSMS*, pp. 70-1).<sup>28</sup> One of Eliot’s final works was precisely his contribution to this British Council series, his booklet on George Herbert, published in 1962. The fact that Eliot shared with Leavis an alarm at ‘the relentless pressure of modern industrialism’ does not mean that he was anti-urban *per se*, as we have already noted; as he remarked, ‘without great cities—great, not necessarily in the modern material sense, but great by being the meeting-place of a society of superior mind and more polished manners—the culture of a nation will never rise above a rustic level’. The essay from which these two quotations are taken, ‘The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe’, which, given its educational concerns, we shall return to in the following chapter, indicates in its very title Eliot’s

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<sup>28</sup> The version of Leavis’s ‘Two Cultures?’ used in this thesis is the reprint in *Nor Shall My Sword* (1972), where it is titled ‘Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow’; when it was first published in the *Spectator* its title was ‘The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow’ (9 March 1962, pp. 297–303).

differences of cultural outlook from Leavis.<sup>29</sup> Echoing Eliot's concerns in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, the essay not only stresses the dangers of cultural nationalism in neglecting 'the *unity* of European culture' (emphasis in original), but also stresses the importance of the 'man of letters' and the European confraternity of such figures—operating presumably in a metropolitan 'meeting-place of a society of superior mind and more polished manners'—as the safeguard of the cultural future ('The Man of Letters', p. 384.). In 'T. S. Eliot as Critic' Leavis fiercely attacks Eliot's approval of the 'maturity of manners' (quoting Eliot's original phrase, *OPP*, p. 56) he found in Congreve's *Way of the World* in 'What is a Classic?'; for Leavis, this 'conventional acceptance' of the play as 'a summit of civilisation and literary refinement' went hand-in-hand with Eliot's inability to recognise the wit and delicacy in Lawrence, where it is linked with much more important qualities like a 'supreme vitality of intelligence' (*AK*, p. 186).

The term 'man of letters' has a genteel and antiquated ring to it compared to the critical powerhouse of the restored School of English in which Leavis places his hopes. Vincent Buckley, in observing this distinction, that is that Leavis was 'neither a poet nor a "man of letters" ... [in] the sense in which ... Eliot, in his prose statements, may be held to be', sees this as a positive disadvantage: the fact that he is 'a teacher in a closely defined milieu, that of a great university' implies 'a limitation in him', though this is not to deny that there is a 'virtue of "relevance" of comment' and an 'intensity' in his criticism (*Poetry and Morality*, p. 158). This stance is mirrored in John Gross's well-known study of 1969, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, which discusses the battle between the 'man of letters' and the

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<sup>29</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe', *Horizon*, 10. 60 (December 1944), pp. 386, 384.

university scholar/teacher of English as literary commentators and the fact that the former seems to be losing this battle. The book ends with a hostile appraisal of Leavis as an example of the rise of the English literature academic, spending a good while illustrating the ‘narrowness, spitefulness, dogmatism’ of his work and, while granting that there are ‘great things to his credit as a teacher’, bemoaning the influence such an academic is able to have over young and impressionable students.<sup>30</sup> Gross suggests that Leavis might ‘have written better books if he had spent his career in the literary-journalistic world which he despises’, yet he has to admit that ‘any future critical *chef d’école* will be more likely than ever to be an academic’ (*Rise and Fall*, pp. 308-9). This leads further to his warning in the Epilogue to his book about the surplus of academic monographs and PhDs being produced in the so-called ‘discipline’ of literary studies, and that it would be a ‘sad day’ if universities ever monopolised ‘the literary tradition’ (p. 328). This Epilogue ends on a plea that ‘however archaic it may seem in other respects, the idea of the man of letters has a place in any healthy literary tradition’ (p. 328), since compared with the ‘experts and specialists’ the man of letters has a breadth of knowledge together with ‘a commitment to the life which lies beyond literature’ (pp. 324, 328). Although Leavis himself can be dismissive of the term ‘man of letters’, as in his Downing seminars where he calls Johnson ‘a man of letters’, while noting ‘that’s why Eliot overrated him’ and adding that Johnson is ‘great and yet not great. He is not a great creative spirit—dull, uninteresting’ (Winder, ‘Leavis’s Downing Seminars’, p. 74), it is odd in some ways that Gross features Leavis as his representative academic. In the following chapter, we shall see that Leavis was as

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<sup>30</sup> John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life Since 1800* (1969; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 298, 308.

hostile to many aspects of traditional scholarship in English studies as Gross was, and as keen to relate his literary values to a commitment to 'life'. As Bergonzi suggests, although Leavis detested the 'belletrist spirit', he might seem 'closer to this tradition ... than he was to later developments in academic criticism' because he has the habit of 'attacking canonical figures' without any reservation, which is 'unprofessional' (*Exploding English*, p. 152).

Leavis's anti-metropolitanism is closely connected with his suspicions about a society of 'polished manners' and the compromises that this might involve for critical earnestness and rigour—for, indeed, Leavis's lifelong tone of trenchant critical confrontation. In an additional note to his original 'Two Cultures?' essay he spends a good deal of time defending himself from charges of having gratuitously insulted C. P. Snow, arguing that the 'unanswerableness of the constation' against Snow as a 'portent' of the literary establishment's power and prestige demanded 'a sharpness, clarity and cogency of challenge' that must be the critic's major responsibility (*NSMS*, pp. 69-70). We have seen how Eliot's version of 'cocktail civilisation' in his play *The Cocktail Party* so infuriated Leavis and was one of the key elements in his later annoyance with him, but the roots of his objections are closely bound up with wider cultural considerations of society and class. The anti-metropolitanism is declared in *English Literature in Our Time and the University*: 'it is an American ethos that prescribes these cosmopolitan cures for our provinciality, and the idea that being provincial is what we suffer from is itself American' (*ELTU*, p. 181). The location of the restored university, whether in the 'provinces' or elsewhere, is irrelevant to Leavis, and of course the 'provinces' have produced much of the line of novelists—the 'great tradition'—that Leavis so

admires in its representing something other than urban modernisation—George Eliot, Hardy and above all Lawrence himself, all of whom, moreover, were ‘low-born’, as Leavis notes in defending them against the class snobbism of Eliot and Lord David Cecil (‘Mr. Eliot and Lawrence’, *S* 18, p. 68). The idea of centralisation, represented by the great city, or the further aggregation of identities represented by ‘Europe’, is something Leavis constantly resists, and it is no surprise that, in the Introduction to *Nor Shall My Sword*, he expresses scepticism about ‘becoming European’ in relation to the early 1970s debate about entering the Common Market: ‘when (or if) this country becomes part of an integrated Europe the mechanisms, magnitudes and blanknesses in the way of getting the essential human problem attended to will become more formidable’ (*NSMS*, p. 36). Elsewhere in the volume he identifies himself as ‘the scion of a line of little Englanders’ (*NSMS*, p. 132). A letter to the *Times* of 2 November 1971 headed ‘The “Great Debate” about Joining Europe’ emphasises where Leavis stood in the debate, and expresses his resistance to a Europe that would mean solely greater economic advantage and a rising ‘standard of living’—not that Leavis anywhere offsets this economic line of argument by upholding a more positive idea of European cultural identity such as we find in Eliot (*LIC*, pp. 145-6). We have seen already Leavis’s literary nationalism in the previous chapter in things like his attack on Eliot’s Francophilia (see above, p. 127), his discounting the French influence on ‘Portrait of a Lady’ (*ELTU*, p. 90) and his belief that Eliot ‘overvalued what Dante had to offer him; he might have got from Shakespeare ... a great deal that Dante couldn’t give him’ (*LIA*, pp. 49-50; above on p. 127). Although Ortolano discusses how the debate between Snow and Leavis ‘intersected with national debates about Britain’s

economic and international position', he does not mention Leavis's specific concerns about the European Common Market issue (*The Two Cultures Controversy*, pp. 162-3).

We noted also in the previous chapter Leavis's highlighting, in an epigraph to *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, Lawrence's statement in a letter that 'I am English, and my Englishness is my vision' (above, p. 116). In spite of this, and of, for example, the observations just referred to at the end of my previous paragraph, there is an argument to be made that Leavis's nationalism is not as overtly proclaimed in his work as one might expect. However, the importance of England and of "English" is arguably not always directly stressed because it is simply taken for granted: England, where a rich literary heritage confronts the threatening forces of modernity, is of course the key place in which the Western battle for cultural survival has to be fought (America is already too far gone down the road to 'Americanisation', and its 'cultural amnesia' means it has lost touch with any organic tradition). His 1969 lecture "'English", Unrest and Continuity' ends explicitly in this respect:

hope of salvation for America depends upon our success in the creative battle here, where we can still open it, and wage it, and resolve to win (or not to lose) ... If this country could generate in a decisive way the kind of creative effort I have described as especially *our* business, that would be its true greatness in history reaffirmed—perpetuated by renewal in terms of the modern world, and nowhere would it receive more heartening recognition

than in America. Of that we can be sure. (*NSMS*, p. 133, emphasis in original)

The title of *Nor Shall My Sword* plainly reaffirms the pledge of building Jerusalem in England (Blake's famous line is quoted on the book's opening page, p. 11) as 'our business', and figures like Blake and Lawrence are inspirational forerunners in their being fully 'vital', alive and engaged. The former is described as 'the antithesis of Eliot' because his 'belief in life is so strong', in an Introduction to the volume which is entitled "'Life is a Necessary Word' (*NSMS*, p. 11, emphasis in original). Throughout *Nor Shall My Sword* the words 'life' and 'living' occur repeatedly:

to think that to have a vital contemporary performance of the critical function matters is to think that creative literature matters; and it matters because to have a living literature, a literary tradition that *lives* in the present—and nothing lives unless it goes on being creative, is to have, as an informing spirit in civilisation, an informed, charged and authoritative awareness of inner human nature and human need. ('Luddites?', *NSMS*, p. 97, emphasis in original)

We noted in chapter 1 how Leavis's most sustained and largely negative assault on Eliot occurs in a book called *The Living Principle*, and it can be emphasised again here how Eliot's famous theory of 'impersonality' was for Leavis a crime against 'life' and all the weight the word carried for him, given that the theory 'plays down

the need for the artist to be a person with the courage of life and the responsibility of his experience in its living wholeness ... And the verb “live” takes on a fresh force in connection with Lawrence’ (‘Lawrence After Thirty Years’, *V*, p. 107).<sup>31</sup> In ‘D. H. Lawrence and Professor Irving Babbitt’ Leavis argued that in contrast to those distracted by political aspirations like the League of Nations, ‘Lawrence always lived on the spot where he was. That was his genius’ (*S* 1, p. 276). Increasingly the coordinates within which Leavis places and evaluates a work of literature have nothing to do with geographical or historical factors or context but are based on this mystical and uplifting term ‘life’, which both literature and literary criticism must attend to. At the same time, Leavis is always mindful that the emphasis on ‘a literary tradition that *lives* in the present’ is one he originally owes to Eliot, not, as we have noted, to the deeply flawed ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ essay but to that on ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, which ‘truly and with pregnant effect illuminates the nature, where there is a living creative continuity in a great literature, of the relation between the present and the past’ (*NSMS*, p. 115). As the following chapter will show, in fact, Leavis’s response to Eliot’s connections with ‘life’ is deeply paradoxical, given that Eliot is at once both a source of ‘life’ and a denier of it.

Discussing Leavis’s debate over the two cultures with Snow, Ortolano has pointed out that ‘what has previously been read as a *disciplinary* dispute about the arts and the sciences was actually an *ideological* conflict between competing visions of Britain’s past, present, and future’ (emphasis in original), so that behind the ‘two cultures’ controversy lies a cluster of ‘the most contentious issues in

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<sup>31</sup> For a fuller discussion of the significance of the word ‘life’ to Leavis, see the section headed ‘Life’ in Storer, *F. R. Leavis*, pp. 108-14.

postwar British history', involving 'the expansion of the universities, the development of social history, anxieties about national decline, debates about the former empire' and so on ('Introduction', *The Two Cultures Controversy*, p. 1). In the following chapter we shall pursue these ideas in relation to Leavis's ideals of the study of 'English' within the university and beyond, and how the emphasis of such study of the literary tradition has to be a concern with the present: as he put it in 'How to Teach Reading', 'to initiate into the idea of living tradition except in relation to the present is hardly possible' (*EATU*, p. 130).<sup>32</sup> The 'main point' in relation to the syllabus is 'that if one is uneducated in one's own literature one cannot hope to acquire education in any serious sense by dabbling in, or by assiduously frequenting, any other' (*EATU*, p. 134). 'How to Teach Reading' is a reply to Ezra Pound's pamphlet 'How to Read', and attacks Pound's 'frequentation of other literatures' as resulting in 'a bag of tricks' (*EATU*, p. 135), not only in terms of a European cultural dilettantism but also in his mistaken grasp of the relation between literature and the wider culture:

in failing to grasp properly the relation of literature to language he fails even to suggest its relation to cultural tradition. Literature for him is a matter mainly of individual works, Chinese, English, Provençal, Anglo-Saxon and so on, written by individual artists who invent—or borrow from other individual artists—devices, processes and modes of charging language with meaning. (*EATU*, p. 118)

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<sup>32</sup> 'How to Teach Reading' was originally printed by the Minority Press in 1932, and was reprinted in *EATU* as an appendix. Slight changes have been made in the new version, and changes relevant to the thesis will be noted in due time.

For Leavis, this aestheticism—of which he also frequently accused Eliot as we saw in chapter 1—is at the opposite remove from his own insistence on literature being seen ‘in living relation with a real culture, shared by the people at large’ (“‘Under Which King, Bezonian?’”, *S* 1, p. 208, quoted above), and his syllabus therefore in ‘How to Teach Reading’ sets itself against any significant or primary place for classical literature, Anglo-Saxon and ‘other literatures’ in general, anything that is that may lead to merely historical or philological study, which will be academic in the worst sense (*EATU*, pp. 133-7). This is very different from Eliot’s blueprint for a literary education, as we shall see. And ‘How to Teach Reading’ ends with the insistence that literature’s ‘relation to cultural tradition’ works in two directions: not only proceeding from ‘a real culture, shared by the people at large’, but, in being studied effectively, leading to a ‘training in awareness of the environment’, as indicated in *Culture and Environment*, and hopefully to wider cultural renewal. Collini argues that the influence of the two cultures debate persists, so that ‘some attempts have been made to allow a broader or more mixed choice of subjects at both school and university’; even so, ‘the situation in England still contrasts strikingly’ with arrangements in America and other European countries ‘where a different inheritance of cultural attitudes as well as of educational arrangements has given a distinctive inflection to the “two cultures” theme’ (‘Introduction’, *The Two Cultures*, pp. xvi-xvii). Thus in both France and Germany ‘scientific education’ has ‘a greater social standing than it has ever had in Britain’ (pp. xvi-xvii). Examining Leavis’s educational provisions, especially with regard to his English syllabus, will further enhance our understanding of such characteristics of English education. But

‘the whole question of the relation of reading to education and culture’, in Leavis’s phrase, will be pursued in chapter 4 (*EATU*, p. 138).

#### 4 LEAVIS, ELIOT AND THE SUBJECT OF 'ENGLISH'

Patricia Waugh summarises the foundational importance of Eliot's work for the development of English Studies in the modern period as follows:

Eliot's influence does not stop with the theory of impersonality, for his central mythopoetic conceit, the idea of a 'dissociation of sensibility' [*CP* 2, p. 380] and a poetically redeemable fall into modernity, along with the related concept of the 'objective correlative' [*CP* 2, p. 125], would provide, in the revisionism of his academic contemporaries and immediate legatees, the very justification for and integrity of English Studies as a modern university discipline, built on the practices of literary criticism. ('Legacies', p. 382)

The 'contemporaries and legatees' Waugh mentions include F. R. Leavis, I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks and John Crowe Ransom, and 'Eliot appealed enormously to these academic critics as an appropriate authority—a thinker, but of a peculiarly literary kind—able to provide an appropriate and legitimating voice for the establishment of the distinctive integrity of literary studies in an academy underpinned by a positivist "research" framework' ('Legacies', p. 382). (This last comment, as we shall see, is open to question: neither Eliot nor Leavis, for whom 'the accumulation of scholarship ... is a matter for misgiving' (see below, p. 218), was enthusiastic about university research in English, as commonly understood). Leavis's promotion of the critical importance of Eliot's poetry in a number of early essays and in *New Bearings in English Poetry* had been anticipated by the

publications of his academic mentor I. A. Richards in the 1920s, in works like *Science and Poetry* of 1926, and the two critics' procedures of 'close analysis' are to begin with similar. In his obituary note on Eliot in 1965, Richards looked back on this period and on how in his thinking Eliot 'would be *the one hope* for the then brand-new English Tripos' (emphasis in original) and Leavis's own assessment of the health or otherwise of the newly established university 'English' in the late 1920s and 30s is similarly related to how far the syllabus can properly accommodate Eliot.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Cambridge Tripos papers contain several questions concerning Eliot, particularly his criticism, though usually in the form of optional choices. Thus a random scanning of the exam papers from the 1920s to 1940s reveal questions requiring discussion of one or two dictums from essays like 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 'The Perfect Critic', 'John Dryden', 'The Metaphysical Poets' and others. For example, in an English Tripos examination of May 1927, candidates were asked to 'write an appreciation of Dryden as a tragic dramatist, with special reference to [Eliot's] criticism', following a quotation from Eliot's 'John Dryden' that 'in general, he [Dryden] is best in his plays when dealing with situations which do not demand great emotional concentration' ('John Dryden', *CP* 2, p. 357).<sup>2</sup> In May 1928 there is a question asking candidates to 'write a note' on some subjects which include 'Donne and T. S. Eliot as creators of a "new" poetry';<sup>3</sup> in May 1931, after a quotation from Eliot's 'Introductory Essay' to Johnson's *London* and *The*

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<sup>1</sup> I. A. Richards, 'On TSE: Notes for a Talk at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, June 29, 1965', in *T. S. Eliot: the Man and His Work*, ed. Allen Tate (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge University Examination Papers*, Michaelmas Term 1926 to Eastern Term 1927, vol. lvi (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1927), p. 1106.

<sup>3</sup> *Cambridge University Examination Papers*, Michaelmas Term, 1927 to Eastern Term, 1928, vol. lvii (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1928), p. 1157.

*Vanity of Human Wishes* that ‘sensibility alters from generation to generation [...], whether we will or no; but expression is only altered by a man of genius’ (*CP* 4, p. 168), students were instructed to ‘discuss this with reference to the poetry of the Romantic Revival, paying particular attention to any one poet who failed and one who succeeded in “altering expression”’;<sup>4</sup> and in a paper from May 1940, observations on Eliot’s ‘we can only say that it appears likely that poetry in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*’ (‘The Metaphysical Poets’, *CP* 2, p. 381, emphasis in original) are required, with candidates also being invited to compare ‘Johnson and T. S. Eliot on the Metaphysicals’ and as well as comparing Arnold with a group of critics including Eliot, Murry and Richards, then being asked ‘which of them comes nearest to realising your idea of the “perfect critic”’.<sup>5</sup> Eliot, whilst saluting Richards’s importance as a critic, had however no intention of accepting this status as ‘the one hope’ if it meant accepting what he saw as false valuations of his work. Thus in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* he expresses doubts not only about Richards’s opinion of his poetry—such as the claim that it had effected ‘a complete severance’ with ‘*all* beliefs’ (*CP* 4, pp. 673-4)—but also about his methods such as his ‘ritualistic’ five stages of practising sincerity while reading which ‘only express a modern emotional attitude which I cannot share’ (*CP* 4, pp. 674-5).<sup>6</sup> While Eliot acknowledges Richards’s importance as a

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<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge University Examination Papers*, Michaelmas Term, 1930 to Eastern Term, 1931, vol. lx (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1931), p. 1196.

