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"THE HAUNTING OF DEATH IN LIFE":[2] MOURNING AND CREATIVITY IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *SONS AND LOVERS* AND THE GARGNANO POETRY

HOWARD J. BOOTH

This article questions narratives that see Lawrence overcoming his past in 1912, in particular those that involve him moving on after his mother's death. Engaging with earlier experiences was central to Lawrence's art, rather than something that needed to be consigned to the past in order to achieve psychological and artistic maturity. In older accounts of Lawrence's development, it was completing *Sons and Lovers* late that year that showed he had moved on as an artist from an over-close bond with his mother that stymied his sexual relationships and left him unable to get over her death. Though critics in this tradition still see problems with parts of the novel, a threshold of maturity had been reached.[3] For the "normative" tradition of Lawrence criticism, his work could then serve as a guide for his readers.[4]

I question narratives of maturation that claim that it was whilst in Gargnano between September 1912 and April 1913 that Lawrence reached maturity as a man and writer. Seeing heterosexuality and marriage as enabling Lawrence's artistic maturity produces a problematic and selective account of Lawrence, sexuality and relationships.[5] Here I question accounts that say that it was also in Gargnano that Lawrence overcame the disabling effects of grief and loss following the death of his mother in December 1910. I explore how writing down to the late 1920s, including revisions of the Gargnano verse, shows ongoing creative responses to loss. The bleak and disturbing elements in *Sons and Lovers* are not only the residuum, the traces of earlier feelings and mental organisation. Lawrence's own shaping narratives of these years cannot be seen as the final word, but as examples of how emphatic statements created,

in combination, a way of articulating ambivalent and complex feelings. At a formal level, the writing sees clear-cut claims placed alongside each other. Shifts and changes of meaning are also captured in the process of revision. The approach here is spurred by our now knowing more, with the third volume of the Cambridge Edition of *The Poems,* about the versions of the verse set in Gargnano. In what follows, I first examine psychoanalytic explorations of mourning and melancholia and how they enable, at least for some, their own forms of creativity. Then poems that are set in Gargnano are considered alongside *Sons and Lovers,* in particular its final chapter. Finally, the wider implications of this reevaluation of the Gargnano period for working-class fiction, politics and the self are discussed with reference to Raymond Williams. Rather than a narrative of overcoming, I contend, we should think instead of a back-and-forth of responses to loss and separation.

Psychoanalytic thinking can help explore ongoing feelings of loss and creativity. More recent psychoanalytic thinking stresses a continuing response to loss rather than focusing on the distinction between mourning and melancholia.[6] The inaugurating text for psychoanalysis and mourning is Sigmund Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia', published in 1917. Both mourning and melancholia exhibit "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity". Freud argues that in mourning there is a gradual loosening of connection. The lost object is in time acknowledged as having departed, and the grieving process concludes. The energy is now deployed elsewhere; when "the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited once again". Freud's interest in mourning provides him with an explanation of what we would today call depression, and he calls melancholia. The symptoms of melancholia are the same as mourning, with the addition of a "loss of self-regard", suggesting ego damage. The state persists, and the originating loss does not fully account for the persistence and severity of the symptoms.[7]

More recent psychoanalytic thought stresses an ongoing response to loss rather than focusing on the distinction between mourning and melancholia. For those within a Freudian tradition, such as María Cristina Melgar, there remains a time beyond mourning. Shifting levels of disturbance and unhappiness are her focus, however, rather than a completed process. The self is changed as a result. Mourning allows, and indeed even enables, forms of creativity that stem from the loss. She contends that "man creates so as to be able to retain what death makes him lose", and that

> Psychoanalysis discovered that for the construction of the psychic apparatus and of language, of the functions of the ego and of the freedom of the subject to feel, imagine, think and create, it is necessary to lose the objects of need and love. The evolution of the psyche bears the marks of mourning and trauma.[8]

Melgar's essay excavates unsettled and painful feelings experienced by the one who mourns. The psychoanalytic language helps us notice things we might otherwise miss in Lawrence's texts given the familiar shaping narratives of moving on and surmounting difficulty. That includes the very intensity of the creative response, which results from the strength of feeling for the one who has been lost. It is a very different position to positing a place after and beyond loss from which the past can be viewed disinterestedly. Melgar's example is the "massive identification" of Van Gogh with his father and the "melancholic mourning", with physical and psychological symptoms, he experienced at Ambers. It was in this period that Van Gogh started to paint self-portraits that explore his ambivalent feelings about his father.[9]

For Melgar, creativity reworks the experience of loss in "the poesis of death".[10] These processes are experienced not only psychologically, but also bodily, with a heightened sense of physical sensation.[11] The world is experienced as enigmatic, a puzzle that acts as a further spur to creative responses.[12] Difficulties processing loss create a border zone between life and death that is populated by both

the living and the dead. Melgar draws on Willy Baranger's conceptualisation of "the dead-alive" to describe the mourner "who identifies with an object that can neither live again nor die completely".[13] The confrontation of the mourner "with disorganisation, disinvestment and traumatic void" results in phantasmagorisation, the dead brought back to some form of life.[14] A withdrawal from the domain of language is followed by a return of expression through metaphor and metonymy.[15] In Melgar's overview, "In mourning the creativity of the psyche straddles the border between the unknown and what is known, between what is lost and what is about to be resumed".[16]

Melgar writes about the creative aspects of the psychological disturbance of ongoing mourning. One of the major British psychoanalytic theorists of the second half of the twentieth century, Marion Milner, emphasised that the relationship with what has been lost is not something to step past, but rather central to mental functioning.[17] She often drew on Lawrence's writing, but her position differed from the Lawrence criticism of her time. Lawrence is seen as offering an alternative to developmental and normative traditions. Milner is unusual amongst her fellow Freudian analysts in stressing a positive, "creative unconscious" usually associated with Jung, which is also similar, of course, to the "pristine unconscious" of Lawrence's *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (*PFU* 11–12). She did not see her role as helping a patient develop along a particular trajectory through life, towards what is said to constitute maturity, rather Milner saw the pressures of living up to societally imposed models as what makes people ill or exacerbates their symptoms.

