

ic truth, following instead a superficial path that provides excellent spectacle but little heart. The audiences that accept such types of theatre are actively encouraging its demise. "When you come to the theatre, you have to be willing to say, 'We are all here to undergo a *communion*, to find out what the hell is going on in this world.' If you are not willing to say that, what you get is entertainment instead of art, and poor entertainment at that."<sup>28</sup> As shown previously, the slide to uninspired drama is a movement that may lead all the way to a death of theatre.

And yet, for all of that, it does not seem it is possible to kill off theatre entirely, no matter what governmental or theological imperatives urge their faithful. Though the religion may change, the very essence of religion, with its ritual and emphasis on storytelling, is fertile ground from which a new theatrical tradition may spring.

Will the resurrection cycle remain unbroken? Will there ever come a day that theatre will die completely, and religion not be able to resurrect it? Predicting the future is a risky business at best, but I would offer up a quote from Antonin ARTAUD, a philosopher of the theatre, as defence against that possibility: "So long as we have failed to eliminate any of the causes of human despair, we do not have the right to try to eliminate those means by which man tries to cleanse himself of despair."<sup>29</sup> As long as the world needs mystery or magic or myth or religion to live, drama will not die.

Jamie MORAN

# Cleave: The Hebrew Word for Passion

## I. Cleave to God

Because the word passion is so degraded today – confused with ego ambition, sex, bullying, etc. – I also use a lot of other terms which seem cognate with the meaning I want to establish. I have a number of key metaphors and alternate expressions, such as the leap into the unknown, being staked to the ground, and others.

I see passion as the key to the Jewish approach to faith in the Old Testament.

I now think I have found another word in Hebrew for the Greek *passion*: this word is *cleave*. Cleave is a strange and powerful word which turns up in various places and in various ways throughout the Hebrew Bible. A man cleaves to his woman in marriage; the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth; tired bones cleave to the skin. But what really grabbed me was that in Deuteronomy, early on in the Old Testament, the text repeatedly says, again and again, cleave to God.

Passion is our cleaving to God.

I love the very word, cleave.

In English, as in Hebrew, this word carries a paradox, a contradiction, a mystery, a secret. For, it means both to join with, and to separate. In fact, more concretely, it means a warm embrace, but yet when we wield a sword, we can cut an opponent's head in two: we cleave them in half. To cleave is at one and the same time to hold on to and unite with, yet also to rend, to tear into pieces, to divide. Poetically this captures the peculiarity of passion as I have written of it in so many different ways. To cleave is to love, yet this very love contains a sacred violence, a fight, a separating. Cleave is

<sup>28</sup> MAMET David, *Three Uses of the Knife*. New York, 2000. 19.

<sup>29</sup> ARTAUD Antonin, *Artaud Anthology*. San Francisco, 2001. 61–62.

not cognate with the Greek *agape*; I believe *agape* is the crown of Eros, its compassion, its philanthropy, its benevolent charity. Cleave, by contrast, is the dragon of the Dæmonic: it is the koan of fire, divine and human.

Without cleaving, we cannot face and come through the wound of existence, as my passion book names all the existential exactions that befall us as a fate. The Greek for passion, *pathos*, carries this connotation of being put in a room of no exit, where the alternatives disappear, and it all comes down to only a very few, but immensely powerful, moves you can make on the rim. In Greek, passion is what you suffer, inescapably. It is not so obvious in Greek that this suffering can generate the ultimate ardour of advocacy for the human, the most zealous and unrelenting fighting spirit, or *thymos*. But the Hebrew cleave is more strong in both its passive acceptance of what cannot be changed, and in its weirdly and inexplicably active way of meeting that, of staying with that, of wrestling that, and coming through that. This is where the sense of violence comes in to cleaving – as in the Biblical statement (Matthew 11,12) that “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”. It punches through.

