“A PROPOS OF THE WAR”:
D. H. LAWRENCE’S ‘ALL OF US’

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Spliced between *Rhyming Poems* and *Unrhyming Poems*, ‘All of Us’ explodes the binary arrangement established by Lawrence himself in his *Collected Poems* of 1928 and preserved – with the addenda of *Pansies, Nettles, More Pansies, Last Poems* and *Uncollected Poems* – in Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts’s *D. H. Lawrence: The Complete Poems* of 1964. *The Poems*’ editor, Christopher Pollnitz, justifies his interpolation on the grounds that, given Lawrence’s repeated and vain attempts from 1916 until 1919 to find a publisher for the sequence, “Placement of ‘All of Us’ between *Rhyming Poems* and *Unrhyming Poems* provides the best available indication of the development of Lawrence’s poetry in the 1910s” (*Poems* xxxiv).

But if his editorial intervention meets the criterion of authorial intent – the guiding aim of the Cambridge Edition is “to provide texts which are as close as can now be determined to those [Lawrence] would have wished to see printed” (*Poems* xi) – it is also motivated by the aesthetic judgement that: “In the very distinctive style of verse it represents, ‘All of Us’ is a valuable addition to the Lawrence canon” (*Poems* 700). In what follows, I want to suggest that ‘All of Us’ is no less valuable an addition to the canons and counter-canons of First World War verse, and to the transnational poetics of modernism.

Variants of ‘All of Us’ have been in circulation since 1919, when *Poetry* magazine printed versions of twelve of the poems as ‘War Films’ in its After-the-War number (July 1919). ‘War Films’ is a selection, made by Harriet Monroe and her cohort of editors at
Poetry, from ‘Bits’, which is Lawrence’s effort to re-assemble the poems he had put together in the 1916 ‘All of Us’, and is reproduced in the 1964 Complete Poems. It is curious, then, that the sequence has been met with what Pollnitz describes as “a critical silence that is almost total” (Poems 700). The exception that not only proves but also explains the rule is Pollnitz’s own 2001 article, co-authored with David Cram, ‘D. H. Lawrence as Verse Translator’, which clarifies the murky transmission history of what would become ‘All of Us’, a history that, as it turns out, Lawrence himself helped to obscure. The germ of the sequence is found in English translations of German transliterations of Egyptian fellaheen folk songs that Lawrence sent in lieu of love poems to his fiancée, Louie Burrows, in December 1910. In his correspondence, Lawrence attributes the German redactions of the Arabic originals to his German-born uncle, Fritz Krenkow, a part-time Orientalist. In fact, as Pollnitz and Cram discovered, the fellaheen songs were translated into German not by Krenkow but by Heinrich Schäfer, an Egyptologist who transcribed the labourers’ songs he heard in the course of excavations carried out on behalf of the Berlin Museum at Saqqāra, in the Upper Nile region, in 1900–01. Schäfer’s collection of these fellaheen songs, Die Lieder Eines Ägyptischen Bauern [Songs of an Egyptian Peasant], was published in 1904, with Frances Hart Breasted’s English edition appearing in the same year. It may be that the death of Lawrence’s mother, which took place just three days after he sent Louie Burrows the first of his verse translations, explains his desire to keep it in the family by accrediting the translations to his maternal uncle: that Lawrence should have suppressed the German connection altogether in his later, First World War, adaptations of the Egyptian songs is easier to understand.

Whatever his motives, in effacing Schäfer from the record, Lawrence increases the slippage between source and target text that obtains in any act of translation – and which, in the case of ‘All of Us’, is aggravated by the fact that Lawrence’s renditions of the fellaheen songs are translations of translations, English versions of
German versions of Arabic originals. Mediated through two European languages, the songs of the fellaheen are also transposed, by Lawrence as by Schäfer before him, from an oral into a lexical medium, and from the culture of the Orient to that of the Occident. When Lawrence returned to the songs in 1916, they would be adapted yet again, and still more radically transfigured: in ‘All of Us’ the voice of the Egyptian fellaheen is transmitted, not as surrogate love poetry, but in the voices of men and women in time of war. The proximity of love and death in the fellaheen songs which had reflected Lawrence’s personal circumstances when he first translated them in 1910 is now recoded to speak to the collective as well as individual experience of loss brought about by the war. Poems that had been the product of a private correspondence become the property of “all of us”, and what had begun, in one sense of the term at least, as “pure translation” – Louie Burrows found the eroticism of the songs “shocking” – gives way, in Lawrence’s later versionings, to oblique or free translation. How should we parse “the politics of translation” in ‘All of Us’?

