

AESTHETICS OF EXPERIMENT: IMAGISM, VORTICISM AND THE EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE

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Declaration

I, Sze Wah Sarah LEE, hereby confirm that the work presented in the thesis as my own.

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Abstract

This dissertation is a critical re-assessment of Imagism and Vorticism in relation to the European avant-garde, which both movements aspired towards in their reactions against the contemporary English arts and letters. I explore the implementation of such aspirations in the English arts by chronicling the complex relationship between the English movements and Cubism, the Parisian avant-garde, Italian Futurism and German Expressionism. The thesis argues that Imagism and Vorticism simultaneously modelled themselves on and reacted against their Continental counterparts, in terms of aesthetic concepts, artistic techniques and promotional tactics in creating a modern art.

As movements with contributors of different nationalities and working in different artistic media, including poetry, painting and sculpture, there necessarily exists many aesthetic varieties within Imagism and Vorticism apart from foundational consensus shared by group members. In order to address the complexity of the groups' make-up and the interdisciplinarity of their avant-garde aesthetics, the enquiry is made through a two-fold approach: firstly, by conducting contextual and comparative studies of significant individuals of the movements, including T. E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, to gauge their individual perspectives on literature, visual arts and aesthetic theories; secondly, by considering the heterogeneous nature of these movements and exploring the group dynamics, tensions and rivalries within the movements and with other contemporary groups.

With this dual focus, my thesis reconstructs the cultural milieu through the artists' works and correspondence, as well as the circulation network of little magazines, publicity and patronage, in order to reconcile the aesthetic and

social contexts of Imagism and Vorticism, both in England and beyond. Ultimately, my thesis provides a more comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the English movements' aesthetics, their relationship with the European avant-garde, and their impact on artistic and literary experimentation in modernist English literature and visual arts.

List of Abbreviations

- B1 *BLAST 1*, ed. by Wyndham Lewis (London: John Lane, 1914)
- B2 *BLAST 2*, ed. by Wyndham Lewis (London: John Lane, 1915)
- CHC Wyndham Lewis, *Creatures of Habit, Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914-1956*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1989)
- CW T. E. Hulme, *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, ed. by Karen Csengeri (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)
- CWA Wassily Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, ed. by Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (London: Faber and Faber, 1982)
- EPVA Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts, ed. by Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980)
- Futurism Futurism: An Anthology, ed. by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)
- GB Ezra Pound, *Gaudier Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, [1916] 1970)
- LE Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954)
- Letters Wyndham Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963)
- P/LR Ezra Pound, *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence*, ed. by Thomas L. Scott and Melvin J. Friedman, with the assistance of Jackson R. Bryer (New York: New Directions, 1988)
- P/Q Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn, 1915-1924*, ed. by Timothy Materer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)
- RA Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. by Toby Foshay (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, [1950] 1984)
- SL Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. by D. D. Paige (New York: New Directions, [1950] 1971)

- SP* Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973)
- 'Vorticism' Ezra Pound, 'Vorticism', *Fortnightly Review* 96, no. 573 (1 September 1914), pp. 461-471. Reprinted in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980), pp. 199-209
- WLA* Wyndham Lewis, *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956*, ed. by Walter Michel and C. J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969)

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Introduction

Research Question and General Outline

My thesis provides a new framework for a critical re-assessment of Imagism and Vorticism, two short-lived but influential and seminal arts movements emerging in England in the 1910s, which consisted of artists and writers from a variety of national backgrounds. In their ambition to break with the artistic tradition of England and reject its cultural backwardness, the Imagists and Vorticists turned to non-English influences, particularly to a range of contemporary art movements in Continental Europe, to embrace, endorse or appropriate their radical and experimental ideas and practices. Although the Imagists and Vorticists were respectively united in their aesthetic goals, the artistic practice and theories of individual members were highly unique, resulting in heterogeneous group aesthetics and internal rivalries. The objective of my thesis is to correct the common conceptions of Imagism and Vorticism as 'English' or 'Anglo-American' movements with fixed and rear-guard aesthetics, which insufficiently and imprecisely reflect and address the aesthetic complexities involved. This necessitates a critical reconsideration which explores the individual, multi-faceted and international qualities of the aesthetics of both movements.

My research objectives are achieved through an in-depth study of the early stages of key artists' careers and the evolution of their aesthetics through their complex interactions with the European avant-garde, which illustrates the aesthetic complexities, diversities and inconsistencies between individuals and groups. Through an examination of the Imagists and Vorticists' discursive and creative interdisciplinary interactions with the European avant-garde in literature,

visual arts and aesthetic theories, my thesis aims to re-evaluate the nature and evolution of Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics, as articulated by both individual and collective statements. Ultimately, my thesis reassesses the contributions of the aesthetic experiments of Imagism and Vorticism in creating an art for modernity.

Orienting the study of Imagism and Vorticism towards the European avant-garde fills a gap in current research and scholarship, and enables me to achieve three further aims. Firstly, to demonstrate Imagism and Vorticism as heterogeneous groups with minimal collective aesthetics, accommodating and emphasising artistic individuality. Secondly, to explore the identities of Imagism and Vorticism beyond ‘English’ / ‘Anglo-American’ and ‘modernist’ movements, by demonstrating their international awareness and aspirations towards the European avant-garde. Thirdly, to challenge the existing academic distinctions between modernism and the avant-garde with regard to Imagism and Vorticism, whose complex nature resists conventional categorisation and deserves to be considered on their own terms.

Approach

My research context and framework are similar to Peter Nicholls’ *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, which significantly expanded the understanding of ‘modernism’ beyond its Anglophone literary connotations by looking into the European context. Such an approach enabled Nicholls to acknowledge modernism’s multiple and ‘divergent forms’ which were ‘profoundly determined by specificities of time and place’.¹ Similarly, my thesis attempts to go beyond the conventional perspectives of nationalist, modernist and avant-garde art, in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of Imagism and Vorticism’s

¹ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. viii.

interdisciplinary engagements with the European art scene. I aim to demonstrate that Imagism and Vorticism were from the start movements with international awareness and aspirations, apparent from their attention to the European avant-garde, leading to artistic outcomes which were both imitative and antagonistic, as well as both English and international.

In view of the potentially very broad scope of my enquiry, I define the particular areas which my thesis engages with as follows. Firstly, the period I am concerned with is around 1908 to 1920, a timespan which covers most of the Imagist and Vorticist activities and coincides with Pound's residence in London. Secondly, I study Imagists and Vorticists who primarily lived and worked in England during the period, and their transatlantic and Continental counterparts and their activities where relevant. Thirdly, I investigate these artists' aesthetic development in relation to the aesthetic theories, works and activities of the European avant-garde, namely the French / Parisian avant-garde, German Expressionism and Italian Futurism.

My thesis engages with a range of interdisciplinary primary sources, including prose, poetry and visual works published in contemporary reviews and journals, in order to gauge the contemporary situation and reception of Imagism, Vorticism and the European avant-garde in England. The personal correspondence of key individuals is also a valuable source to understand their aesthetic development during this period. Secondary literature is also consulted to support and engage the discussion in the thesis.

Definition of Key Terms

Within the defined scope of study, I observe the following terminologies in view of multiple definitions and interpretations of certain key terms. As my thesis

argues for individual aesthetics within Imagism and Vorticism, I use the names of the movements only to refer to the particular historical gathering of individuals, without denoting a fixed, collective aesthetics. I also use the terms ‘English movements’ and ‘artists’ to refer to both movements and their members, while bearing in mind the differences in their artistic media and approaches, as well as their diverse nationalities and backgrounds. The term ‘aesthetics’ is used to describe both the theories and practices of art movements, as well as that of individual members, in order to encompass a broader artistic and philosophical context beyond literature and its theory, which the term ‘poetics’ implies. I also use the term ‘interdisciplinary’ to describe a combination of literary and non-literary arts, especially in Vorticism with works across different artistic media. The terms ‘development’ and ‘evolution’ are used to describe the progress and changes in the aesthetics of individuals and movements over time.

For the purpose of my thesis, I use the term ‘avant-garde’ in a broader sense than the historical avant-garde movements outlined in Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. I argue that Imagism and Vorticism can be considered avant-garde movements, in their aspiration towards the new artistic theories and practices of the European avant-garde movements (what I term ‘influence’), and their attempt to achieve a new, modern aesthetics. Similarly, I use ‘European avant-garde’ to refer to the artistic movements which were known and contemporary to the Imagists and Vorticists, including Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism, as well as Symbolism, Impressionism and Post-impressionism in France. The latter movements which were slightly prior to the historical avant-garde movements are included, as when they were introduced to England in the early twentieth century, they were considered ‘new’ despite having been surpassed by subsequent movements in France. And

despite labelling these movements by their countries of origin, my thesis focuses on the aesthetics instead of the historical, national and socio-political contexts of the European movements, in order to trace the aesthetic connections between these different systems of artistic theories and practices and the English movements, which were largely established independent of social and political concerns, including the First World War.