<sup>5</sup> *Cambridge University Examination Papers*, Michaelmas Term, 1939 to Eastern Term, 1940, vol. lxxix (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 1454, 1476, 1477.

<sup>6</sup> I. A. Richards, ‘Poetry and Beliefs’, *Science and Poetry* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1926), pp. 64-5 (emphasis in original); I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929), pp. 290-1. Richards however seems to share with Eliot the antipathy towards the teaching of English on a research level, as in his letter to Eliot on February 1929 replying to Eliot’s enquiry about opportunities to study in Cambridge for a Master’s or PhD degree: ‘Nor on the whole are the Research Degrees (M. Litt., Ph.D.s) much good to anyone. We are doing our best in English to abolish them—in most cases they just waste a man’s time and their window-dressing

critic the disagreements indicate his own detachment from the rising tide of academic literary criticism in the twentieth century which will be explored in this chapter. Similarly, Eliot's being talked up by Leavis could not conceal profound disagreements between the two men, as we have already seen, and while Eliot's work had an extremely important educational role for Leavis, their views of what actually constitutes 'education' diverge in fundamental ways.

Leavis, as a university teacher, had a lifelong concern with education that goes beyond that of Eliot, even if education was an important subject for the latter too. *New Bearings*, whilst seeing Eliot's work as a 'new start for poetry' (*NB*, p. 95), ends with a gloomy outlook for poetry itself within modern culture. The fact that fewer people are reading it is traced to the lamentable teaching of poetry in schools which generally relies on outmoded and poorly selected anthologies, while outside the classroom Leavis insists that the wider practice and concept of education are in decline. The modern reader in fact 'has lost the education that in the past was provided by tradition and social environment' (*NB*, p. 171); as a result of the process of modernisation, as we saw in the previous chapter, 'a real culture, shared by the people at large' has disappeared (above, p. 139) When *Scrutiny* began publication in May 1932, its opening 'Manifesto' promised that it would focus on 'combin[ing] criticism of literature with criticism of extra-literary activities' (*S* 1, p. 2), predominantly the country's education system, and within this 'the teaching of English in schools and universities, the training of teachers, and similar subjects', since 'the life of a country is determined by its educational ideals' (*S* 1, p. 6).

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value—for good men—is less than often supposed. I might recommend a medievalist to work for one but not a man who is interested in general critical questions' (*LOE* 4, p. 407n).

In the third volume of *Scrutiny* (December 1932), L. C. Knights's investigation of the state of teacher-training, 'Will Training Colleges Bear Scrutiny?', found that even 'the more intelligent of the [English] lecturers had never heard of Eliot', many believing that modernist literature was 'dirty'; hence 'it would have been impossible' to discuss with them works like *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* or *To the Lighthouse* (*S* 1, pp. 250, 259). Martin Crusoe's 'English Work in the Public School' (*S* 1, pp. 368-73) talks of 'a general lack of critical standards among the men teaching English, the vast majority of whom believe in poetry as an anodyne to serious thought, and hold that [Tennyson's] "The Lady of Shallot", [Yeats's] "Innisfree", and similar works are the height of poetry' (*S* 1, p. 370). The result of this 'self-regarding, self-pitying kind of romanticism', passed on by 'regressive' teachers who see poetry 'as an escape from reality' to the young generation, is to 'fix the boy to the past instead of using his imagination to look forward; there is all the difference between dreaming and seeing a vision' (*S* 1, pp. 370-1, 373). This attitude is reflected in the outmoded materials the teacher uses, the anthologies, 'every school book on the subject I know' (*S* 1, p. 371), and so on. Whilst Crusoe does not specifically recommend Eliot's poetry as a correction to this reliance on the 'anodyne', his views are clearly in harmony with *New Bearings*, which salutes Eliot's reintroduction of values into poetry—'wit, play of intellect, stress of cerebral muscle' (*NB*, p. 16)—that contest the Romantic/Victorian prejudice that poetry is written out of the 'soul', a prejudice that leads to, or is the result of, an evasion of contemporary existence and a seeking in poetry of 'a sanctuary from the modern world' such as we find, Leavis argues, in Matthew Arnold's work (*NB*, p. 23). Nineteenth-century poetry generally creates a 'dream world', whilst Eliot, 'alive in

his own age', makes a new start, his work declaring the poet's responsibility to 'expose[] himself freely to the rigours of the contemporary climate' rather than trying to escape from it as Tennyson did (*NB*, p. 21). Leavis's assessment of the literary tradition and of where it has gone wrong—'a study of the latter end of *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* leads to the conclusion that something has been wrong for forty or fifty years at least' (*NB*, p. 14)—mirrors Eliot's own rewriting of the 'tradition' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), whilst he openly declares that his attack on the nineteenth-century 'dream world' has been anticipated by Eliot's remarks in the essay 'Andrew Marvell' (1921), where 'wit' is also saluted as a quality that is needed urgently in the modern poetic restoration and attention is brought to 'the effort to construct a dream world, which alters English poetry so greatly in the nineteenth century, a dream world utterly different from the visionary realities of the *Vita Nuova* or of the poetry of Dante's contemporaries', an effort that 'makes a poet of the nineteenth century, of the same size as Marvell, a more trivial and less serious figure' (*CP 2*, pp. 316-7).

In the September 1933 *Scrutiny* Knights continued his educational work with a 'Scrutiny of Examinations' (*S 2*, pp. 137-63), which collated reports received from dissatisfied schoolteachers; it is a wholesale attack on systems of assessment which have nothing to do with education but simply amount to cramming. He talks about the over-reliance by teachers and pupils on annotated text-books where the notes have 'more importance than the original text', the complicity of academics and University presses in supplying such material (*S 2*, pp. 157-8), and about unimaginative syllabuses where the texts are 'so dull and remote from living interest that teaching is becoming a farce' (*S 2*, p.156). Knights repeats a question

raised in an article in the *Times Educational Supplement*, ‘how many pieces of literature will remain literature to the pupil after such treatment?’ (S 2, p. 155).<sup>7</sup> Articles such as this are a reminder of how invested *Scrutiny* (and of course other specialist education journals) was in the subject of education in comparison with say the *Criterion*. In ‘What’s Wrong with Criticism?’ in the September 1932 *Scrutiny*, Leavis laments the contemporary indifference to standards of criticism manifested in the promotion of the second-rate by organs like the Book Society, the English Association, the BBC and the Sunday papers, and bemoans ‘the death of the literary tradition’ (S 1, p. 135) when confronted with modernisation and its media allies. In these circumstances, education itself ‘can be only a matter of so much more machinery, geared to the general machine of civilisation’ (S 1, p. 145). As an instance of this machinery, Leavis, in ‘looking over the reports of educational work in the country generally’, particularly attacks the English Association’s sponsorship of ‘the anthology, very widely used in schools, called *Poems of Today*, the two volumes of which (as I have heard indignant teachers who have to use it lament) contain between them hardly half-a-dozen good poems’, but the sales of which are crucial ‘to the finances of the Association’ (S 1, p. 142). In the same issue of *Scrutiny*, Denys Thompson, under the heading ‘World-Losers’, reviewed six primers and school textbooks on poetry representative of ‘dozens of their kind’, arguing that ‘the conceptions of poetry they authorise are so pernicious that the intelligent product of such teaching is likely to be permanently excluded from an interest in poetry’ (S 1, p. 194). Modern poetry is represented in these books by figures like Lawrence Binyon, W. W. Gibson and Edith Sitwell, and the article

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Examinations and Literature’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 13 August 1927, n. p.

opens by quoting a cautionary remark made to a teacher ‘who proposed to introduce an upper form to Mr. Eliot’s work’, namely ‘but aren’t they at the Tennyson stage?’ (S 1, p. 194). Once again, *Poems of Today* and the English Association are brought in for criticism (S 1, p. 195). *Scrutiny*’s response to the ‘disgraceful’ *Poems of Today* might be ‘dismissed as the usual kind of insolence’, but it was unlikely that, as the same article reports (S 3, pp. 219-20) Eliot’s own attack on ‘one more bad anthology’ which the Association has produced, *The Modern Muse*, would be similarly dismissed: Eliot’s condemnation of this anthology a month earlier in his *Criterion* ‘Commentary’ of July 1934 is quoted with much approval here (S 3, pp. 219-20). Eliot worries that the ‘occasion is much more serious than the appearance of one more bad anthology’ because ‘official sanction’ from the Association may lead to its circulation in schools like ‘its monstrous predecessors’ such as *Poems of Today* (CP 5, p. 102). In quoting this ‘Commentary’ *Scrutiny*’s position is bolstered by what it sees as an ally of more prestige, and waits ‘to see if the Editor of the *Criterion* will be dismissed as wantonly insolent and critically negligible, and no notice taken’ (S 3, pp. 220).

For Leavis and his *Scrutiny* colleagues, education ‘works in a round—School, University, Training College, School’ (S 1, p. 247), and there is little chance of a more enlightened approach to poetry being adopted in schools if the higher education system, which produces the English teachers, is inadequate. Although insistent on the need to reform the system, Leavis was always cautious in his estimate of what might be achieved, given the direction in which he thought the modern world was heading, as described in the previous chapter. In his very first contribution to *Scrutiny*, “‘The Literary Mind’”, a response to a book thus titled by

Max Eastman, and a work symptomatic of the false literary authority being claimed by those ‘deficient in taste and sensibility’ (and intelligence) (*S* 1, p. 21), Leavis admits that

to revive or replace a decayed tradition is a desperate undertaking; the attempt may seem futile ... No one aware of the problem will entertain easy hopes, for, inevitably, the machinery of education works in with the process of the modern world; and in the absence of standards, how can we start a reverse process? Something in the nature of luck is needed; the luck, let us say, that provides a centre of stimulus and a focus of energy at some university. All that falls under the head of ‘English’ there becomes, then ... of supreme importance. (*S* 1, p. 31)

In the following issue, Leavis was to argue that university English is the source of whatever regeneration there might be, not only in terms of restoring standards of criticism for those who produce it, and in creating an ‘educated public’ who will reject the false version of literary criticism now offered by the Sunday papers and so on (‘What’s Wrong with Criticism?’, *S* 1, p. 134), but also in supplying more effective teaching in schools. In a more far-reaching sense, ‘literary study ... should be the best possible training for intelligence—for free, unspecialised, general intelligence’ which will foster ‘a critical awareness of contemporary civilisation’ (‘“The Literary Mind”’, *S* 1, pp. 24, 32). Intelligence of this nature, synonymous with a sensitiveness to the complexity and subtleties of the literary use of language,

will form a politics of resistance to the crudities of advertising and propaganda that are so powerful in modern culture.

For Leavis, at this time there was ‘no more effective awakener of the intellectual conscience’ than T. S. Eliot (‘T. S. Eliot—A Reply to the Condescending’, *V*, p. 16), particularly in Eliot’s emphasis on the ‘living tradition’, the idea that no ‘study of literature ... should ignore the present’ (“‘The Literary Mind’”, *S* 1, p. 32), an attitude absent from the work of many prestigious English dons like F. W. Bateson, as we saw Leavis complain in chapter 1 (above, pp. 26-7). Eliot’s work and ideas and the key place they should have in the university English syllabus are reflected not only in Richards and Leavis’s teaching at Cambridge but also in things like the revival of the Cambridge Literary Club in 1924, presided over by James Smith ‘in order to introduce Cambridge to T. S. Eliot’.<sup>8</sup> But Eliot’s ‘intrusion’ into Cambridge, to adopt Basil Willey’s term, provoked both support and opposition, as in the different responses to the invitation to Eliot to give the Clark lectures there in 1926.<sup>9</sup> As Schuchard notes, whilst ‘the younger dons of the English School’, including Leavis himself, ‘were there in allied support for some or all of the lectures’, the ‘detractors’ represented by T. R. Henn and F. L. Lucas either commented adversely on Eliot’s work or were ‘openly hostile’ towards him.<sup>10</sup> Henn was to talk to a literary society at St. John’s in 1933 of ‘the vulgarity of most

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<sup>8</sup> John Haffenden, *William Empson: Among the Mandarins* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 603.

<sup>9</sup> Basil Willey, then a young lecturer in English, confessed that he had first regarded Eliot as ‘only one of many intruders into pre-lapsarian Cambridge’, but later sensed ‘the beginning of the climatic change from the day when Tillyard casually observed, to me, at the end of a walk round Grantchester, that there was a new chap called T. S. Eliot for whom one should be on the look-out’. *Cambridge and Other Memories 1920-1953* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald Schuchard, ‘Introduction’, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry: the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, 1926, and the Turnbull Lectures at the John Hopkins University, 1933*, ed. and introd. Ronald Schuchard (London: Faber, 1993), p. 12.

of Eliot's work, all the more pernicious since cloaked by an austere and pseudo-learned style', while Lucas, as a librarian at King's, 'would not even allow Eliot's work to be bought for the library'.<sup>11</sup> As for other universities H. A. Mason, in his 'Oxford Letter' that opens the September 1934 issue of *Scrutiny*, complains that 'Eliot has never been more than a fashionable cult' at Oxford, and that the University is home to 'many who consider that modern poetry has "gone wrong" and who would be glad to see the work of Eliot and Pound run down' (S 3, pp. 113-4). This is, Mason continues, 'a serious matter from an educational point of view. Many of the prejudices acquired in the University will be reproduced a hundred-fold in classrooms in succeeding years' (S 3, p. 114). Mason's article ends with a reply to Oxford's suspicions about *Scrutiny* as a 'Cambridge' organ, and a remark on the need for all English universities to unite to support the educational and cultural campaigns that *Scrutiny* is conducting (S 3, p. 116).

At the same time, the problems Mason identifies at Oxford would not be solved simply by Eliot's becoming more prominent in the English syllabus. There is the danger that Eliot would receive the wrong kind of academic attention, one that ignores the whole concept of the 'living tradition' and the 'organic' relationship between the present and past. This is the major criticism in Mason's review headed 'Traditions and the Academic Critic' in the December 1935 issue of *Scrutiny* of one of the best known of the early studies of Eliot, F. O. Matthiessen's *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*. For Mason, Matthiessen's 'comments on the poems show a marked insensitivity', in spite of some successful instances of interpretation and source-hunting which the author has achieved through his 'careful research' (S 4, pp. 311-

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<sup>11</sup> T. E. B. Howarth, *Cambridge Between Two Wars* (London: Collins, 1978), p. 166.

2). In particular, it is a 'failure in presenting a total valuation' that Mason objects to, and this means, as with Leavis's comments on Bateson's 'academic' scholarship (above, pp. 26-7), ignoring the crucial importance of seeing, as Eliot's 'Introduction' to *The Sacred Wood* of 1920 says, 'the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes' (*CP* 2, pp. 296-7). If Matthiessen has shown how Eliot's work fits into 'the tradition', he has failed in demonstrating how 'the tradition' has been significantly altered by Eliot's work—and thus how, says Mason, quoting Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 'the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past' (*CP* 2, pp. 106-7). The absence of the 'contemporary' emphasis in a work on Eliot means that Matthiessen's study is 'academic' in a negative sense. The book therefore indicates 'very fairly what we are to expect from our academies and in what way they fail to perform the work projected by Mr. Eliot' (*S* 4, pp. 311-2). Mason's review, though very short and general, represents an approach axiomatic among the *Scrutiny* circle to Eliot based on the cardinal principles of Eliot's 'Tradition' essay; it also highlights the argument between a so-called living criticism and a dead scholarship that Leavis and his colleagues are constantly making.

Ironically, however, big differences between Leavis and Eliot on the subject of education were also emerging at this time; this has been noted briefly in chapter 1 with reference to Leavis's 'Mr. Eliot and Education' which appeared in *Scrutiny* in June 1936 (*S* 5, pp. 84-9). As a review of Eliot's *Essays Ancient and Modern* (1936), the article takes issue with Eliot's approval of features of Tennyson's poetry that arise from the latter's classical training and Italianate prosody ('In Memoriam',

*CP* 5, p. 323). For Leavis, these things have corrupted what, in quoting Wordsworth, he calls ‘the living voice’ of poetry, adding that ‘the training in Latin and Greek must not be made a substitute for training in English’; for him, it is ‘axiomatic’ that ‘it is only in one’s own language that one’s sensibility can, in the first place, be educated’ (*S* 5, pp. 86-7). ‘English’, declares Leavis, ‘must be looked after’, and specifically ‘at the university level’; in Eliot’s essay ‘Modern Education and the Classics’, however, Leavis is dismayed to find not only that Classics remains a corner-stone in Eliot’s scheme of education, but that the study of English literature is rejected at university level, and regarded as ‘bad as training’ (*CP* 5, p. 340). Eliot’s note of incredulity that ‘nowadays they even teach *English* in England’ (*CP* 5, p. 339, emphasis in original), given that ‘the study of *English Literature* or, to be more comprehensive, the literature of one’s own language’ is ‘bad as training’ (*CP* 5, p. 340, emphasis in original) is part of a wider emphasis on the ‘deterioration of the universities’ (*CP* 5, p. 339) through liberal ideas in modern education, with their ‘doctrine of studying the subject we like’, which may lead to the ‘most disastrous’ of consequences (*CP* 5, p. 341). Thus students may either become ‘overspecialised’ individuals and ‘be wholly ignorant of the general interests of human beings’, or end up as smatterers, a situation synonymous with the fact that today ‘Latin and Greek [are] subjects of little import’ (*CP* 5, p. 341).

Leavis would never accept Eliot’s point that Latin and Greek are the ‘foundation’ of any study of modern languages and one’s mother-tongue, and that without this our ‘power over these other subjects’ will ‘remain limited’ (*CP* 5, p. 341), nor would he show any interest in the survival of a Christian civilisation (*CP* 5, p. 343) that is intimately related to Eliot’s promotion of classic training, a subject

to be discussed later in this chapter. In a 1942 address given at Cambridge, 'The Classics and the Man of Letters', Eliot again emphasised the necessity of classical knowledge for an understanding of English literature: to read Milton, for example, may require 'a knowledge of the Bible ... a knowledge of the classical literature, mythology and history of Latin syntax and versification and of Christian theology' (*TCC*, p. 149). Furthermore, 'some knowledge of Latin [or Greek] should be expected of those who teach English literature' and 'those who study it' today, in order to recognise how that literature is 'a distinguished part of a recognisable entity called European Literature' (*TCC*, p. 150). In lamenting the prevalence in contemporary culture of 'the untutored taste of the individual', Eliot does not suggest 'that this is all due to the neglect of classical studies, or that a revival of these studies would be enough to stem the current'. Nevertheless, this neglect is synonymous with 'the disappearance of any common background of instruction, any common body of literary and historical knowledge, any common acquaintance with the foundations of English literature' (*TCC*, pp. 151-2).