Adam Phillips has argued that Milner positioned herself within a radical tradition in English culture that she associated with Blake and Lawrence.[18] She advocated placing oneself in "the hands of the living god", picking up on Lawrence's late poem 'The Hands of God', rather than seeing the role of analysis as helping people in modern capitalist societies to experience and feel in certain set ways.[19] For Milner the full engagement with the world about us includes those

who are no longer physically present in our lives. As she argues in an essay on Blake's *Job*,

> The Freudian viewpoint sees … as a result of clinical experience (with the so-called "normal" as well as with those who know they are not), that the inner structure of the unconscious part of our psyche is essentially animistic. That is we build up our inner world on the basis of our relationships to people we have loved and hated, we carry these people about with us and what we do, we do for them – or in conflict with them. And it seems that it is through these internalized people that we carry on our earliest relationships, developing and enriching them throughout life; even when these first loved people no longer exist in the external world, we find external representatives of them both in new people who enter our lives, and in all our interests and the causes that we seek to serve. And because these internal people contain something of ourselves, they contain, represent, the love and the hate which we first felt for the outside people, so we go on throughout our lives, continually discovering more of ourselves and more of the world, in developing our relationships to them through their substitutes. And not only do they represent the original objects of our love and our hate, they also are felt as helping or hindering figures working within us, and in this sense they become identified with our own powers.[20]

Rather than a loss being something to be overcome and placed squarely in the past, its ongoing role in constituting the self should be recognised.

For Jorge Luis Borges, in his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1967, the relationship between loss and creativity is an untroubled, positive process when compared with the states of mind that Melgar explores. Borges observes that the Platonic dialogues were born from Plato's wish to hear again, to bring back to life, the voice of his master, Socrates.[21] There is a crucial relationship between creativity and loss, the individual is not simply taken away

from the world as they mourn, but, paradoxically, death acts as a spur; the new emerges in content and form. These 1967 Borges lectures were for many years feared lost to posterity until a recording was located; they were published in 2000 as *This Craft of Verse*. Unlike the dead, some texts can come or return later into the world; others, known to have existed, remain stubbornly lost and mournable.

The shifting terrain of available texts allows us to reconsider what we once felt sure about – or, perhaps a better way of putting it, what we once tried to make ourselves feel sure about. This is certainly true of the way the Cambridge *Poems* allows us to think about the poetry set in Gargnano. We see a shifting relationship there and in *Sons and Lovers* to the lost object. This not only involves individual loss, specifically Lawrence's of his mother, but by extension to earlier versions of himself, and the world of his working-class upbringing; Lawrence's relationship to his parents and their marriage was always bound up with their differing response to the mining community. Lawrence remained open to the end of his life to the intense feelings his mother evoked, asserting powerful shaping narratives of his earlier life, examples of which include the "coming through" in *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1917), and the account of his poetic development offered in 'Foreword to *Collected Poems*' of 1928. The latter of course came to introduce versions of the Gargnano poetry discussed here, and it is where Lawrence uses the phrase "the sick year" to describe the period following his mother's death in late 1910. After noting that the following year saw the end of a number of relationships with women, he continues:

> Then, in that year, for me everything collapsed, save the mystery of death, and the haunting of death in life. I was twenty-five, and from the death of my mother, the world began to dissolve around me, beautiful, iridescent, but passing away substanceless. Till I almost dissolved away myself, and was very ill: when I was twenty-six.

> Then slowly the world came back: or I myself returned: but to another world. And in 1912, when I was still twenty-six, the other phase commenced, the phase of *Look! We Have Come Through!*—when I left teaching, and left England, and left many other things, and the demon had a new run for his money. (*1Poems* 653)

At the end we can see the Foreword's argument about the poetic demon, and what might get in the way of it breaking through. As well as constructing a narrative of this earlier period – and relating it to the Foreword's argument about a "poetic demon" that is not susceptible to change – an account of the self being made and remade over time is present. The passage of time is both strangely foregrounded and also rendered static: much happens, yet he remains twenty-six. In the sentence "Then slowly the world came back: or I myself returned: but to another world" one clause follows another, but the heavy punctuation also has the effect of arresting temporal continuity, of appearing to place the statements on top of each other. The location of the change is left open as a result, as is whether it is inside or outside the self, and the perspective adopted.

A problem with seeing the completion of *Sons and Lovers* as coming at the end of Lawrence's mourning, the overcoming of what had caused the "sick year", is that references to his loss recur. The discovery of 'Death-Paean of a Mother' in 1990 provides a significant case study (*3Poems* 1538–40). That it was an elegy for the mother initially suggested a date shortly after her death at the end of 1910, but, against these expectations, a 2003 article by Christopher Pollnitz presented evidence that it was first composed in 1918.[22] The poem uses imagery of a lake at nightfall as part of its exploration of the dead mother on "a border-line" between life and death. (As we will see, this speaks back to the Lake Garda verse.) The language in 'Death-Paean of a Mother' recasts the narrative of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*, with the dead mother taking the role of the sleeping Brünnhilde. (That makes the I-voice both the son

of the lost mother and aligns him with Brünnhilde's lover, Siegfried [*3Poems* 1538–40, 1838–40].)