By accepting the unacceptable, it knocks down and punches through existential walls, it strides into and crosses existential gaps, that simply cannot be knocked down or crossed except by the power of this kind of passion. It is this passion that God encouraged in Israel – unlike the Greeks, who, though they recognised the Dæmonic wound of fate and the suffering passion it sparked, as in Flamenco music’s deep song or *duende*, nevertheless gradually turned against all passion *per se*, for the sake of light, transcendence, joy, freedom, unassailable knowledge of spirit. The Dæmonic was rejected in favour of Eros; the divine dark that indwells the dark of existence, the realm of Spirit, was rejected in favour of the light that brings all potentiality to fruition, the light that loves and heals what comes to light in its gracious and golden embrace, the realm of Logos. The Jewish cleaving does not make this flight from the Dæmonic, but violently embraces its violence, not only being cut to shreds by it, but cutting through it to reach a far shore otherwise not reachable.

This is passionateness of heart, and for the Jews the whole span of its holy mystery, from primitive beginnings to increasing existential sophistication, is summed up in this word *cleave to God*, and *cleave to this world in its redeemability*. Without the increasingly deeper cleaving that is deepened passion, the human being does not arrive

at holiness, and stands outside the most wonderful and horrendous mystery in existence, the wisdom of heart: the wisdom of God at stake in the blood, sweat and tears of this world. The hidden God, and the hidden wisdom, are only flushed out of their place of hiding, are only dug out, through the cleaving that is passion’s free and loving embrace of existence’s wound.

KIERKEGAARD’s understanding of passion as necessary to existing brings his account close to the Biblical cleaving. A quote I found recently says something along these lines: we need passion to exist – and if you do not realize this, you just do not understand what it means to *exist* – in which case, you are not really *here*, but in some head trip to somewhere else: you have left existence in this world. For some people, they go off via fantasies of sex, or wealth, or status; for some they go off on control, power over things, domination; some go off on comfort and luxuriating; some go off on philosophy, theology, ontological structures. We all choose our preferred escape. Without cleaving, we do not have the energy, the muscle, even the motive and intentionality, to stay, to get stuck in, to see it through to the end. Without cleaving, we cannot stand in this world and really take on the terror and beauty of existence in all its existential bite. It is precisely this most irrational and testing reality of existence that hides within the depth of its existential predicament the entire wisdom of God; this is what can become the wisdom of God united with the wisdom of humanity in the travails, the struggles and raptures, of the deep passion of heart. Failing this, cleaving has no point.

To cleave is an action, and it implies a sticking to it and sticking with it that is key to passion.

In the Orthodox church recently I heard another phrase, from the Acts of the Apostles, that is also relevant here. The author refers to the *fervour of spirit*. Passion is the fervour of our spirit; but what could impassion such fervour, if it were not the Spirit? The passionate are not Logos people; they are Pneuma or Spirit people. The Spirit becomes the only help for those who risk the way of passion. And as Fyodor DOSTOYEVSKY prophesied, in the future the Spirit will speak to and act directly on people through their passion of deep heart. This will disempower the Church as an external structure, and perhaps open up a space for it to find a new role and new mode of being, to do a necessary job, but without what surrounds that now.

Putting the two phrases together, cleaving and fervour of spirit, you get this: those who cleave to God will receive the Spirit.

Those who cleave to God will know the Spirit directly in the

fervour of their spirit, which is the fervour impassioned in their passion of deep heart.

## II. Adhering

I ran into a plethora of slightly differently nuanced accounts of the Hebrew root meaning of cleave. I found different spellings in English (such as QBDW and BAQA). Yet the range of meanings seems a family of close relatives, rather than strangers.

The basic meaning is to *adhere*. When you adhere to something, you embrace it in a very strong way. The marriage context in Genesis speaks of leaving mother and father in order to cleave to the spouse, and by that cleaving, to become one flesh – or as it was explained by certain Jewish scholars, to become a combined entity, a dual unity, not exactly a single person, but a closeness and intimacy so potent between them that the two persons become *as one*. This is not Oriental fusion, nor is it Western duality. Whatever we cleave to, be it in marriage, in fighting spirit, or in redeeming the world, passion and its Other remain distinct, yet become as one. They break through to a conjoint, new being. This is beyond oneness or two-ness. It is a state of communing. Martin BUBER would call it I–Thou, or maybe that We which emerges from I–Thou as a further stage, its crown.