But Eliot's sense of the necessary classical foundation is never accepted in Leavis's promotion of English literature as a living force; in the above review of Eliot's *Essays Ancient and Modern*, he had already declared that 'we cannot take [Eliot's] interest in education very seriously' (*S 5*, p. 88), flawed as it is by his seeming ignorance of opposing points of view held by 'persons ostensibly better qualified to conclude and to pronounce' (*S 5*, p. 87). These 'better qualified' people include George Sampson, in his book *English for the English*, and the compilers of the 1921 report appointed by the President of the Board of Education into *The Teaching of English in England*, known as the Newbolt Report after its chairman

Sir Henry Newbolt: ‘in common decency’, Leavis says, Eliot ought to at least have read such things before making his pronouncements (*S* 5, pp. 87-8). Sampson’s emphasis throughout *English for the English*, which had an Introduction by Denys Thompson when it was reprinted in 1970, is on the supreme importance of a thorough teaching of English in elementary schools, because ‘before the English child can awaken to any creative fullness of life he must become proficient in the use of his native tongue, the universal tool of all callings and of all conditions’.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, ‘it is quite obvious that the great majority of classically educated persons do not possess any remarkable alertness or strength or breadth of mind’, just as arithmetical puzzle solvers ‘are usually intolerable dullards’ (p. 24). The Newbolt Report, the compilers of which included Sampson, had the remit, as stated on the title-page, ‘to inquire into the position of English in the educational system of England’.<sup>13</sup> It found that, in ‘the idea of a liberal education’ there is in schools ‘a singular depreciation of the value of English literature for such a purpose’, whilst whatever the former importance of teaching Latin and Greek, in the present day ‘it is ... and will probably be for as long a time as we can foresee, impossible to make use of the Classics as a fundamental part of a national system of education’ (pp. 12-3). Again, while paying handsome tribute to the classics as ‘perennial sources’ of our own culture, the report argues that

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<sup>12</sup> George Sampson, *English for the English* (1921, rpt. with an Introduction by Denys Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 32. The book was first published in 1921 and went through several editions. For an overview of its concerns and of those of the Newbolt Report, see Baldick, *Social Mission*, pp. 92-106.

<sup>13</sup> *The Teaching of English in England: Being the Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the Board of Education to Inquire into the Position of English in the Educational System of England* (London: H. M. S. O., 1921).

we do not believe that those who have not studied the Classics or any foreign literature must necessarily fail to win from their native English a full measure of culture and humane training. To hold such an opinion seems to us to involve an obstinate belittling of our national inheritance. (p. 18)

The report does go on to suggest that at university level some knowledge of the classics and of literature in modern European languages is a desirable supplement for those studying an English degree (pp. 198-212), but it also argues conversely that degrees in classical literature would benefit from studying the ‘English parallels or derivatives’ of the classical sources, and that ‘all foreign literatures are best approached by an Englishman through English’ (pp. 208-9).

Eliot in ‘Modern Education and the Classics’ stands resolutely against this current of thought in his dismissal of university English and in his belief that the classics are crucial in education at school and university level. His stance is an illustration of ‘the qualifications attaching to nationalism and patriotism that are foregrounded in much of his later work’, in the words of Steve Ellis, whatever the perception of his becoming in mid-career ‘more English than the English’ (*The English Eliot*, p. 1); here his stance, the Newbolt Report might imply, is even positively anti-patriotic in its ‘obstinate belittling of our national inheritance’. In ‘Modern Education and the Classics’ Eliot also argues that the classics should be separated from the education system as it stands and ‘permanently associated where they belong, with something permanent: the historical Christian Faith’, and calls in this regard for a ‘revival and expansion of monastic teaching orders’ (*CP 5*, p. 343). This stands for Leavis as a further instance of the depressing contamination of

orthodoxy one finds more and more frequently in Eliot's criticism. Leavis sums up this tendency by quoting from the essay 'Religion and Literature' in *Essays Ancient and Modern* where Eliot argues that 'literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint' (*CP 5*, p. 218). For Leavis and the *Scrutiny* circle, however, 'serious literary criticism leads outside itself and [we] are intent on following it, but do not know of any fixed base "outside" from which to move in the opposite direction' (*S 5*, p. 88). For Leavis, as we have noted above, literary criticism is the foundational discipline, a developing of the intelligence which will move 'outside itself' to diagnosis of cultural and political evils, therefore it cannot be subordinate to or dependent on anything more 'important', such as in Eliot's ethical standpoint. Such a 'standpoint' has meant 'a decline in the virtues we can recognise' in Eliot's criticism, which is characterised by 'weak thinking, failure in critical disinterestedness or courage, bad judgement, and so on' (*S 5*, p. 89); a key stage in this decline, occasioned by orthodoxy, had of course been Eliot's remarks on Lawrence from two years earlier in *After Strange Gods*. We have seen how one of Eliot's fundamental points in that book was 'the limiting and crippling effect of a separation from tradition and orthodoxy' on a series of modern writers including Lawrence (*CP 5*, p. 41); that such writers are able to appeal as 'leaders' to a wide readership is due to the fact that most readers are 'quite uneducated' and 'not very well qualified for discriminating between nostrums' (*CP 5*, p. 28). In fact the world 'has as nearly lost all understanding of the meaning of *education* as it well can', so that for many readers 'the mere accumulation of "experiences", including literary and intellectual experiences, as well as amorous and picaresque ones, is ... valuable in itself' (*CP 5*, p. 29, emphasis

in original). In the need to avoid being led astray by such heresies, ‘to develop a more critical spirit, or rather to apply to authors critical standards which are almost in desuetude’ (CP 5, p. 29), namely those of Christian orthodoxy, we must preserve ‘some vestiges of a traditional education’ (CP 5, p. 17). This led to Eliot’s upholding Babbitt against Lawrence—a sore point for Leavis as we have seen—because the former ‘believed in tradition; for many years he stood almost alone in maintaining against the strong tendency of the time a right theory of education; and such effects of decadence as are manifest in Lawrence’s work he held in abomination’ (CP 5, p. 31).

Eliot’s interest in ‘Modern Education’ is indicated in a work preceding *Essays Ancient and Modern*, namely *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* of 1933, which Harding rather than Leavis noticed in *Scrutiny*, finding it ‘loose’ in structure, and impaired by Eliot’s ‘concern with historical materials’ which hampered him from probing ‘deep enough’ into his topic and offering ‘accurate’ formulations (S 2, p. 289). Nevertheless he found Eliot’s ‘glimpses’ into a variety of subjects including ‘English literature in a school curriculum’ to be ‘valuable’ and ‘fascinating’ even though Eliot did not go into details (S 2, p. 291). We have seen how Eliot believed in a ‘traditional education’ that would involve the classics and religious and moral instruction, as well as his scorn at the fact that ‘nowadays they even teach *English* in England’. It is compatible with this that in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* any ‘education in [English] poetry’ seems to occur outside the teaching system entirely. In the Introduction Eliot talks about how such an education happens, and about the possible development of ‘a person already educated in poetry’ (CP 4, pp. 582-3); it is characteristic that he uses entirely non-

institutional terms to discuss this 'education'. He believes in a 'native capacity' for enjoying poetry or 'an innate idea' of understanding it; where this exists, this capacity will develop in the process of time as the reader's 'poetic experiences multiply' and 'the element of enjoyment is enlarged into appreciation'; thus we experience 'a more intellectual addition to the original intensity of feeling' which leads us to compare and classify our poetic experiences (*CP* 4, pp. 582-3). Eliot makes no reference anywhere in this development to any part played by the education system, teachers or so forth; rather, 'we learn what poetry is ... from reading it' (*CP* 4, p. 583), and this position is congruent with Eliot's repeated insistence elsewhere, for example, in the 1929 'Dante' essay, that 'an elaborate preparation of historical and biographical knowledge has always been to me a barrier' in reading poetry (*CP* 3, p. 700), and where the initial individual encounter with poetry, unaffected by any context of instruction or information, is of absolute importance. In a 'Note' to the Introduction to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, entitled 'On the Development of Taste in Poetry', Eliot gives a brief history of his own development as a reader, from initial enjoyment to a 'craving for poetry' at puberty to the 'overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling' experienced when he 'happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's *Omar* [*Khayam*] which was lying about' at the age of fourteen (*CP* 4, p. 591). This last remark indicates that 'education' is a process of the chances of individual experience rather than an affair of intentional planning by teachers, schools and universities through lectures, syllabuses or exams. After that Eliot 'took the usual adolescent course' with the English Romantics until the gradual, mature perception was realised of why 'Shakespeare, or Dante, or Sophocles holds the place he has' (*CP* 4, p. 592);

in this statement there is once more no indication of any part that Eliot's actual schooling had to play in this.

Eliot does, however, open his Note on the 'Development of Taste' by hoping that his remarks are 'not without some bearing upon the teaching of literature in schools and universities' (*CP* 4, p. 591), and the Note ends by indicating that it is

really introductory to a large and difficult question: whether the attempt to teach students to *appreciate* English literature should be made at all; and with what restrictions the teaching of English literature can rightly be included in any academic curriculum, if at all. (*CP* 4, p. 593, emphasis in original)

This question is not explored further in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, but we can infer the confirmation here that Eliot is unenthusiastic about 'the teaching of English literature', or at most he believes that such 'teaching' should largely consist in leaving the reader alone to develop his or her own 'native capacity'. In the Conclusion to the book he makes a well-known declaration:

I believe that the poet naturally prefers to write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible, and that it is the half-educated and ill-educated, rather than the uneducated, who stand in his way: I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write. (*CP* 4, p. 690)

Here it seems that education does more harm than good in the response to poetry; Eliot also remarks here that ‘the ideal medium for poetry ... is the theatre’ and that the ‘auditor’ rather than the reader should be the targeted audience of poetry (*CP* 4, p. 691). ‘I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write’ tallies with Bourne’s observation, commented on in the previous chapter (see above, p. 145), that ‘one of the ablest, most intelligent, men in my shop could not read or write’. Eliot’s ideas on the personal and self-directed element in education are longstanding; see, for example, the 1919 essay, ‘The Education of Taste’, where education begins with ‘a passionate admiration for some one writer’ (*CP* 2, p. 63), taste being something that ‘begins and ends in feeling’, ‘an organisation of immediate experiences obtained in literature, which is individually modified in its shape by the points of concentration of our strongest feelings, the authors who have affected us most strongly and deeply’ (*CP* 2, p. 64). The role of the instructor is again strictly limited: ‘he can point to good literature and then be silent’, but he can also be a positive danger, given that ‘the mind of a boy of fourteen may be deadened by Shakespeare’ (*CP* 2, p. 63).

In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* Eliot observes that ‘on the subject of education, there are some helpful remarks in Lawrence’s *Fantasia of the Unconscious*’ (*CP* 4, p. 694). Lawrence’s *Fantasia* is indeed also applauded in *Scrutiny* as ‘one of the indispensable guides to determining the ends of education’: ‘an intelligent attitude towards children’ can be found in the ‘relevant (and now often quoted) chapters’ in the *Fantasia*, the ‘sanity’ of which ‘is particularly welcome after the accounts of what some educationalists do to the children they teach’ (Thompson, ‘Progressive Schools’, *S* 3, p. 210). In the following issue of

*Scrutiny*, of December 1934, Raymond O'Malley declares in 'Culture and Early Environment' that the *Fantasia*, whilst 'by no means the last word on education ... seems to me the best single book on the subject published since the War' (*S* 3, p. 222). Lawrence is against education that is force-feeding and repressive, referring to 'forcing-beds, called schools' (*Psychoanalysis*, p. 105); he advises parents to send children over the age of ten to domestic and technical workshops or artistic classes rather than to pursue reading and writing, this tying in with Bourne's craft type of education that is approved by Leavis, as discussed in chapter 3. Lawrence abhors an education dominated by the 'head' and by ideas: 'the brain has become the vampire of modern life, sucking up the blood and the life. There is hardly an original thought or original utterance possible to us. All is sickly repetition of stale, stale ideas' (*Psychoanalysis*, pp. 105-6). In the same vein, 'ideas are the most dangerous germs mankind has ever been injected with', and education should not be dedicated to mental training, and cramming the heads of the young with ideas that have 'no reference to their dynamic souls' (*Psychoanalysis*, p. 115). Leavis's comment on this book is very supportive, particularly in the matter of education, where he quotes a passage from the *Fantasia* and summarises thus:

civilised life is certainly threatened with impoverishment by education based on crude and defective psychology, by standardisation at a low level, and by the inculcation of a cheap and shallow emotional code. Lawrence's genius has done much to make this more widely and more keenly realised than before. It is a great service. (*FC*, p. 143)

This is consistent with Leavis's practice elsewhere of referring to Lawrence's non-fiction writings with approval, as in the essays 'Approaches to T. S. Eliot' (1947) and 'The Novel as Dramatic Poem (V): "Women in Love"' (1950); in the former Lawrence's *Fantasia* 'has much more of health and rightness in it' compared with Eliot's critical writings 'against "liberalism"' (S 15, p. 62), and in the latter it shows 'unmistakably the serenely triumphant reign of intelligence' (S 17, p. 204). Lawrence's abhorrence of enforcing borrowed ideas or ideals and his resentment of institutions corresponds with much that Leavis promotes, as for example indicated by his words on Babbitt, whose 'preoccupation with the "inner-check"' on the emotions is 'only a comparatively respectable form of something that prevails in most institutions, academic and other', at its worst a 'dry rot' that is 'common in the academic world' and that 'anyone may find without much search' (S 1, pp. 276-7). In quoting in the same article Lawrence's statement 'I only want to know people who have courage to live', Leavis objects to Eliot's opinion that Bertrand Russell would have been 'much better ... for an education in the classics' (S 1, p. 277; in Eliot's actual words, 'it is a public misfortune that Mr. Bertrand Russell did not have a classical education', CP 3, p. 623n). On the contrary, according to Leavis/Lawrence, what Russell really needed was more contact with and education in 'life and emotion': 'it isn't that life has been too much for him, but too little' (S 1, p. 277).

We can see therefore how there are both differences and overlap between Eliot and Lawrence/Leavis on education, and how the anti-pedagogy strain in Lawrence, at least in relation to the teaching of English literature, may lie behind Eliot's support in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* for Lawrence's

‘helpful remarks’. This is compatible with his comment in the ‘Blake’ essay of 1920 that education may be disadvantageous to the poet because it ‘consist[s] largely in the acquisition of impersonal ideas which obscure what we really are and feel, what we really want, and what really excites our interest’ (*CP* 2, p. 188). Decades later, Eliot was to voice a similar view in his essays on ‘The Aims of Education’ (1950), warning that if a child demonstrates an interest in language and poetry, parents should adopt a leave-alone approach and neither ‘discourage’ this nor ‘attach ... specific significance’ to it (*TCC*, p. 82). Other important treatments of education by Lawrence are in his depiction of a state school in the chapter ‘The Man’s World’ in *The Rainbow* and his essay ‘Education of the People’, both of which are saluted by Q. D. Leavis (*S* 7, p. 85) and elsewhere in *Scrutiny*. In the latter essay Lawrence promotes a basic instruction in ‘the three R’s’ between the ages of seven and twelve for children, but for the most part other than this ‘leave a child alone’, and do not provide a smattering of other subjects like geography, history, music, ‘pseudo-science’ and so on which a child might be interested in taking up later rather than being forced to encounter too early.<sup>14</sup> Other than this, rather than making all pupils continue with the same system, ‘set[ting] up standards and regulation patterns for people’ (*Phoenix*, p. 652), the practice should be to nourish and bring out the ‘living, spontaneous individuality in every man and woman’ (*Phoenix*, p. 606), so that after the age of twelve the child shall be directed into vocational or academic education according to their individual bent (*Phoenix*, p. 597). But much of ‘Education of the People’ moves out in a wide orbit from education into Lawrence’s fundamental concerns about our false notions about what ‘individuality’ is, not mere

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<sup>14</sup> D. H. Lawrence, ‘Education and the People’ (1918), in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. and introd. Edward D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), pp. 595-6.

individualistic self-consciousness but ‘blood-consciousness’ at a deeper level. The damage here is done at the earliest pre-schooling stage, through the suffocating idealisation, by the mother, of the mother-child relationship. Hence ‘how to begin to educate a child. First rule, leave him alone. Second rule, leave him alone. Third rule, leave him alone. That is the whole beginning’ (*Phoenix*, pp. 620-1). Although of course in *After Strange Gods* and elsewhere Eliot expresses worries about the extreme individualism of our culture, and about following the Lawrentian ‘Inner Light’ (*CP* 5, p. 43), as far as the education of the poet goes he seems to share the idea that it is precisely the individual’s own resources, and his being able to develop them without interference, that are paramount.

While the *Scrutiny* circle and Eliot therefore share some belief in the wisdom of Lawrence as a commentator on education, the common ground between them tends to disappear when it comes to the particular question of the value of teaching English literature as a school and university subject. In *Scrutiny*’s case, that ‘a real education ... should start from, and be always closely associated with, the training of sensibility in the literature of the student’s own language (where alone it is possible)’, as Leavis puts it in a review of December 1932 (*S* 1, p. 300), becomes in effect a campaign for the rights to ‘English for the English’, to quote the title of Sampson’s book referred to in Leavis’s ‘Mr. Eliot and Education’ discussed above. In his article ‘What Shall We Teach?’ from March 1934, Thompson further endorses this book, recommending it as ‘an excellent tonic’ for ‘dispirited educationists’ and offering support for Sampson’s view that ‘English is of supreme importance as the key subject’, or, in Sampson’s own words which are quoted, is ‘the condition of [children] learning everything else’: ‘English is not really a subject

at all ... [but] a condition of existence rather than a subject of instruction' (*English for the English*, pp. 27, 25; *S 2*, pp. 379-80). For Thompson, referring to his and Leavis's *Culture and Environment*, 'English' is not only about a training in reading literature but a development of cultural awareness, and his essay goes on to promote the other major theme of his and Leavis's book which argues that education must rectify 'the greatest impoverishment that a mechanical life has brought', namely 'the lack of personal knowledge from the earliest childhood, of nature and the countryside' (*S 2*, pp. 380, 381). Thus the 'intelligent study of English'—and Thompson suggests a number of literary and non-literary texts and exercises to develop 'close attention to words' (*S 2*, pp. 383-4)—is the cornerstone of a key *Scrutiny* axiom: 'the education proposed would enable the young to diagnose contemporary civilisation and mobilise some impetus to cure it ... people educated in this way ... would have a more radical insight into the ills of megapolitan civilisation' (*S 2*, pp. 385-6). Such an instrumental view of education is repeated in an addendum actually called 'The *Scrutiny* Movement in Education' to the June 1933 issue: 'in education ... the power of the press, of the advertiser and of the literary racket can be challenged as nowhere else (*S 2*, n. p.). This involves a use of poetry and other literature different from anything Eliot supports in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, where poetry's primary 'use', which is its providing 'pleasure' to the individual reader, is stressed alongside other non-interventionist effects it may have, such as contributing towards 'revolutions in sensibility', 'mak[ing] people see the world afresh' or making us more aware of 'the deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being' (*CP 4*, p. 692).