Another example is the poem 'Spirits Summoned West', the penultimate poem in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, which sees the persona inviting "Women I loved and cherished, like my mother" (*1Poems* 361) to come to America.[23] The ongoing presence of the women is sought and welcomed – "*Come west to me*" (364) – though we have repeated reference to how the I-voice "told them to die" (362). The late autobiographical pieces from the 1920s may have responded to requests from publishers for biographical summaries, or been spurred by Lawrence's final visit to England, but it is also the case that the differing conclusions and energy of those texts speak to an ongoing response; they are not the disinterested reconsideration of the past.[24] To note continuing feelings of loss is not to claim that they were always of the same intensity, or that their form did not change; neither, however, is there some even, steady decline. He returns to earlier loss in his writing through into the late 1920s.

Loss and the mother in the Gargnano poems

Lawrence often thought of his mother when he was in Gargnano, though the response changes. We do not see the completion of the process of mourning as described in Freud's essay. Sight and the visual are to the fore, with a focus on twilight and darkness, shadows and reflection, along with being seen by others. The poetry explores the boundary between life and death. Reference to ghosts is just one way of imagining a partial return to life of the dead mother; she also returns through the act of writing about her. Lawrence was also undertaking the final revision of the novel that drew on his early life, *Sons and Lovers*, between early September and 18 November 1912 (*SL* xliii–iv).

The textual history of 'Everlasting Flowers', which spans many years, shows shifting responses to ongoing feelings of loss rather than a trajectory of overcoming.[25] There is a border zone between life and death, the past and the present. Successive drafts do not lead

to some finished, final version; all is provisional, including versions that are published. The verse captures the ebb and flow of mourning and melancholia in Lawrence's writing. The third volume of the Cambridge *Poems* says that the poem was first drafted circa September 1912, soon after Lawrence's arrival in Gargnano on the 18 September. The first draft was presumably in Frieda's *Tagebuch*, which Lawrence had taken over. Frieda still possessed the *Tagebuch* when composing her memoir of Lawrence *"Not I, But the Wind …"*, published in 1935, but it has long been unlocated.[26] As it contained the early versions of most of the poems in *Look! We Have Come Through!* its loss is keenly felt, and as a result responses to the surviving versions are themselves forms of creative mourning. The poem was then revised as it was transferred into the Porthcothan notebook (*3Poems* 1534–6, 1835).[27] The title 'Too Late' has been scored through, to be replaced by the more neutral 'From the Italian Lakes', though that title serves to underline the distance between the poem's setting and the places that Lawrence's mother knew. Beginning by evoking the possibility of an ongoing connection between mother and son, the poem ends by asserting a total break, an unbridgeable gap. The hope for such a connection remains, however, and the loss is not accepted.

The I-voice starts 'From the Italian Lakes' by asking a question: "Who do you think stands watching" (*3Poems* 1534). The poem is clearly addressed to someone. The reader is not part of this dyad, though; they are made to feel on the outside. The interlocutor is closer at the start of the second stanza, "One of us sees" (1534) – an earlier, deleted version continues the questions, "Who is it sees" (1835) – and it is only in the fourth stanza that we know that both the persona and the one addressed experience the scene together:

> Yea, my little lady
> And this is Italy,
> And this is me, my darling,
> And this is me. (1535)

The repetition asserts mutual recognition and re-establishes familiarity. (In *Sons and Lovers* Paul uses "little woman" as a familiar name for his mother [*SL* 149, 153, 197, 222]; death raises the mother-figure's status to "little lady" in the poem.) The scene is then viewed from the perspective of a man on an "oxen wagon" (*3Poems* 1535). It is getting dark quickly and "He'll think I'm a ghost, a stranger";[28] the I-voice feels himself to be the one returning from the dead. Life and beauty become real through contact with the (dead) mother: "All the things that are lovely / I wanted to bring them you".

Just as the nightfall means that the lake and mountains can no longer be seen, so death makes contact with the mother impossible. 'From the Italian Lakes' ends:

> And never the two-winged vessel
> That sleeps along the lake
> Can I catch it between my hands, like a moth
> For you to take.
>
> We have lost them all, and the darkness
> Alone is left, of all
> The wonderful things I had for you.
> —So the fall
>
> Of the latch through the night rings final.
> And on opposite sides of the door
> We are each shut out from the other now
> For evermore. (*3Poems* 1535–6)

The latch's fall occurs between the stanzas, and the last word of the poem perhaps echoes Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven'; the "nevermore" of that poem, not again, becoming in 'From the Italian Lakes' a separation for "evermore", for all eternity.[29] However, the mother is addressed as if she can still hear.

The new version of the poem that Lawrence prepared in 1918 is also now available in Volume 3 of the Cambridge *Poems* under the title 'Everlasting Flowers [2]' (*3Poems* 1536–7; 1836–7). The title is suggested by the French word for artificial flowers, *immortelles*, and suggests something that lasts perpetually but is not real and organic. 'Everlasting Flowers [2]' is the version that was intended for *New Poems*. However, to comply with Martin Secker's request that the book run to 64 pages Lawrence cut the final two stanzas from the poem.[30] The ongoing need for the mother remains: "And now in the dark my soul to you / Turns back". Without the absent mother there is a pall over life; we are in the territory of Freud's melancholic states: "For what is the loveliness, my love, / Save you have it with me!" (*3Poems* 1536). There is no final separation, as in 'From the Italian Lakes', rather the mother lives on in the I-voice. 'Everlasting Flowers [2]' concludes:

But hush, I am not regretting:
    It is far more perfect now.
I'll whisper the ghostly truth to the world
    And tell them how

I know you here in the darkness,
    How you sit in the throne of my eyes
At peace, and look out of the windows
    In glad surprise.