Cleave is always in Hebrew in the masculine, singular, imperfect tense: passion is spiritually masculine, as in Saint Peter’s hidden man of the heart; it is singular, because the impetus for it comes from deep within the unique person, the distinct personhood, the unrepeatable personalness: I cannot give myself to life for you, nor can you do this for me, it is something we must each do ourselves; and it is in the imperfect tense, because it is an action and this action is still incomplete, it is on its way, always travelling, battling, changing, shedding the old for the sake of the new: it has not arrived yet, but it is going, fundamentally on the move.

Adhere means to stick to something, and it also means to stick to it, to remain committed, through thick and thin. But there is this other, and much more active and even aggressive, implication to cleaving. Thus it means to *break open*, or *break through*. Indeed, to cleave also means to *rend open*, or even implies a *violent cutting into pieces*. There is a certain terror associated with cleaving, in the Old English sense of the word *terrible*. Passion is terrible in this old manner of speaking because it does not relent; it is the hunter who



cannot be deflected or distracted, seduced or intimidated, off the hunt. It is the warrior whose fight will not submit. Passion carries on, despite, not because of, conditions, circumstances, exigencies. It takes the hit – and gets up, and walks ahead. This aggressivity cuts things in half all right: it not only removes obstacles, which are worldly and spiritual at once, but it hits the wall where most hearts must stop, and it batters this wall until it breaks through. Thus passion separates those who cleave and continue from those who bail out prematurely because they cannot take any more. The cutting edge of cleaving also cuts through delusion, deception, lies. Thus in every respect it does not stop where most people stop.

I dreamt of a friend recently, who, in the dream, announces from the depth of their depression: “I am going to flush out God from the place where he is hiding.” The aggressivity in cleaving is, at its most profound, a refusal to be put off by God’s hiddenness, and becomes a fierce determination to break through to where God is hidden in existence. Depression slays all other hopes, dreams, yearnings, of life, so we can seek the one thing needful. God likes to be hidden, but likes even more those not intimidated by the unknown God, the absent God, the defunct bad daddy God who is either off somewhere else enjoying God’s bliss or even if with us cannot do anything effective anyway.

On this hunt to dig out God from where God is hidden in the depth of existence, we pass through water and we pass through fire; we enter the dark; we plunge down; we go in over our head; we are stretched to breaking point and beyond. We go into hell, losing all hope. We curse God and die: but we do not. We continue, even though we have lost anything and everything that could comfort us, secularly or religiously. We even let go guilt, blame, condemnation of self or world or God. ‘Cleave to God’ encompasses all this. God loves our violence of quest, and makes it more so, makes it necessary if we are to continue without cashing in the chips. To stay in the game is impossible, as the stakes go up and our losses spiral out of control, but to cleave means being in the game to the end.

Many people give in and give up well before the end-game is reached; to cleave is to hang in there, and hang tough, and refuse easier and safer and reassuring substitutes. In the end we hunger only for the reality, and the truth that relates us to reality. In the end we are naked, and want nothing except the unvarnished reality and its truth, however hard, however costly, however heavy a weight to carry.

This is where cleave acquires its double sense of a love that not only warmly embraces reality, but separates reality from illusions,

in the ultimate; and not only warmly embraces truth, but separates truth from lies, in the ultimate. A person who cleaves to God is a lover of reality and a lover of truth: such a person is not fooled by, drawn to, or in any way a lover of, illusions and lies. When you cleave to what is what, you come to see and appreciate how what is not what kills existence in all its facets.