After our references to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, it will be evident that the very title of Leavis's almost contemporary pamphlet of 1932, 'How to Teach Reading', would raise serious doubts in Eliot. Leavis's pamphlet is a reply to Pound's essay 'How to Read' (1931), and while he can agree with Pound's 'scornful' attitude to 'university "Arts" courses', and with his analysis of the dangers of the 'tools' of language becoming 'rotten' (*EATU*, pp. 108-9), the 'perversity' of Pound's proposed remedies merely illustrates, among other inadequacies, the 'elegantly pedantic dilettantism ... which has its monument in the *Cantos*' and shows no understanding of what a literary tradition is (*EATU*, pp. 111, 117). Leavis places his corrective to Pound's views in the context of a university course in English; in this pamphlet Leavis only has space to throw out a few 'hints' (*EATU*, p. 125) about the syllabus and method that will achieve 'the training of sensibility [which is] prior and irremissible' (*EATU*, p. 120). While in the original 1932 pamphlet Leavis offered a more general estimation of the educative function of Eliot's prose, namely that 'the student will be able to learn from Mr. T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* ... It is not only because of their content that the essays in this book are ... an education in themselves; they are models of critical method' (*HTTR*, p. 27), in the revised version published as an appendix to *Education and the University*, Leavis, still attentive to the instructional function of Eliot's essays (they are 'examples of good criticism...illustrating, in different ways, criticism as a discipline both sensitive and strict of intelligence and sensibility', *EATU*, p. 121), in the two-page Note draws on long paragraphs from Eliot's 'Ben Jonson' (*CP* 2, pp. 156-7) and an introductory essay to Samuel Johnson (*CP* 4, pp. 168-9) as a 'valuable hint' demonstrating criticism of 'critical method' and 'quality

intelligence' (*EATU*, p. 139).<sup>15</sup> Leavis's 'method' is also illustrated in an exemplary close reading of Shakespeare, whom Pound had unforgivably neglected (*EATU*, pp. 120-4), and is followed by a 'scheme of work' focussing on comparative evaluation of Metaphysical and later poets which is inspired and influenced by Eliot's 're-opening of communications with the seventeenth century' (*EATU*, pp. 127-30). Leavis's other Eliot-inspired insistence is that the syllabus shall ponder the past in terms of 'an interest in the literature of today', and thus 'initiate into the idea of living tradition' (*EATU*, p. 130).

When it comes to the place of 'other literatures' in the syllabus, Leavis accepts that 'one is equipped to profit by incursions' into them, but only after 'having trained one's sensibility and grasped firmly the significance of "tradition" and "a literature" in the literature of one's own language'; likewise, 'if one is uneducated in one's own literature one cannot hope to acquire education in any serious sense by dabbling in, or by assiduously frequenting, any other' (*EATU*, pp. 133-4). With 'English' as foundation, Leavis can allow the study of the 'line of Mr. Eliot's descent' in French, that is, the line from Baudelaire through Corbière and Laforgue, and 'one can read Dante ... helped, say, by Mr. Eliot's remarkable essay' (the 'Dante' essay of 1929, *EATU*, p. 134). But 'other literatures', including Latin and Greek, a training in which will commonly 'incapacitate from contact with literature for life' and result in an approach to language 'divorced from experience', 'must be kept subsidiary to training in English' (*EATU*, pp. 134-5). Leavis has similar opinions about Anglo-Saxon and the History of the Language as subjects,

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<sup>15</sup> Leavis noted in the Preface to *Education and the University* (1943) that 'How to Teach Reading', included as an Appendix to the book, has revisions, omissions and 'some compensating additions' when compared with the original pamphlet (*EATU*, p. 13).

valid in their own right but ‘deadening and dehumanising’ for ‘a real understanding’ of ‘what we commonly mean by English literature’ (*EATU*, pp. 136-7). Leavis’s pamphlet ends by reasserting the primacy of the university within the whole system of education—‘with the universities ignoring their function, it would, of course, be idle to hope much of education in general’—and by arguing the familiar position of the value of English in relation to the wider engagement of *Culture and Environment*: ‘practical criticism of literature must be associated with training in awareness of the environment—advertising, the cinema, the press, architecture and so on’ (*EATU*, pp. 137-8).

It is apparent at this stage that Leavis’s ‘pedagogy’ (*EATU*, p. 138) absorbs extensively from Eliot, not only in relation to the criticism of English literature but as a trustworthy guide to ‘incursions’ into European literature; in the latter case, what is needed is ‘some sense of the “mind of Europe”’ as ‘the order within which English literature has its place’ (as outlined in Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’) rather than the ‘elegant and scholarly eclecticism’, or ‘bag of tricks’, of Pound’s ‘How to Read’ (*EATU*, pp. 135-6). At this stage, and as late as 1943 when Leavis reprints his criticism of Pound as an Appendix to *Education and the University*, Eliot is seen as an ally against Pound, whereas once Leavis begins to lose faith in the former, he sees more and more a common weakness of the two, diagnosing it as a limiting Americanness (above, pp. 66, 114, 169). It is clear that an essay of Eliot’s like ‘Modern Education and the Classics’ referred to above, would have been truly shocking to Leavis, given its calling in question his entire educational enterprise and written by someone who had been seen as its greatest support. Nevertheless, Eliot’s importance for the way modern ‘English’ should be

developed is too formative to ever be repudiated, and as we shall see, the very weaknesses of his poetry, as Leavis comes to understand them, make him especially suitable for university study. In educational terms therefore Eliot becomes for *Scrutiny* a highly ambivalent figure who necessarily can only be dealt with selectively. Thus H. A. Mason, in a Note on ‘Classics and Education’, applauds Eliot’s ‘celebrated essay’ in *The Sacred Wood*, ‘Euripides and Professor Murray’, for exposing the outmoded ‘critical values’ of the classical scholarly establishment, adding that ‘the advances made in criticism and above all the work of Mr. Eliot as critic and poet have made possible the assimilation of much more of the classical world than was possible before’, and such an updating needs to be complemented by ‘the appearance of translators who will render in the modern idiom the poetry of the past’ (*S* 8, pp. 34-5). But there is no reference to Eliot’s views on ‘Modern Education and the Classics’, which goes against Mason and *Scrutiny*’s belief in ‘English ... as the humane study *par excellence*’ and the belief that ‘any claim for the Classics can only be for a subordinate role in general education’ (*S* 8, p. 32).

During the second half of the 1930s there is a lull of interest in the subject of ‘Mr. Eliot and Education’ in *Scrutiny*’s pages; this, as we saw in chapter 1, goes with a reawakening of admiration for Eliot the poet following the publication of ‘Burnt Norton’ in 1936. But *Scrutiny* does not relax its effort into the investigation of education *per se*, and the number of education-related publications it reviews shows clearly that diagnosing serious faults in the system at school and university level is still a widespread concern of *Scrutiny*. University ‘English’ is vital, but the traditionalism with which universities approach this modern subject—all the ‘wretched retarded paraphernalia’ of exams, ‘inert respect for the pantheon of the

dead', the passive absorption of "'facts about" authors and their work'—is dismaying, as L. C. Knights reports in his review of one of the best known 'anti-academic' books, *The Muse in Chains* by Stephen Potter (*S* 5, pp. 438-40).<sup>16</sup> Under such circumstances, Harding, in September 1936, remarks worriedly that "'The Poetry of T. S. Eliot" begins to have the intimidating sound of a Tripos question' (*S* 5, p. 171). Attacks on the narrowness and out-of-touchness of the academy, and on the practice of scholarship in English that 'never gears in with life', occur repeatedly, as in Q. D. Leavis's review of Dorothy L. Sayers (*S* 6, p. 340), and in Knights's scrutiny of 'The Modern Universities', where among other faults 'for the great majority [of students,] excessive lectures and incessant examinations form a vicious circle from which there is no escape' and the lecturer is 'an aloof presence' whose guidance is extremely limited (*S* 6, p. 369). Knights bolsters his point by describing D. H. Lawrence's 'acute disappointment' with his college experience, as recorded by Jessie Chambers (*D. H. Lawrence*, chapter 3, 'Student Days', pp. 73-89; *S* 6, p. 371). He also refers approvingly to an article by P. Mansell Jones in the *Criterion* entitled 'Where Modern Universities are Wrong' (*S* 6, pp. 367, 369), where over-specialism on the one hand, and too much vocational training on the other, alike defeat the aims of a 'humane education', together with a 'machine' system that has students taking too many courses that are examined at the end of every term, producing 'a sense of "rush" which is the reverse of ... academic

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<sup>16</sup> Knights is not however impressed by Potter's suggestions of 'huge changes' for students of English literature to whom his book is dedicated, including reading being inseparable from what we now call 'creative writing', plus the abolition of any 'historical time order' in the syllabus and of all examinations, assessment being based on 'the accumulated record ... of the apprenticeship in writing' throughout the course and the 'word' of the student's tutors. *The Muse in Chains: A Study in Education* (London: Cape, 1937), pp. 256-62.

“stillness””, and that gives them ‘little time to read widely’.<sup>17</sup> Mansell Jones is considering the defects in Arts degrees specifically, though there is no detailed comment in the article on English studies.

*Scrutiny*’s attack on what is called the typical ‘academic mind’ and what it publishes also continues. Knights, in ‘The Academic Mind on the Seventeenth Century’, sees in this an attempt ‘to *substitute* scholarship for criticism’ (emphasis in original), as exemplified by E. M. W. Tillyard, whose focus in discussing Milton is an extensive investigation into Milton’s sources rather than Milton’s verse itself: Tillyard’s approach shows ‘a curious incomprehension of the necessary subordination of factual studies’ (*S 7*, pp. 99-100). The following piece in *Scrutiny*, by Leavis himself, ‘In Defence of Milton’, is to some extent a review of Tillyard again, whose monograph *The Miltonic Setting* shows ‘a justly respected scholar’ is ‘rarely a good ... critic’, and can lack ‘any developed sensibility, any fineness of perception and judgment’ (*S 7*, p. 104). For Leavis, the appearance of such a book reveals the necessity ‘to defend literature ... against the academic mind’ (*S 7*, p. 104), which takes the reader further and further away from the primary texts into scholarship and context, extending ‘the list of works that students much drudge through’, or finding ‘new burdens for the literary student’ (*S 7*, pp. 110-1). Leavis reasserts his position that Milton’s poetry ‘denied itself the life of the living language’ as opposed to Tillyard’s challenge to this (*S 7*, p. 114). But apart from specific disagreements, Leavis observes in Tillyard a wrongness extremely worrying for English studies:

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<sup>17</sup> P. Mansell Jones, ‘Where Modern Universities are Wrong’, *Criterion* 15 (July 1936), p. 609.

the accumulation of scholarship—‘work on’—about and around the great things of literature is ... a matter for misgiving. The problem, as a university teacher should be especially aware, is to ensure that the libraries and reading-lists of such work shall not ... be the reverse of an aid and an encouragement to humane education and the vitalising currency of the classics. In these conditions anything approaching the spirit that sets out to establish the indispensability of fresh impedimenta and seeks fresh impedimenta with a view to establishing ... their indispensability, is peculiarly to be deplored. (*S* 7, pp. 106-7)

This ‘spirit’ contrasts sharply with that of Eliot, whose best essays, as we saw in chapter 1, show an ‘essential and pregnant felicity’, and who is at the furthest remove from ‘mere accumulation’ (above, p. 27). Ironically, such scholarly procedures would soon be practised on Eliot himself, as we saw Leavis complain in his review of Rajan, with ‘the general tendency in the literary-academic world today to substitute ... elucidation for criticism’ (above, p. 50).

This contempt for ‘academic’ approaches is repeated in Knights’s rejection of the study of literature in terms of ‘origins, forms and influences’, as he puts it in his attack on C. S. Lewis’s *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (a work which also calls for the retention of Anglo-Saxon in the English syllabus as well as scoffing at the study of ‘current literature’ (‘Mr. C. S. Lewis and the Status Quo’, *S* 8, pp. 88-91). On this point, Eliot is sympathetic to *Scrutiny*’s position in many ways, though it is only in his essay of 1956, ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’ that we find the fullest indication of this position. Here, Eliot talks about the harm of scholarly criticism

that is ‘explanation by origins’, as exemplified by John Livingston Lowes’s ‘monumental’ *The Road to Xanadu*, a type of detection work which is ‘fascinating’ but is no aid to making poetry ‘more intelligible as poetry’ (*OPP*, pp. 107-8). Likewise, biographical criticism can constitute, to use Leavis’s term, ‘impedimenta’, as Eliot reveals with his own experience of reading poetry: ‘too much information about the origins of the poem may even break my contact with it’, and in discussing Wordsworth, ‘I feel no need for any light upon the Lucy poems beyond the radiance shed by the poems themselves’ (*OPP*, p. 112). Eliot argues that

when the poem has been made, something new has happened, something that cannot be wholly explained by *anything that went before*. That, I believe, is what we mean by ‘creation’ ... examination of [a poem’s] sources ... responds to the desire of a good many readers that poetry should be explained to them in terms of something else. (*OPP*, p. 112, emphasis in original)

Eliot approves more the contrary procedure, which corresponds more to the practice of ‘close reading’, or what he calls ‘the lemon-squeezer school of criticism’, but this term for it also indicates that this has its dangers too: the assumptions that there is one correct interpretation of the poem and that this was ‘consciously or unconsciously’ the author’s intention, as well as the fact that a reader’s enjoyment of the poem may be impaired after a critic has taken it ‘to pieces’ in this way (*OPP*, pp. 113-4).

‘Enjoyment’ is for Eliot the primary aim in reading poetry, and the word is stressed throughout ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’:

to understand a poem comes to the same thing as to enjoy it for the right reasons. One might say that it means getting from the poem such enjoyment as it is capable of giving ... It is certain that we do not fully enjoy a poem unless we understand it; and on the other hand, it is equally true that we do not fully understand a poem unless we enjoy it. And that means, enjoying it to the right degree and in the right way, relative to other poems ... (*OPP*, p. 115)

This corresponds with remarks noted above from the ‘Dante’ essay of 1929, where Eliot asserts that ‘it is better to be spurred to acquire scholarship because you enjoy the poetry, than to suppose that you enjoy the poetry because you have acquired the scholarship’ (*CP* 3, p. 700). We should therefore ask, ‘about any writing which is offered to us as literary criticism, is it aimed towards understanding and enjoyment?’ If not, Eliot argues, it will belong to some other branch of study, as history, psychology, sociology and so on, a type of knowledge that, ‘for the appreciation of the poetry ... can only lead us to the door: we must find our own way in’ (*OPP*, pp. 116-7). A truly valuable critic for Eliot is someone who can make him look at something he has either not looked at before, or only approached ‘with eyes clouded by prejudice’, and ‘set me face to face with it and then leave me alone with it. From that point, I must rely on my own sensibility, intelligence and capacity for wisdom’ (*OPP*, p. 117). Therefore although Eliot and Leavis might agree that

there is a great amount of scholarly ‘impedimenta’ which is a danger to literature, Eliot’s emphasis on the privacy of consumption, which we have already seen in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, seems to be very different from Leavis’s engagement with the understanding of poetry in the highly competitive and communal atmosphere of the university seminar room.

In ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’, Eliot might be said to lecture his university audience on the dangers proceeding from university study, where literary criticism’s being infiltrated and corrupted by other disciplines, a ‘transformation ... which we may say began with Coleridge but which has proceeded with greater acceleration during the last twenty-five years’, is prompted in part ‘by the teaching of literature (including *contemporary* literature) in colleges and universities’ (*OPP*, p. 114, emphasis in original). At the outset of the lecture Eliot had remarked that ‘I am far from deploring this situation’, that is the modern eminence of the teacher-critic: ‘most of the really interesting criticism today is the work of men of letters who have found their way into universities’ (*OPP*, p. 105). ‘I do not deplore the transformation’, Eliot says, but only because ‘it seems to me to have been inevitable’ (*OPP*, p. 114). The body of Eliot’s lecture thereafter consists of cautionary assessments of academic criticism and analyses of its threat to readerly enjoyment, and there are no instances of it which Eliot can approve without misgiving. His ambivalence can be summed up by his remark at the very close of the lecture: ‘these last thirty years have been, I think, a brilliant period in literary criticism in both Britain and America. It may even come to seem, in retrospect, too brilliant. Who knows?’ (*OPP*, p. 118).

Although Leavis is nowhere mentioned by name in the lecture, it is doubtless the case, given his prominence in the discipline in the last ‘thirty years’ in question, that Eliot includes him too in this doubtful salute. Leavis’s reaction to *On Poetry and Poets*, the book which contains ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’, is hostile; his ostensible review of it opens with the question ‘how can a book of criticism be at once so distinguished and so unimportant?’ (‘T. S. Eliot as Critic’, *AK*, p. 177). This particular essay is not mentioned in Leavis’s review, however, as his attention here seems not so much taken up by university English as by the wider ‘plight’ that Eliot ‘gives no sign of recognising’: ‘the impossibility of maintaining an intelligent critical journal; the absence of an educated public ... coherent and influential enough to be able to insist on the maintenance of serious standards in the places where the function of criticism is supposed to be nowadays mainly performed—the weeklies and the middle-class Sunday papers’ (*AK*, p. 194).

Returning to *Scrutiny*’s engagement with Eliot, we note D. W. Harding’s comment in December 1939 that

in his attack on flabbiness of mind, on the lowering of standards in literature and ‘culture’ in the narrower sense, on the substitution of a mob led by propaganda in place of a community, and in the sort of concern he shows for education, Mr. Eliot implicitly agrees with much that has been expressed in *Scrutiny* for the last seven years. (*S* 8, p. 310)

This comment is made in Harding’s review of Eliot’s recently published *The Idea of a Christian Society*, where Eliot is certainly ‘concerned’ for education and for

‘the depression of standards of art and culture’ which he attributes to (as *Scrutiny* would certainly agree) the ‘advertisement and propaganda’ operating ‘in any mass society organised for profit’ (*ICS*, p. 66). ‘A nation’s system of education is much more important than its system of government’, Eliot notes (*ICS*, p. 67), and he attacks the ‘sporadic and unrelated experimentation’ which he sees as characterising modern liberal ways of education (*ICS*, p. 67), or as he puts it earlier, ‘that system of miscellaneous or specialised instruction which passes for education’ (*ICS*, p. 57). This miscellany is reflected in the diverse and liberal nature of the syllabus; of students in America he notes: ‘it might have been better if they had read fewer, but the same books’, and ‘only a proper system of education can unify the active and the contemplative life, action and speculation, politics and the arts’ (*ICS*, p. 67). He thus calls for a Christian education common to all, the aims of which ‘will be directed by a Christian philosophy of life’. Thus ‘education’ will no longer be ‘merely a term comprehending a variety of unrelated subjects undertaken for special purposes or for none at all’ (*ICS*, p. 64).