How you've taken my breast to house in,
    My eyes to look forth from, now.
You take what you want from my hand, and ride
    In power on my brow.

Your ghost in me is identical,
    Implicit with life.
I am lord in you of the kingdom of death,
    Of the afterlife. (1537)

(The *New Poems* version ends with "In glad surprise" [*1Poems* 184].) The truth is ghostly both because the mother's presence is spectre-like and, it seems, because as an awkward echo of the truth it can only be whispered rather than given full voice. Disturbingly for the reader, the mother-figure is silent and at times without agency; for example, she is enjoined to "take what you want from my hand" (*3Poems* 1537).[31] A miniature person, in fact dead, sits in the head of the son. Her gaze is not fully her own, her personality not distinct from that of the I-voice.[32] Yet in the poem the mother-figure is said to "ride / In power on my brow". After declaring that the "ghost" is somehow the same as the I-voice, the effort is made at the end of 'Everlasting Flowers [2]' for him to triumph over death. The final line was changed to "Of the afterlife" from "In the afterlife". There had been a suggestion that the poetic persona resided in the world of the dead. And before then it had read "Master of strife" suggesting power over an ongoing state of struggle and contestation (1837). The loss and grief shape the depiction of the relationship with the mother-figure on a border between life and death.

After the publication of *New Poems* there were yet further authorially sanctioned changes. One was to the poem's position in *Collected Poems*. The poem was moved from the *New Poems* section into *Look! We Have Come Through!* to make it part of a sequence about "coming through". Further, Lawrence made alterations to the final typescript that were not in the end included in the published version (*2Poems* 956 and *3Poems* 1836). In the 1928 typescript the lines "I'll whisper the ghostly truth to the world / And tell them how" became "I'll whisper the ghostly truth to you / And tell you how" (*1Poems* 184). The *New Poems* / *Collected Poems* version we are used to is easier to follow; the I-voice tells the wider world how things stand. The unincorporated revision, now adopted in the Cambridge *Poems* because it is Lawrence's final known version, helps reinforce the feeling that the mother is her son's whole focus, an effect reinforced by the repetition of the word "you" in the poem. While open to the objection that there is no need to whisper "the ghostly truth" to the mother because she surely knows it already, the

change shows that ongoing communication with the dead – seen as no longer possible in 'From the Italian Lakes' – is present, at least in attenuated form, in this 1928 typescript. It pulls against any one-voiced narrative of "coming through".

Lawrence had embarked on rewriting the final section of *Sons and Lovers*, including Mrs Morel's final illness and death, the day before All Souls' Day.[33] Held on the 2 November, All Souls' does not originate in the Christian Bible, and the day's Roman Catholic rituals would have been unfamiliar to Lawrence. In two poems Lawrence drew on what he had witnessed at the Cimitero Monumentale in Gargnano.[34] Lawrence's mood in this period was unsettled and low, though he struck an ironic, detached note when referring to All Souls' Day in a letter of that day, "Today is the feast of all the dead, so we're going to the cemetery to be made bright" (*1L* 467). Frieda later recalled that "when he wrote his mother's death he was ill and his grief made me ill too … Once sitting on the little steamer on the lake he said: 'Look, that little woman is like my mother.' His mother, though dead, seemed so alive and there still to him".[35]

The two poems set in the cemetery, 'Giorno dei Morti' and 'All Souls', represent ongoing states of mourning and melancholia. I differ from Holly A. Laird who sees the latter poem as "a final elegy that releases him once and for all to be, as in 'Hymn to Priapus' 'faithless and faithful'" in his relationship with Frieda.[36] Whatever changes and shifts there were in his relationship with Frieda, and however the ordering of *Look! We Have Come Through!* might aim to shape that experience, "once and for all" is always deferred. 'Giorno dei Morti' focuses on the local, Italian experience of the day, as its adoption of the Italian in its title suggests. Offering detached observation of different people and their customs, its imagery, and words such as "mystery", spill over into 'All Souls'.

'Giorno dei Morti' addresses separation in multiple ways: the I-voice from the events depicted, some of the villagers from the religious ceremony, and the living from the dead. The last of these is felt keenly by the grieving parents. The villagers follow the procession of the clergy to the cemetery,

> And at the foot of a grave a father stands
> With sunken head, and forgotten, folded hands;
> And at the foot of a grave a mother kneels
> With pale shut face, nor either hears nor feels (*1Poems* 189)

The repeated reference to the grave demonstrates that it is the parents' primary focus; they do not interact with each other. The mother is cut off from the world around her. With the stress on "forgotten, folded hands" we are reminded of Gertrude Morel's response to the death of William in *Sons and Lovers* with, behind it, Lydia Lawrence's grief over the death of her son Ernest.[37] The mourning of parents for a child also suggests its reverse, the loss of a parent.

The first verse paragraph of the remarkable 'All Souls' establishes a concern with bridging the gap and separation identified in 'Giorno dei Morti'. Though unrhymed, unlike its companion, the poem gains many of its effects by repetition and recombination; loss is followed here by the rebuilding of language and connection. The short second verse paragraph introduces the heavy use of punctuation and end-stopping that characterises the poem. The verse paragraphs, though of irregular length, keep together material the line endings separate. The poem ends:

> The naked candles burn on every grave.
> On your grave, in England, the weeds grow.
>
> But I am your naked candle burning,
> And that is not your grave, in England,
> The world is your grave.
> And my naked body standing on your grave
> Upright towards heaven is burning off to you
> Its flame of life, now and always, till the end.
>
> It is my offering to you; every day is All Souls' Day.

I forget you, have forgotten you.
I am busy only at my burning,
I am busy only at my life.
But my feet are on your grave, planted.
And when I lift my face, it is a flame that goes up
To the other world, where you are now.
But I am not concerned with you.
I have forgotten you.