On one hand, Lawrence’s initial expropriation of the fellaheen songs is a prime instance of Orientalism as defined by Edward Said, in which the Orient, or Near Orient in the case of Egypt, offers “a sort of surrogate or even underground self” for the European who dabbles in its culture. To translate the fellaheen songs may not be to talk like an Egyptian, but the Eastern promise of the lyrics Lawrence translated for Louie as proxies for the love poetry he could not then write is closely imbricated with their erotic charge. Read in this way, Lawrence’s 1910 remediations of the songs belong in a longstanding tradition in which the Orient “offended sexual propriety” and “exuded dangerous sex”. On the other hand, the very different uses to which Lawrence subsequently put the fellaheen songs may be counted as what Said deems “exceptions, or if not exceptions then interesting complications, to [the] unequal partnership between East and West” – to the uneven
power relationship which affects cultural, no less than political, interactions between Europe and the Orient.\(^\text{13}\)

In the judgement of translation studies scholar Lawrence Venuti: “Translating is always ideological because it releases a domestic remainder, an inscription of values, beliefs, and representations linked to historical moments in the receiving situation”.\(^\text{14}\) Because “the translator involves the source text in an asymmetrical act of communication”, translation inevitably encodes those asymmetries of power identified by Said. Yet translation may also be utopian, Venuti suggests. Invoking Ernst Bloch’s utopian theory of culture, according to which cultural forms release a “surplus” that is supererogatory to their use value, Venuti proposes that “the domestic remainder inscribed in the foreign text during the translation process” may be construed as a “utopian surplus”. Venuti’s “surplus” or “remainder” comports with Walter Benjamin’s understanding of translation as “a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself”. In “The Task of the Translator”, Benjamin proposes that:

> Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife ... The life of the originals attains in [translations] to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering.\(^\text{15}\)

The organic metaphor deployed in Benjamin’s definition of translation as “flowering” is applied by Lawrence to art per se in *Study of Thomas Hardy*:

> What then of this excess that accompanies reproduction? The excess is the thing itself at the maximum of being. If it had stopped short of this excess, it would not have been at all. If this excess were missing, darkness would cover the face of the earth. In this excess, the plant is transfigured into flower, it achieves at
last itself. The aim, the culmination of all is the red of the poppy. (*STH* 11–2)

In her gloss of this passage, Anne Fernihough explains that Lawrence is “explicitly opposing art to the network of exchange: art is the ‘excess’ or ‘waste’ symbolized in the poppy’s extravagant flowering, that which cannot be recuperated, but falls outside the sway of exchange-value”.[16] The songs of the fellaheen are more troubling manifestations of “excess” or “utopian surplus” in that the art of the workers on the Saqqāra excavation is at once supernumerary to and a by-product of their physical toil: the songs are cultural surplus in an Orientalist economy driven by unskilled manual labour. (Schäfer tells his reader that: “When the boys sang at the work of excavating, as they were usually inclined to do, they kept strict time, accenting the beats, which, just as in ancient times, were, besides, often marked by clapping the hands and stamping the feet”).[17] The fellaheen work songs nonetheless exemplify what Hannah Arendt defines as “human ‘power’, whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing a ‘surplus’, that is, more than is necessary for its own reproduction”.[18] In Arendt’s analysis, “The force of life is fertility. The living organism is not exhausted when it has provided for its own reproduction, and its ‘surplus’ lies in its potential multiplication”. The “specifically human mode of the life force ... is as capable of creating a ‘surplus’ as nature itself” – as Lawrence likewise suggests in the analogy, in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, between the “excess” that is the artwork and “the red of the poppy” (*STH* 11–2).[19]

*Study of Thomas Hardy* was begun in September 1914, the month after the outbreak of the First World War, and before the poppy became the symbol of the conflict into which many colonised peoples, including the fellaheen, would be drawn.[20] Some 32,000 fellaheen were (often forcibly) recruited into the Egyptian Labour Corps, divisions of which served in Salonika and Mesopotamia, and on the Western Front. Lawrence’s 1916
retranslations of the Egyptian songs into topical, anti-war poems therefore speak to the contemporaneous experience of the fellahaen as well as to that of the colonising culture. In the context of the 1914–18 “Weltkrieg”, the “domestic remainder” identified by Venuti as a property of the translated text is also and inevitably a foreign remainder: as Pollnitz notes, ‘All of Us’ not only “represents Lawrence’s response to the First World War in surprising forms” but also “shows that he had previously unrecognised knowledge of its far-flung campaigns” (Poems xxxiv). ‘War Films’, the title of the selection printed in Poetry, captures the poems’ quasi-cinematic pan of the war’s locations, from the home front in London (‘Zeppelin Nights’), to army training camps in Wiltshire (‘Drill on Salisbury Plain in Summer Time’), to Flanders (‘Near the Mark’), to the Dardanelles (‘Antiphony’), and to the East African front (‘The Well of Kilossa’).

