

# Trinity

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*We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen*

—*The Nicene Creed*

**D.H.** Lawrence begins Part One of *The Man Who Died*—which he resolutely ordered his publisher to call *The Escaped Cock*, to no avail—with the physical image of a cock tied by the leg to a post. The cock “was tied by that leg and he knew it”; in fact, “body, soul, and spirit were tied by that string” (164). However, one morning, before the light of dawn, the cock, roused from his slumbers, leaps forward from his perch and snaps the string. At that exact moment, Lawrence’s version of Jesus, the man who died, wakes “from a long sleep in which he was tied up” inside his tomb: it is Easter, in Christian theology, and Lawrence describes the moment when Jesus awakes from the tomb to ascend later into heaven (165). Yet the man who died does not merely awake from a slumber; he breaks the same ties as the cock, which Lawrence has not-so-subtly positioned as his animal analogue. The man who died breaks the string tying him to the divine, to the biblical story from which Lawrence takes his template, to the idea of a formal tripartite Christian God. Lawrence separates Jesus and the man who died from the outset of the novel. Jesus is the unseen, the eternal ideal, and the man who died is the seen, the physical body freed from the heavenly conception.

If Part One of *The Man Who Died* can be expressed imagistically in the body of the escaped cock, Part Two may be expressed in the image of the sexual act between the man who died and the Priestess of Isis. Again, the man unties a string—the string of the Priestess’s tunic—and finds a new expression of being: “the deep, interfolded warmth, warmth living and penetrable, the woman, the heart of the rose!” “Why did you hide this from me?” the man asks the Father. Even at the beginning of the act, the man knows that it is his

sexual re-awakening, his ironically physical ascension: "A new sun was coming up in him, in the perfect inner darkness of himself." In copulation, the man finds himself becoming "something new" (206). The first image of the novel represents the freeing of the man who died from Christ's traditional mission of savior to the people. The second image re-imagines the resurrection, that central Christian myth, as a sexual awakening.

Yet to reduce Lawrence's complex novella to such simplistic imagistic allegories is to deny the power of the images themselves. Lawrence has given us solid images, rich images, images with bodies. We must allow our consciousness to interact with these images, to eroticize and interpret them, to reach a deeper understanding and a personal ascension. In *Archetypal Psychology*, James Hillman writes that every image, no matter how unique and individualized, is "universal" because "it resonates with a collective, trans-empirical importance" (11). This universality of the image implies that the soul's response to the image is universal as well: when a consciousness interprets an image, its interpretation represents not only a personal perspective but also a collective one. Thus, the act of interpreting an image raises the soul "beyond its egocentric confines" (12). Hillman argues that any image can have this universality and be termed archetypal, for the word "archetypal" does not point *at* a specific universal meaning, but rather points *to* the presence of value: richness, depth, the possibility of exploration (13). Thus consciousness gives the image its archetypal value through interpreting the depth of the image, and the act of interpretation forms and deepens the consciousness. However, the "psychic value of the world" achieved through the viewing of archetypal images can only occur through "sticking with the image," through penetrating both the image itself and the consciousness attempting to interpret it (as any work of interpretation is by nature subjective) (Hillman 14). Ascension of consciousness, a broadening of the mind from the egocentric to the universal, occurs in the copulation of the archetypal and the imagistic through the penetrative act of interpretation.