I am a naked candle burning on your grave. (*1Poems* 189–90)

The centrality of the mother, even in death, is initially the dominant note: we build to "every day is All Souls' Day" (189). Not mourning continuously seems to be a cause for self-reproach, but the ambivalence then comes to the fore. The image of the feet on the grave suggests being rooted in the one lost, but the I-voice also looks away. Then again, that look is heavenwards. The merging of the persona's body with the torch suggests aestheticism and vitalism. One thinks in particular of Walter Pater's famous reference in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*: "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life".[38] As Lawrence was to write a few months after finishing *Sons and Lovers*, in a letter to Ernest Collings of 17 January 1913, "I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame forever upright and yet flowing: and the intellect is just the light that is shed onto things around" (*1L* 503). However, the burning down of a candle also suggests life consumed.

The final two lines of the penultimate verse paragraph stress emotional distance so unequivocally as to suggest the very opposite. Indeed, they address someone supposedly forgotten. The reference to the naked candle, unprotected from guttering, shows the persona's acceptance of vulnerability in response to these recurring feelings. The poem utilises metonymy – the grave in England linked to other interments – and repetition with difference. Words such as "naked", "candle" and "burning" shift in meaning as they are reused. Clear-

cut statements of total distance from the dead person are combined with assertions of their ongoing importance. The overall effect is complex. The poem's last line suggests that the I-voice is separate from the lost loved one *and* that his existence is still grounded in that other person. As with 'From the Italian Lakes', though, the mother has left the world of the living; she is in "the other world".

Paul, mourning and the end of *Sons and Lovers*

Like the Gargnano poetry, the end of the final draft of *Sons and Lovers* sees unresolved mourning.[39] 'Derelict', the final chapter, depicts both the ongoing effects of the loss of Paul's mother, and his final encounter with Miriam. Paul is in a melancholic state that stymies his creativity, "Everything seemed to have gone smash for the young man. He could not paint" (*SL* 454). The writing powerfully explores a border area between life and death. Paul is dissociated from what is going on around him:

> Always alone, his soul oscillated, first on the side of death, then on the side of life, doggedly. The real agony was that he had nowhere to go, nothing to do, nothing to say, and *was* nothing himself. Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad. Sometimes he was mad: things weren't there, things were there. It made him pant. Sometimes he stood before the bar of the public-house where he called for a drink. Everything suddenly stood back away from him. He saw the face of the barmaid, the gabbling drinkers, his own glass on the slopped, mahogany board, in the distance. There was something between him and them. He could not get into touch. He did not want them, he did not want his drink. Turning abruptly, he went out. On the threshold he stood and looked at the lighted street. But he was not of it or in it. Something separated him. Everything went on there below those lamps, shut away from him. He could not get at them. He felt he couldn't touch the lampposts, not if he reached. (456–7)

Paul does not consider himself to be in contact with the physical world. He is like the "living dead", where in the versions of 'Everlasting Flowers' the mother returned as "the dead-alive", to pick up once again Baranger's term deployed by Melgar. Paul is separated from the streetlamps, and that distance from the illumination they provide others has a metaphorical significance as well.

Late one day in his room, the disturbed mental state extends to a splitting of the self and an internal dialogue over whether to carry on living: "'You're alive.' / 'She's not.' / 'She is—in you'" (*SL* 456). The imagined exchange with the mother brings to mind 'Everlasting Flowers', and the similarities extend to the cart in both that poem and in 'Meeting Among the Mountains': "There was a sound of a heavy cart clanking down the road. Suddenly, the electric light went out; there was a bruising thud in the penny-in-the-slot meter. He did not stir, sat gazing in front of him. Only, the mice had scuttled and the fire glowed red in the dark room" (456). Paul is so disengaged from the world that at first the sounds from outside produce no response. Even the loss of light and the "bruising thud", like a body blow, of the meter as the electricity runs out fail to get through. For Paul, whether or not to carry on is a matter of letting self-neglect take its course, rather than his contemplating a single suicidal act. The representation of this state sits oddly with what we know of Paul, who has not travelled far in his life. It is rather Lawrence's own perspective on his earlier life, viewed from Gargnano, that provides the language, one shared with the poetry set by the lake,

> The town, as he sat upon the car, stretched away, over the bay of railway, a level fume of lights. Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns—the sea—the night—on and on! And he had no place in it. Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his mouth sprang the endless space—and it was there behind him, everywhere. (*SL* 463–4)

We can compare this passage with the night-time in 'Everlasting Flowers', and the reference to the "spot he stood on" in 'All Souls'.

The dissociation is not complete, however. The stile on which Paul rests after getting off the tram suggests an ongoing connection with the world, though one that refers back to the stile where the violent fight with Baxter Dawes had started, and thus connection in a particularly disturbing form:

> She had been in one place, and was in another, that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed something. (*SL* 464)

There is here a surprising echo of Rossetti's Blessed Damozel, who "leaned out / From the gold bar of heaven" to look out for her beloved left behind on earth.[40] The Blessed Damozel experiencing physical sensation in heaven contrasts with Paul who – for once in his current state – relates to the material world. The physical connection he wants, however, is with his mother: "He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her". The novel's closing sentences see Paul resolving differently, but the marks left by his loss are there, and the future lies beyond the novel's end: "He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly" (*SL* 464).