Whilst working on *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot was also attending meetings of the discussion group called the Moot, to one sub-group of which the *Scrutiny* writers Knights and Harding also belonged in 1939. According to H. A. Hodges’s report, Knights and Harding, present at a meeting in ‘a Manchester group organised by George Every’ categorised as the ‘University Group’ that considered the relation of the university to society, belonged to the second of the two poles of thought emerging within the Moot in 1939; theirs was ‘an impulse towards action, stimulated by [Karl] Mannheim’s thinking’, whilst the other pole was ‘a concern for philosophical-theological analysis’ (quoted in *T. S. Eliot’s Social Criticism*, p.

171).<sup>18</sup> According to Mannheim's 'Sociology of Education', provided for the Moot discussion group in 1939, where he compared aspects of education in different historical and social periods, in an age when tradition was more alive and when 'education was simply one of the unconscious techniques for assisting the infant to grow up into a given social order', people could rely on the 'spontaneous emanation of a tradition', but in a time as now when 'tradition is fading in the most important spheres of life', 'silent ... transmission' 'ha[s] to be replaced by conscious processes'.<sup>19</sup> A few pages later he emphasised the need for 'official education' because, as he wrote, 'the family and the community are losing their educational power', thus 'the creation of basic attitudes is left to vulgarising agencies such as ... the cinema' (p. 3); this is congruent with much of Leavis and his associates' attacks on mass civilisation as we have already seen in chapter 3 and elsewhere. But Eliot, as we have seen and shall note again (see on pp. 147, 204, 240), is opposed to strict educational or cultural planning, still believing in a more general cultural infiltration and the role of family and community. Whilst Mannheim may share some grounds with Leavis with the idea that 'the eternal core of the gospel ... cannot consist in a dogmatic fixation on the concrete setting in which truth appeared at that time' (p. 1), and that education needs to be more practical whilst maintaining

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<sup>18</sup> The records of the Moot in the Moot Archive in the Education Library, University of London, show that education was a key issue under discussion in the Moot meetings. Between 1939 and 1941, Fred Clarke, Karl Mannheim, Adolf Löwe, Christopher Dawson and Eliot were engaged in a series of discussions on education and Christianity, as the titles of their papers suggest, for example, Clarke's 'Some Notes on English Educational Institutions' (1939), 'Some Notes on Religious Education' (1941), and 'Notes on Secondary Education in England' (1942), Mannheim's 'Some Remarks upon F. Clarke's Paper "English Educational Institutions"' and 'Sociology of Education', Geoffrey Vickers's draft on 'Education, War, Change' (1939), Löwe's 'Some Notes on University Reform' and 'Some Notes on University Education', Dawson's 'Notes on Mannheim's Paper' (1941), and T. S. Eliot's 'Notes on Mannheim's Paper' (1941) and 'Notes on Social Philosophy' (1942).

<sup>19</sup> Karl Mannheim, 'Sociology of Education' (1939), UCL Institute of Education Archives, MOO/11, p. 1.

‘a healthy distance from the ephemeral in worldly affairs’ (p. 2), he tends to be more tolerant to religion than Leavis, as he believes in the beneficial continuance of Christian ideas:

just as the Christian idea has to permit different ways of life in the very same society, so the different social and historical forms in the metamorphosis of the spirit have the function of opening up various perspectives, of bringing to a synthesis the eschatological and the historical elements in Christianity, which has always been one of its main themes. (pp. 1-2)

Thus we shall find later in a supplement to the *Christian News-Letter*, a journal associated with the Moot, entitled ‘Education in a Christian Society’ (1940), Eliot refers approvingly to Mannheim’s recommendation of Max Weber’s classification of the aims of education, including ‘charismatic education’, ‘education aiming at culture’ and ‘specialist education’, to which his own explication of ‘the essential values’ of education, involving ‘those of Wisdom and Holiness, the values of the sage and of the saint’ are close.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Adolf Löwe, who at that time was a faculty member of the University of Manchester and contributed to the Moot as previously mentioned, certainly also belongs to the second pole noted above; indeed he acknowledged in *The Universities in Transformation*, a pamphlet based largely on his above-noted two contributions to the Moot in late 1939 and early 1940, that ‘I am deeply indebted to Professor K. Mannheim’s work for enlightenment on the

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<sup>20</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Education in a Christian Society’ (1940), *Christian News-Letter*, Supplement No. 20, 13 March 1940. Mannheim’s reference to Max Weber is on p. 2 of his ‘Sociology of Education’.

structure and evolution of modern society in general'.<sup>21</sup> A decade later in his 'The Aims of Education', which has been mentioned above (p. 209) and we will return to below (p. 245), quoting a section from Löwe's pamphlet where he talked about the inseparableness of education system and social order, Eliot was to comment that

we must recognise that the system of education in every country is the product of history, and reflects the history, and responds to the temperament, of that people. In so far as a system of education is something shaped by the conscious aims of a few men—whether these men are organising the education of their own people, or creating a system for some more backward race—there is always grave danger of borrowing or imposing something which does not fit the ethos, the way of life, the habits of thought and feeling of that people. (*TCC*, p. 95)<sup>22</sup>

Eliot, closely associated with the Moot in its early stages, contributed both to its discussion and the *Christian News-Letter*, and certainly belonged to the latter pole, as shown by his 1940 supplement to the *News-Letter*, 'Education in a Christian Society' noted above.<sup>23</sup> In fact as we shall see it was a matter of much frustration to many readers that Eliot's writings on education and other subjects were so short on 'action', so bare of practical and detailed suggestions for how the systems he criticised could be improved. As Stefan Collini remarks, in his non-literary writings 'it is noticeable that Eliot made much of the invocation of principles in general, and

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<sup>21</sup> Adolf Löwe, *The Universities in Transformation*, Christian News-Letter Books No. 9 (London: The Sheldon Press, 1940), p. v.

<sup>22</sup> Eliot's quote is from Löwe's *The Universities in Transformation*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Eliot acted as editor of the *News-Letter* between 1940 and 1942.

rather less of the content of any actual principles' (*Absent Minds*, p. 310). His position in 'Education in a Christian Society' is consistent with that in *The Idea*, calling for stress on 'those educational values which can be regarded as permanent': 'the values which we most ignore, the recognition of which we most seldom find in writings on education, are those of Wisdom and Holiness, the values of the sage and of the saint' (*ICS*, p. 141). In being misled by the misconceptions of 'identify[ing] wisdom with knowledge, saintliness with natural goodness ... minimis[ing] not only the operation of grace but self-training ... divorc[ing] holiness from education', Eliot wrote, 'education has come to mean education of the mind only; and an education which is only of the mind—of the mind in its restricted modern sense—can lead to scholarship, to efficiency, to worldly achievement and to power, but not to wisdom' (*ICS*, p. 142).

Eliot opposes certain educational dogmas such as the 'equalisation of opportunity' and the 'democratisation of education' which may result in a mass-society that 'may end in totalitarianism' (*ICS*, p. 146), a recurrent concern of *The Idea* also. The comparison of alternative models of society in *The Idea* is very general, and no specific proposals for the reform of education or of anything else are offered, a feature also characterising 'Education in a Christian Society'. The 'main point' of the article is 'the affirmation of the end values of Christian education as wisdom and holiness', as opposed to current values that are progressive, liberal and material (*ICS*, p. 147). Harding's review of *The Idea* may have noted areas of 'implicit agreement' with Eliot, but he hardly accepts Eliot's general statement of remedies, and much of his review is taken up with expressing a 'non-Christian's doubts' about the conservatism, repression and damaging belief in 'the evil which

is present in human nature' of the traditional Christianity upheld by Eliot (S 8, pp. 311-3).

At the same time as Eliot was becoming more general and removed from action in his 'philosophical-theological analyses' Leavis was becoming more detailed and applied, and nowhere more so than in *Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School'* (1943), which is his most extended piece of educational writing, being an amplification of four articles previously appearing in *Scrutiny*: 'Why Universities?' (S 3, pp. 117-32), 'Education and the University: Sketch for an English School' (S 9, pp. 98-120), 'Education and the University: (III) Literary Studies' (S 9, pp. 306-22) and 'Education and the University: Considerations at a Critical Time' (S 11, pp. 162-7). The key problem concerning higher education for Leavis is

how to produce the 'educated man'—the man of humane culture who is equipped to be intelligent and responsible about the problems of contemporary civilisation—this is a truly urgent study, but a study that apart from an adequate preoccupation with the Idea of a University is likely to end in despair. (*EATU*, pp. 29-30)

It is only the 'English School' that is 'capable of discharging [this] function of the university in the matter of liberal education' (*EATU*, p. 32), given that 'English'

trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity

of intelligence—intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy. (*EATU*, p. 34).

At the outset of the book he defends his belief in ‘humane culture’ from Eliot’s Christian position in his essay ‘The Humanism of Irving Babbitt’ (1928), namely that ‘the culture represented by such an education is incomplete’ when divorced from its far more important religious context (*CP* 3, pp. 457, 459-60); Leavis however insists on ‘a liberal education that doesn’t start with a doctrinal frame, and is not directed at inculcating one’ (*EATU*, p. 20). Although he accepts that ‘the cultural tradition we belong to and must aim to preserve is in very important senses Christian’, Leavis implies a significant modification of this in his declaration, noted above, that ‘this is the age, not of Dante or of Herbert, but of T. S. Eliot’ (p. 49); in other words, any ‘received doctrinal frame or conceptual apparatus’ no longer functions absolutely in modern civilisation and ‘the prevailing spirit must be tentative’ (*EATU*, pp. 20-1). To illustrate this, he includes as an Appendix to the book his article ‘T. S. Eliot’s Later Poetry’ (*S* 11, pp. 60-71) which, as we saw in chapter 1, argues that Eliot’s later poetry ‘doesn’t say, “I believe” or “I know”, or “Here is the truth”’, unlike that of Dante, and in which we have ‘nothing of the order of affirmation or statement, but a kind of tentatively defining exploration’; the ‘difficulties of [Eliot’s] age ... are such that they certainly cannot be met by any simple reimposition of traditional frames’ (*EATU*, pp. 89, 91, 103).

For Leavis then, religion remains something in the background of literary study, whereas for Eliot it is practically the other way around. We shall pursue this before returning to *Education and the University*. In his essay ‘Second Thoughts

about Humanism' (1929) Eliot challenges a passage from Norman Foerster's *American Criticism* where he promotes 'pure humanism' and its resistance to religion's dogmatic affirmations, its rejection of formal theology and aversion to religious asceticism.<sup>24</sup> For Eliot however religion affirms 'that the unpardonable sin is insolence or presumption, and overweening pride of passion or reason, a failure to be mindful of the Nemesis that lies in wait for disproportionate self-assertion' (*CP* 3, p. 615), which echoes the charges made against Lawrence discussed in chapter 2. Eliot denies Foerster's polarisation between humanism and religion, restating that the two are 'compatible' (*CP* 3, p. 616), and refers to Foerster as a 'Heretic' (*CP* 3, p. 619), a term also to be applied to Lawrence. Foerster is 'like most humanists ... trained as a man of letters; and Humanism bears the imprint of the academic man of letters. His approach to every other field of study is through literature' (*CP* 3, p. 617). This means that the humanist has a 'limited equipment' that is no substitute for that of philosophical training, and thus 'the trouble is that, for a modern humanist, literature thus becomes itself merely a means of approach to something else' (*CP* 3, p. 617). For Eliot 'this trick of making literature do the work of philosophy, ethics and theology tends to vitiate one's judgment and sensibility in literature' (*CP* 3, p. 618). This 'trick' is of course as remarked above precisely Leavis's own position: 'in a university English School as it should be, literary studies would lead outside themselves into other fields and other disciplines' (*S* 16, p. 119); again, 'serious literary studies lead outside themselves ... they ask to be associated with studies outside the strictly literary-critical field' (*V*, p. 167).

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<sup>24</sup> Noel Foerster, *American Criticism: A Study of Literary Theory from Poe to the Present* (1928, rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), pp. 244-5.

If up till now Eliot has never argued directly with Leavis over the issue of humanism and religion, in his talk given at the Malvern Conference in 1941 entitled 'The Christian Conception of Education', Leavis and his associates are mentioned by name as being typical of forces contaminated by humanist beliefs that were originally grown in the American university, representative of a liberal education associated with Irving Babbitt (*ICS*, pp. 151-2). Eliot agrees that humanism has a positive role in its reaction 'against the ideals of specialised or miscellaneous instruction, of technical narrowness or of dilettante smattering' (*ICS*, p. 151), but he cannot allow the humanists' denial of the 'adequate foundation' (*ICS*, p. 152) from which humanism itself sprang: 'humanism is, in fact, derived from Christianity and contingent upon it; unexplainable and unacceptable except as the outcome of Christian tradition' (*ICS*, p. 152). Repeating the view in 'Second Thoughts about Humanism', Eliot insists that 'education must rest upon a dogmatic view whether natural or supernatural' and 'in education as in other matters, the only final alternative to a worldly totalitarian view is a Christian view' (*ICS*, p. 152). 'Education should aim at forming, not merely the instructed man or the technically competent man but the *wise* man' (emphasis in original), and wisdom without a Christian basis would be 'folly' (*ICS*, p. 153). Again, 'the wisdom of Europe since the Christian revelation has been dependent upon the Christian tradition': the humanist approach as a way of education is 'not enough':

it can only appeal to a small number of superior individuals; it can help them to recognise what is wrong, but it cannot provide them with the power to influence the mass of mankind and to bring about what is right. It can appeal

to those people who have already the humanists' feelings and desires: but it cannot change the will of those who worship false gods ... Humanistic wisdom can provide a helpful, if in the end joyless nourishment for the intelligent educated individual—on another level, there is a comparable wisdom of the countryman rooted in village tradition and the life of the countryside and the procession of the seasons—but it cannot sustain an entire society. In the field of education, the humanistic approach may lead to many valuable reforms; but it seems to me inherent in the humanistic position to make unexamined assumptions, which it is likely to be right in making, but which it cannot justify. (*ICS*, pp. 153-4)

It is significant that here Eliot compares 'humanistic wisdom' to another limited 'wisdom' which is also favoured by Leavis and his circle, that of 'the countryman rooted in village tradition', and indeed he goes on to refer to an 'article by Dr. Leavis' which is 'admirable', in which 'he makes very sensible suggestions for the improvement of the English Tripos', the article being 'Education and the University: Sketch for an English School' noted above, from September 1940 (*S 9*, pp. 98-120). Any approval here is however much modified by Eliot's referring again to the crucial questions the humanist isn't asking:

'why should we want humane culture? Why is one conception of humane culture better than another? What is the sanction for your conception of social conscience or of political will as against that, for instance, now

dominant in Germany?’ I do not think that the humanist can give a satisfactory answer. (*ICS*, p. 154)

The argument with Eliot about the relation between humanism and religion at the outset of *Education and the University* is anticipated in the editorial retrospect of *Scrutiny*'s aims, 'After Ten Years', which appeared in April 1942. Here the editorial rejects, but in a very deferential way, Eliot's assessment of the 'inadequacy in the nature of [*Scrutiny*'s] preoccupation with the problems we discuss' in his Malvern Conference address (*S* 10, pp. 327-8). In *Education and the University*, the initial disagreement with Eliot is also signalled by extreme deference, which is quite different from the more outspoken anti-Eliot tone that we have already seen in some of Leavis's responses to Eliot in the 1930s. That the picture of a modern 'English School' in *Education and the University* is so pervasively indebted to Eliot perhaps accounts for this muted voice of dissent: as Storer has noted, when Leavis's writing at this time is 'more focused on the question of how English literature should be studied and taught as a university subject', then Eliot shares the field with no-one else: beside him, 'reference to new poets and novelists disappears almost entirely' (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 20-1). To begin with, as we have seen, 'Eliot's later poetry', enthusiastically praised by Leavis, offers among other things a definition of the age—'the age ... of T. S. Eliot'—as one of 'tentatively defining exploration'; second, the second Appendix to *Education and the University*, 'How to Teach Reading', draws extensively on Eliot's formulations which contribute to an 'epitomised statement of principles and elements' (*EATU*, p. 13). When it comes to the actual syllabus, 'A Sketch for an "English School"', which Leavis outlines, Eliot

is again the presiding inspiration: rather than attempting to cover all of English literature, ‘the defined scope of the field of study’ that constitutes Part II of the proposed degree is suggested to be ‘English Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century’ (*EATU*, p. 58), covering the entire complex of relations between ‘the economic, the political, the moral, the spiritual, religion, art and literature’, and involving ‘a critical pondering of standards and key-concepts—order, community, culture, civilisation and so on’ (*EATU*, p. 49). Moreover, ‘the study of the Seventeenth Century is a study of the modern world’, which means students are encouraged to ponder on the similarities and differences between the two periods (*EATU*, p. 49); this is how an English degree would produce students who are ‘intelligent and responsible about the problems of contemporary civilisation’ (*EATU*, pp. 29-30).

For Leavis, it was Eliot of course who effected the ‘re-orientation’ and rehabilitation of the seventeenth century, as in the essays on the Metaphysical poets and on Marvell (*S* 4, p. 236), just as it was Eliot who insisted on the ‘living tradition’, with the present and the past of literature in inseparable dialogue. Although at the centre of the syllabus ‘would be a study of the literature of [the students’] own language and country—the most intimate kind of study, that is, of a concrete tradition’ (*EATU*, p. 19), there would also be some study of European literature like Dante and another area Eliot has also instituted, that is ‘that line from Baudelaire which has become of special interest to the English reader of poetry since Mr. Eliot arrived’ (*EATU*, pp. 62-3). Although it is notable that Leavis insists on historical and contextual study for the full understanding of the seventeenth century and hence of modernity, all such study will have its basis in the qualities of

‘sensitiveness and precision of response’ and so on which only the discipline of literary criticism can foster. Here again Eliot is a paragon with the model criticism his work supplies: the student must acquire the ‘essential equipment’ in ‘directed discussion of the main critical questions as they come up in practical criticism and are raised in T. S. Eliot’s critical work’ (*EATU*, pp. 85-6). As a final ‘Note’ to his book, Leavis includes two passages from Eliot’s essays on Ben Jonson and Samuel Johnson, as noted above, which are directed to an imagined student: ‘You can’t write like that, but it can do you nothing but good to try. If there is such a thing as a model of critical writing to point to, there you have it’ (*EATU*, p. 140).

If Eliot can be called the major inspiration in Leavis’s scheme of study, the reverse situation, as we have seen, is not true: not only do Eliot’s writings show, implicitly or explicitly, no belief in an ‘English School’, but, as we saw in chapter 1 (pp. 24-5), in an essay entitled ‘The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe’ (1944), which is almost contemporary with Leavis’s book, Eliot offers a totally different agenda of reconstruction which places importance on rescuing the cultural legacy of Europe through the confraternity of ‘men of letters’. They, including poets and writers of fiction, should be mindful of the relation between national and European cultures because the two are a compound whole (‘The Man of Letters’, p. 383) and they ‘should also be particularly concerned with the maintenance of those elements in education which the several European nations have in the past had in common’ (p. 388). But Eliot is disappointed to find a dereliction of such responsibility in a ‘recent Education Act in this country’ (p. 387n), the Act of 1944 introduced by the Conservative politician R. A. Butler which favoured ‘One Nation Conservatism’. For Eliot, however, ‘excessive nationalism in education’ is exactly

what ‘we are actually suffering from’; ‘for the preservation of any European culture, as well as for the health of its national components’, Eliot insists, ‘a perpetual cultivation of the sources of that culture, in Greece and Rome, and a continual refreshment from them, are necessary’ (p. 388).