So, let us "stick with the images" in *The Man Who Died*. Although the novella has two designated parts, each characterized by an image I have designated as archetypal, two other images hover always in the background: the image of the Christian God and the image of the mythic Isis, images the reader cannot help but imagine constantly throughout the novel—which, after all, is constructed on the foundations of mythic stories. To go deeper, to categorize, interpret, and play with all these images, one might organize them into three different types: the noumenal, the phenomenal, and the archetypal. The images of God and Isis never appear in *The Man Who Died*; the man who died

himself is not Jesus but the man who *used* to be Jesus, and who now is only a man who died. The priestess of Isis is, likewise, not the goddess herself but a priestess of the goddess. Lawrence never gives the ever-present “images” of God and Isis bodies; he never really makes them images at all. As such, they represent noumenal figures, pure *archetypes* that exist without being perceived by the senses.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the man who died (before meeting the priestess) is a *phenomenal* figure, something that can be known by the senses, a physical and bodied being. Hillman would probably call the man who died an *archetypal* image, too, because he can be given a depth of meaning through interpretation. Yet while the man who died may be archetypal in Hillman’s sense of the word, we cannot feel the weight of his meaning, cannot feel that he is a part of the heartbeat of the world. The man cuts himself off from the myth of the Christian God, and remains, in essence, a dead and isolated being. He calls himself “alone in the seethe of all things” and proclaims, “first and foremost, forever, I shall be alone” (181). The image may be archetypal, but it is separated from the constellation of archetypes that constitute and govern a living world. The only image of the novel that seems to encapsulate the world, to incarnate the heartbeat that links human to human, to have a full-fleshed *body*, is the image of the priestess of Isis and the man who died in sexual union. All three images—the purely archetypal concept of God, the physical image of the man who died, and the image of the union between two physical beings—give *The Man Who Died* the feeling of a full-bodied work, a work that gets at the heart of things and gives existence meaning. But what makes the combination of these three types of images so necessary?

## I.

*We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth*

Lawrence never gives the images of God and Isis in *The Man Who Died* bodies. What exactly does it mean for an image to lack a body? Objects that absorb all frequencies of light in the visible spectrum and reflect no color of their own are called black. When one views something black, no visible light

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<sup>1</sup> This meaning of archetype stands apart from the archetypal, which is a descriptor that points to a richness of meaning within a particular image, while archetype, here, defines an ineffable ideal not yet solidified in imagistic form.

reaches the eye; black cannot be categorized, cannot be named except as the absence of color. In the same way, the concept “zero” cannot be categorized except as the absence of numbers, and “chaos” cannot be categorized except as the absence of order. All of these terms—black, zero, chaos—produce no coherent mental image. The concepts lack bodies. They are noumena. In “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” Carl Jung writes that *the collective unconscious* is “a sphere of unconscious mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind” (298). This collective unconscious “shows no tendency to become conscious under normal conditions, nor can it be brought back to recollection by any analytical technique” (298-99). Like black, zero, and chaos, the primordial images in the collective unconscious, which may be called archetypes, remain bodiless: they create no specific picture in the mind. Patricia Berry calls this bodilessness “virginity” in her essay “Virginites of Image,” an exploration of images that seem to have no concrete image at all. These images are “virgin” because they are not tied to form, because they lack that most basic of physical structures: a body. “In each instance,” Berry writes, “the body aspect of the image remains untouched, so that the virginity of the psyche is untouched by the image” (98). Everything (chaos) is nothing (zero) without the body of form, just as all colors create no visible image in the mind when they come together in a single source (black).

Another bodiless image to consider: Yahweh, God, Allah. The words summon no distinct mental picture, nothing specific to explore, nothing to deepen. In *The Man Who Died*, Christ and Isis exist like the concepts of black, chaos, and God: as unbodied ghosts of meaning rather than bodied mental pictures. In fact, the image of Christ in *The Man Who Died* is most closely related to yet another bodiless image: death. Lawrence emphasizes the emergence of the concrete, bodied image of the man from the dead, bodiless image of Christ. Despite multiple detailed physical descriptions of the man who died, Lawrence never once describes the physical body of Christ as he was before death. Lawrence does not allow a mental picture of Christ to exist. He characterizes the love of Christ as a distinctly bodiless, dead love: “I wanted them all to serve me with the corpse of their love,” says the man, “And in the end I offered them only the corpse of my love” (205). God never has a body, only a hollow corpse. The man hypothesizes that Judas may have betrayed him because he “loved Judas bodilessly” and Judas loved him “in the flesh” (205).