Raymond Williams, *Sons and Lovers* and the working-class novel

Lawrence's responses to the loss of his mother cannot be viewed wholly in terms of his October 1913 assertion to Arthur McLeod that "one sheds ones sicknesses in books – repeats and presents again ones emotions, to be master of them" (*2L* 90). The sense here of a fierce super-ego training up the ego exemplifies what is in play in normative accounts of healthy development. More than a fuller

understanding of Lawrence and his writing is at stake, though. *Sons and Lovers* has been given a founding place in twentieth-century British working-class fiction. My efforts to shift the structuring, well-known narratives in this article has been aided by recovered texts, from Borges's Harvard lectures to versions of Lawrence's poems published for the first time in the final volume of the Cambridge Edition, and we can think about *Sons and Lovers*, loss and working-class writing using a recently published transcript of a lecture given by the leading post-war British cultural critic Raymond Williams at Aarhus University in Denmark in 1979.

Williams had praised *Sons and Lovers* in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* of 1970, arguing that its attention to community and working-class life had been neglected by those who stressed Lawrence's development a writer of international significance in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. Williams thus operates within the established Marxist critique of Lawrence, going back at least as far as Christopher Caudwell in the 1930s, that sees Lawrence as moving away from the class in which he was born, with his analysis of industrial capitalism crucially undermined by his belief in responses that originate in the individual. The early writing is then prized by this tradition. Williams sees a forced shift away from full lived experience in the community later in *Sons and Lovers*, starting with the introduction of Clara.[41]

The newly available lecture can be used to augment the comments Williams made later in a 1986 discussion with Edward Said. Williams invokes Lawrence's novel when talking about the formal challenges he had faced when working on his first novel, *Border Country* (1960). That text drew on Williams's own upbringing in the Welsh Borders:

> When I started to write it in the late forties, there was clearly a place still for the novel of working-class childhood which was, so to say, pre-formed to end with the person leaving a working-class environment, going right away from it. The classic of this is still, after all, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and indeed when it was

> said that a wave of working-class novels came out in the fifties and sixties, it's amazing that the majority of them included that form – childhood, adolescence and going away – that Lawrence movement of walking towards the city with all your life ahead of you. The working-class experience has been important, but it is something you remember from a distance. Now, every time I tried to write *Border Country*, although the material was different, it came out that way. But I couldn't accept it.

Williams asserts that Paul sloughs off his past at the end of the novel and is then fully open to new possibilities. He notes that it took many drafts of *Border Country* to work past this "deep cultural form" – pervasive but largely unrecognised – and his eventual solution was to include narratives of both father and son as young men: "until that is so, you have not altered the stereotype".[42]

In the Aarhus lecture, Williams speaks at greater length about "the D. H. Lawrence phenomenon … this intense description of working-class life from which a bright young man moves away".[43] As well as discussing once again the drafting of *Border Country*, he explores how others broke from the novel of moving away from a working-class community after the Second World War, considering Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (1958) with its depiction of the pleasure and escape available in the brief interludes between repetitive, dulling labour. Williams sees writers as being led on ineluctably by the prevailing culture's shaping narrative: they find themselves "being involved and being nudged this way and that as to how really one should write, these processes are very strong and of course they take their form from the prevailing dominant fiction".[44] And for much of the twentieth century that meant a plot Williams associates with Lawrence and *Sons and Lovers* that reinforced for middle class readers the perceived rightness of their class privilege:

> One acceptable form, wholly acceptable since Lawrence, has been the gifted young man or young woman who has come from a working-class family or otherwise poor family and has made it

> in some way, made it educationally, made it by marrying the boss's daughter, made it by getting to London and becoming a good painter, made it by marrying a German aristocrat and going to New Mexico. The form is deep because, after all, this is the bourgeois idyll, is it not? I mean, the lower he starts, the better the rise. There is absolutely no resistance to this in culture and people can think "my god, I am telling them now, I'm telling them how tough it was in the old days and how we had bread dipped in hot water and how we did not have boots"; the response is often "more please, give us more, because you will then be able justify the class system because you got out of it didn't you? You made it with the proper people, so describe it, please, because it will be a very good example to others, how with gifts and energy or without too much scruple you got out." If that is working-class literature, and it has been the most widely acclaimed of what is called working-class literature, then it is a very curious thing.[45]

This is both superb rhetoric – the timing of "without too much scruple" is a particular highlight – and a crudely reductive account of Lawrence's relationship with Frieda and their way of life at the ranch above Taos. Is "getting to London and becoming a good painter" how Williams sees Paul's future, and, if so, what grounds are there for that claim in *Sons and Lovers*? Williams criticises talented young working-class men for leaving their home region, in geography and sympathy; that is not what is depicted in *Sons and Lovers* but a projection.

This could all perhaps be used to suggest that it doesn't much matter what ambivalences and complexities exist in Lawrence's writing because readers, including one as influential as Williams, have by and large taken *Sons and Lovers* one way. However, Williams's other responses to Lawrence were by no means as one-voiced as the Aarhus lecture. He observed in the *New Left Review* interviews from the same period that "The only Lawrence I now read is the very late Lawrence, the versions of *Lady Chatterley* and the autobiographical texts he wrote just before he died. It is the powerful

uncertainties there that are impressive".[46] Not only is the "just before" here largely inaccurate in terms of the dates of composition of these pieces, we might well balk at the suggestion that such "powerful uncertainties" are only in evidence in a small subset of late Lawrence texts. Williams's selection shows that he was intrigued – before Lawrence criticism indeed – by Lawrence's reconsiderations of his early life (of which the Foreword to *Collected Poems* is one example).