In his revisionist history, The World’s War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire, David Olusoga reminds us that: “The unglamorous history of labour and of labour migration is an essential, if often unwritten, aspect of the First World War”.21 To procure labourers, “those powers that could drew on the resources of their empires”. The ‘All of Us’ poem ‘Foreign Sunset’, with its descriptive subtitle ‘Coloured labourers behind the fighting-line complain that they are done up’, gives voice to that silenced history (Poems 148, Lawrence’s emphasis). A composite translation of Schäfer’s ‘Lieder nos. 34 and 36’, ‘Foreign Sunset’ superimposes upon the fellahaen workers at the Saqqāra excavations coloured labourers behind the front line, who may themselves be fellahaen conscripted into the Egyptian Labour Corps, or members of the British West India or French North African regiments, all of whom performed behind-the-line duties such as digging and reinforcing trenches and securing supply chains.22 Linguistic superimposition infers solidarity between the experience of the coloured labourers and that of another subaltern group: the colliers of Lawrence’s own Nottingham mining country. Embedded in the poem’s opening line,
“Oh master, let it be loose-all, it is enough” (Poems 148), is a dialect term from the East Midlands collieries, “loose-all” meaning the end of a working shift. Mining was a reserved occupation during the war, so, like the coloured labourers, the coal-blackened miners were also working behind the line, if in domestic coalfields rather than in foreign fields.

Grafting a white working-class idiom onto the tongue of coloured labourers, the poem courts the charge of ethnocentrism levelled at translations that replace or domesticate source language idioms with target language equivalents. Equivalence is a contested concept for translation studies theorists and for critics of modernist primitivism like Marianna Torgovnick, who insists that homologies between “primitive” peoples (like the fellaheen) and subaltern groups in the domestic culture (like miners and the working class) are inevitably false, since “systems of us/them thinking ... structure all discourse about the civilized and the primitive”.

That binary only collapses when the “us” itself is shown to be “fragmented along lines of gender, national origin, class, political sympathies, race”. The vernacular speech act in ‘Foreign Sunset’ not only articulates the way in which translational surplus “exceeds the ideologies of the dominant class” but also posits a wider, far from ethnocentric, equivalence between workers in a war which was “the first in which peoples and nations from across the globe fought and laboured alongside one another, rarely in equality other than equality of suffering”.

Vernacular language, as Matthew Hart defines it, is a “carrier of culture that links voice to labor and a whole way of life”. In ‘Foreign Sunset’ the vernacular is an intercultural carrier, and as such bears closer comparison with the discourse Hart calls “synthetic vernacular” than with Rudyard Kipling’s Cockney khaki or with Lawrence’s own dialect ballads. A dialect of modernism deployed by, among others, J. M. Synge and Hugh MacDiarmid, synthetic vernacular “signals a poet’s attempt to sublate the tension between local languages” and what Said describes as the “new inclusiveness’ ... marking modernism’s late imperial engagement
with the non-Occidental world”. The colour line and class lines are clearly drawn in ‘Foreign Sunset’, but if these lines fracture Torgovnick’s “civilized” consensus, they also converge in the service of Said’s new inclusiveness. The three-way comparison latent in Lawrence’s translation between the coloured labourers, English miners and the fellaheen connotes a capacious understanding of “us”, set against the “them” not of the native Other, but of a military-industrial complex that subjugates white and coloured labour and colonial subjects alike.

The collusion of industry and empire is exposed again in ‘All of Us’ in ‘Drill on Salisbury Plain in Summer Time’, where wartime conscription is equated with the “forced labour” (“corvée”) of the fellaheen, and in ‘Munitions Factory’, a proletarian protest poem located at the war machine’s hub. The opening salvo of ‘Munitions Factory’ is a disenchanted repurposing of the first line of Schäfer’s ‘Lied no. 29’, from the ‘At Work on the Excavations’ section of his Songs, “For Allah’s sake, let us eat dinner, ye, who stand behind us!”:

For God’s sake, let us stop, Oh you who stand behind us,
Let us eat the last meal!
Would you have us go on till we drop, Oh you who stand behind us? (Poems 147)