In spite of these crucial differences we also noted above that Leavis and his *Scrutiny* colleagues and Eliot can be said to share doubts about the ‘academic mind’, and these are introduced again forcefully in *Education and the University*:

literary history, as a matter of ‘facts about’ and accepted critical (or quasi-critical) description and commentary, is a worthless acquisition; worthless for the student who cannot as a critic—that is, as an intelligent and discerning reader—make a personal approach to the essential data of the literary historian, the works of literature (an approach is personal or it is nothing: you cannot take over the appreciation of a poem, and unappreciated, the poem isn’t ‘there’). (*EATU*, p. 68)

This tallies with Eliot’s emphasis throughout ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’ about the primary importance of the ‘face to face’ personal relationship with the poem itself, but it is also obvious that for Leavis such a ‘personal approach’ needs to be nurtured in his reformed ‘English School’, whereas for Eliot, as we have seen, it is essentially non-institutional. Likewise, adopting a quotation from Eliot’s early essay ‘The Function of Criticism’—‘the common pursuit of true judgement’ (the first three words became the title of a book of essays Leavis published in 1952)—Leavis envisages this pursuit taking place in the seminar room—‘the poem builds up in

this way, doesn't it?'—whereas Eliot's involved 'quiet cooperative labour' among critics (*EATU*, pp. 70-1; *CP 2*, p. 459).

'Quiet cooperative labour' is practically the last phrase one would think of to describe the tone of Leavis's critical writings, whatever the atmosphere of 'collaboration' might have been when he was with his students, though even with regard to the latter Christopher Hilliard has assembled evidence that Leavis's seminars 'were seldom reciprocal ... billed as discussion groups but "inclined to monologue"' (*English as a Vocation*, p. 73).<sup>25</sup> Although from the mid/late 1940s onwards the gulf between Leavis and Eliot becomes clearer to the former, as we have seen in previous chapters, their common origin as rebels (against the university/poetic establishment) is never forgotten in the pages of *Scrutiny*. In 1939, taking Sir Edward Marsh to task in her review of his memoir *A Number of People*, Q. D. Leavis criticises Marsh for still maintaining that Eliot's poetry is 'a silly joke' (*S 8*, p. 74), and her article 'The Discipline of Letters: A Sociological Note' in the Winter 1943 issue traces 'the academic war against contemporary poetry and literary criticism' which 'rag[ed] from about 1925 for a dozen years or more', and *Scrutiny*'s part in that war (*S 12*, p. 14). Here 'contemporary poetry' and 'literary criticism' are aspects of each other, united against a common enemy; this is represented by the 'chief productions' of Professor G. S. Gordon, namely his two inaugural lectures 'The Discipline of Letters' and 'Poetry and the Moderns' which he delivered at the University of Oxford in 1923 and 1934 respectively.

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<sup>25</sup> Ian Robinson confirms that in his supervisions at Downing, Leavis 'largely monologued, and some of his monologues were what we could have found in his books', also commenting that 'later on, in his remarkably active seventies, he was stumping the country delivering monologues on the need for discussion'. Robinson also comments on Leavis's 'regrettable personal intensity about Eliot'. *F. R. Leavis the Cambridge Don* (Newark: Brynmill Press, 2011), pp. 18, 16, 26.

Q. D. Leavis sees the latter lecture as laying down the 'rules' of what she calls 'the academic English club': 'only thus can we account for the curious spectacle of a professor of poetry and literature inaugurating his term of office by insulting the greatest living poet ("Ash-Wednesday" had appeared four years earlier) and decrying literary criticism' (*S* 12, p. 19). For Gordon, as Q. D. Leavis states, 'English' should consist of philology, editing and scholarship; he 'decr[ies] literary criticism' and 'denounc[es] State proposals to take seriously the study of literature as an educational process' (*S* 12, p. 19). For her, the 'English club' still exists: Lord David Cecil in his *The English Poets* (1941), C. S. Lewis in *Rehabilitations* (1939) and Geoffrey Tillotson's *Essays in Criticism and Research* (1940) are seen as Gordon's heirs (*S* 12, pp. 21-3). By now, however, Eliot has 'achieved a lasting position' in spite of the 'club', and his merits can hardly be ignored; but the situation that he has 'become incorporated into the canon of accepted Literature' does not mean scholars of this club have become less hostile to 'the practice of real literary criticism' (*S* 12, p. 21). This is reflected in their treatment of the exponents of 'real literary criticism' in *Scrutiny* 'who only recently were outlawed for daring to insist that *The Sacred Wood* and *The Waste Land* were important' but 'are now rebuked by the same pens for venturing to disagree with later critical pronouncements of [Eliot's]'  
(*S* 12, p. 21). This reversal of the official attitude towards Eliot has been 'one of the few entertaining spectacles in this last depressing decade', but it also shows, for Leavis, how much resistance the advocates of the new 'English' still face: 'the academics ... have not changed their skins at all, merely camouflaged them' (*S* 12, p. 21).

The essay goes on to insist that the ‘revolutionary movement in education, the new order that is more than likely to follow the peace’, must ensure that ‘English studies must be cut free from the classical-scholarly tradition in every respect and at every level’ (*S* 12, pp. 23-4), and it ends with the question, ‘can anyone be so optimistic as to believe that any university reform less violent than a bloody revolution would make such a programme possible?’ (*S* 12, p. 26). The statement that Eliot has ‘become incorporated into the canon of accepted Literature’ has an ominous ring to it in terms of the Leavis-Eliot relationship, given the case as we have seen that the former has a more and more conscious sense that Eliot and he are increasingly no longer outsiders together, but that Eliot is firmly of the literary establishment (or ‘mandarinate’, as John Xiros Cooper would call it), and therefore part of the system Leavis opposes. Ironically, according to Cooper, Leavis’s own wartime readings of the *Quartets* were influential ‘in construing a critical language that readied [the poem] for the work it was destined to do in the 1940s and 50s’: by stressing its ‘non-ideological character and its position as a supreme artwork’ such criticism prepared the poem ‘for its assimilation into the common intuitive life of the mandarinate’, that is, an intelligentsia wearied by, and in retreat from, the shocks of recent history which the *Quartets* in this reading offered a refuge from.<sup>26</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, Eliot’s thinking about education during the mid-late 1940s is mainly expressed in ‘Notes on Education and Culture’ which he included at the end of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, published in book form in 1948. These Notes begin with Eliot’s report that ‘during the recent war an exceptional number of books were published on the subject of education’ (*NT*, p.

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<sup>26</sup> John Xiros Cooper, *T. S. Eliot and the Ideology of ‘Four Quartets’* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), p. 118.

95), and move on to show his acquaintance with some of these. We noted above that Eliot's *Notes* is extremely sceptical about the idea of cultural 'planning', by the State or other mechanisms, and the same is true of education as a component of the wider culture. Accordingly, the 'Notes on Education' take the form of contesting the assumptions of the various educationalists Eliot has read: assumptions including that education should meet the social/political 'needs' of the age, or train for full participation in our democracy; that it should aim to achieve 'happiness', or upward social mobility; that it should give 'equality of opportunity' and that the more of it we have the better (*NT*, pp. 96-103). For Eliot, with his belief that the family has a key role in the transmission of education (as with other aspects of culture), and that a healthy society is a class-based one where what constitutes 'education' will differ from class to class, as will how much of it will be desirable, a national system of education with, for example, a standard school-leaving age, can only accelerate 'cultural breakdown' (*NT*, p. 105). Thus his 'Notes' become a set of repeated warnings: 'the universal imposition of education up to the years of maturity will lead to hostility towards it' (*NT*, p. 100); 'in our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards' (*NT*, p. 108), positions that can also be found in, for example, Lawrence's 'Education of the People'.

We noted in chapter 3 the 'symposium' that *Notes* produced in the pages of *Scrutiny*, beginning with G. H. Bantock's 'Mr. Eliot and Education' in the March 1949 issue (*S* 16, pp. 64-70). Bantock, salutes the 'fundamental questions' that Eliot is asking about current educational thinking (*S* 16, p. 70), but also finds he merely 'hints at possible lines of action' that might improve things, seeing this as a culpable detachment that grows out of Eliot's fundamental 'awareness of the imperfection

of human consciousness ... [which] is being used subtly to undermine the idea of effort' (S 16, p. 68). For Bantock, what is exasperating is Eliot's metaphoric comparison of cultural development as something that can only grow 'organically' and cannot be planned; again this is 'to stress the unself-conscious aspects in a manner which weights the scales against conscious effort' (S 16, p. 67). Bantock is in accordance with the other *Scrutiny* commentators on *Notes* who accuse Eliot of 'refusing, with splendid dignity, to commit [himself] to anything practical', to repeat Cormican's words (above, p. 164). For Bantock, although Eliot's asking a series of 'fundamental' if unfashionable questions is to his credit (S 16, p. 70), these 'should not necessarily lead him to quite the degree of scepticism about education ... that at times he seems to imply' (S 16, p. 67).<sup>27</sup> Whilst Eliot is engaged here with generalised ideas about education, Leavis is working on his scheme of a School of English as 'a real humane focus in a university' (*EATU*, p. 32) in much more detail. In his lengthy 1949 article 'Mill, Beatrice Webb and the "English School": Preface to an Unprinted Volume', he continues the proposals formulated in *Education and the University*, but here his example of contextual study focuses on George Eliot rather than seventeenth-century literature. However, the emphases are still on 'literary training' as the core discipline, and that 'in a university English School as it should be, literary studies would lead outside themselves into other fields and other disciplines' (S 16, pp. 118-9). What is also worth attending to is the essay's

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<sup>27</sup> Bantock's much later short book of 1970 seems to be much more sympathetic to Eliot's detachment from 'possible lines of action', finding his focus on ultimate religious 'aims' within which thinking on education should take place—what is education 'for', 'what is a man?'—a stance that makes him 'so valuable a writer on education' in the midst of all the busy planning, policies and research produced by the present-day 'hoard of experts' (*T. S. Eliot and Education*, pp. 108-9). There is little sense in the book of Bantock's former *Scrutiny* affiliation, and no mention of Leavis, or the specific question of university education.

praise of Matthew Arnold as a model critic in contrast to Eliot's remarks on the same figure in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. While Eliot finds in Arnold's criticism the 'stasis' of not keeping up with the 'new stage of experience' (*CP* 4, p. 654), and a lack of 'mental discipline, the passion for exactness in the use of words and for consistency and continuity of reasoning' (*CP* 4, p. 669), Leavis finds there 'the flexibility, the sensitiveness, the constant delicacy of touch for the concrete in its complexity, the intelligence that is inseparably one with an alert and fine sense of value' (*S* 16, p. 126). The essay is also noteworthy for its focus on J. S. Mill's discussion of Bentham's philosophy, which, in the words of the former that Leavis quotes, 'will do nothing ... for the spiritual interests of society' (*S* 16, p. 121); what is emerging here is Leavis's later description, in *English Literature in Our Time and the University*, of our age as 'Technologico-Benthamite'.

In a note of 1946, 'For Whom do Universities Exist?', Leavis supports the position of H. M. Chadwick, 'a decidedly heretical one in some quarters' that subjects like philology, history of the language and Anglo-Saxon, which are part of 'the "English" imposed at many—at most—universities' should have no place in the English literature syllabus (*S* 14, pp. 136-7). This is expanded in an anonymous *Scrutiny* obituary on Chadwick 'from one of his former pupils' in the following year, where Chadwick's 'heretical' position of not wanting to impose his own subject, Anglo-Saxon, on those reading English at Cambridge is outlined as immensely benefitting both subjects. The obituary ends however with a warning that a counter-movement 'has taken on fresh vigour' in recent years which will lead to the undoing of Chadwick's work 'of freeing English students from compulsory linguistic and philological cram' (*S* 14, pp. 204, 208). When this obituary was

reprinted later in 1968 in *A Selection from Scrutiny*, this anonymous pupil was identified as Q. D. Leavis.<sup>28</sup> Leavis was later to dedicate *English Literature in Our Time and the University* to Chadwick.

In the 1947 article ‘The Literary Discipline and Liberal Education’ published in the *Sewanee Review*, Leavis reiterates to an American audience some of his educational views, rebutting the accusation of his ““narrow” preoccupation with the “words on the page””, and stating again his ‘sense of the inevitableness’ with which ‘serious literary studies lead outside themselves, and of the cogency with which they ask to be associated with studies outside the strictly literary-critical field’ (*V*, p. 167). Leavis identifies himself as ‘an Englishman’ working ‘in England at Cambridge’ (*V*, p. 168), explaining that how he sees the issue might ‘differ in various ways from [how] it is likely to be seen by an American’ (*V*, p. 168); he also indicates, however, that he should not be seen as representative of ‘Cambridge’ where, as in ‘For Whom do Universities Exist?’ and the Chadwick obituary, an anti-progressive faction is still strong. Thus he refers to his own college whilst noting that no-one should be deceived ‘that what goes on at Downing in the way of English Studies is representative of “Cambridge English”’ (*V*, p. 168):

it is in the interstices of the official system, in holes and corners and chance islands, that, in respect of this problem of liberal education, the real work will be done, the life fostered, the energy generated, the possibility proved ... No one, I think ... can suppose that anywhere, in any major

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<sup>28</sup> See on the content page and p. 41 in *A Selection from Scrutiny*, compiled by F. R. Leavis in two volumes, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968).

instance, the official system will for long tend to promote any serious attempt at an answer—or to foster life. (*V*, p. 168)<sup>29</sup>

After both praise and blame for the Cambridge English Tripos as it stands, the latter in relation to the examination system (*V*, pp. 170-1), Leavis quotes a page from ‘Eliot’s Later Poetry’ to the effect that ‘far from being concerned merely with the training of a narrowly “literary” faculty—some specialised “taste” or sensibility’’, the preoccupation in English ‘with words in their subtlest organisations is a preoccupation with the nature of thought and expression’ (*V*, p. 174). ‘English’ promotes an ‘awareness’ that cannot be attained otherwise; ‘for lack of it thinkers in various special fields are, to the detriment of their work, apt to be unnecessarily naïve about the processes of conceptual thought they are employing’ (*V*, p. 174). The study of the seventeenth century is reaffirmed ‘as a major part’ of the syllabus, ‘not merely in literature, but as a whole’, its being ‘a key phase, or passage, in the history of civilisation’ (*V*, p. 177).

We have examined therefore in some detail what Storer calls the ‘second phase of [Leavis’s] career ... from the mid-1930s to the early 1950s’, when, to repeat his words above, Leavis’s writing is ‘more focused on the question of how English literature should be studied and taught as a university subject’; reference to new poets and novelists disappears almost entirely (with one important exception—T. S. Eliot) (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 20-1). But the ‘exception’ of Eliot involves both Leavis’s strong endorsement of Eliot’s importance for university English as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Compare his discussion in ‘A Retrospect’ of the ‘quixotic anti-academic design’ of *Scrutiny* as that of ‘the power of essential Cambridge to defeat the academic ethos from within’ (*S* 20, p. 5).

the deep and paradoxical circumstance that Eliot did not believe at all in English as a discipline nor in Leavis's 'humanistic' motivations in promoting the subject. The result could only feed into Leavis's deeply conflicted response to Eliot that we have already pointed out in this thesis, and that would intensify in the following decades. The growth of Leavis's doubts about Eliot in the late 1940s and early 1950s, illustrated by his response to *The Cocktail Party*, his essay 'Mr. Eliot and Lawrence' and his association of Eliot with Pound, have been highlighted in previous chapters. In terms of education, the wide divergence in the interests of the two men become more prominent at a time when Eliot himself shows his keenest interest in the subject, as evidenced by the series of lectures/essays 'The Aims of Education' of 1953. These show hardly any overlap with the direction in which Leavis's thoughts are tending, and are more or less an expansion of the thinking about education in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, in that it is mainly the problems of the 'aims' of other educationalists that are highlighted rather than any proposals of Eliot's own. Thus education as a means to earning a living, as embodying the excessive liberalism of our culture (as in Eliot's rejection of the American free elective system in universities), the dangers of over-specialisation at one end of the spectrum and becoming a 'dilettante' at the other (*TCC*, p. 81), are all attacked. All the present disagreement in thinking about education is due to a lack of recognised standards, and this leads to a confusion in which name-calling between 'authoritarians' and 'libertarians' abounds (*TCC*, p. 108); the final lecture, entitled 'The Issue of Religion', argues that only with 'reference to theology' can these standards be provided and the ultimate question, 'how is man as man to be improved' both for an individual and for society, be answered (*TCC*, p. 117).

Leavis meanwhile is continuing with his much more focussed scheme of the best way of teaching literature in the university. In his 1953 article ‘The “Great Books” and a Liberal Education’, collected in *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher*, he attacks the programme of certain American educationalists, especially Robert M. Hutchins who identifies liberal education with ‘the Great Book programme’. Large paragraphs from two essays, ‘Education for All’ and ‘Education and Economics’, collected in Hutchins’s *The Great Conversation* are quoted to refute the author’s position which is ‘astonishingly’ unreal and ‘has given the grotesque and solemn escapade of academic idealism its aspect of portentous fact’ (*CAP*, p. 158); however Leavis believes that circumstances in Britain are better because there is no ‘hiatus in tradition’ which the Great Books are meant to fill (*CAP*, p. 162).<sup>30</sup> Leavis himself has ‘not read most ... of the Great Books, and I shall never read them. I know that it would be a waste of my time and energy to try’ (*CAP*, p. 162). He conceives the phrase ‘academic intellectualism’ ‘to describe aptly enough the whole ethos of the Great Books—the Great Books, the Great Ideas, the Great Conversation’ (*CAP*, p. 163). Entirely characteristically Leavis argues that ‘so extreme a form of academic intellectualism’ is represented in ‘T. S. Eliot’s estimate of Irving Babbitt as against D. H. Lawrence and ... the conceptions of Culture, Civilisation, and Art represented by Pound’s *Cantos* (and his pamphleteering)’ (*CAP*, p. 163), a charge he also makes in ‘The Americanness of American Literature’ (1952). There this ‘Americanness’ is considered to be hostile to the ‘living tradition’ (‘the hypertrophied academic innocence, the utter remoteness from realities, the lack of all sense of how things

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<sup>30</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation: The Substance of a Liberal Education* (1952, rpt. Chicago: William Benton, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1957); Leavis quotes from ‘Education and Economics’ (pp. 17-8) on p. 157; from ‘Education for All’ (pp. 43-4, 44-5) on pp. 159-60.

are and what they *could* be’) (*CAP*, p. 163, emphasis in original). ‘Let us not’, he pleads, ‘be academic and esoteric’, but be in a ‘full and living relation with actualities!’ (*CAP*, p. 164), and argues that university education should bring about a ‘real educational profit’ that can benefit the student after they leave the campus, something ‘intelligent’ that can bear on the everyday criticism of social phenomena (*CAP*, pp. 164-5). Here he emphasises again that ‘For English-speaking people’ these benefits derive from study of ‘the literature of the English language’ (*CAP*, p. 166), and ‘Great Books’ are a route into academic dilettantism and dispersal, the opposite of a programme of education ‘rooted’ in English culture and tradition.