Organisation of Chapters

The main body of the thesis consists of five chapters. Three chapters focus on the avant-garde influences from different European countries on the Imagist and Vorticist groups, in which I discuss the works of individual Imagists and Vorticists, and their collective relationships with European avant-garde movements. The other two chapters focus on two key individuals, Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme, because their works and theories were fundamental to the conceptions of Imagism and Vorticism, as well as indicative of divisions and contradictions within and between these two movements. I argue the evolution of their aesthetics during this period as a result of their engagement with various interdisciplinary European influences, which in turn characterised Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics. The works and aesthetics of Wyndham Lewis, the founder of Vorticism, are discussed across the chapters in relation to the European avant-garde as well as to Pound and Hulme.

The chapters are arranged so that the discussion of French, German and Italian avant-garde influences on Imagism and Vorticism alternates with an exploration of the aesthetic development of Pound and Hulme, so that the sequence of chapters maintains a dual focus on individuals and the collective. The discussion begins with French influences from the late nineteenth century to

Cubism on Imagism and Vorticism in Chapter 1, followed by an exploration of Pound's aesthetic development in Chapter 2. The influence of German artistic ideas and practices from the late nineteenth century to Expressionism on Vorticism is discussed in Chapter 3, followed by a reassessment of Hulme's important role as theorist of poetry and visual arts in relation to Imagism and Vorticism in Chapter 4. Finally, I discuss the contemporaneous avant-garde of Futurism and its relationship with Imagism and Vorticism in Chapter 5.

Research Context

Even within the defined fields, there are still many possible lines of enquiry in terms of historical, political, social and cultural aspects. In the following, I discuss some of the key notions and texts which I interact with and their relevance to my thesis. The discussion is arranged by the categories of 'movements', 'individuals', 'modernisms' and 'avant-gardes'. This approach allows the illustration of the issues at stake in a logical progression, and at the same time brings together and balances intersecting viewpoints difficult to disentangle across the many busy fields which my thesis covers, cutting across nations, languages and artistic media. The following discussion serves to outline the scope of my thesis, define its critical edge and justify its significance.

Movements

Imagism and Vorticism can be considered within a tradition of artistic experiments and reconsiderations in England throughout the nineteenth century. Precedents of Imagism include significant movements such as the (mainly Celtic) Rhymers' Club, which, led by William Butler Yeats, 'reacted against the long

'Victorian poem' and 'didacticism, pomposity and verbiage',² as did individuals such as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and Thomas Hardy. And although in general the public was slow to take up the Continental innovations in painting, visual practice in England had been transformed by diverse groups and figures, such as the Pre-Raphaelites, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Walter Pater and William Morris. Groups contemporaneous to Imagism and Vorticism also engaged in similar artistic reforms albeit in different manners. The Georgian poets 'opposed to rhetoric and didacticism', made use of 'everyday' language and 'brief, lyric form', and limited their membership to English poets.³ The Bloomsbury circle sought to develop a modern style in literature and painting, where their championing and embrace of French Post-Impressionist works generated enormous publicity surrounding their exhibitions. Situated in this context, Imagism and Vorticism strove to establish a distinct character for their works by looking towards the Continent and adopting and synthesising a wide range of aesthetic ideas and practices, which I explore in my thesis.

Imagism

Imagism (or *Imagisme* in Pound's coinage) was established in 1912 by Pound to denote the works by him and fellow poets Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.). Although two doctrinal statements, 'Imagisme' and 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' were published, *Imagisme* was arguably more a brand name to pitch their poems than an aesthetically cohesive movement. As Pound admitted to Amy Lowell in a letter on 1 August 1914, the name was intended as his 'machinery for gathering stray good poems and presenting them to the public

² Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and the Imagists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), p. 533.

³ Ibid., p. 534,

in more or less permanent form and of discovering new talent [...] – or poems which could not be presented to the public in other ways, poems that would be lost in magazines. As for example “H.D.’s” would have been, for some years at least.’ (SL, 38) Subsequently more poets came on board and four anthologies were published between 1914 and 1917, after which the movement dissipated. Pound seceded from the group and turned to Vorticism in 1914, coinciding with Lowell’s contest for the control of the movement in terms of publishing; in fact the anthologies of 1915 to 1917 were largely administered by Lowell and published in the United States. Pound’s departure marked the critical moment which exemplifies the internal turbulence, aesthetic differences and contradictions within the Imagist group, which I explore in my thesis.

Two academic studies on Imagism and the Imagists emerged within a decade or so after the movement’s dispersal. The first was René Taupin’s *Influence du Symbolisme Français sur la Poésie Américaine* (*The Influence of French Symbolism on Modern American Poetry*) published in French in 1929 (the English translation was not published until 1985). Taupin sees Imagism as an American heir to French Symbolist poetry in the Imagists’ adoption of *vers libre* and close reading of the Symbolist poets. The first study in English was Glenn Hughes’ *Imagism and the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry* (1931), based on both scholarly research and interviews with many Imagists. As the title suggests, it is a chronicle of Imagism and its contexts which profiles several key members, and essentially a factual study that includes the reprint and discussion of works of individual poets. Similar to Taupin’s work, Hughes suggests a

number of French influences, such as Symbolism, Parnassianism, Cubism, Fantastism and Unanism as significant for the Imagists.⁴

Hughes' study discusses individual Imagists without an emphasis on the 'leader' *per se*, partly due to the fact that Lowell, the chief campaigner of the movement from its intermediate stage onwards, had died when Hughes conducted his research. Aldington also intervened by suggesting Hughes interview other Imagists besides Pound, as he explained to H.D. in a letter on 20 March 1929: '[Hughes] has seen all the Imagists except the Imagist! Luckily I was at Rapallo when he went to see Ezra, and I sent him to [John Gould] Fletcher first – consequently I think he has a fairly correct idea of what happened and will not be stampeded into accepting everything Ezra tried to force on him. Ezra may have "invented" Imagism, but, after all, you wrote the poems.'⁵ Hughes' compliance with Aldington's advice can be seen from the fact that, above the others, the chapter on H.D. is titled 'The Perfect Imagist', and he also describes Pound as 'promoter, interpreter, and to a limited extent, practitioner' of Imagism.⁶ This is revealing evidence for a crucial aspect of the Imagist group – their internal strife – which I discuss in Chapters 1 and 5.

Following Taupin and Hughes' works, mid-twentieth century saw a steady stream of scholarship on Imagism, including Stanley K. Coffman's *Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry* (1951), Frank Kermode's *Romantic Image* (1957), Wallace Martin's *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (1967) and 'The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic' (1970), J. B. Harmer's *Victory in Limbo: Imagism, 1908-1917* (1975) and John T. Gage's *In*

⁴ Glenn Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, [1931] 1972), pp. 3-7.

⁵ Richard Aldington, H.D. and Caroline Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H.D.: The Later Years in Letters* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 17. Original emphasis.

⁶ Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists*, p. 234.

the Arresting Eye: The Rhetoric of Imagism (1981). These studies are more concerned with an understanding of Imagist poetry and rhetoric rather than the biographical details of the Imagists. Steven Watson's *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (1991) considered Imagism from another perspective: its cultural context. Although the American dimensions of Imagism are emphasised at the expense of its English context, Watson's study is commendable in its meticulous depiction of the poets' relationship with contemporary little magazines, in particular Pound and Lowell's interactions with various editors, demonstrating their power struggles and tensions through the publishing network and the public arena, in which they compete via their respective 'movements' *Imagisme* and 'Amygism', as Pound called Imagism under Lowell.

A recent substantial study of the Imagists is Helen Carr's *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and the Imagists* (2009), a comprehensive group biography of Imagism. Carr rejects the conventional dualistic view of Imagism as the movement of Pound versus Lowell, and chronicles other Imagists in greater detail than previous studies. She argues that diversity among the Imagists was paramount to their existence as a group, as F. S. Flint defended his stance in his article 'The History of Imagism' in a letter to Pound on 3 July 1915: 'I was tracing Imagism to no particular person. [...] Imagism, like all other literary movements, was a general movement, a product and impulse of the time.'⁷ (This, however, might not be an unbiased statement: Flint might have been taking sides when reacting against Pound's appropriation of Imagism to Vorticism, and this partisanship would undermine his assertion of the 'neutrality' of Imagism and the individual rights of the poets involved.) Carr argues against

⁷ Quoted in Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 768; Michael Copp, *Imagist Dialogues: Letters between Aldington, Flint and Others* (Cambridge, U.K.: Lutterworth Press, 2009), pp. 61-62.

conceiving of Imagism as a collective movement by highlighting its arbitrariness and its fortuitous and volatile nature: ‘Pound invented the name of the movement first, and only began to reach a programme when he saw H.D.’s spare yet freighted poems, so imagism came to be defined by the sort of poetry that she and – to some extent – he and Aldington were writing; it was not a set of principles they had followed to produce it, hence Pound’s continual redefinition of the term as he strove to analyse more exactly how he thought their verse worked’.⁸

Carr seeks to situate Imagism in a broader context than previous studies, covering Imagist poetry and theory, the development of individual members, and engages with other scholarly accounts and theories. Carr argues Imagism as a European movement by drawing parallels between Imagism and the European avant-garde, such as the influence of French *vers libre* on Imagism. She disputes Lawrence Rainey’s account in *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (1998) that the *Imagistes* ‘brand’ was Pound’s reaction towards the competition of Futurism in March 1912, and argues instead that Pound came up with the name as influenced by Flint’s essay ‘Contemporary French Poetry’ in the August 1912 issue of *Poetry Review*.⁹ Carr also suggests that the Imagists’ liberal, reformative mindset deserves to be considered as aspiring towards the avant-garde, challenging Bürger’s definition that only those movements which ‘subvert the institution of art should be considered avant-garde’.¹⁰

Carr also mentions Vorticism in relation to Imagism, but does not discuss the movement in depth. She suggests that ‘as far as poetry was concerned

⁸ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 491-492.