The not so casual blasphemy that differentiates the complaints of the English factory workers from those of the Egyptians at work on the excavations anticipates Lawrence’s assertion, in Kangaroo (1923), that “machine warfare is a blasphemy against life itself” (K 221). The spiritual drought brought on by the war is registered again in ‘All of Us’ in the bitter irony of prayer-poems like ‘Benediction’ and ‘Supplication’, and in ‘The Well at Kilossa’, Lawrence’s version of Schäfer’s ‘The Well Zemzem’ (sic.). In Lawrence’s translation, the holy water of the Zamzam well at Masjid al-Haram, taken by pilgrims making the Hajj to Mecca, reverts to water as a basic necessity of life: the poem’s subtitle is
‘A thirsty soldier in East Africa praises the well at which he drank’ (Poems 140, Lawrence’s emphasis). But if Lawrence’s transposition of the Zamzam well to the godforsaken terrain of the East Africa Campaign secularises or desacralises the Islamic original, the fellaheen songs themselves often combine the spiritual with the sexual, the sacred with the profane: in his annotation to ‘The Well Zemzem’, for instance, Schäfer tells us that the well also “means a girl”. In other translations, psychological likeness transcends religious difference: the all-too-human lapse of piety in “Allah’s house”, which is the subject of Schäfer’s ‘Inattentive Devotions’, is transposed in Lawrence’s translation, ‘Straying Thoughts’, to the “cathedral church” of St. Paul’s (Poems 141); both poems’ speakers violating W. H. Auden’s dictum, that “To pray is to pay attention”. The speakers of ‘Munitions Factory’ and Schäfer’s worksong represent very different constituencies, but identify a common oppressor nonetheless in the “you who stand[s] behind us”, an overseer figure in whom the twin imperatives of industrialism and imperialism are embodied. The “us”, meanwhile, comprised of English factory hands and the Egyptian labourers, constitutes one of the “communities fostered by translating” identified by Venuti. Transplanting the Egyptian songs into the wartime environment of ‘All of Us’, Lawrence carries out what Benjamin defines as the key task of the translator: to preserve the “vital connection” between the source text and its “afterlife” in the target text.

Connectivities between source and target cultures make ‘All of Us’ a complex instance of what postcolonial theorists of translation term “overwriting”, where the “suppressed identity” of the colony is “overwritten by the colonizer”. Fernihough’s point that the “anti-imperialism implicit in Lawrence’s critique of ‘white consciousness’ is central to his aesthetics” indicates that overwriting works to dissident ends in Lawrence: ‘All of Us’ is overwriting of the kind we find in a palimpsest, writing over earlier writing the vestiges of which remain legible. Jahan Ramazani discusses modernist poems that incompletely assimilate the “alien’
cultural materials” on which they draw, and thus “reflect in their diction, syntax and sound the pressure of other languages”. In ‘All of Us’ that pressure produces the effect that Venuti calls “foreignisation”, which, in English-language translations, operates as “a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism”. In ‘Fragile Jewels’, for instance, the foreign cadences of Schäfer’s ‘Lied no. 14’ survive the song’s translocation from an Egyptian leavetaking to its equivalent in wartime England:

Oh brother, put me in your pouch
As you would a fresh, sweet locust-pod.
For I am frail as a flask of glass,
As a fine grey egg, or a slender rod. (Poems 141).

Schooled in Frazer and Frobenius, Lawrence was prone to syncretise “primitive” peoples, like Celts, Etruscans and Native Americans. ‘All of Us’ is different, its substitutions and surrogations between subaltern and subnational population groups revealing global connectivities, rather than effacing ethnic and experiential differences. Take ‘Gipsy’, for example, a poem that Lawrence translated from Schäfer and subsequently readapted, but omitted from the ‘All of Us’ typescript. The 1910 translation is spoken in the local vernacular of an East Midlands labourer – “Shalt see me come home with steaming hair, / Shalt know thou the worth of that money there” (IL 196) – who is reincarnated as the ‘Gipsy’ we encounter in New Poems in 1918. In its final, New Poems, version, the translation completes what Torgovnick would call its “set of substitutions” between categories of the “primitive” by looping back, by way of the etymological association between “gipsy” and “Egyptian”, to the culture of the source text. ‘Star Sentinel (A young woman muses on her betrothed, who is in Mesopotamia)’ (Lawrence’s emphasis) and the 1919 ‘Bits’ poem ‘Mother’s Son in Salonika’ likewise effect a return to the original song’s Middle Eastern provenance. If ‘All of Us’ domesticates the
foreign, it also foreignises the domestic, interanimating English and Egyptian experience and expression.\textsuperscript{42}