Leavis re-engages extensively with the topic of ‘Eliot and Education’ in the 1960s and 70s in some of his major works, notably *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (1969) and *Nor Shall My Sword* (1972) and other related essays. The title of the former book suggests its pedagogical aspect, and how it is comparable with *Education and the University: A Sketch for an ‘English School’* of over twenty years earlier. This is particularly the case in its preoccupation with Eliot, who again has a far more significant role in it than any other writer. The fact that at one point, however, Leavis declares that ‘I shan’t ... be doing anything like dictating a syllabus’ (*ELTU*, p. 70) indicates that here he is far from offering a detailed planning for university English, as in *Education and the University*; the book is in fact much more diffuse and even wayward (as Leavis himself recognises) in comparison with the earlier work. In *English Literature in Our Time and the University* he announces at the start his vision of how ‘the real university is a centre of consciousness and human responsibility for the civilised world’ (*ELTU*, p. 3), and what follows in the ‘Introductory’ chapter is a repetition of many of his familiar

concerns, like his rejection of the educational value of Greek and Latin literature in favour of the ‘living reality’ that English literature is and the function of ‘English’ to create an educated and responsible public ‘as might affect decisively the intellectual and spiritual climate in which statesmen and politicians form their ideas, calculate, plan and perform’. The proper study of the ‘living tradition’ is also to ‘assert and vindicate a profounder conception of “society” than the technologico-Benthamite world knows’ (*ELTU*, pp. 6-7, 29-30, 27). In the opening chapter that follows Leavis pursues such ideas while enumerating various challenges they face at a time in the 1960s of great expansion in the university sector, ending with the assertion that ‘English comes first’:

the need is for a focal centre; and a focus of cultural continuity can only be in English. English literature, magnificent and matchless in diversity and range, and so full and profound in its registration of changing life, gives us a continuity that is not yet dead. There is no other; no other access to anything approaching a full continuity of mind, spirit and sensibility—which is what we desperately need. (*ELTU*, p. 60)

The three chapters that follow however all focus, not on ‘English’ and how it is best taught and organised in the university, nor on a literature that is ‘magnificent and matchless in diversity and range’, but on Eliot. The first chapter takes Eliot’s discussion of the ‘dissociation of sensibility’ (from ‘The Metaphysical Poets’) as a model of exemplary critical insight, that is, as ‘criticism of the highest order: pregnant, intensely economical, and, in the way of great criticism, unmistakably

creative, [exemplifying] with classical force the essentially collaborative spirit of critical judgment' (*ELTU*, p. 76). As we saw in chapter 1 (p. 26), Leavis defends such a critical procedure against the scholarly complaints of J. B. Leishman, who sees Eliot's idea of the 'dissociation' as being founded on too narrow a sampling of seventeenth-century poetry, and that his 'exaltation' of such poetry was defectively linked to the type of poetry he himself wanted to write, or to his 'axe to grind' as a poetic practitioner (*ELTU*, pp. 74-6). For Leavis, however, these are exactly Eliot's strengths, representing his value as a critical exemplar in the seminar-room. By way of explanation, the fact that Eliot's idea is 'intensely economical' instead of being grounded on a wearisome accumulation of evidence, or 'mere accretion' (*ELTU*, p. 77) is not only a standard for others to follow in their own critical practice, but is a stimulus for expanding and developing it in discussion, that is in the key process of 'collaboration'; it is in this sense that it is 'pregnant'. Leavis adds that the 'kind of strong and subtle thinking in poetry, an intellectual nerve' that we find in, for example, Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady', is inseparable from Eliot's critical astuteness (*ELTU*, p. 82). Throughout this chapter which is titled 'The Present and the Past: Eliot's Demonstration', Leavis is clear that he is avoiding any detailed planning for 'English' but is demonstrating 'with some particularity' (*ELTU*, p. 70) how valuable Eliot's own 'demonstration' of the correct critical practice is. 'With some particularity' means unfolding one Eliot phrase—'dissociation of sensibility'—for the entire lecture, coupled with the exhortation that Eliot's 'purpose' is 'the kind of which the student of literature needs to cultivate the most inward understanding; inward, sympathetic and active' (*ELTU*, p. 75).

The following chapter, entitled 'Eliot's "Axe to Grind" and the Nature of Great Criticism', indicates that Leavis is far from finished with the material we have just discussed; indeed, it takes up the battle from the previous chapter to defend Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility' as 'a classical and decisive piece of criticism' in its opening pages (*ELTU*, p. 91). It is ironic however that something so 'intensely economical' in Eliot has led to such an amount of almost obsessive repetition in Leavis—informing his own 'axe to grind' against academia. But as the chapter develops we find Leavis starting to disagree with Eliot, over the idea, for example, that 'to have the virtues of good prose is the first and minimum requirement of good poetry' (*ELTU*, p. 99; here Leavis is quoting from Eliot's 'Introductory Essay' to Johnson's satires, *CP* 4, p. 170). Leavis also challenges Eliot's essay on 'Blake' for its ignoring the 'new sense of human responsibility ... the Romantic era's great permanent contribution' that Blake's work records (*ELTU*, p. 106), which is consistent with his emphasising the importance of Blake in his discussion of *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* and in the Introduction to *Nor Shall My Sword* (p. 12), as remarked in chapter 1 (see on pp. 66-8, 72, 78). The chapter ends with the information that in the following lecture/chapter 'I intend to discuss Eliot's own poetic achievement next'; at the same time Leavis also guards himself against the misunderstanding on the audience's part that he has 'adopted for myself the attitude, the ethos, the spirit of it'—that is Eliot's negative belief in human creativity and responsibility; the criticisms of Eliot he has made should already indicate to his audience that this won't be the case (*ELTU*, pp. 107-8). We have not for the first time the sense that Leavis's discussion of Eliot is becoming rather distant from the subject he intends, 'English Literature in Our Time and the University'.

In fact, in the following chapter, after spending several pages discussing the development of Eliot's poetry, Leavis cautions himself: 'I mustn't, however, spend longer on this kind of detailed discussion of "Ash-Wednesday". My purpose in these lectures doesn't permit it, not aiming at, or permitting, an expository critique of Eliot's poetry' (*ELTU*, p. 121). What therefore is Leavis's 'purpose' in these lectures? He explains: 'it is to lay some emphases and make some points in order to enforce my contention about the opportunities presented by Eliot's work in relation to the problems that literary study, if we think it important, faces us with at the university' (*ELTU*, pp. 121-2). It is a feature of this chapter by now that any context relating to 'literary study ... at the university' is much reduced, and replaced by Leavis's own practice as a reader relating to the 'problems' of Eliot's poetry, that is, as Leavis puts it earlier, 'its insistent challenge to the thinking—the pondering, distinguishing, relating—mind' (*ELTU*, p. 117). By the end of this chapter entitled 'Why *Four Quartets* Matters in a Technologico-Benthamite Age', Leavis applauds 'the creative battle to vindicate spiritual values' in Eliot's poem: *Four Quartets* has the 'subtlest kind of analytic interest in language' in the face of a prevailing materialist and quantitative culture, and 'we, who are concerned for humane education at a time when linguistic science, or scientific linguistics, is making its victorious advances, have a duty to exploit' it (*ELTU*, p. 132). Afraid that his lengthy 'exploitation' of Eliot in this chapter may lead to certain misunderstandings, Leavis clarifies at the beginning of the following lecture/chapter that:

Eliot's name has figured a great deal in these lectures, and one of the four has been devoted to his achievement in poetry ... I hope no one deduces from these facts that I propose to make him the main subject of study in a university English School, or a subject that should bulk in the student's economy on a scale proportionate to the share of attention I have given him. (*ELTU*, p. 135)

In fact, any such 'deduction' from the lectures would be a perfectly reasonable one, given that it is not just 'one of the four' but a greater part of the lectures so far that has 'been devoted to [Eliot's] achievement in poetry', though Leavis dismisses 'a misunderstanding of that kind' as being not, 'I think, very probable' (*ELTU*, p. 135). Leavis then explains that in discussing Eliot at length and in detail what he is concerned with is 'something more like a definition of principle, the principle being of such a kind that the defining can't be done in mere general statement' (*ELTU*, p. 135). Explanation of this 'principle' is unfolded in the following pages, and again it is Eliot-centred, taking the form of a declaration 'to the student' to

make the most of [Eliot]. In becoming intelligent about his creative achievement and the criticism belonging with it you apprehend, you acquire, the active informing principle without which there is little to be got from the protracted study of literature. (*ELTU*, p. 136)

This does not mean that Eliot should take up the majority of the student's reading effort, because what Eliot should essentially be for the student is the 'seed' of

successful literary practice, the ‘pregnant’ figure within whose work the ‘active informing principle’ unfolds. On this point, Leavis compares him to Yeats, in connection with whom the student, with his/her limited ‘expenditure ... of time and energy they can’t afford’, is likely to be distracted by a ‘protracted study’ of occultism and the esoteric, a ‘sanctioned habit’ that has led to much ‘bad criticism’ (*ELTU*, pp. 136-7).

It is certainly the case that Eliot is no less the ‘major component’ in Leavis’s thinking, to repeat a phrase from the discussion above of *Education and the University*, in this later book than he was in the earlier—indeed, in many ways Eliot is even more central here, but one notable difference is that there is an absence, or at least a modification, of that tone of deference we found in *Education and the University*. The chapter entitled ‘The Necessary Opposite, Lawrence’, has already been discussed in chapter 2 above; in fact, it is precisely in Leavis’s attacks on Eliot, which now become more conspicuous and forceful, that the latter reveals a further reason for the student’s ‘making the most’ of him, as Leavis begins to develop the theme at the end of chapter 3 of Eliot’s limitations, his incrimination in the world of Bloomsbury, his animus against Lawrence: in short, ‘the weak, the uncreative—the *anti-creative*—T. S. Eliot’ (*ELTU*, p. 139, emphasis in original). Thus Leavis develops his famous ‘Yes, but—’ formula in relation to Eliot: ‘the admiring, and the assent that critical admiration carries with it, are to be understood as having the form, “Yes, but—” and that ... “but” is a very serious matter’ (*ELTU*, p. 139). Here the key Leavis position of criticism taking the form of collaborative dialogue, where positions advanced are modified and carried forwards by the interlocutor’s only partial assent, finds its stimulus above all in Eliot. This process of advancing with

consideration and reconsideration ultimately takes us to where ‘intelligent comment on literature requires a responsive and delicate sense of life’ (*ELTU*, p. 150), and the realisation that Lawrence is ‘pro-life’ in the way that Eliot is not. But the complex of positive and negative qualities in Eliot’s work, and the critical attention required in seeking them out, make Eliot a more suitable subject than Lawrence for Leavis’s (and his students’) attention in *English Literature in Our Time and the University*: he does not in fact propose ‘to give Lawrence very much direct attention. He doesn’t, in relation to my purpose, lend himself to the kind of direct treatment on my part that Eliot invites, and, a not voluminous poet, repays so pregnantly’ (*ELTU*, p. 148).

In the book’s ‘Summing Up’ chapter, Leavis returns to the theme of how English literature is the main repository of cultural tradition, and that study of it enables participation in ‘a living whole that can have its life only in the living present, in the creative response of individuals, who collaboratively renew and perpetuate what they participate in—a cultural community or consciousness’ (*ELTU*, p. 148). Thus ‘it is a vital necessity that something real in humane education, involving a central and genuine discipline of intelligence and the acquiring of an inward knowledge of English literature, should be done at university level somewhere’ (*ELTU*, p. 182). Leavis is clear that the ‘central and genuine discipline’ of English will be an elite vocation—‘the kind of study I have been defining as proper to a university implies that the students will be truly of university standard’ (*ELTU*, p. 182), but through this study the elite will themselves become the seeds of a broader social regeneration, creating, as Leavis sees it at the end of the book, ‘an influential educated public, a responsible public that cares for and

represents the heritage and is concerned ... to get it shared as widely as possible'. In this way, 'we shall hear much less of the lost sense of purpose' in society, and become mindful of what 'a living cultural tradition may do for humanity' (*ELTU*, p. 184). As he develops this point, Leavis notes that 'I have been explicit about the way in which I have been using Eliot, and the ways in which he lends himself to it' (*ELTU*, p. 167). Eliot is thus the 'pregnant' source at the centre of the discipline that is central to the university that is central to civilisation—all, in fact we might argue, is ultimately born of him. We have also discussed in chapter 1 how Eliot's critical writings such as the Marvell essay is seen as a stimulation to further growth of ideas (see on pp. 22, 25-6), so any idea, as with Bergonzi, that we have a simple 'rejection' of Eliot at the end of the 'long road' that Leavis travelled with him is a misjudgement in part resulting from not attending to the Leavis-Eliot relationship in an educational context and in discounting books like *Education and the University* and *English Literature in Our Time and the University*.

After the Clark Lectures, which formed the basis of the latter book, were delivered in 1967, Leavis collected various subsequent lectures (with the exception of two lectures prior to the Clark Lectures, 'Two Cultures?' of 1962 and 'Luddites?' of 1966 which have been discussed previously) in *Nor Shall My Sword* (1972); these are delivered in different times and places but they were conceived by Leavis as a 'comprehensive whole' aiming at continuing the argument of *English Literature in Our Time and the University*: the 'focal preoccupation ... is with the creating of the university ... the answer to a present extremely urgent need of civilisation' (*NSMS*, pp. 29, 27). Discussion of these lectures in the previous chapter was centred on their anti-establishment, anti-metropolitan and anti-European

perspectives rather than their educational focus, whereas I shall now pay attention to Leavis's familiar arguments 'to justify my seeing the centre of a university in a vital English School' and the internal resistance to this idea—'the academic is the enemy and ... the academic *can* be beaten' (emphasis in original)—which has been evident to him from when, 'thirty years ago, I wrote a pioneering book on modern poetry that made Eliot a key figure [*New Bearings*]' (*NSMS*, p. 63). Eliot is still a 'key figure' in this later book, but Leavis dwells on him only in one lecture, "'English", Unrest and Continuity', delivered in 1969. Here the argument is mainly a reiteration of the Clark Lectures, though in an abridged form: that in a 'vital' English School 'it would be absurd not to make the most of T. S. Eliot ... more bluntly, he's there, and we can't do without him', or more explicitly without his 'perceptions and apprehensions that are energies, and impel to growth and living organisation' (*NSMS*, pp. 112-3). Once more, Eliot is the seed of critical life, and this contradicts all the emphasis that Eliot is hostile to 'the living life' (*AK*, p. 181), as will be explored in the Conclusion.

We have here the typical Leavisite opinion that what we have 'got from Eliot' is an understanding of 'the relation between the present and the past and the way in which an organic (and therefore changing) English Literature exists', but at the same time we have to bear in mind that Eliot's inadequacies are still important: 'it is an essential aspect of Eliot's value for us that intelligent critical recognition of what he achieved can't but entail adverse and severely limiting judgements' (*NSMS*, pp. 114-5). We then have a repeat charge of Leishman's 'academic blankness' about the 'dissociation of sensibility' and the relevance of 'Portrait of a Lady' to the discussion (*NSMS*, p. 114-8; see above, pp. 27, 248-9) before Leavis again, as in

*English Literature in Our Time and the University*, feels the need to explain to his audience that ‘I’m not lecturing you on Eliot ... whatever the appearances’ but is demonstrating how Eliot’s observations prompt ‘the principle of life that should inform the student’s work’ (*NSMS*, p. 119). Eliot is also ‘a great creative writer of *our time*’ (emphasis in original), even if *Four Quartets* was ‘completed twenty-five years ago’, because our time is still critically suffering from ‘the distinctive stresses of technological civilisation’, and Eliot best answers our need for critical intelligence—there is definitely no hope in relying on the so-called ‘really modern literature’ of the modish writers supported for example by the BBC and American universities (*NSMS*, pp. 120-1). At the same time Leavis also adds immediately that ‘of course, D. H. Lawrence is a much greater writer’ and ‘an incomparably greater critic than Eliot’, but this is again precisely why ‘he doesn’t lend himself to our needs in the clear way in which Eliot does’ (*NSMS*, p. 121). Eliot is once more the paramount writer of the ‘yes, but—’ formula: his work will always produce in readers ambivalence and disagreement, and there will be no ‘danger of mere acceptance’ in using him. The implication is that Lawrence, on the other hand, who would always be in the ‘background’ in any discussion of Eliot, is of a stature and sanity such that his work *will* command acceptance in the reader, and that is why ‘I don’t think that the curricular economy I myself should sketch would find room for any set formal study of Lawrence’ (*NSMS*, p. 123). Here it is almost as if no-one could contest the essential truth in Lawrence, whilst the ‘divisions’ in Eliot would lead to lively and probing seminar interchanges.

After some further discussion of such things as the ‘dissociation of sensibility’ and insistence on the key importance of Blake ‘for any English course’

(*NSMS*, pp. 123-8), Leavis returns to Eliot's 'limitations', exemplified by the portrayal of the 'yokels' of 'East Coker' I, a symptom of his inability as a 'fellow-countryman of Pound' to 'conceive ... of a sophisticated art that should grow out of a total organic culture', and this leads to the essay's concluding passage about doing 'everything we can to save this country from Americanisation' (*NSMS*, pp. 129, 133). If by now Leavis's remarks on Eliot, both positive and condemnatory, seem entirely predictable, there is one extremely revealing passage from "'English", Unrest and Continuity' that discloses Eliot's final significance for Leavis:

conveniently small in quantity as the *oeuvre* is, the Eliotic phenomenon is challengingly complex. My own relevant testimony is that, in the last two or three years I have written three separate critiques of his poetic achievement, different, but not contradictory, and I feel that I might write two or three others. That, for me, is the only way of dealing with him. (*NSMS*, p. 123)

To write endlessly about Eliot is 'the only way of dealing with him', but there is no suggestion that such writing will ever put the Eliot obsession to rest in Leavis. Some reasons for this will be considered in my Conclusion, but one thing that might be stated here is that Eliot's work not only prompts ambivalence in Leavis, but ambivalence of the most fundamental kind. We have seen how increasingly Eliot's work (and indeed his personality) is stigmatised as 'anti-life' in comparison with Lawrence, and yet at the same time how his early critical interventions will always

be the 'life' of the English syllabus and hence of any possible cultural intervention. To write out this contradiction, as Leavis is attempting, might seem an impossible task, though this of course explains the pressures behind the last effort to do so, in *The Living Principle* of 1975, discussed in chapter 1, and Leavis's insistence there that finally 'I know my mind about the completed poem' (above, pp. 49, 61, 74-5). It is impossible not to feel, however, that there is some self-deception in this certainty, and that the Eliotic 'self-division' that Leavis gives his final account of in the *Quartets* is arguably much more Leavis's own.