⁹ Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 500.

Vorticism was for Pound at the time more a new name than a new school',¹¹ there is much truth to her observation, yet it under-values and under-represents Vorticism by only looking at its achievement in poetry and in association with Pound, owing to her focus on Imagism. To gain a fuller understanding of Vorticism, it is essential to look also at works by other Vorticists in other artistic media, as well as its complex aesthetic theories and polemics in addition to Pound's Vorticist poetry and theories.

Vorticism

Vorticism was founded by Lewis, Pound and like-minded artists in June 1914, with the aim of revitalising English art so that it could stand up to (if not surpass) Continental standards. Their magazine *BLAST* was published in July 1914 and features a diverse range of content, including manifestos and 'Vortex' statements of the movement, lists of blasts and blesses, as well as literary and visual works: genres of visual art as diverse as paintings, woodcuts and sculptures are brought together with literary contributions including poetry, short stories, a play and art criticism. A second number was published in July 1915, and two exhibitions were held in London and New York in 1915 and 1917 respectively, although all these ventures met with little success. As a short-lived interdisciplinary movement formed by an alliance of artists and writers, disrupted by and virtually forgotten after the First World War, Vorticism did not attract much scholarly attention until some decades later.

The first retrospective Vorticist exhibition, 'Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism', was held at the Tate Gallery in 1956, shortly before Lewis's death. The first book-length study of Vorticism appeared in 1972: William C. Wees's *Vorticism*

¹¹ Ibid., p. 697.

and the English Avant-Garde discusses the social and cultural contexts of Vorticism at large and evaluates its artistic outcomes. Wees regards Lewis and Pound as the key Vorticists, although he also suggests that, '[o]f the [BLAST] manifesto's signers, perhaps only Lewis, Wadsworth, Hamilton, and Gaudier-Brzeska subscribed to all that the Vortex stood for. At least, only they contributed work to *Blast* that satisfied its uncompromising standards.'¹² The list conspicuously omits Pound, and the 'uncompromising standards' of the 'Vortex' are debatable terms, as the definition of the 'Vortex' differs according to Lewis, Pound and the Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska in their respective 'Vortex' statements. Pound recalled in hindsight that Lewis first proposed a review as 'a forum for the several ACTIVE varieties of CONTEMPORARY art/cub/expressionist/post-imp, etc. BUT in conversation with E.P. there emerged the idea of defining what WE wanted & having a name for it. Ultimately Gaudier for sculpture, E.P. for poetry, and W.L., the main mover, set down their personal requirements.'¹³

Indeed, the Vorticist group was as contested as the Imagists', as Wees summarises various members' opinion of the movement's nature: 'One man's doings, group designation, personal requirements, period label, nonsense, slogan, enigma – all of these must be accounted for in answering the question, "What was Vorticism?"'¹⁴ In view of the multiplicity and diversity of aesthetics and opinion within Vorticism, Wees offers detailed analysis of the aesthetics of individual members. Wees' study does not go much beyond 1914, whereas Richard Cork's seminal two-volume account *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the*

¹² William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 179.

¹³ Letter to artist Gladys Hynes in 1956, quoted in Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 67. Original emphases. I discuss the genesis of Vorticism in relation to Futurism in Chapter 5.

¹⁴ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 3.

First Machine Age (1976) is an almost minute-by-minute chronicle of Vorticism from its beginning to end. This study initiated a new wave of interest in Vorticism, and has been an invaluable sourcebook for subsequent scholarship, which often take the form of edited volumes of critical essays or catalogues to exhibitions.¹⁵

The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World (2010) is the catalogue of a recent international roving exhibition which showed at the Tate Modern, and features a number of scholarly essays that explore the various media and aspects of Vorticist artworks, including painting, sculpture, photography and *BLAST* itself, as well as chronicling the movement's origins and the reception of the contemporary Vorticist exhibitions. The latest volume of essays, *Vorticism: New Perspectives* (2013) addresses the multiple aesthetics of Vorticism with the term 'Vorticisms', and features essays on a range of topics, including Vorticism's relationship with the European avant-garde and the United States, as well as historical studies of the contemporary social-political context and Vorticism's ventures. Such a broad range of discussions aids the understanding of Vorticism as a multi-faceted interdisciplinary movement, with works of different artistic media and close interactions with the European avant-garde, while primarily exerting its impact in the Anglo-American world.

Imagism / Vorticism; Movements / 'Moments'

Despite the differences between Imagism and Vorticism, there is seemingly much permeability between the two movements. This is mainly due to Pound's significant efforts in creating and promoting both movements and his frequent mixing of the 'Image' and the 'Vortex' in his discussions, resulting in many

¹⁵ Notable volumes include *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) and *The Great London Vortex: Modernist Literature and Art* (Bath: Sulis, 2003), both edited by Paul Edwards, as well as *Blasting the Future!: Vorticism in Britain 1910-20*, ed. by Jonathan Black (London: Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, Philip Wilson, 2004).

similarities in the theories and polemics of Imagism and Vorticism which survived in print. For example, not only did Pound include his definition of the ‘Image’ in his account of the ancestry of Vorticism in his ‘Vortex’ statement, he also theorised about the ‘Vortex’ in terms of the ‘Image’, declaring that: ‘The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perform, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing.’ (*Vorticism*, 207, original emphasis) These similarities give rise to a risk of appropriation and subjugation, leading to the assumption that Imagism and Vorticism are highly similar to each other. This confusion is one of the crucial reasons which led to the success of Lowell’s coup of Imagism, due to most Imagists’ insistence on the unique identity of Imagism and their resistance of its association with Vorticism as exerted by Pound.

The differences between Pound’s idiosyncratic conceptions of both movements and those of Lowell’s (and the other Imagists’) as well as Lewis’s (and the other Vorticists’) warrant being investigated beyond a dualistic stand-off between the relevant parties, in order to gauge the multiplicity of the movements as seen and represented by individual members. The significant complexities, diversities and inconsistencies within the two groups demonstrate that, instead of being ‘static and self-contained’ endeavours as the collective group names imply,¹⁶ and showcasing monolithic, unified aesthetics and theories, Imagism and Vorticism emphasise artistic individuality and diversity, and members focused more on solidarity against common enemies and conventional artistic practices rather than aesthetic unities. The Imagists reacted against lengthy, dull

¹⁶ Richard Sheppard, ‘Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison’, in *Facets of European Modernism: Essays in Honour of James McFarlane Presented to Him on His 65th Birthday, 12 December 1985*, ed. by Janet Garton (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1985), pp. 149-174 (p. 154). Sheppard’s description refers to Vorticism and German Expressionism, though the description is also fitting for Imagism.

and sentimental verse, and challenged the conventional conception of the materials and meanings of poetry; the Vorticists fought against artistic backwardness in England and the competition posed by Futurism.

Imagism and Vorticism can be regarded as milestones in the waves of efforts to modernise English arts and letters in the early twentieth century. However, the artistic (and historical) value and significance of both movements has often been challenged, not least due to their short duration, ubiquitous self-promotions and limited reach, as well as Vorticism's diverse interdisciplinary aesthetics, boisterous rhetoric and inherent contradictions. The manifestoes and theories of Imagism and Vorticism have been regarded as elusive, perplexing statements and performative gestures, not always fully justified by their creative works. And while the connections with High Modernism demonstrate the importance of Imagism and Vorticism, they are also paradoxically sidelined as transitional stages.

In *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, Marjorie Perloff sees the innovation of Pound and fellow progressive artists as part of the 'Futurist moment', made possible by the impulses to 'provide a vision of a possible future' behind the Futurist movement, which she argues as more important than the movement itself.¹⁷ She also cautions against '*ism* studies' which almost invariably 'stress the uniqueness of the movement in question at the expense of its context', 'trust[ing] empirical evidence perhaps too completely'.¹⁸ Perloff's study, while seeking to contextualise the different movements, ultimately illustrates them as various forms of the same impulse of innovation, the Futurist moment.

¹⁷ Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. xxii-xxvii.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. xxxviii. Original emphasis.

While placing an overarching common objective over the European avant-garde movements including Imagism and Vorticism is feasible, my thesis is concerned with the aesthetics and the specific interactions between individuals and movements, between England and Continental Europe in Imagism and Vorticism. And despite the movements' limited immediate impact, many scholars have defended their significance. Hugh Witemeyer describes Imagism as 'probably the most important single movement in English language-poetry of the twentieth century' due to its far-reaching legacies, and Reed Way Dasenbrock regards Vorticism as a 'key locus of innovation' in creating modernist literature that 'aspir[es] towards the condition of modernist painting'.¹⁹ Christopher Butler suggests that the creative energy of 'Modernist artistic achievements in England prior to 1914', including Imagism and Vorticism, produced 'a critical awareness of Europe, and of new ideas', which sowed the seeds for 'the distinctive and enduring English-language contribution to European Modernism' after the war.²⁰ In view of Imagism and Vorticism's contributions to Anglo-American modernism and beyond, I argue that they remain significant and useful nomenclatures, identities and points of departure in charting the evolution of the radical and innovative interdisciplinary experiments in early twentieth-century England.