Olusoga holds the “literary war” – in particular the canon of First World War poetry – responsible for erasing the “multinational, multi-ethnic, multi-racial dimension” of the conflict.\textsuperscript{43} Lawrence, who refused to join up to that literary war, conceived of ‘All of Us’ as an alternative “kind of cosmopolitan folk poetry” (Poems 698), in much the same way that Schäfer presented his ‘Lieder’ as “songs really sung by the people”.\textsuperscript{44} “Give it the people as the ‘war literature’ they are looking for”, Lawrence advised his agent, J. B. Pinker: “they will find themselves in it” (3L 51, Lawrence’s emphasis). Lawrence shared Ezra Pound’s objections to “war literature” of the kind featured in Poetry magazine’s War Poems Prize Awards number, which had appeared somewhat prematurely in November 1914, only three months after the commencement of hostilities.\textsuperscript{45} If the Poetry special issue was in poor taste (it appeared during the first Battle of Ypres), so were the publications advertised in its back pages: The Masses, with its “War on War” slogan, promised the reader “Shrapnel Cartoons” and “Rifle-fire stories by our staff of Literary Sharpshooters”.\textsuperscript{46} As non-combatants who were deemed unfit for active service, Lawrence and Pound would subsequently be excluded from what would form the canon of First World War verse, which privileged soldier-poetry over its civilian counterpart.\textsuperscript{47} Canonical war poetry like that of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon was valorised for its first-hand witness, a criterion that remains firmly in place in Paul Fussell’s important 1975 study, The Great War and Modern Memory. Fussell, himself a veteran of the Second World War, critiques David Jones, a survivor of the Great War, for refracting war through myth in his In Parenthesis (1937). Civilian poetry, meanwhile – like Pound’s Cathay (1915) and Homage to Sextus Propertius (1919) – is wholly excluded from Fussell’s remit. Cathay and the Homage, moreover, are, like ‘All of Us’, translations, and as a mode of mediation, translation, like Jones’s
mythical method, violates the principle of immediacy observed even in the most dissident of canonical soldier-poems.

Pound scholarship has nonetheless received *Cathay* as a First World War text since the publication of Hugh Kenner’s *The Pound Era* in 1971: Lawrence’s war poems, by contrast, are still stranded in a definitional no-man’s-land. For example, in a recent essay reframing the field to accommodate the writing of non-combatants, Santanu Das, who makes only passing reference to Lawrence due to “pressure of space”, judges that his “war” verse “is unlike anything else in First World War poetry”.

Through comparable processes of translation and translocation, *All of Us*’s exposures the global and multi-ethnic dimensions of the First World War that the “literary war” served to obscure.

If the longstanding exclusion of texts like Lawrence’s and Pound’s from dominant definitions of war poetry has been premised, in part at least, on the fact that they are translations – since the surplus generated by translation is itself surplus to the sparer and starker requirements of war poetry – then as translations, *All of Us*, like Pound’s wartime work, meets Steven Yao’s definition of the period of modernism as “an age of translations”. As Rebecca Beasley insists, “Central to any account of global modernity and its modernisms are analyses of the flow of cultural material across the globe—which is to say, analyses of translation”.

For Pollnitz and Cram, however, the modernism of ‘All of Us’ modifies its achievement, and even explains Lawrence’s “prevarications” about his sources:

Revising the Fellaheen songs during the rise of modernism, Lawrence might have had a premonition that the global literary protocol he was helping construct would be sufficiently
powerful to absorb and reconfigure all that was local, folkloric and ingenuous ... While Lawrence’s use of his folk source was more secretive than the thefts and borrowings of other modernists, his evasiveness might be attributable to his disquiet about the direction modernist practice was taking him, away from the Romantic myth of the poet as the sole source of sincerity and vision, and away from the poet as the champion of folk spontaneity and directness.  

Lawrence found in folk song – both fellaheen and German – a mode of resistance to the deadly technologies of industry and the war, and yet ‘All of Us’ is also a working model of the way in which the folk tradition evolves in response to modernity. The Egypt transmitted in the fellaheen songs is far from the Pharaonic, premodern Egypt evoked in Women in Love (1920) and The Ladybird (1923). It is in taking liberties with the originals that Lawrence remains faithful to the spirit of the fellaheen songs, which, reconfigured and translocated as they are, remain collective and topical expressions of lived experience in which “the people themselves speak”. Concerns of the kind expressed by Pollnitz and Cram should also be set against Ramazani’s warning that: “Criticisms that reduce high modernist and later cross-regional ‘appropriations’ to orientalist theft or primitivist exoticism may risk circumscribing instead of opening up possibilities for global and transnational analysis”. The distinction between a globalising aesthetic and the local and folkloric – if not that between light-fingered modernists and sincere Romantics – has been queried in recent studies of global modernism which “recast modernism’s internationalism on a transcontinental landscape of multiply located agencies”.