Even in our fear of God – which in Hebrew means not something frightening or terrifying, but does suggest holy terror, awe, respect, reverence – we should begin to understand that the Dæmonic is serious, not messing about, and that if we enter the Dæmonic way of loving, the way of fire and earth, the way of suffering, the way of dark, the way of sacrifice, then this will subject us to the terribleness of God, which is at the same time the terribleness of love. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God; but all existence is in these hands, and risking and suffering and venturing this in order to find God in existence is much more terrible. It is not pap for infants. It is not the rules and regulations, the well marked paths, of conservatives. It is not the sloppiness and timidity and indifference of liberals. It is serious. To be a lover of God, to be a lover of this world in its redeemability, and to vow to find God in the place in the existential paradox and predicament where God is hiding, is terrible; but such is cleaving. Its flame is warm, but this flame is also terrible. The burning that ignites through cleaving is zealous and fervent, not simply warmly generous with loving-kindness. To cleave is to fight for something, and to fight for something is to be separated from it, yet refuse to allow that separation to become final.

In marriage we are separated, yet fighting to become united. In the fight for the world, in the fight for redemption – not transcendence – of existence, we are separated from redemption’s eighth day of completion, but travelling toward it, battling to reach it, struggling to make it real, and sacrificing our all to make it truth.

Such is the warmth and burning of the flame kindled in our cleaving.

### III. Cleaver, not Believer

But I discovered another amazing theme: when people speak so often in English of believing in God, they are misspeaking, and misunderstanding what they are saying. To cleave to God actually means to trust God, as an unknown and hidden reality and truth, as a sought-for but not yet found mystery; to cleave to God means to have faith in, to rely on, and to depend on, this Great Mystery.

Now, the vital point: where the English Biblical text speaks of believe, the equivalent Greek Biblical text uses *pisteuo*; and this verb is much closer to cleave, with all its risk-taking and personal faith, trust, relying on, depending on. In effect, we should stop speaking of ourselves, or others, as believers, because what this really means even in Greek, and much more so in Hebrew, is that we are all cleavers. We are cleaving to a mystery, we are adhering to it, and as it is cutting through us we are cutting through it, to reach a far shore, to break open and break through to a new land of heart. For where is God hidden in existence? God is hidden in the deeps of existence, and that means God is hidden in the deeps of the heart.

When we cleave, we go through hells, pits, voids, of God's absence. In these times and places, we are in strange terrain, and belief in any creedal sense does not help us in such a situation. It is in some ways a shame that the early Christians thought they needed a creed in words: I believe in this, that, the other. This is Greek, not Jewish; cleaving is existential, not doctrinal. As Martin BUBER puts it, you do not cleave to your idea of God [a statement 'about' God], you cleave only to God; nor do you even cleave to your relationship with God, because you do not cleave to a relationship, you cleave only to God. The cleaving is the relationship; and however much you try to state, or think, its mystery, the mystery is itself existentially challenging, it causes us "black inexplicable pain" in Federico Garcia LORCA's words, and the mystery eludes all words and all thoughts. It is found, understood, its wisdom dug up, only in a living way in the throes and in the thick of the existential problem itself. The Jewish cleave means, 'go through this, be in it, weep, curse, cry out, let deep call to deep': this is faith. Your dogmas and doctrines are existentially dangerous, because they encourage people to flee the existential cauldron and take refuge in the words and thoughts which try to express mystery but still are not, and never can be, the living mystery. Nothing replaces the black inexplicable pain of living in the predicament, where we must lose or find this mystery, search and hunt for this mystery or give up on it, and by virtue of that, give up on our own personal heart and give up on humanity's heart in the world.

Equally, when in John 11,25, we read Christ saying: "Whoever believes in me, although he may die, yet shall he live", we should know that rendering the English as 'whoever believes in me' is fundamentally misleading. Belief in this case suggests assent to a creed with our head, or emotion; assent to dogmatic or doctrinal

propositions. But this is not what Christ is saying. Christ is saying: whoever cleaves to the Christ in the deeps, where all is lost, will come through to the other side. I know many anti-religious believers, who are, despite that – or indeed because of that – cleaving to God, and even cleaving to Christ, in the dark and difficult deep place, where real passion is afflicted, stricken, hurt, broken, yet at the same time, forged, destroyed and reborn, its mettle and steel purged and honed and raised to fiery life.