We can only speculate on what lies behind the contradictions in Williams's statements here, but the obvious hypothesis is that he was unsettled by these "powerful uncertainties" and what they suggest about how the past might shape our lives in ways that pull in different directions. The repeated assertions that *Border Country* had found a full formal response can perhaps be questioned; perhaps innovation alone cannot provide solutions. A Milner-informed response might be to ask why there needs to be a polarised choice between moving away or returning in full plenitude to what has been lost, where the loss of the father and of belonging to place and working-class culture are closely interconnected. It is not possible to go back and live in the past, but wholly moving away from one's formation is not possible either. These discussions of Lawrence in the later Williams are fascinating because they are not fully articulated; they do not become the direct object of his critical discourse. Williams's usually felicitous and confident exposition of shaping narratives falters, and the wider issue this raises is what such accounts omit and slide over; they in turn might well become the "prevailing dominant" plot.

What has dropped away in Williams's account of Lawrence and *Sons and Lovers* is loss. Lawrence's writing acknowledges and explores such feelings long after his mother's death in ways that unsettle claims that he finally moved on, and indeed that doing so was a prerequisite for success. The Gargnano writing is part of a continuing relationship with the dead mother. He remained open to exploring it in ways that disturb unilinear narratives of overcoming and moving on. This happens even though he also made assertions about mastering and overcoming loss; though it seems counter-

intuitive, making emphatic statements helps create the space for an ongoing response. Texts that have become available much later can act as a counterweight to the hardening and simplifying of narratives about Lawrence and his writing. Attending to the changes found in textual histories shows that responses to loss do not resolve because they are part of the stuff of life itself.

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[1] From D. H. Lawrence, 'Foreword to *Collected Poems*' (*1Poems* 653). Making this "life haunted by death" would have been more straightforward grammatically, but Lawrence's formulation also suggests that death is haunted by life.

[2] From D. H. Lawrence, 'Foreword to *Collected Poems*' (*1Poems* 653). Making this "life haunted by death" would have been more straightforward grammatically, but Lawrence's formulation also suggests that death is haunted by life.

[3] As an example of post-Second-World-War criticism of *Sons and Lovers*, H. M. Daleski maintained that, for Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* "was a catharsis. It liberated him from the immediate involvements of his young manhood and left him free to develop as a man and as a writer. But the struggle recorded in the novel left its mark on him and influenced the future course of his thinking": H. M. Daleski, *The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1965), 73.

[4] Mark Spilka heralds Lawrence "as the transvaluative prophet of love, friendship, and creative labor" in *Renewing the Normative D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Progress* (Columbia, MO: U of Missouri P, 1992), 2.

[5] "When the normative elements in the established narrative of Lawrence's early life and career are questioned, other ways of thinking about gender and sexuality come to the fore": Howard J. Booth, 'Same-Sex Desire, Cross-Gender Identification and Asexuality in D. H. Lawrence's Early Short Fiction', *Études Lawrenciennes* 42 (2011), para 36 <https://doi.org/10.4000/lawrence.113>.

[6] Of course, psychoanalysis did not invent loss, grief and the elegiac mode. For discussion of pre-Victorian writing on mourning between Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and John Keats's 'Ode on Melancholy' of 1819 see Allan Ingram et al., *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century: Before Depression, 1660–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[7] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 14 (1914–1916),* eds James Strachey et al. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 243–58: 244, 245, 244.

[8] María Cristina Melgar, 'Mourning and Creativity,' in Leticia Glocer Fiorini, Thierry Bokanowski and Sergio Lewkowicz, eds, *On Freud's Mourning and Melancholia* (London: Karnac, 2009), 110–122: 110, 121. Indeed, Freud's periods of creative insight were spurred, as Didier Anzieu pointed out, by his own periods of mourning. Psychoanalytic thought itself emerges from loss. Didier Anzieu cited in Melgar, 111.

[9] Ibid., 114–15.

[10] Ibid., 115.

[11] Ibid., 112.

[12] Ibid., 113.

[13] Ibid., 116.

[14] Ibid., 118.

[15] Ibid., 122. Julia Kristeva notes that melancholia interrupts "desiring metonymy" in her *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), 14. See also my 'D. H. Lawrence's "Black Sun": Masculinity and Melancholia in *Twilight in Italy*', in Nick Ceramella, ed., *Lake Garda: Gateway to D. H. Lawrence's Voyage to the Sun* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 55–62.

[16] Melgar, 112. Focusing on modernism and culture, rather than emerging from psychoanalytic theory and practice, Jonathan Flatley has explored the important ongoing role of melancholia and loss, arguing that many modernist writers recognised that melancholia can inform new works of art and cultural forms that engage with the world and with individuals. It is not simply a matter of withdrawal. Flatley prioritises art that itself reflects on the aesthetic and form. However, such writing need not be confined to a somehow separate and compensatory realm of art. Feelings of loss and dissatisfaction were part of what spurred Lawrence's view that it was the world itself that needed to change. Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008), 1–10.

[17] Marion Milner's work has received renewed attention since 2010, including the posthumous publication of her *Bothered by Alligators* (Hove: Routledge, 2012); Emma Letley, *Marion Milner: the Life* (Hove: Routledge, 2013); Eve Dickson and Akshi Singh, eds, Special Issue on 'Marion Milner: Modernism, Politics, Psychoanalysis', *Critical Quarterly*,

63:4 (2021), 3–125; and Margaret Boyle Spelman and Joan Raphael-Leff, eds, *The Marion Milner Tradition* (Hove: Routledge, 2022).

[18] For Adam Phillips, Milner believed that the truth resided in part within, "in a sort of creative unconscious" that "in a traditional romantic way" is "an internal resource", and was the product of "the tradition that she came out of, which was kind of nonconformist English, mostly English, visionary literature, Blake and Lawrence being very important people". Akshi Singh, '"The Unconscious was Another Word for Inspiration": Adam Phillips on Marion Milner', Special Issue on 'Marion Milner: Modernism, Politics, Psychoanalysis', eds Eve Dickson and Akshi Singh, *Critical Quarterly*, 63:4 (2021), 6–19, 13.