Despite “geopolitical discrepancies”, Ramazani suggests, poets nonetheless “fashion a locally responsive poetics, paradoxically, by virtue of a bypass through the global”. As Yao’s study shows, translation – which is itself a bypass through the global – was crucial to the development of modernism. ‘All of Us’, like Cathay, also proves Yao’s more specific point that,
in the modernist era, translation served as a vehicle for exploring the relationship between poetry and gender. Cathay juxtaposes the plaints of the River-Merchant’s wife and the courtesan of ‘The Jewel Stairs’ Grievance’ with those of the Bowmen of Shu, while the majority of the speakers and personae in ‘All of Us’ are women. ‘The Grey Nurse’ is Lawrence’s adaptation of Schäfer’s ‘Lied no.7’, ‘The Prophet in the Rose-Garden’: this, one of the loveliest of the fellaheen songs, is derived from medieval Persian poet Sa’di’s Gulistān:

The grey nurse entered a rose-garden
And the roses’ shadows sheltered her.
Her apron was brown with blood. She prayed;
And roses listened to her prayer. (Poems 142)

Since Gulistān means rose-garden, it may be that the nurse in Lawrence’s translation finds a temporary sanctuary from war in poetry itself, the roses, like “the red of the poppy”, representing the utopian surplus of the artwork. But Lawrence’s translation also displays the dystopian residue of the war: the nurse’s apron, brown with dried blood, is the stained wartime substitute for the Prophet’s gold-embroidered prayer-shawl of the original.

‘The Grey Nurse’ is the first part of a diptych completed by ‘The Saint (Litany of grey nurses)’ (Lawrence’s emphasis). The latter is Lawrence’s version of ‘To the Saint at Tanta’, which follows ‘The Prophet in the Rose-Garden’ in Schäfer. In Lawrence’s poem, the Sufi saint – Es-Seyyid Ahmed el-Badawi, who mediates between mankind and the Prophet – is gendered as the “Sister” petitioned by the nurses, who are the descendants of those Sisters of Mercy who went with the original grey-uniformed nurse, Florence Nightingale, to the Crimean War:

Sister, Oh holy sister,
Thou door into Heaven, Sister!
Thou of the tall, bright Tomb!
Thou splendid door to the Angels!
Thou silver portal to the Presence! (Poems 143)

In counterpoint to the nurses’ litany, a solo voice addresses the “beloved”, who – if he is the same soldier we have heard praying on the battlefield in ‘Supplication’, the poem immediately preceding the nurse verses in ‘All of Us’ – may already have been killed in action: “If here I am left in life, beloved, I’ll come / And kindle my lamp at the innermost flame, beloved, of thy tomb” (Poems 143). The tomb of the Tanta saint is re-imagined here as a war grave.

Contrary to the received view that Lawrence did his “real poetic work during the First World War” in Look! We Have Come Through! (1917), in which the Great War is displaced onto the battle of the sexes, ‘All of Us’ gives voice to the wartime experience of men and more often of women, whether nurses who staffed field hospitals behind the lines, or the women who worked and waited on the home front. Of these, the widowed and unmarried – those “left in life”, as the speaker in ‘The Saint’ puts it (Poems 143) – are “surplus women”, so called after the 1921 Census revealed the more than two million population gap between the genders in the postwar period. The women of ‘All of Us’, the surplus product of the war who also embody the cultural surplus generated in the process of translation, populate the domestic and the foreign remainder of the text, and connect ‘All of Us’ to the wider matrix of Lawrence’s poetic war work.