## CONCLUSION: A DIVIDED SELF

We have noted in this thesis how ambivalent Leavis's response to Eliot was, in many ways increasingly hostile, as is most clear in that final judgment of *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle* where that the poem represents 'the element of ... anti-life' in Eliot's disposition (p. 62) is insisted upon, and yet at the same time how vital Eliot is and remains as an inspiration for, and integral element of, the university English syllabus Leavis proposes. Leavis finds in the *Quartets*, and in its author, a profound 'disorder', which he defines as 'the inner conflict bred by irremediable self-division' (p. 62), symptoms of that division including not only passages of poetic triumph within the *Quartets* itself which unwittingly celebrate 'life' despite the poem's anti-life emphasis, but the disorder of a man of great sensitivity and intellect who craved what Leavis saw as the shallow satisfaction of metropolitan and establishment status and acclaim. But the symptoms of 'division' Leavis claims to find in the *Quartets* often seem difficult to justify on literary-critical grounds, and in his attempt to 'master' the poem he often seems to be working out his own deep personal needs and obsessions: to call Leavis's response to Eliot 'obsessional' does not seem inaccurate when Leavis himself notes that his 'only way of dealing with' the 'challengingly complex' 'Eliotic phenomenon' is a relentless attempt to write it out of himself, so to speak (*NSMS*, p. 123). He attempts, I think, to finalise his response in *The Living Principle*, but we can be sure that this would not have been the 'last word' on Eliot had Leavis not died within three years of the book's publication.

It is tempting then to consider the emphasis Leavis puts on 'self-division' in Eliot as at some level a projection of his own intensely divided and conflicted

response to him, or as Anthony Kearney puts it, 'the faults [Leavis] finds in Eliot were very much his own', or more boldly, 'if Eliot was a case, then, so was Leavis' ('Leavis on Eliot', pp. 66, 64). In fact we might claim that the Eliot Leavis creates operates as a 'double' of Leavis himself, and that this psychological relationship is a more accurate interpretation than the Freudian situation Bergonzi sees at the end of his essay, where Leavis's final rejection of Eliot is a parricidal ritual, the 'father' being killed to ensure the life of his successor ('Long Road', p. 41). This doubling comes to light above all in a passage of Eliot's poetry that did have a significant personal relevance for Leavis, that is the meeting with the 'familiar compound ghost' staged in part II of 'Little Gidding', where the protagonist, 'assum[ing] a double part', encounters in fact his own double, 'Both intimate and unidentifiable' (*P* 1, p. 204). Our discussion in chapter 1 indicated that this passage was the only thing of any value in 'Little Gidding' to Leavis; it was in his own words 'so much the most impressive thing in the whole quartet as to be a foil' to the rest of it. Part of its power lay in Eliot's finally confessing his own personal inadequacies, as Leavis saw them, in a passage of 'self-accusing and avowed self-exposure'; as we noted these inadequacies included Eliot's 'fear of life', his lack of faith in creativity, his evasion of 'self-recognition' (p. 77). What we did not pursue in chapter 1, however, is Leavis's belief that when the narrator, in the words of his double the 'ghost', accuses himself of 'the shame/Of motives late revealed, and the awareness/Of things ill done and done to others' harm/Which once you took for exercise of virtue' (*P* 1, p. 205), Eliot has particularly in mind things 'ill done' to Leavis himself, and that this passage is a coded apology to him. As David Holbrook put it,

in Leavis's late essay 'Mutually Necessary', Leavis really seems to end up believing that much of Eliot's guilt-feelings were about him, Leavis; that he is the ghost met in the air-raid in 'Little Gidding', and that Eliot's deep shame also relates to him, Leavis.

Holbrook finds these assertions 'astonishing', and speaks of them as illustrating 'a disastrous lapse in [Leavis's] self-knowledge'.<sup>1</sup>

We have not spoken, in this thesis, of any personal contact between Leavis and Eliot: their relationship has been treated very much as a textual one, and in fact any such contact between them was extremely rare. One episode, however, is noted by Michael Black, recording Leavis's account of a visit Eliot paid him in Cambridge 'in the early 1940s': Leavis 'told me, as he told others' that Eliot

spent a long evening pouring himself out, while the pile of cigarette ash in the grate grew and grew ... I gathered that [Eliot] had been wanting a friendship which would take the edge off criticism. I find this poignant, but Leavis did not. Eliot had gone with the herd, and had treated him badly. Eliot had felt guilt, though, and I am convinced that Leavis saw himself as one component of the 'familiar compound ghost', with 'brown baked features' ... who calls the 'I' of 'Little Gidding' to such strict account. Indeed he finally said so in print.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Holbrook, 'F. R. Leavis and the Sources of Hope', in Denys Thompson, ed., *The Leavises: Recollections and Impressions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p.169.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Black, 'The Long Pursuit', in Thompson, ed., *The Leavises*, p. 97. There is a fuller account of the visit in MacKillop, *F. R. Leavis*, pp. 242-3.

Black is referring to Leavis's essay 'Mutually Necessary', as noted above, which originally appeared in the *New Universities Quarterly* in 1976 as a response to a series of articles on Leavis published in the December 1975 issue of the same journal, including Michael Black's 'A Kind of Valediction: Leavis on Eliot, 1929-75' quoted in my Introduction (pp. 2-3) and Michael Tanner's 'Literature and Philosophy', articles largely concerned with Leavis's latest book, *The Living Principle*.<sup>3</sup> In Leavis's essay the discussion of the 'Little Gidding' passage seems to appear very abruptly, attacking Tanner and Ian Robinson (in the case of the latter's review of *The Living Principle* in the *Spectator*) for not supporting him in his challenge to Harding's 'radically falsifying' account of the passage (for the argument with Harding, see above, p. 59n) (*CAP*, p. 198).<sup>4</sup> By the end of the essay, he returns to attack Tanner's over-estimation of 'Little Gidding' generally (and the *Quartets* as a whole) and related under-estimation of Eliot's weaknesses, and at the same time restates his position that

the peculiarities that made [Eliot] a 'case' limited and starved him in his first-hand living—precluded his having access to that comprehensive human experience without which he was incapacitated for the imagining and producing of a great creative work.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Tanner, 'Literature and Philosophy', *Universities Quarterly* (Winter 1975), pp. 54-64. Leavis's response to this essay in 'Mutually Necessary' in the Spring 1976 issue of the same journal triggered another essay by Tanner titled "'Mutually Necessary': a Rejoinder' (Summer 1976), pp. 313-23.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Robinson, 'Leavis, the Spirit Unappeased', review of *The Living Principle*, *Spectator*, 13 September 1975, pp. 344-5.

Tanner, Leavis continues, 'ignores the way in which Eliot', in the lines about 'the shame/Of motives late revealed' (*P* 1, p. 205) 'towards the end of the passage', 'comes to the verge of telling himself the nature of his guilt' (*CAP*, p. 206). He attributes Tanner and Robinson's 'conventional impercipient' or 'blindness' to his interpretation as resulting from his being 'too unemphatic [in *The Living Principle*] in making my point' (*CAP*, p. 206) about the episode in 'Little Gidding'; this arose out of an 'embarrassed modesty' that was 'complex', but now he offers a personal testimony for the interpretation arising out of Eliot's visit to him in Cambridge:

he stayed a very long while ... I deduced later, when 'Little Gidding' was ... published, that he had been composing that Quartet at the time of his visit to my house. A number of things he said to me appear in that 'All Clear!' passage, and I was (with good reason) a major focus of the guilt-feelings expressed in *The Family Reunion*, the most revealingly personal of his works. (*CAP*, p. 206)

To Leavis the purpose of Eliot's visit was to expiate his 'guilt-feelings' for taking up a Bloomsburyite slighting of him and of *Scrutiny*, a position that he asks that Leavis 'shouldn't in future take ill', even though it was a position Eliot would be 'continuing to support' while at the same time he 'would continue to think highly of me' (*CAP*, p. 206). Thus the Eliot visit is declared as unrevealed until now because of Leavis's 'modesty', as well as being a clear example of Eliot's hypocrisy and his characteristically divided state of trying to find favour with both London

and Cambridge at once; it is thus also evidence for his being the ‘case’ that the account in ‘Little Gidding’ illustrates in Leavis’s eyes.

Another ex-pupil of Leavis, David Ellis, in commenting on ‘Leavis’s strange conviction that he was often in the forefront of Eliot’s mind’, also recalls that Leavis ‘would describe this visit [of Eliot’s] often’.<sup>5</sup> Ellis expresses scepticism in particular about Leavis’s claim to be ‘a major focus of the guilt-feelings expressed in *The Family Reunion*’, an observation he finds ‘quite baffling’ in discussing the guilt the play seems rather to disclose about Eliot’s treatment of his wife: ‘there is in my view not the slightest trace in the play of any relationship analogous to that between Eliot and Leavis’ (p. 135). In his recent book *F. R. Leavis: the Creative University* (2016), Steven Cranfield gives a more detailed and valuable confirmation of the personal importance of ‘Little Gidding’ to Leavis, through his first-hand account of attending Leavis’s seminar on the poem when he was a student at the University of York in 1973. As we saw from *The Living Principle*, Leavis thought this Quartet was the weakest of the four, but this did not stop him from offering a reading of the poem in class which, according to Cranfield, he ‘had been rehearsing ... for some years, to the extent that it had probably assumed a quasi-symbolic significance for Leavis as a *compte rendu* of his views about Eliot, life and language’ (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 60). The seminar began with Leavis’s telling once again the anecdote about Eliot’s Cambridge visit to him, and Cranfield interestingly relates Leavis’s passing from the pile of cigarette ash Eliot left behind him on that occasion to the seminar’s focussing on the ‘Ash on an old

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<sup>5</sup> David Ellis, *Memoirs of a Leavisite: The Decline and Fall of Cambridge English* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 2013), pp. 135, 134.

man's sleeve' stanza of 'Little Gidding' II and by association 'Ash-Wednesday' (*P* 1, pp. 202, 85-97; *F. R. Leavis*, p. 61). The 'autobiographical details' that found their way into the seminar centred on Leavis's 'personal and far from comfortable relations with Eliot', a degree of self-revelation that was far from common in Leavis's teaching, with its characteristic 'reticence on an interpersonal level' and avoidance of any 'false intimacies' with his students (*F. R. Leavis*, pp. 60-1). In Cranfield's judgement,

there was ... something in this poem of Eliot's that nudged Leavis towards a degree of unaccustomed self-disclosure ... That something, it turned out, was Eliot's own self-disclosure in the poem [that is, in the 'familiar compound ghost' passage], the unique occasion on which, according to Leavis, the poet's self-defensive mask momentarily dropped. (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 60)

If Leavis, in his reading of Eliot, and particularly of 'Little Gidding', is seen by Cranfield as mirroring the Eliot protagonist in being 'nudged ... towards a degree of unaccustomed self-disclosure', then this is stimulated by Eliot's own use of the double theme here. In saying that the identification between the two is here at its closest in Leavis's eyes, I do not mean to repeat Kearney's judgment that 'the faults [Leavis] finds in Eliot were very much his own'. Indeed it is disputable to claim that the two men's faults were similar, if 'faults' they were. We noted above, for example, Leavis's 'lifelong tone of trenchant critical confrontation' (p. 178) in his writing, together with a marked repetitiveness in his work (another thing he

could be said to owe to Lawrence, a point made earlier in chapter 2, pp. 121-2); these features would certainly distinguish him from the urbanity of tone that characterises much of Eliot's prose. In Leavis's phrase, Eliot was 'certainly not given to any tactless intransigence of sincerity—his status as an institution mattered very much to him' (*V*, p. 125); as we suggested above (p. 76), in this comment Leavis probably reflects on his own 'intransigence' and what it has cost him.

In fact, as we have seen, Leavis and Eliot were in many ways very different, in areas like cultural background and affiliation and educational thinking. On one level therefore, we could approach the relationship of the doubling between Leavis and Eliot precisely in terms of antithesis rather than similarity: for example, that Eliot enjoyed the celebrity, status and success that Leavis desired, whether this desire was repressed or not, and that this constitutes a wish-fulfilment identification on Leavis's part. The idea of 'the double' is found in Freud's 1919 essay 'The Uncanny': the double can be a slowly formed 'special agency' that 'stand[s] over against the rest of the ego' and 'has the function of observing and criticising the self and of exercising a censorship within the mind', and it can represent 'all those unfilled but possible features to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed'.<sup>6</sup> Relevant to 'Little Gidding' is Freud's distinguishing between this function of self-criticism and the double as an incarnation of the ego's unconscious and repressed desires: 'when poets complain that two souls dwell in the human breast ... what they are thinking of is this division (in the sphere of ego-psychology) between the critical

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<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', James Strachey ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), pp. 235, 236.

agency and the rest of the ego, and not the antithesis discovered by psycho-analysis between the ego and what is unconscious and repressed' (p. 235n). Here we may find some connection of the 'critical agency' with Eliot's 'compound ghost' as an observation and reflection of his achievements and failures as a poet in 'purify[ing] the dialect of the tribe' (*P 1*, p. 205), while the idea of the repressed may apply, as noted above, to Leavis. But there is a more straightforward level on which we can discuss the idea of the double in Leavis's response to Eliot. According to Black's account of the Cambridge visit above, Eliot went to Leavis 'wanting a friendship' with him, and Leavis's own account indicates that Eliot on that occasion revealed how he thought 'highly' of him, even within the context of his 'far from comfortable relations with Eliot'. This indicates that it is not only 'guilt' and 'shame' that is written into Eliot's encounter with the 'other' in 'Little Gidding', but a kind of troubled desire which 'adverse external circumstances have crushed' ('The Uncanny', p. 236), and it is here that we can talk about Leavis's reading the section in *Little Gidding* as expressing a complicated need for Leavis's approval and even intimacy (the 'familiar compound ghost' is 'Both intimate and unidentifiable', *P 1*, p. 204) that, however much a surprise this reading might be to Eliot himself, would seem to epitomise Leavis's lifelong obsession with Eliot. The fact that the narrator places his double under 'pointed *scrutiny*' at the outset of the passage (*P 1*, p. 204, my emphasis), doubtless confirmed for Leavis the validity of his interpretation, a detail that has not, perhaps, been sufficiently addressed in critical commentary, though MacKillop mentions it in passing (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 243). 'The pointed *scrutiny*', together with reference even to things like the ghost's 'brown baked features' (*P 1*, p. 204)—Leavis had a notably dark skin colour—helped convince

Leavis that he was referred to in the ‘compound’ as Black noted (quoted above, p. 262; also noted in Mackillop’s *F. R. Leavis*, pp. 11, 242-3), *Scrutiny*’s ‘pointed’ remarks over the years on Eliot, the London literary world, the *Criterion* and so forth confirming this understanding.

Perhaps Leavis’s autobiographical reading of part II of ‘Little Gidding’ is only an intensification of what he thought critical interpretation should always involve. As we noted in chapter 1 (above, p. 48), in his earliest remarks on the *Quartets* Leavis saw the poem as eliciting ‘meditation and disciplined self-searching’, with the reader being obliged to ‘re-read the whole, and question his experience, again and yet again’; thus Eliot’s later poetry ‘exacts of the reader who proposes to feel that he has mastered it a ... difficult and moral readjustment’ because of the way it questions and indeed ‘scrutinises’ reading itself (above, p. 48). In ‘Mutually Necessary’, suggesting that what is required of the reader is ‘a profoundly considered and wholly sincere response’ to Eliot and to poetry more generally, Leavis argues that this involves meeting the ‘challenge ... to be more than ordinarily inward; it involves a self-searching and self-testing’ (*CAP*, p. 191). Identification with the ghost-figure of ‘Little Gidding’ might thus be said to be the climactic staging and embodiment of the process of ‘finding oneself’ in Leavis’s sustained encounter with Eliot’s poetry. Cranfield, in his account of Leavis’s teaching of ‘Little Gidding’, notes how Leavis indeed ‘enacted’ Eliot’s own ‘spiritual and linguistic impasse’, a performance that was similar in his reading of an earlier poem, ‘Ash-Wednesday’ (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 61). Likewise, Cranfield notes that ‘Leavis more than once spoke of ... the failure inherent in any attempt to read the poem adequately, mirroring the poet’s repeated refrain of failure to articulate

meaning', such 'reflexivity' being 'a characteristic feature of Leavis's critical approach' (*F. R. Leavis*, p. 62). Here we have a sense that reading is itself the 'double' of the writing process, in the way it 'enact[s]' and 'mirrors' it, but this doubling is again, for Leavis in relation to Eliot, experienced as an intensely difficult relationship, characterised, as we saw in our account of *The Living Principle* in chapter 1 (p. 49), by the struggle for mastery over the text.

Ultimately, to return to Michael Black's words in the essay 'A Kind of Valediction', quoted in my Introduction, if 'Eliot is the great poet of the [twentieth] century', and Leavis its 'great critic', what we have is a complex situation of both kinship and rivalry.<sup>7</sup> In 'Mutually Necessary' Leavis raises a question of some significance, even if he then refuses to answer it: 'original critics are rare; whether rarer than great creative writers (who are certainly rare) I won't discuss' (*CAP*, p. 191). But in the following pages of the essay Leavis seems to in a sense give an answer concerning the relative importance of the two, where he states

the continuance of the literary tradition in a vigorous state depends on a tiny minority of persons of keen and articulate critical sensibility, and its being influential depends on a much larger reading public that respects and responds intelligently to the judgement of the élite minority. Where the educated reading public has been destroyed, with the serious standards and the prestige they enjoyed ... the tradition is dead or dying, and even in a

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<sup>7</sup> 'A Kind of Valediction' is of course the phrase Eliot uses to describe the ghost's departure at the end of the encounter in 'Little Gidding' II (*P* 1, p. 205), though curiously Black does not consider this poem in his essay, save for one passing reference (p. 87).

country with as rich a literature as the English there will be no more great writers. (*CAP*, pp. 192-3)

This statement, apart from summarising the lifelong Leavisite mission for the function of the 'English School', awards 'great critics', rather than 'great creative writers', the predominance in keeping the tradition alive.

In section II of 'Little Gidding' Eliot staged the encounter with the 'familiar compound ghost' as a meeting between two poets, concerned with 'speech', with keeping language and the tradition alive and 'purify[ing] the dialect of the tribe' (*P* 1, p. 205). The ghost, described as 'compound', can in part be a projection of the narrator himself suffering in the fires of the afterlife rather than those of the air-raid that Eliot experienced; it can also, as the usual interpretation suggests, be identified with W. B. Yeats, who had recently died abroad and 'left [his] body on a distant shore' (*P* 1, p. 205). However Leavis identifies himself with the ghost, and makes the ghost the recipient of Eliot's tribute and apology; what is more, being a critic himself, he thus inserts criticism into the place of honour originally occupied by the poet-double. The strategy is implicit in *The Living Principle*, where as we noted (pp. 74-6) Leavis's reading operated as a corrective critical 'double' of the original poem. But the 'doubling' also involved a kinship with Eliot that remained to the last, so that the differences that split the two apart cannot have been at all 'easy', in Ellis's word, to handle: Eliot was so 'inextricably entangled with Leavis's own sense of himself as a literary critic ... that the progressive discovery of what appeared serious weaknesses meant a difficult re-ordering of his own value systems' (*Memoirs of a Leavisite*, p. 136). As *The Living Principle* shows and

'Mutually Necessary' confirms, Leavis did however attempt, at the end of his life, to finally lay the ghost of Eliot to rest with 'a kind of valediction'.

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