[19] See Lawrence's poem 'The Hands of God' (*1L* 613–14), the argument of which reverses Hebrews 10.31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (King James Bible). Adam Phillips argues that the "teleological account of the growth process also means that the patient (and the analyst) are always potentially tyrannised by a sense of their unrealised potential, of their unlived lives; drawn, that is to say, to an elegiac psychoanalysis. If you believe in wholeness, as Milner does – and Freud and Winnicott and Klein do not – it is the missing parts of the self that become the essential concern. And yet Milner was never one of the happily mournful in psychoanalysis – of which there are so many – because for her both the analyst and the patient, are, in Milner's language, in the hands of the living god. Ultimately they both depend upon what occurs to them, and on what doesn't. If you are in the hands of the living god outcomes are no longer the point": Adam Phillips, Introduction to Marion Milner, *The Hands of the Living God: An Account of a Psycho-analytic Treatment* (Hove: Routledge, 2010), xxiii.

[20] Marion Milner, 'The Sense in Nonsense (Freud and Blake's *Job*)', *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: Forty-Four Years of Exploring Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1988), 168–91, 188–9.

[21] Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000), 7–8.

[22] Christopher Pollnitz, 'Watermarks in a Cigar Box: Recent Findings in D. H. Lawrence's Manuscript Verse', *D. H. Lawrence Review* 31.2 (2003), 5–23, 6–7. See also David Ward, 'Newly Discovered Poem by Lawrence Excites Scholars', *The Guardian* (9 Nov. 1990), 20, and Dennis Jackson, 'Laurentiana in a Cigar Box', *D. H. Lawrence Review* 22:1 (1990), 111–13.

[23] The spur for the poem had been hearing of the death of Sallie Hopkin, and he wrote the poem in the days after hearing news of her death on 25

October 1921. In February 1923, whilst assembling the manuscript of what became *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Lawrence added a dedication to Katherine Mansfield, who had just died, only to remove it again in a matter of days (*2Poems* 1070–1).

[24] See John Worthen, 'Lawrence's Autobiographies', in Gamini Salgado and G. K. Das, eds, *The Spirit of D. H. Lawrence* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 1–15, and John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years, 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 500–03.

[25] The subtitle 'For a Dead Mother' was added for inclusion in *Collected Poems* (*2Poems* 956).

[26] See Pollnitz, 'Watermarks in a Cigar Box', 18–19.

[27] 'From the Italian Lakes' is included in Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 453–4, where it is described as "a dangerously sentimental poem" (453), in that it represented feelings that Lawrence knew he had to let go. Worthen's claim is an example of implied models of development necessary for creative success that this article seeks to break from. The unaddressed problem with the older position is that the writer who had supposedly moved on returns to these earlier troubling experiences and represents them with obvious investment and energy. Before Worthen's first volume in the Cambridge Biography was published, 'From the Italian Lakes' could be reconstructed from the textual apparatus for Poem 179 in Carole Ferrier, *The Earlier Poetry of D. H. Lawrence: A Variorum Text Comprising All Extant Incunabula and Published Poems Up To and Including the Year 1919*, University of Auckland Ph.D., 1971.

[28] The gaze of the other in the form of a cart driver can also be found in 'Meeting Among the Mountains'. A version of the poem probably taken from the *Tagebuch* can be found in Frieda Lawrence, *"Not I, But the Wind …"* (London: Heinemann, 1935), 48–9.

[29] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Raven', *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. David Galloway (London: Penguin, 1967), 77–80.

[30] They were first published – with minor inaccuracies – in *3L* 283 n.2.

[31] As Christopher Pollnitz points out in the notes to the Cambridge Edition, "In glad surprise" echoes Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon' (1816) where the prisoner starts to cry at the sound of birdsong (*Poems2* 956). Here it is the mother, imprisoned by death, who is moved by the engagement with the world she has left.

[32] The word "pupil" in English means both children at school and the black circle at the centre of the iris in the eye, the opening through which light passes. As the *OED* says of the etymology of the latter sense, it is "so called

on account of the small reflected image seen when looking into someone's pupil". Both definitions go back to the Latin word *pūpilla*, meaning little girl, doll (*OED* online, "pupil", *n.2*.).

[33] Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 451.

[34] Built in 1900 to include the Feltrinelli family tomb, it was photographed by the Bolognese photographer Alessandro Oppi in August 1910, two years before Lawrence's arrival. Alberto Prandi and Marta Marri Tonelli, *1910 Alessandro Oppi Fotografa il Lago di Garda* (Riva: Museo Alto Garda, 2011), 138.

[35] Frieda Lawrence, *"Not I, But the Wind …"*, 52.

[36] Holly A. Laird, *Self and Sequence: The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence* (Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 1988), 94.

[37] In *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs Morel has "her hands folded on her lap" in a physical sign of her grief; she is "mute" (*SL* 168). A variation of the phrase occurs a few pages later (170).

[38] Walter H. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 210.

[39] For a general discussion of this chapter see Maria DiBattista, 'Dereliction', Special Issue on *Sons and Lovers*, eds Richard A. Kaye and Keith Cushman, *D. H. Lawrence Review* 39.2 (2014), 116–27.

[40] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Blessed Damozel', *The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975), 1–5.

[41] Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 169–184. Christopher Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture* (London: John Lane, 1938), 44–72.

[42] Raymond Williams and Edward Said, 'Media, Margins and Modernity', in Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, ed. Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 2007), 177–97, 186.

[43] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Politics: Class, Writing, Socialism*, ed. Phil O'Brien (London: Verso, 2022), 135.

[44] Ibid., 137.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015), 127.