Belief in God means cleaving to God in the midst of the absurdity of existence, and in the midst of all that destroys us and God and world. All hope in life, all hope in secular things and all hope in religious things is burnt up, lost to the deeps, swept away or burnt up in the unknownness, the hiddenness, the mystery of God. Yet we go on. Yet we proceed. Yet we will not turn back. This is cleaving. It is irrational; yet something equally irrational on God's side summons us, calls to us, pulls us along.

This points to another meaning of cleave I discovered on my trawling: when we humans cleave to God, there is a sense of a more dependent being *leaning on* a more firm being. The old hymn, Rock of Ages, invites the cleaver to lean on God. Israel was invited to do this towards God. Christ speaks in this same vein when offering to carry our yoke with us: not that He will carry it for us, but He will conjointly carry it with us. The weaker can lean on the stronger, and by this gradually assimilate their strength, and the properties and attributes of steadfastness, enduring and undergoing, and most powerful of all, *bearing up*.

This means that cleaving is not only a personal action of heart: passion is what the heart does, not just its muscle and energy, but its deed; cleaving is also a trust and faith in, a leaning and depending on, a personal God who 'gives God's personal word'. This is already evident in the Biblical cleaving of marriage: you pledge your troth, you give your word to be real, to be serious, to be committed, about the impossible task of the two becoming as one. Similarly, a warrior makes a vow, which promises him to the fight. This is where cleaving and believing are so different: believing is shallow, you can do it with your head or with your emotion, while cleaving is deep, you can only do it with your deepened, suffering and struggling, ventured, risked, weight-carrying, heart. Believing and cleaving are on different levels entirely: believing is abstract and theoretical, but cleaving is existentially concrete and actual.

You remain within your comfort boundary when you believe. You put yourself on the line when you cleave.

I know only a very few people who believe and cleave.

I know many people who believe and do not cleave.

I know even more people who do not, and will never, believe, but who cleave.

You will only know which of these three you are if you examine your heart. Do you use religion to skate over the existential deeps, where God is hidden, or have you let these deeps wound you, so that you might die in them-- or find in this very dying the leverage, the spark, from which to launch your search for the one thing needful, your search for the unknown and hidden God, right in the midst of existence in this world?

The believer can be cool, calm and collected. The person of cleaving has terrible ups and downs, weeps bitter tears, knows the heartbreak of God absent from the human heart, and the human heart absent from itself, in all the world.

Believing in the bright Christ of dogma and doctrine is not the same as cleaving to the dark Christ who is in the deeps where all human beings are lost.

The person whose life is cleaving will seek and search, hunt and track, fight and wrestle and struggle, to dig up the heart of God from the place where it is hidden in the heart of each person and in the heart of all the world.

The person whose life is cleaving will find the heart of God, and by this, find their own heart and find the heart in all the world.

## IV. Truthfulness

To cleave is passion: it points to a strong love, whose commitment is personally trothed, pledged, vowed, promised, and by putting up with all the cuts that come through this immersion and plunge into existence, cuts through.

There is a lot of guff, waffle, flim-flam, as well as all the poison, to cut through. If you cleave, you are cut by God, and this enables you cut through yourself and cut through the world. Such is the black of suffering and the red of fighting spirit in passion.

Cleaving therefore also carries the connotation not only of making a vow, and promising yourself to the 'whole damn thing, no matter what', but also of this commitment being manifested in an increasingly hard-fought and hard-won loyalty, fidelity or faithfulness, all of which can be summed up as *truthfulness*. Be strong, we say in the Cante Tinze; but we could as well be saying, be true.