Individuals

Both Imagism and Vorticism were unquestionably shaped by the collective and at their heights propounded their group identities; the networks formed in

¹⁹ Hugh Witemeyer, 'Early Poetry 1908-1920', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. by Ira Bruce Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 48; Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 150.

²⁰ Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 233-234.

Imagist and Vorticist days also led to the high modernist grouping (if not hegemony) of Pound, Lewis, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. However, the nature of the collective is antithetical to the notion of the individual artist, and any homogeneity implied by the Imagist and Vorticist collectives was self-consciously resented by members of both movements, in bold declarations such as '[the Imagists] are Individualists' and 'Blast presents an art of Individuals.' (B1, 8)²¹ The individual / group dichotomy of Imagism and Vorticism is complicated by the diversity of the members, making it difficult to summarise a coherent aesthetics for the movements, despite both groups' attempts at laying down 'rules' or 'manifestoes'.

My thesis argues for the importance of individual contributions to Imagism and Vorticism, as Butler suggests the critical role of the individual in artistic innovations: 'it is only within persons that the new ideas of a period present themselves as problems and attract further thoughts and feelings which can lead to innovation and discovery, in work which, unlike that of science or much of formal philosophy, will always bear the clear marks of individual character and temperament'.²² Studying the aesthetics of Imagism and Vorticism through individual members allows a more comprehensive investigation into the internal differences which led to their multiplicity. By looking into the aesthetics of Pound, Hulme and Lewis, a more comprehensive understanding of Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics, as well as the movements' relationship with the interdisciplinary arts of the European avant-garde can be gained. In the following, I highlight salient issues in the aesthetics of these key individuals in relation to both movements.

²¹ Amy Lowell, 'Preface', in *Some Imagist Poets, 1916: An Annual Anthology* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), pp. v-xii (p. vi).

²² Butler, *Early Modernism*, p. xvi.

Ezra Pound

Being a heavy-weight modernist literary figure, Pound requires little introduction. In my thesis I focus on Pound's aesthetic development during his residence in London, from Imagist poetry to Vorticist interdisciplinary art and beyond, taking into account his multiple roles as poet, critic, theorist, literary agent / art dealer and propagandist. A significant factor in the evolution of Pound's aesthetics from the development of Imagism in 1912 to Vorticism in 1914 was the influence of the visual arts and the inspiration of the European avant-garde, which Pound came into contact through the (subsequently) Vorticist artists. I chronicle Pound's search for the essence of artistic creation through his interactions with various artists and works in different artistic media, which, combined with his experiments in poetry, resulted in the development of a critical framework that is theoretically applicable to all the arts, as 'a language to think in' (*LE*, 194) which allows for a systematic formal organisation of creative works in different artistic media. I also discuss Pound's relationship with fellow Imagists and Vorticists with evidence from correspondence and biographies, and demonstrate his critical role in the propagation of the two movements via the little magazines and other practical means. I argue that Pound's significant contributions to Vorticism lie not only in aesthetic theorising, poetry and polemics, but also concern the practical propagation and survival of the movement, acting as the *de facto* leader and coordinator while many of its members went to war.

My exploration of Pound's aesthetics particularly focuses on his relationship with the visual arts, including Vorticism and the European avant-garde, as mediated by fellow Vorticists such as Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska. Chapter 2 of Ronald Bush's *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (1976) on structural terms is very useful in highlighting Pound's search for form and organisation in poetry

in relation to the Vorticists' works inspired by the European avant-garde. For example, Bush argues that Lewis's controlledly abstract compositions are 'emotional', 'dynamic' and entail 'narrative potentiality', suggesting to Pound the possibility of creating 'a long Imagiste poem'.²³ In his essay 'Pound and the Visual Arts' (1999), Dasenbrock suggests Pound's interest in the visual arts was due to 'their social and public nature, particularly in contrast to the far more private and interior world of poetry', as well as 'the rather greater availability of patrons in the art world'.²⁴ Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism* puts forward a similar thesis, regarding Imagism as a ploy for poetry to enter the 'cultural marketplace', following the example of Futurism.²⁵

In contrast, Rebecca Beasley's *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (2007) argues for a less utilitarian and superficial connection to the visual arts which began before Pound arrived in London. Beasley's account traces Pound's ongoing interest in painting as an artistic genre in great depth, although in my opinion her discussion of Imagism and Vorticism (in Chapter 2) neglects unjustly Pound's specific interest, beginning around 1913, in the European avant-garde's experiments in the visual arts. This significant turn subsequently led to Pound's affiliation with Vorticism and is indispensable in understanding his transforming aesthetics during the period, which I elucidate in my thesis. Contrary to Beasley's theory of Pound's 'anti-verbalism',²⁶ I argue that instead of denouncing literature for its limited ability of expression via words, Pound conceived the 'Image' as the antidote to conventional language and

²³ Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton; Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 46, 48.

²⁴ Reed Way Dasenbrock, 'Pound and the Visual Arts', in *Cambridge Companion Ezra Pound*, ed. by Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 224-235 (pp. 226, 228).

²⁵ Lawrence S. Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 38.

²⁶ Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 84.

rhetoric, as ‘word beyond formulated language’ (*Vorticism*, 204), a ‘meta-language of the arts’ expressing the essence of reality with the assistance of the visual.²⁷ Such a revised conception of language underlines Pound’s evolving definition of Imagism as a branch of Vorticism.

In my thesis I address a unifying element which ran through Pound’s quest – the search for the essence of artistic creation – which he variously termed ‘luminous detail’, ‘image’, ‘energy’, ‘vortex’, ‘primary pigment’ and ‘intensity’ at different points in time. The confusion generated by these various terms often baffles critics even to this day, but I seek to demonstrate that when considered in chronological order and in relation to Pound’s aesthetic development, they are less esoteric than they seem. I argue that credit is due to Pound in his attempts to develop critical terminology, novel aesthetic theories and frameworks to connect all the arts in their essence, and to ‘[call] things by their right names’.²⁸ In response to Julian Murphet’s critique in *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (2009) that the ‘primary pigment’ is a ‘pseudo-concept’, a compositional method which still relies on a transposition between artistic media and forms, contrary to Pound’s belief of expression being uniquely tied to form,²⁹ I enquire beyond the esoteric quality of Pound’s aesthetics and polemics, to chart their development and discuss their significance to modernist literature and visual arts.

²⁷ Julian Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 148.

²⁸ R.G. Hampson, “Experiments in Modernity”: Ford and Pound’, in *Pound in Multiple Perspective: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Gibson (London: Macmillan P., 1993), pp. 93-125 (p. 96).

²⁹ Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism*, p. 150.

T. E. Hulme

In my thesis I argue for Hulme's significant contributions to the aesthetic foundations of Imagism and Vorticism, which have rarely taken centre stage in academic studies of the movements, partly as he is not generally considered an active member of either movement. However, Hulme's intellectual efforts were in fact instrumental to the engendering of both movements. In 'The History of Imagism', Flint named Hulme the official 'ringleader' of the group of poets, which in March 1909 began meeting at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel, with a common goal to resuscitate contemporary English poetry by means of a variety of foreign models, including *vers libre*, French Symbolist poetry and Japanese *tanka* and *haikai*. Flint argued for a demonstrable lineage from this formative group to the launch of Imagism in 1912, when 'Mr. Pound published, at the end of his book "Ripostes," the complete poetical works of T. E. Hulme, five poems, thirty-three lines, with a preface in which these words occur: "As for the future, *Les Imagistes*, the descendants of the forgotten school of 1909 (previously referred to as the 'School of Images') have that in their keeping.'" (71)

As an amateur philosopher, Hulme was an ardent promoter of European avant-garde theories in England. The 'image' was first proposed by Hulme from his study of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who had links with the Symbolists and the Cubists.³⁰ Hulme also resided in Germany between 1912 to 1913, where he gained knowledge of various aspects of the German avant-garde, such as the art historian Wilhelm Worringer's theories and Expressionist groups such as Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter. These led him to formulate an anti-humanist, abstract and geometrical modern art, propounded in a series of art criticism in the *New Age*, and in a lecture titled 'The New Art and

³⁰ See Chapter 2 in Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, *Cubism and Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

Its Philosophy' delivered on 22 January 1914 at the Quest Society of London, alongside Lewis and Pound's lectures.³¹ Hulme's aesthetic ruminations provided theoretical support for the Vorticist artists in their quest to transplant the aesthetic ideas of the Continental avant-garde to the English arts. By tracing the transitions in Hulme's aesthetics and discussing the frequently neglected but crucial significance of Hulme's intellectual efforts in introducing the European avant-garde to an English audience, and his relationship with contemporary artists such as Pound and Lewis, I demonstrate his significant contributions to both Imagism and Vorticism and justify his positioning as one of the 'leading' figures of these movements.