Lawrence similarly characterizes Isis with an apparent and even all-consuming lack of flesh. He names her Isis Bereaved, Isis in Search (188). She

searches, ironically enough, for the bodily fragments of her dead husband Osiris, “dead and scattered asunder, dead, torn apart, and thrown in fragments over the wide world” (188). Lawrence minutely describes the parts of the body that cannot be found: “his hands and his feet, his heart, his thighs, his head, his belly” must be gathered by Isis and reassembled (188). In fact, Isis finds almost every part of her husband’s body except the most important one: the phallus. She can never have sex with her husband, and can never transcend her own bodiless state through physical union.

Lawrence never gives Christ or Isis any bodied representation at all; as mentioned before, his characters are the priestess of Isis, not Isis, and the man who died, not Christ. These characters exist against the backdrop of those mythic archetypes, but do not represent them. Yet the very presence of those ineffable archetypes gives Lawrence’s characters meaning, makes them seem more than the sum of their parts. Interpreting the characters in *The Man Who Died* without knowledge of the myths of Christ and Isis would be like trying to believe in Christ without knowledge of God or the Bible. The embodied form of the character is meaningless without the formless archetype that is its foundation.

## II.

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father*

Yet the reverse holds true as well: the physical body of Christ is necessary to give form and meaning to the ineffable, ungraspable, unbodied concept of God. The physical characters of the man who died and the priestess of Isis are necessary to make the novella a work of meaningful art rather than an elusive theology. To grasp meaning, that meaning must be given form. Jung writes of that form in terms of symbols: the true symbol “should be understood as an expression of an idea that cannot yet be formulated any other or better way” (292). According to Jung, “when Christ expresses the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven in parables,” he makes a “genuine and true symbol” expressing “something for which no verbal concept yet exists” (292). By employing symbols, true works of art express elements of the collective unconscious that previously had no form, no body, no pictorial quality. “Whoever speaks in primordial images,” writes Jung, “speaks with a thousand voices; he enralls and empowers” (300). “That,” he says, “is the secret of great art.” By giving the collective unconscious shape, the artist “makes it possible for us to find our

way back to the deepest springs of life” (300). A god can be whatever connects humankind to this primordial pool of unconsciousness, and a parable can be any work of art that translates the archetypal into the physical, into a body. The fact that Lawrence writes *The Man Who Died* in the language of a Biblical parable suggests that the two forms, art and religion, share the same power. We believe in one god, one collective unconsciousness, given form in a thousand ways.

The human form of Jesus gives form to the consciousness of God for Christians: although the Bible rarely describes any physical aspect of God, Christ is described often. In the Bible, Jesus has a body that can be touched, imagined, even cleaned. “When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them” (Luke 7.37-38). This concrete body once served as the image through which people could connect to the archetype, the Christian God. Yet the image of Christ no longer serves that function. Patricia Berry’s concept of “psychic virginity” emerges from an absence of the body in relation to the image; she argues for the necessity of impurity to understanding, the necessity of unvirginity to transcendence. A completely pure, eternal image cannot be grasped by the mind; it must be brought to Earth through some taint of dirt, some aspect of contrast or imperfection. The story of Jesus in the New Testament once rang with that “impurity,” that complexity or fecundity that makes an idea “not only true, but also interesting,” as Susanne Langer writes (qtd. in Berry 100). The tension between the nature of Jesus as physical and the nature of Jesus as spiritual and inhuman, deified, seemed itself an act of blasphemy against the heavens. Now, however, the long history of Christianity and the often dogmatic nature of its worship has made Jesus Christ a divine image, a *parthenos* or “virgin” again.