God has, to an extent we do not understand, because we have not broken through to its reality, truth, wisdom, in the heart, already cleaved to us. God has pledged God's troth, vowed and promised Godself, been loyal, faithful, true, to us, no matter what. This is the significance of the deeds God performed in the Old Testament to encourage the Jews. God cleaved the Red Sea to let them through, to escape Egypt (Psalm 74,15); God cleaved the rock in the desert to give them water as they traversed the lost place looking for the new land (Psalm 78,15). Many people misconstrue these events of divine providence. They do not mean we will not, in leaving Egypt, be dumped in the vast desert before we can reach the Promised Land: this promised land is a new land of heart we will share with God, when God's heart is found, our heart is found, the world's heart is found. It is not yet. But it is what both the old and new covenants are pledged to. This is what it was always about.

These events of divine providence, or divine wisdom, weaving into the story of existence lived out on the ground, occur for one reason: not to promote naïve, facile, escapist hope, but to tell us something more fundamental, something we sense, but which God occasionally comes out of hiding to reveal.

This is that we are not asked, and not inspired, to cleave to a God who is not cleaving to us.

We cleave to God, because before we were forged in the furnace of passion, he cleaved to us.

Those who cleave will find the heart of God, their own heart, the heart of the world, because in cleaving to us, God is determined to find our heart and the heart of the world.

## V. A New Land

Job's repentance, this cleaving to God in the absurdity of existence is the deepest passion, and brings us through a door that otherwise never opens to a new land of heart.

Passion is cleaving to God, no matter what; and through that, we come to cleave to the world in its redeemability, no matter what.

When we go far enough in passion, these two things become the same.

It is all about one thing only: a new land of heart. It is not yet, but it is coming.

Cleaving is passion, because what it relies on, in its courage and vulnerability, is the not yet.

It means, in the heart, ‘your word is good enough’. Here, in the end, Logos and Spirit converge. Logos makes the promise, Spirit brings it to pass, in and through the very agony that most threatens its loss.

This is why, in the end and at the deepest, there is no goal, no point, no justification, for cleaving. It resists all explanation, theological, psychological and scientific.

Cleaving cleaves in order to cleave. This is sufficient.

To say more, now, would be cheating.

And cleaving is the only honest thing in existence.

Rebecca BLOCKSOME

# Ut Pictura Poesis: Word and Image in Early Modernism

W. J. T. MITCHELL, in his book *Iconology*, dissects the *ut pictura poesis* tradition in art criticism, which attempts to find points of similarity between painting and poetry – points of contact or transference between the two arts. Taken at face value, it seems like a slightly perverse pastime, since in general painting and poetry – or in a larger frame of reference, words and images – superficially have many more differences than they do similarities. In fact, they are often regarded as two entities in opposition to each other, each one laying claim to a particular territory: painting to the natural world, space and vision; poetry to the world of ideas, time and audition.<sup>1</sup>

MITCHELL goes on to argue that this is an artificial dichotomy; there is no essential difference between text and image,<sup>2</sup> and in fact works of art which incorporate aspects of both texts and images are the *rule*, not the exception<sup>3</sup>. Further, he identifies two periods where the borders between art and language were especially porous: XVIII<sup>th</sup>-century romanticism, and XX<sup>th</sup>-century modernism. Both these statements directly contradict conventional wisdom, which alleges that modernism in particular aggressively tried to eliminate any connection with the literary world. This argument has been expressed by, among others, Rosalind KRAUSS: “Surfacing in pre-war cubist painting and subsequently becoming ever more stringent and manifest, the grid announces, among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse. As such, the grid has done its job with striking efficiency. The barrier it has lowered between the arts of vision and those of language has been almost totally successful in walling the visual arts into a realm

1 MITCHELL W. J. T., *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago, 1986. 47–48.

2 MITCHELL W. J. T., *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago, 1986. 49.

3 MITCHELL W. J. T., *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago, 1986. 155.