Studies on Imagism and Vorticism discuss Hulme's contribution to varying extents, usually in greater depth in detailed studies such as Cork's *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* and Carr's *The Verse Revolutionaries*, in which the latter attributes a pioneering role to Hulme within the Imagist and Vorticist circles. Michael H. Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (1984) champions Hulme's significance more broadly in modernising the English arts, and argues that Hulme's aesthetic development and importance have not been properly assessed due to editorial reasons: in *Speculations* and *Futher Speculations*, the first two volumes of Hulme's collected writings, his works were not organised in chronological order, and thus the progression of his ideas could not be correctly identified. This fault is rectified by *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme* (1994) edited by Karen Csengeri, and in my thesis I discuss the writings of Hulme in chronological order where possible, in order to trace the development in his aesthetic ideas, particularly in relation to Imagist and Vorticist theories.

³¹ The event is detailed in Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 633-638.

Despite the integral role played by Hulme in the pre-war English arts, studies in which he takes centre stage are relatively rare, perhaps owing to his short career curtailed by the war and the aforementioned confusing editing of his writings. Besides biographical accounts, I refer to critical studies such as *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (2006) for discussions of Hulme's work and his connections to the Imagists and Vorticists. The editors argue that 'Hulmean Modernism' or 'the discursive networks' around Hulme, rather than any 'solitary creative force', brought about the English modernist innovations collectively.³² The volume is particularly useful in offering insightful discussions of the transition of Hulme's aesthetics and beliefs, from poetry, 'Image' and Bergson to the visual arts, Worringer's theories and geometrical abstraction, which continuity (despite the disparity) and significance for Imagism and Vorticism I explore in Chapter 4.

Wyndham Lewis

In contrast to Hulme and Pound, Lewis was not involved in Imagism but was the dominant founder of Vorticism. Another difference is that Lewis was both a painter and a writer – though prior to Vorticism he was largely known as a painter and only published very little writing.³³ Lewis's Vorticist efforts can be observed in both painting and writing; as the editor of *BLAST*, his literary contribution was considerable, including the manifestoes, the play *Enemy of the Stars* and 'Vortices and Notes', a diverse series of critical essays on modern art, altogether more voluminous than his visual works (six works reprinted in *BLAST*). His

³² Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Introduction: On the Significance of a Hulmean Modernism', in *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, ed. by Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (Aldershot, England, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-22 (p. 16).

³³ See Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis* (Santa Barbara, Calif: Black Sparrow Press, 1978), pp. 223-224.

literary contribution further increased in *BLAST* 2 with many essays, including the extensive article ‘A Review of Contemporary Art’ in which he discussed Vorticism and the European avant-garde at length, and his short story ‘The Crowd Master’. Outside of *BLAST*, Lewis was an equally vocal advocate and defender of Vorticism in the press and a public persona as much as Pound. It is therefore essential to engage with both Lewis’s paintings and writings in understanding his Vorticists aesthetics. Critical questions include Lewis’s discussion and positioning of Vorticist aesthetics in relation to the European avant-garde, and his interpretations of apparently irreconcilable dichotomies such as ‘life’ and ‘art’, and ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’. Although the discussion of Lewis does not form a chapter in my thesis, I refer to his works frequently when discussing the relationship between Vorticism and the European avant-garde.

There has been a steady output of literature on Lewis throughout the years, although much scholarly attention has been dedicated to Lewis’s works beginning in the 1920s and his politics. In contrast, his earlier works and aesthetics, which is the focus of my thesis, have been less well documented and discussed. My thesis also investigates the relationship between the European avant-garde and Lewis’s interdisciplinary works in *BLAST*, a complex interaction involving both artistic appropriation and criticism. Academic studies begun to read Lewis ‘from within a European tradition’ with Fredric Jameson’s *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979);³⁴ Paul Edwards’s *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (2000) offers a comprehensive account of Lewis’s life and works, and is particularly useful to my thesis as Edwards devotes extensive critical analysis to Lewis’s Vorticist phase and his

³⁴ Paul Edwards, ‘Legacy’, in *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Andrzej Gasiorek and Nathan Waddell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 219-233 (p. 226).

intellectual relationship with the European avant-garde. Besides this monograph, Edwards has also contributed many extensive studies of Lewis, which are helpful in thinking about the dualism and contradictions of Lewis's interdisciplinary aesthetics.

Two recent edited volumes of essays, *Wyndham Lewis and the Cultures of Modernity* (2011) and *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide* (2015) present a range of tangents in which Lewis's aesthetics can be understood and influences can be traced. The former volume seeks to illustrate Lewis's interactions with the contemporary cultural milieu, including other literary figures, artists, creative genres, cultural institutions and networks, in order to investigate his work in relation to his contemporary cultural context, which is similar to the aim of my thesis in tracing contemporary influences of the European avant-garde in Lewis's works and Vorticism. I also discuss Lewis's Vorticist aesthetics and theories in relation to Pound and Hulme's, in order to indicate the aesthetic variety amongst individuals in the Vorticist group, giving rise to a heterogeneous if not conflicting group aesthetics. The latter volume includes a range of essays spanning Lewis's entire career, where discussions of Lewis's early years, cultural critique and technology are particularly relevant to my thesis.

Coalitions

Besides focusing on individuals, studies on Imagism and Vorticism often portray coteries, especially writers and artists in connection with Pound and Lewis. Carr's *The Verse Revolutionaries* charts the group dynamics within Imagism and its multiple fractions owing to members' disparate aesthetics and opinion. A recently published volume of letters titled *Imagist Dialogues: Letters between Aldington, Flint and Others* (2009) edited by Michael Copp provides

insightful primary materials into the Imagists' relationships tensioned by rivalry, publicity and copyright – the right to use the name Imagism.

In terms of Vorticist circles, Timothy Materer's *Vortex: Pound, Eliot, and Lewis* (1979) focuses on the vortex as 'a sign of creative energy, convergence, and order', and discusses its relevance to the works of Pound, Lewis, Eliot, as well as Gaudier-Brzeska and Joyce.³⁵ Reed Way Dasenbrock's *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (1985) focuses on Pound and Lewis and discusses the various aspects of Vorticist aesthetics, as well as the legacy of Vorticism respectively in Pound and Lewis's later works. Vincent Sherry's *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (1993) sets out the influence of European (particularly French) modernist thoughts on Pound and Lewis, in terms of the social and political elements of their aesthetics. All these studies are helpful in thinking about the role played by individuals in their common rally for a change in English arts and letters, paralleling the radical innovations on the Continent.

Other 'coterie' studies focus on certain individuals and tropes. *Pound's Artists: Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy* (1985) edited by Richard Humphreys focuses on Pound's relationship with fellow artists, and in his essay Humphreys discusses Pound's involvement in the visual arts in relation to Gaudier-Brzeska, Epstein and Alvin Coburn Langdon. Jane Beckett and Deborah Cherry discuss the female Vorticist members in their essays in *Women Artists and Modernism* (1998) and *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918. The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World* also explores the works of Gaudier-Brzeska and Coburn Langdon, regarding them simultaneously as Vorticists as well as artists with individual aesthetics. Attention to such artists

³⁵ Timothy Materer, *Vortex: Pound, Eliot, and Lewis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 11.

besides the key figures of Imagism and Vorticism expands the study of European avant-garde influence in the English arts, and testifies to the heterogeneous nature of both movements.

Modernisms

Modernism is a huge field of study, and as Peter Nicholls demonstrates in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, there are indeed many variations of modernism across different periods and regions. The understanding of each variety of ‘modernism’ begins from understanding its locale: Levenson’s *A Genealogy of Modernism* is one of the first studies which discusses English modernism in its historical context, accounting for ‘a recognizable lineage in a specific geographic centre during a confined period’, hence the ‘genealogy’ in the title. But Levenson also outlines issues in applying the concept of genealogy to Modernism: namely the principal figures ‘keep changing’ as ‘no one figure followed all the turnings of the literary movement’, and the rapid changes in literary taste and criticism during the period, which were often ‘hasty formulae of polemicists’.³⁶ My thesis attempts to balance between individuals and the collective (as well as the historical and cultural contexts), and approach Imagism and Vorticism with critical skepticism as Perloff advises regarding ‘*ism* studies’.

Tim Armstrong surveys modernism on a more conceptual level in *Modernism: A Cultural History* (2005), arguing against defining modernism by canonical figures as the ‘monumentality’ of their works ‘comes at the cost of the suppression of a broader discursive world’. Armstrong approaches the topic by outlining and discussing the different periods of modernism and factors at stake, including transnational cultural exchange and translation, ‘sites’ of modernism

³⁶ Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. viii-x.

such as salons, galleries and the press, as well as nationalism, regionalism and feminism.³⁷ My thesis similarly investigates the impact of national and socio-cultural factors on the interdisciplinary pursuits of Imagism and Vorticism, and some salient concerns are outlined in the following.

Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the most significant factors in the context of early twentieth century English arts, where the turbulent and rapid changes in politics, such as the waning of imperialist pursuits, the increase in national and cultural competition from the Continent and the imminent prospect of war made their marks on artistic creations. The subsequent war defined the 1910s and further charged the arts towards cultural nationalism. England's customary identity as provincial in art and its longstanding practice of adopting a 'policy of cultural internationalism as the proper way to "modernize" English art and literature' were challenged in this milieu of intense international competition,³⁸ in face of the increasingly nationalist discourses on the Continent. In France, Apollinaire employed nationalism as a justification for Cubism's experiments, and in Germany the concept of 'national art' was gaining popularity, although with an aim to counteract 'the commodification of culture and the institutions associated with it' with 'the idea of the nation as a carrier of cultural regeneration'.³⁹

Like other English artistic movements of the period, Imagism and Vorticism were inevitably subjected to the context of nationalism. However, for the

³⁷ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), pp. 24, 27, 44-46.

³⁸ Paul Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde: Nation and Empire, 1901-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 54, 84, 181n85.

³⁹ Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 120-121; Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2007), p. 159.

Imagists and Vorticists, the situation was complicated by the fact that a significant number of them were not English nationals, though working in the cosmopolitan locale of London, a meeting place for differing nationalities. Pound went as far to suggest in ‘Through Alien Eyes. III.’ (*New Age*, 30 January 1913) that the finest authors working in London ‘are all foreigners’ (300), deliberately blurring the distinction between English, Anglo-American and Continental European identities. Therefore nationalism occupies a curious but significant position in understanding Imagism and Vorticism’s relationships with the European avant-garde and their contemporary situation and reception.

Founded in England, Imagism was a purely artistic movement without a nationalist agenda; the group’s prime concern was to refine the art of poetry by employing diverse traditions and practices which members agreed to call ‘good’ regardless of their origins. However, the movement had a number of conspicuous connections with the United States: many of its members were Americans, including Pound, H.D., Lowell and Fletcher, and their poetry first and frequently appeared in Harriet Monroe’s Chicago-based little magazine *Poetry*. During the war, Imagism dwindled in England but thrived in the (then still neutral) United States due to the efforts of Lowell, who aimed to establish Imagist poetry as part of the American poetry canon and heritage as Melissa Bradshaw argues.⁴⁰

Vorticism’s relationship with nationalism was even more complicated. From its beginning the movement declared itself ‘the Great English Vortex’, intending to champion English arts in reaction to Futurism. However, the Vorticists also paradoxically described themselves as ‘Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World’ in their manifesto (*B1*, 1, 30); *BLAST* simultaneously blessed and blasted

⁴⁰ Melissa Bradshaw, ‘The Fall of the House of Ezra: How Amy Lowell Used Edgar Allan Poe to Americanize Imagism’, presented at the 128th MLA Annual Convention, Boston, 4 January 2013.

Englishness, featuring ‘vast and often incoherent tracts of invective castigating every sacred cow in English national life, while at the same time patriotically praising England’s potential as the world headquarters for Modernist revolution’.⁴¹ Within the pages of *BLAST*, notions of individuality, regionalism, nationality and universality are juxtaposed, where nationalistic discourse is in fact countered by extensive discussions of the European avant-garde. Moreover, the key drivers of Vorticism were not ‘English’: Lewis was half-English, Pound was American and Gaudier-Brzeska was French. This variety of national identities complicates *BLAST*’s apparently nationalist claims, and calls for a more in-depth examination of the Vorticist nationalist rhetoric beyond its face value.

Paul Peppis discusses Vorticism’s nationalist context and discourse at length in *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde: Nation and Empire, 1901-1918* (2000). He opines that Vorticism is not just a product of ‘cultural internationalism’, as Perloff suggests in *The Futurist Moment*, but rather a reaction to ‘rising European competition [...] in ways that make English culture and cultural doctrine both more cosmopolitan and more nationalistic’. He argues that ‘*BLAST* provokes patriotism to promote Vorticism’, as seen from the fact that ‘the foreign target of their opposition’, initially Italian Futurism, was reoriented to Prussian imperialism in the second issue of *BLAST*, so that ‘the Vorticists could assert that their project was allied with the war effort against Germany’. The inclusion of war art in *BLAST* 2 ‘also manifests the Vorticists’ wartime conviction that art can and should engage the conflict using modernist visual techniques’.⁴² But Peppis recognises that the Vorticists also ‘term[ed]

⁴¹ Andrew Gibbon Williams, *William Roberts: An English Cubist* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2004), p. 24.

⁴² Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 4, 15, 53, 90, 97-98, 114.

themselves “Individualists” unfettered by nationality, even while proclaiming their creative works “fundamentally English”; Lewis was also adamant that “politically souled” artists who create naturalistic propaganda pictures at the government’s behest reduce art’s function to reflecting the status quo’, and instead called for ‘an “abstract and universal” art’ against conservative tendencies.⁴³ However, although Peppis’s study pinpoints the intrinsic dichotomies and contradictions in the Vorticist nationalist rhetoric, he does not seek to connect or resolve them in light of their aesthetics. He also regards Vorticism primarily in a nationalist discourse and bypasses the significant impact which the European avant-garde had on its aesthetics. In my thesis I seek to repair these issues. I also explore how Lewis’s personal aesthetics shaped Vorticism, as the dominance of his contradictory statements in the two issues of *BLAST* complicates Vorticism’s nationalist discourse.

Peter Nicholls suggests the nationality of Imagist and Vorticist members affected the nature of the collective, arguing that as many Imagists and Vorticists were not British by birth, ‘their sense of belonging to a shared avant-garde was considerably more ambivalent than that of comparable groupings on the Continent.’ Nicholls further reasons that, ‘[p]artly as a result of this designedly loose alliance, London’s principal contributions to the history of the avant-garde – Imagism and Vorticism – proved to be moments rather than movements, short-lived phases in a more complex history’.⁴⁴ However, the divergent aesthetics of both movements were affected more by members’ different aesthetic inclinations rather than their national identities; and although the latter is an important factor in European avant-garde movements in general, it does not determine or dominate their aesthetic outcomes. Notable exceptions

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 115, 164.

⁴⁴ Nicholls, *Modernisms*, p. 163.

such as the Parisian avant-garde were not founded on homogeneity of nationality, but on the common belief in the spirit of aesthetic innovations and solidarity. Similarly, I argue that the diverse nationalities of the Imagist and Vorticist members were not the main cause for their lack of aesthetic cohesion, and that the emphasis on individualism, the ‘designedly loose alliance’ and the short lifespan of the movements, compared to more systematic and regimented avant-garde movements on the Continent, do not necessarily undermine their aesthetic significance.

Cultural Contexts

As both Imagism and Vorticism sought to react against the cultural backwardness of contemporary England with their aesthetic experiments, it is important to understand the cultural contexts of the movements. Peter Brooker’s *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (2007) is exemplary in this respect, in which he reconstructs the cultural avant-garde localised in London in certain cafes, restaurants and cabarets through many anecdotal evidences of the different groups of artists, portraying vividly the particular social and cultural milieu of which Imagism and Vorticism belonged. Christopher Butler’s *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (1994) is also helpful in tracing the wider contemporary social and cultural contexts, in which he explores the aesthetics of the English arts in response to Continental developments and comments on the exceptional interaction between the arts in this period, as mediated by new ideas and common ends.⁴⁵

A number of studies also connect modernism with the context of cultural markets, following Andreas Huyssen’s *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass*

⁴⁵ Butler, *Early Modernism*, p. xv.

Culture, Postmodernism (1986), which brings to light the relationship between modernism and mass culture, or more particularly consumer culture. Huyssen's situation of modernism in the social context inspired accounts which link modernist works and commodity culture, such as John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (1992), which focuses on the high / low culture divide and the elitist leaning of certain modernist authors. Lawrence Rainey's works consider modernism primarily in 'institutional terms', as 'constituted by a specific array of marketing and publicity structures that were integrated in varying degrees with the larger economic apparatus of its time'.⁴⁶ Ann L. Ardis' *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922* (2000) also comments on modernism's relationship with mass culture, but she argues that modernist authors adopted scientific and misogynist discourse as camouflage for their radical works, in order for them to be accepted by mainstream culture.

Both Imagism and Vorticism simultaneously sought to survive in and react against a consumer culture, best exemplified by its favoured form of publication outlets: the little magazines. Timothy Materer's 'Make It Sell! Ezra Pound Advertises Modernism' (1996) gives a thorough account of Pound's manoeuvres and interactions with various little magazines on behalf of Imagism and Vorticism, as well as other artists who he championed. Pound's elitist attitude certainly posed contradictions with publishing in mainstream / mass culture magazines, and his seemingly misogynist attitude might be questioned in view of his frequent dealings with the female editors and patrons of *Poetry*, the *Egoist*

⁴⁶ Lawrence Rainey, 'Introduction', in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence Rainey (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. xix-xxix (p. xxiv); see also Lawrence Rainey, 'The Cultural Economy of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 33-68, and Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*.