Lawrence may have pitched his translations of the fellaheen songs as “tours de force” which “might have a real popular success”, but his private prediction that the establishment would find his “doubtful little pills” hard to swallow would be borne out when the publisher Cyril Beaumont rejected ‘All of Us’ and subsequently mislaid the typescript (3L 51, 234). Beaumont brought out Bay instead, a volume which moves “from the old pre-war days, and from the old country pre-war sleep, gradually into war” (8L 29). In 1918, when he had completed Bay, which would appear
belatedly in 1920, Lawrence planned to make “other little books of poems” “à propos of the war”, the classical model for which was Euripides’s Trōades or The Trojan Women, the story of four women of Troy – Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, Helen – who lament over the body of Hector in the final book of the Iliad (3L 238, 233). Pollnitz explains that the new sequence, which Lawrence thought of calling ‘Chorus of Women’ or ‘Choir of Women’, was to be “made up of monologues or portraits of women who, as in The Trojan Women, had been devastated by war” (Poems 710). Lawrence’s title indicates that his work-in-progress would have woven these monologues or word-portraits into a contemporary equivalent of Euripides’s Chorus of Trojan Women. Pre-empting Yeats’s preference for the vitality of the “tragic chorus” over the “passive suffering” of First World War soldier-poetry, Lawrence’s ‘Chorus of Women’ project anticipates the rich modern reception of The Trojan Women in the twentieth-century theatre of war and anti-colonial resistance.61

Like ‘Chorus of Women’, ‘All of Us’ was a casualty of the war that incited it. In reassembling the bits, Pollnitz’s edition of The Poems not only shores the fragments of Lawrence’s war poetry against its ruins, but also accords ‘All of Us’ a significance – structural, aesthetic, historical – comparable to that of Drum-Taps (1865), the Civil War volume that is interpellated into the 1867 edition of Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass.62 The surplus product of the war machine, and of the translation process, ‘All of Us’ is a vital supplement to Lawrence’s poetic oeuvre, to “war literature” and to global modernisms.

1 The first two volumes of The Poems appeared in 2013; a third and final volume is to follow.
2 Pollnitz places ‘All of Us’ not quite where he deems Lawrence would have put it: at the end of Rhyming Poems, alongside the cluster of anti-war poems from New Poems and Bay.
3 ‘All of Us’ was the form in which Lawrence wanted the poems published. When neither his agent, J. B. Pinker, nor the publisher Cyril
Beaumont could find either of the typescripts he had sent them, he did his best to reconstruct a new version, ‘Bits’, from somewhat similar materials. Both ‘All of Us’ and ‘Bits’ are revised and refined versions of a 1916 draft, now lost.


Lawrence’s reference to “the book” in a letter to Louie Burrows must mean Schäfer’s book, indicating that Schäfer’s *Die Lieder Eines Ägyptischen Bauern* is the German source of Lawrence’s English translations of the Arabic songs (IL 205).

The fellaheen songs were written down to the dictation of the excavation’s watchman, Mahmûd Mohammed el-’Itr, and then “rewritten at his dictation, so that all these printed texts give his pronunciation”. Mahmûd insisted “that none of the songs was composed by himself”. Heinrich Schäfer, *The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant: Collected and Translated into German*, trans. Frances Hart Breasted (Whitefish, MT: Kissinger Legacy Reprints, 2010), viii.

As McLoughlin notes, the ‘All of Us’ poems “are the outcome not only of a carrying across from language to language but of a wholesale transfer of situations from the everyday lives of the fellaheen to circumstances peculiar to the First World War”: McLoughlin, ‘All of Us’, 46.
Lee M. Jenkins, ‘D. H. Lawrence’s “All of Us”’

12. Ibid., 167.
13. Ibid., 153.
19. Ibid., 108.
20. Paul Fussell remarks that, two years before the war, the focus of Georgian poetry “was appearing to narrow down to the red flowers, especially roses and poppies, whose blood-colors would become an indispensable part of the symbolism of the war”. Fussell’s example of the full-blown flower symbolism of the war years is the opening stanza of Lawrence’s ‘Bombardment’, from *Bay*: “The Town has opened to the sun. / Like a flat red lily with a million petals / She unfolds, she comes undone” (*Poems* 125). Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975), 243, 244.
22. The Egyptian Labour Corps (ELC) was founded in 1915 “to fill the crucial manpower for logistics and supply of the fighting men in all the fronts of the Great War”. By 1917, some 23,000 members of the ELC, most of whom were recruited from Upper Egypt, had been sent to the Western Front; others were dispatched to Gallipoli, Salonika and Suez. Coercive recruitment fostered anti-British sentiment, and contributed to the 1919 uprising for Egyptian independence from British rule. Eugene Rogan, ‘Egyptian Labour Corps on the Western Front’, in *Forgotten Heroes: North Africans and the Great War*), 14–15: <http://www.forgottenheroes.eu>.


Ibid., 9.

Schäfer, *The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant*, 28. “Corvée” or forced labour was abolished in 1889. In a 1915 letter to Cynthia Asquith, Lawrence recalls that in July 1914, after a walking tour in Westmorland, “we came down to Barrow in Furness, and saw that war was declared ... Messrs. Vickers Maxim call in their workmen – and the great notices on Vickers’ gateways” (2L 268). Vickers was an armaments manufacturer, principally of machine guns.