A virginal image creates “psychic virginity” in the mind of the observer by presenting itself as an unquestioned truth, as an object to be worshiped rather than a figure to be interpreted. Ben Belitt writes that writing a poem requires “seeing through the eye rather than with the eye” (qtd. in Hoy 311). Pat C. Hoy elaborates this notion, writing that seeing *through* the eye means to “see not according to established standards and practices, but to see anew,” to see “through the blind spots” (311). “Psychic virginity” involves seeing *with* the eye, seeing only that which presents itself without tension or impurity—seeing only through the lens of society, education, even myth. To truly see

through the eye, to truly come to a new understanding, a transcendence, one must also find impurity, unvirginity. Jesus in the New Testament has become a virginal, mythic figure, a source of memorized psalms and hymns, rather than a source of tension, a source of idea.

In *The Man Who Died*, Lawrence gives form to the archetype of Christ and introduces tension, impurity, and unvirginity to the myth. Lawrence's re-imagining of Christ makes the story new again; readers are forced to look at the original Christ story and struggle to strip away its virginity, to see *through* their eyes instead of merely *with* them, to see it anew. Yet Lawrence's story would not be possible without the original virginal purity of the Christ myth. It is built, as it could only have been built, upon mythic structures, as a flower blooms from a bud and petals layer upon petals.

Part One of Lawrence's novel does not yet represent a constellation of bodies, a work of art that gives meaning to a world composed of ephemeral archetypes and disparate physical forms. The man sits apart from the "seethe" of the world: he looks at the cock, that first image of the novel, and sees "not the bird alone, but the short, sharp wave of life of which the bird was the crest" (171). Yet he does not join that wave of life; his reach ends "in [his] fingertips" and his stride is no longer "than the ends of [his] toes" (174). He sees the phenomenal world, "dirty and clean together," and yet finds himself "apart" (181). The man ends Part One of the novel dreading the contacts with the world and its people, and associating those contacts with being compelled "even into death" (184). Although Lawrence has given the man form, and linked that form to an ancient archetype, the work does not yet have a body, a heartbeat that links it to the beat of the world. It needs a third thing, a third image.

### III.

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.*

The third image of the Christian faith, the Holy Spirit, represents the union of the believer with God: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6.19). It represents the indwelling of the archetypal God in each person, the actual connection between the people of the Earth and the God of the heavens, the spark of light that makes the trinity whole. The mere knowledge of the existence of God and sight of the image of the

physical form of Christ cannot in themselves constitute a religion that gives meaning to millions; a third thing, a connection between each person and Christ Himself, an indwelling of the spirit, must be there as well. Lawrence provides the eternal archetype of God and the physical form of the man who died in Part One of his novella, but he does not yet form a trinity, a complete set of images that can create meaning. He needs an expression of the Holy Spirit, a conception of connection and indwelling. That conception comes in the sexual union between the man and the Priestess of Isis, the union that connects the man with the rest of the world.

In that coupling, the man finds his resurrection and the woman finds her Osiris. The union makes each whole, gives each an inner light. As the man makes love to the priestess, he feels “A new sun was coming up in him, in the perfect inner darkness of himself” (206). The priestess proclaims, “I am full of Osiris! I am full of the risen Osiris!” (207). Only this indwelling of spirit, this connection between two bodies which serves as a connection to the heartbeat of the world, can make the trinity of images and meaning complete. Lawrence’s man proclaims, “I am part of it, the great rose of Space. I am like a grain of its perfume, and the woman is a grain of its beauty. Now the world is one flower of many petalled darkness, and I am in its perfume as in touch” (208). The flowering of images, of knowledge, of ideas, is not an isolated process—is not, in itself, virginal. A true idea requires copulation, the dance between polarized parts, the moment of connection between man and woman, between two archetypes, between idea and idea. The eternal archetype and the physical form provide a foundation for meaning, but the connections between bodies, between ideas, create meaning itself.