(formerly the *Freewoman* and the *New Freewoman*) and the *Little Review*. However, the importance of the little magazines as a publicity outlet and ‘an “official organ”’ (*P/LR*, 6) subjected Pound to compromise on his (lack of) control of these publication ventures.⁴⁷

Besides discussing Pound’s relationships with these magazines, Materer also suggests that ‘[t]here is in fact a closer parallel between the techniques of modern advertising and imagist techniques’ in their common goal of presenting ‘things’ directly, but argues that Pound was philosophically naïve in suggesting that the ‘image’ provides ‘a direct, unmediated access to reality’, and that the concept of the ‘image’ as only real ‘in our sense’ was overstated by Pound with an air of scientific certainty.⁴⁸ Murphet in *Multimedia Modernism* also discusses Pound’s ambition in making literature a ‘thing’ by aligning it with other artistic media of Vorticism such as painting, and expresses skepticism towards Pound’s ‘pseudo-concept’ of the ‘primary pigment’.⁴⁹ These critiques are helpful in thinking through Pound’s development and promotion of an interdisciplinary aesthetics, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

The flourishing of magazine studies in the past decade provides many models of enquiry in investigating the role the genre played in promoting the new arts. An edited volume, *Little Magazines and Modernism: New Approaches* (2007) presents essays on little magazines such as the *Freewoman*, the *Egoist* and the *Little Review*, which were instrumental to promoting Imagism and Vorticism, as well as modernism and the avant-garde as a whole. Faith Binckes’s *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde: Reading*

⁴⁷ Timothy Materer, ‘Make It Sell! Ezra Pound Advertises Modernism’, in *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading*, ed. by Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 17-36 (pp. 20-23).

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 27-28, 32.

⁴⁹ Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism*, pp. 140, 150.

Rhythm (1910-1914) (2010) is a case study of *Rhythm*, a little magazine with an emphasis on the European avant-garde and the visual arts. This study is helpful for understanding the cultural context of interdisciplinary and ‘inter-national’ little magazine publication, and the critical mode and methods of recent modernist studies of the magazine. Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman’s *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (2010) offers practical guidelines and discusses various aspects in the field of study, with an emphasis on Pound’s important role in the genre. The three-volume *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* offers detailed discussion of various Anglo-American and European little magazines, which significantly expands the modernist networks of circulation and influence via the medium, which is helpful for tracing the interactions between Imagism, Vorticism and the European avant-garde in print culture. My thesis investigates the significance of the little magazines as a publication medium of both Imagism and Vorticism, and their practical functions in propagating the movements through the complex interactions between artists, editors and the public across artistic and national boundaries.

Avant-Gardes

Distinctions have often been asserted by academics concerning ‘modernism’ and the ‘avant-garde’. Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974, English translation published in 1984) defines the nature of avant-garde movements as ‘an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society’; modernism is defined as a cultural mode in which art is beheld by the individual as consumer and institutions instead of belonging to the collective, which negates its social impact, and institutionalises and separates it from the praxis of life. In contrast, avant-garde movements sought ‘to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art’

in their radical anti-academicism.⁵⁰ Matei Calinescu develops Bürger's theories in *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (1987), and suggests the avant-garde as a phase of modernity in the broadest sense. However, the avant-garde is more 'radical' yet 'dogmatic', relying on certain fixed rules of aesthetics which could be both self-assertive and self-destructive. And although modernism and the avant-garde share a common objective of a renewal in art, they are different and mutually exclusive concepts as Calinescu comments, '[i]t is true that modernity defined as a "tradition against itself" rendered possible the avant-garde, but it is equally true that the latter's negative radicalism and systematic antiaestheticism leave no room for the artistic reconstruction of the world attempted by the great modernists',⁵¹ evidently referring to the avant-garde's rejection of traditions, 'art for art's sake' and the institutionalisation of art.

Imagism and Vorticism have typically been considered home-grown Anglophone modernist movements. Both have often been claimed and discussed in the context of English culture and politics owing to their limited presence outside England, and considered rearguard in comparison with movements of the European avant-garde with similar intentions but more radical gestures and greater publicity. Peter Nicholls suggests that unlike many European countries, '[n]either Britain nor America possessed a powerful academic culture on the European model, and this may explain why [the English modernist] writers felt little direct hostility towards art as an institution and, accordingly, no desire to dissolve the boundaries between art and life.'⁵² In fact,

⁵⁰ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Minnesota University Press, 1984), pp. 22, 25, 48-49.

⁵¹ Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 96-97, 140-141.

⁵² Nicholls, *Modernisms*, p. 163. Original emphasis.

the Imagists and Vorticists' apparent aim to institutionalise their art has been popularised by studies which focus on their elitist marketing means, for example Lawrence Rainey's works. Nicholls also argues that Anglo-American modernism was 'developed in part as a *critique* of modernity', where 'the "new" was a highly equivocal category, since cultural renovation was frequently projected as a *return* to the values of a previous age'.⁵³ This assessment seemingly concurs with Rainey's opinion of Imagism as a rearguard effort to rescue and reclaim the arts from the masses.⁵⁴

It is certainly true that Imagism and Vorticism's experimental attempts were dwarfed by the European avant-garde movements', which sought not only to revolutionise the means of artistic expression, but also to transform drastically the use of materials, as seen in Futurist words-in-freedom, Cubist collage and Expressionist non-representational abstraction. Rainey describes Imagism as 'a movement to end movements', being 'informal, antitheoretical, absorbed in matters of writerly technique, and averse to more global programs that linked poetry to contemporary social transformations or posed questions about the status and functions of art', which he identifies as 'the first anti-avant-garde' in Anglo-American literature.⁵⁵ Vorticism has also been considered rearguard despite its reactive stance and aggressive rhetoric. In his essay 'The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism' (2006), Martin Puchner similarly describes Vorticism as 'rear-guardism', in the sense that it was 'located within the field of advancement but [is] sceptical of its most extreme practitioners; rear-guardism seeks to correct and contain the avant-garde's excess without falling behind and losing touch with it entirely'. Puchner recalls

⁵³ Ibid. Original emphases.

⁵⁴ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

Bürger's definition of the avant-garde, categorising Vorticism as modernism rather than avant-garde, but suggests that 'the strategies of *Blast* with respect to the continental avant-garde are much too contradictory to be classified according to Bürger's modernism/avant-garde scheme'. Vorticism is thus ultimately 'a transitional project, caught between avant-garde and Modernism, and between the Continent and England'.⁵⁶

Although Bürger's distinctions have remained influential, there have been attempts to challenge his definitions, particularly in view of the English context. Josephine M. Guy points out that in fact avant-gardism can be defined in terms of aesthetics or politics, denoting formal or aesthetic innovation and 'subversive political function' respectively. She critiques theories such as Bürger's which focus only on one of these aspects, and argues that 'according to Burger's criteria *only* Vorticism [but not Imagism] can be authentically avant-garde', where the emphasis on the 'function' of 'cultural opposition' necessarily belittles the importance of the literary innovations of Imagism. She proposes that understanding these two tropes in synthesis can give rise to a more comprehensive notion of avant-gardism.⁵⁷ Guy also argues for a different definition of the avant-garde in England as distinct from the Continent, as '[t]he concepts of historical rupture and of the repudiation of tradition developed by French historians' were rejected in Britain, leaving 'virtually no conditions in which avant-garde activity [in the Continental conception] could flourish', and that English artists 'who do not easily fit existing definitions of avant-gardism' have been neglected. She argues for the necessity of a redefinition of

⁵⁶ Martin Puchner, 'The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism', in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 44-67 (pp. 45, 63, 66n30).

⁵⁷ Josephine M. Guy, *The British Avant-Garde: The Theory and Politics of Tradition* (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 2-3, 35, 6. Original emphasis.

'avant-garde activity' in England, where artists 'had to accommodate *themselves* to a tradition, not a tradition to their work' for validation of innovativeness, and that subversion lies in a difference in the artists' use of tradition compared to their contemporaries.⁵⁸

Through analysing the aesthetic innovations of Imagism and Vorticism and evaluating their relationship with the European avant-garde, my thesis aims to discuss and endorse their unique contributions to the avant-garde. This entails a constant negotiation between the English and the Continent, as Jane Goldman argues in *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (2004), 'a separatist, nation-based model [...] is ultimately inadequate to the understanding of the international forum of avant-garde poetics', a 'continuum' in which the English modernists 'may also simultaneously be placed' alongside Continental and international counterparts.⁵⁹ Indeed, the Imagists and Vorticists were keenly aware of the developments of the European avant-garde and absorbed a plethora of interdisciplinary influences from a range of movements. This led to both innovative and imitative artistic outcomes, in which the references and connections to the European avant-garde can hardly be overlooked, and suggests the development of their aesthetics as across and beyond national boundaries. Moreover, these influences were not received passively, but were subjected to interpretations and contradictions by the English artists. My thesis seeks to 're-locate' Imagism and Vorticism in the context of the European avant-garde by detailing these processes of influence and interaction.

While Imagism and Vorticism might seem antithetical to the concept of the avant-garde, being individualistic, intellectual and elitist in their efforts against

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 56, 38, 71. Original emphasis.