Kilossa is located in Tanzania, then German East Africa, a region that in the 1910s was ravaged by drought and famine as well as by war: Kilossa was taken by the British in August 1916. See *Poems* 140, and see Santanu Das, *Race, Empire, and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 93.


41 Both the ‘All of Us’ poem ‘Star Sentinel’ (1916) and the ‘Bits’ poem ‘Mother’s Son in Salonika’ are revised versions of a lost ur-poem, Lawrence’s original translation of Schäfer’s ‘Lied no. 68’.

42 Jed Esty places Lawrence in the English tradition of autoethnography, which in its nineteenth-century practice “often featured a mutual allegorization between the ‘folk’ at home (rural peasants or urban working class) and the ‘folk’ abroad (tribal, primitive, or colonized working class)”. By the 1930s, “autoethnographic writing tended not so much to trade between these two ‘others’ of metropolitan intellectuals as to replace the primitivist with the domesticated version of the folk”. Lawrence, who was dead in 1930 and who was no metropolitan intellectual, can hardly be held responsible for the trade-off Esty describes. Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), 239.


44 Schäfer, *The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant*, ix–x.

45 On Lawrence’s reaction to the War Prize Awards issue of *Poetry*, see Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 152. The special number of *Poetry* was a cultural endorsement of US neutrality: in her comment on ‘Poetry and War’, associate editor Alice Corbin Henderson explains that: “The American feeling about the war is a genuine revolt against war, and we
have believed that POETRY might help to serve the cause of peace by 
encouraging the expression of this spirit of protest": Poetry v.ii (1914), 83.

46 Ibid, n. pag.

47 See Tim Kendall’s discussion of ‘Civilian War Poetry’ in The 
Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War, ed. Santanu 
Das (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 198–209. In a composite review 
of ‘Other Poets of the War’ in Poetry’s After-the-War number (xiv.iv), 
Harriet Monroe discriminates between “the work of soldiers” and “war 
verse written by outsiders”: Poetry xiv.iv (1919), 223. Both kinds of war 
poem are represented in the issue, in which Lawrence’s ‘War Films’ 
follows Richard Aldington’s ‘In France: 1916–1918’.

48 Santanu Das, ‘Reframing First World War Poetry: An Introduction’, in 

49 Christine Froula, ‘War, Empire and Modernist Poetry, 1914–1922’, in 

50 Steven Yao, Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, 

51 Rebecca Beasley, ‘Modernism’s Translations’, in Wollaeger and 

52 Cram and Pollnitz, ‘D. H. Lawrence as Verse Translator’, 149.

53 The subsistence lifestyle of the fellaheen was in direct competition 
with the dynastic Egypt that Orientalists sought to conserve: the 
nitrogenous earth taken by peasant farmers from ancient sites to fertilise 
their fields contained fragments of the papyri sought by archaeologists, 
Schäfer among them. The tussle over papyri between Oxford University 
Egyptologists Grenfell and Hunt and local fellaheen in 1896 is dramatised 
in Tony Harrison’s 1988 play The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus; on Schäfer’s 
turn-of-the-century search for papyri, see Miroslav Verner, Forgotten 
Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids (Preha: Academia Skodaexport, 1994), 159.

Lawrence dedicated ‘All of Us’ to Cynthia Asquith, the model for Daphne 
Apsley in The Ladybird. The daughter-in-law of Herbert Asquith, Prime 
Minister from 1908 to 1916, Cynthia, who undertook war work with the 
wounded, may be a model for the ‘The Daughter of the Great Man’ in the 
‘All of Us’ poem of that title: “The daughter of the great man rolls her 
khaki wool, / And in her hands the sparkling needles fly” (Poems 145). In 
The Ladybird, Daphne sews shirts of “fine white flannel”, embroidered 
with the crest of his “family insect”, for Count Johann Dionys Psanek, the
prisoner of war who is “like an Egyptian king-god in the statues” (Fox, 175, 217, 212).

58 Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism*, 5.
62 *Drum-Taps* had been republished as a stand-alone volume by Chatto & Windus in 1915 “with an introduction reprinted from the *Times Literary Supplement* (1 April 1915) connecting the work with the current war”. That connection would be played out in the literary war, too, with poets Ivor Gurney and Isaac Rosenberg, and the American nurse Mary Borden turning to Whitman as “a counter-example” to the sacrificial idealism embodied by Rupert Brooke. Palmer and Minogue, ‘Modernism and First World War Poetry: Alternative Lines’, 234, 235.