The explosive outpouring of emotion during the union between the priestess and the man who died calls to mind a passage from Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*—a novel that also contains a flowering of archetypes and forms and connections, revealed through a different type of looking glass. If reading *The Man Who Died* is like reading a parable, reading *Mrs. Dalloway* is like listening to a complex orchestral song. Both give the reader a sense of touching something holy, but the actual experience differs vastly. As Septimus, the insane prophet of Woolf’s novel, stares at the sky, he seems to engage in a sexual act with the world itself. “The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet; first that trees are alive; next there is no crime; next love, universal love,” Septimus mutters, “gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths” until “the world was entirely changed by them forever” (66). His statement spontaneously encapsulates one of the many flowerings of meaning in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The three images necessary to create meaning—archetype,

form, connection—all exist in Woolf’s novel, but they exist simultaneously, in the rising and falling swells of various characters’ consciousness. Lawrence’s parable form, his careful laying of an archetypal foundation, his painstaking creation of a re-imagined resurrection, is not at all the only way to create meaning in art. Woolf creates it by plunging her characters into constant interaction, constant interpenetration of mind and body. Peter Walsh, another of Woolf’s impressionistic characters, looks at tree branches and endows them with womanhood; he “sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution” (56). The holiness in Mrs. Dalloway occurs on the ground, through the connections between character and character and between character and earth, through the weaving in and out of the webs of a thousand threads of existence. Woolf’s art emerges from the earth, and her art and earth exist on a single plane. Yet if Woolf and Lawrence both create meaning, if both create a feeling of holiness, why do their works feel so profoundly different?

The sexual encounter between the man who died and the priestess of Isis only completes their particular archetypal trinity; it does not connect that trinity to the world at large, does not make the man who died and the priestess of Isis *themselves* a part of the Earth. Throughout *The Man Who Died*, Lawrence maintains two distinct hierarchies of being: the plane on which the Man and the priestess live, and the plane on which the commoners, which the man calls “clods of earth,” are “overturned like the sods of the field” (172). The man maintains a rigid separation between these two hierarchies of existence, the earthy and the heavenly: “Let the earth remain earthy, and hold its own against the sky,” he proclaims (172). The sexual act between the priestess and the man is clearly on a higher level than the sexual act between common, “earthy” men and women. Lawrence describes the sexual union between the man and the priestess as a resurrection, a transcendence. He describes the sex between a slave boy and girl as a brutal rape: the boy beat the young girl until she was “inert and unconscious,” then covered her in “the blind, frightened frenzy of a boy’s first passion” (186). Looking on, the priestess turns away. She isn’t disturbed, only “uninterested,” as the slaves are on a separate level from her (187). When the man proclaims himself “the great rose of Space,” he is joining the archetypal constellations that make up the heavens, the art that people worship, not the people themselves. Lawrence maintains this separation between art and earth throughout the novel; he is, after all, not bringing Christ down to the level of the people, but construct-

ing a new Christ myth to be worshiped, a new Trinity in which resurrection is enabled by the sexual act. Yet this new myth is itself earthbound.

Woolf creates meaning through an orchestral interfolding of archetypes, forms, and connections, and her art pays testimony to the fact that not all art must be separate from the rhythms of the Earth. Lawrence does something quite different. He is not creating *new* images to give people a connection to the “wellsprings” of a collective consciousness. Instead, he is giving a body to old ones that have long since lost their phenomenal form. By giving Christ a body again, by re-inserting the idea of impurity and physicality into the Christ myth, Lawrence allows *us* to relate to his new Trinity, to see the man *through* our eyes rather than *with* them. Woolf taps into the pool of consciousness by creating new forms and new connections; Lawrence taps into that pool by resurrecting ancient ones. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost form the Trinity. The archetype, the physical form, and the copulation and connection of ideas form true art. All three types of images are necessary to give the world meaning, to give a constellation of archetypes a heartbeat, to tap into the collective unconscious, to reach the “wellsprings” of life. This trinity of images—imagined again and again—allows the meaning of the world, continuously dying, to be continuously created.

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