⁵⁹ Jane Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 81, 93.

popular culture and artistic amateurism, as well as their eclectic passéism – in the sense of valuing certain past (and largely learned) traditions – I argue that the ultimate aim of Imagism and Vorticism is not so much ‘art for art’s sake’, but to create an art which is fitting for the modern age and the modern mind, reflecting a concern for the contemporary. The differential use of tradition in Imagism aims to modernise poetry rather than to retreat to passéism, to reconnect art with life rather than to institutionalise, as Pound envisioned: ‘a man feeling the divorce of life and his art may naturally try to resurrect a forgotten mode if he finds in that mode some leaven, or if he think [*sic*] he sees in it some element lacking in contemporary art which might unite that art again to its sustenance, life.’ (*LE*, 11) Vorticism also clearly demonstrated the intention to be on a par with other European avant-garde movements, and adopted similarly radical rhetorical and visual languages to represent the contemporary reality. For the Imagists and Vorticists, the purpose of art is to think and experiment according to their aesthetic objectives for the modern age, instead of creating uncritically and imitatively by conforming to conventional standards.

Furthermore, although the radicalism of Imagism and Vorticism might not be socially or politically-oriented, Levenson points out that ‘[t]he polemical vehemence of the avant-garde is only understandable when linked to a vision of the larger social whole, a vision of the whole as moribund, decadent and stifling to creative endeavour’.⁶⁰ There was definitely rebellious if not revolutionary energy in Imagism and Vorticism, which was located in a network of radical political rhetoric similar to the reformation tendencies of the European avant-garde, for example in the socially progressive little magazines. Altogether, such counter-evidence suggests the necessity to reconsider the positioning of

⁶⁰ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 138.

Imagism and Vorticism in modernism and the avant-garde, in a complex, paradoxical space between surface dichotomies such as Continent and England, ‘art’ and ‘life’, as well as aesthetics and socio-politics. My thesis goes beyond conventional perspectives of nationalism and modernism / avant-garde, in order to assess the complexity and multiplicity of Imagism and Vorticism’s engagements with the European context.

Of course, the Imagists and Vorticists were also influenced by various non-European aesthetic systems, for example Japanese poetry and visual art, as well as Oceanic and African primitive art. But the focus of my thesis is on their connections with the European avant-garde; as Rainey notes, recent scholarship on modernism has increasingly negotiated between London and the Continent rather than resolutely focusing on either.⁶¹ I explore the tangible interactions between Imagism and Vorticism and the European avant-garde, including the French avant-garde circle, German Expressionism and Italian Futurism, and argue that the international awareness and avant-garde aspirations of Imagism and Vorticism indeed call into question their commonly assumed nature as ‘English’ and ‘modernist’ movements.

French Influences

The French artistic tradition influenced Imagism and Vorticism in different ways due to their respective artistic media: Imagist poetry was significantly indebted to contemporary schools of experiments in *vers libre*, whereas Vorticist artworks were inspired by and reacted against the French visual avant-garde. Imagists such as Flint, Aldington, Lowell and Fletcher were much taken with modern French poetry, in contrast with Pound’s initial archaism and H.D.’s

⁶¹ Rainey, ‘Introduction’, p. xxii.

Greek inclinations. René Taupin composed the first academic study of Imagism and the Imagists in 1929, with a focus on their relationship with French poetry. It was 45 years before Cyrena N. Pondrom published the sourcebook *The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry, 1900-1920* (1974), which contains many primary writings, including articles on and correspondence with contemporary French poets and poetry, and provides useful commentary on the relationship between French and English poetry of the period.

Pondrom argues that besides poetic ‘influence’ – which she defines as including actual or technical imitation, as well as ‘conceptual and theoretical influence’ – French visual culture also impacted on English poetry:

in the years 1915-20 British poets’ interest in the French symbolist period led them to models which reinforced the growth of an abstract poetic form earlier prompted by the revolution in the visual arts between 1907 and 1914. Both currents converged and their individual impacts henceforward often cannot be clearly distinguished, despite the fact that the nineteenth and twentieth-century influences generally rest on different aesthetic foundations.⁶²

Indeed, the various interactions between Imagism and Vorticism and the French artistic circle were not limited to the avant-garde movements, but also what were regarded as ‘new’ in the contemporary English perspective, for example Symbolism and Post-impressionism.

In my thesis, I discuss the various French influences in the English movements in terms of artistic and poetic techniques, for example *vers libre* and the use of colours and multiple perspectives. I also focus on individuals who facilitated the Anglo-French artistic exchange, for example Flint and Aldington in

⁶² Cyrena N. Pondrom, *The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry, 1900-1920* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 20, 43.

introducing French *vers libre* to the English audience. I argue that such an exchange was mutual with the examples of two French poets, Henri M. Barzun and Guillaume Apollinaire, and discuss their interests in and interactions with the English artists. I also explore the artistic exchange network through the Anglo-American and French little magazines, and argue the medium as a fertile ground for burgeoning exchange, a fruitful process which was terminated by the war. Yet the French magazines suggested many publishing strategies for the Anglo-American counterparts, contributing to the propagation of Imagism and Vorticism in wartime. Last but not least, I liken the English and French avant-gardes in their interdisciplinary experiments, and chart the development of Vorticism in relation to the French visual arts. Altogether, I hope to demonstrate the dynamic pattern of interactions between Imagism, Vorticism and the French avant-garde.

German Expressionism

In terms of influence from Germany, I explore the impact of German Expressionist thought and artistic practices on Vorticist works and aesthetic theories. One significant connection is abstraction, both as an artistic method and an entity endowed with philosophical significance. This was introduced from two sources: the art historian Wilhelm Worringer's theories and the work of the painter Wassily Kandinsky, through the interpretations of individual members, including Pound, Lewis and Edward Wadsworth. Kandinsky was featured prominently in both issues of *BLAST*; besides being a painter and a leader of *Der Blaue Reiter*, he was also a prolific aesthetician, whose theories certainly inspired the Vorticists. I consult Kandinsky's writings in the period to gauge his aesthetics, and discuss Lewis's antagonistic response to his transcendental and

metaphysical approach to artistic creation. A nationalist perspective is also relevant to my discussion, as Britain went to war with Germany between the two issues of *BLAST* and beyond, which Peppis argues had altered *BLAST*'s polemical attitude towards Germany. I address the curious inconsistencies in Vorticism's nationalist rhetoric, programme, aims, aesthetics and attitudes towards German arts and culture in the two issues of *BLAST*, and discuss both the Expressionists and Vorticists' aesthetic ambiguities as expressed in their multivalent polemics and works.

Scholars including Ulrich Weisstein and Richard Sheppard have pointed out the difficulties in approximating the English and German movements due to contextual differences. Social conditions such as patriarchal repression and political persecution in Germany, crucial for the engendering of Expressionist aesthetics, were absent in England.⁶³ However, my approach does not seek to offer a reductive, unilateral comparison which Weisstein and Sheppard caution against. Rather, I argue that an assessment of the significance and application of German influence, through a discussion of Expressionist aesthetics and textual analysis of *BLAST*, can enhance our understanding of Vorticism and its aesthetic position as a 'Northern avant-garde' movement,⁶⁴ despite *BLAST*'s nationalist claims.

The relationship between Vorticism and contemporary German arts and culture received relatively less critical attention than the French and Italian influences, yet which is no less tangible and significant. Contemporary

⁶³ Ulrich Weisstein, 'Vorticism: Expressionism English Style', in *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon: 21 Essays and a Bibliography*, ed. by Ulrich Weisstein (Paris: Didier, 1973), pp. 167-180; Sheppard, 'Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison'.

⁶⁴ I borrow this term from Scott W. Klein, '"Our Compatriots Improve": Vorticism, Germany, and the Paradoxes of the Northern Avant-Garde', presented at the Wyndham Lewis: Networks, Dialogues, and Communities Conference, Institute of English Studies, University of London, 30 November 2012.

Anglo-German interactions and influence from Germany are detailed in accounts such as Philip Head's *Vorticist Antecedents* (1997) and Matthew C. Potter's *The Inspirational Genius of Germany: British Art and Germanism, 1850-1939* (2012). Scott W. Klein's essay in *Vorticism: New Perspectives* illustrates convincingly many connections between Germany and England as sites of 'Northern avant-garde'. Klein highlights the commonalities between Expressionism and Vorticism, such as their goals in attaining graphic and nationalistic intensity, and their nature as secession movements. He also points out the many formal similarities in their visual styles, their interdisciplinary publications such as *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* and *BLAST*, and short abstract dramas such as Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* and Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars*.⁶⁵ Andrzej Gasiorek also suggests that 'Vorticism drew on Worriingerian ideas when it associated "Northern" art with mysticism, satire, and universality': he compares *BLAST* to German little magazines such as *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, and suggests *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* as 'an influence' and 'a European forerunner of *BLAST*'.⁶⁶

In *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (2006), Martin Puchner discusses connections between Expressionism and Vorticism, and suggests *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* as 'one model for *Blast's* pan-art ambition', reflecting Lewis's intention to 'integrate literature and painting', as exemplified by the inclusion in *BLAST* excerpts from Kandinsky's treatise on painting, *On the Spiritual of Art*. Puchner also opines that 'many of the aesthetic

⁶⁵ Scott W. Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition', in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 68-86.

⁶⁶ Andrzej Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume I, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 290-313 (pp. 292, 299).

doctrines expressed in *Blast* can be traced directly to Worringer and to Hulme's critique of Bergson'.⁶⁷ This illustrates the synthesis of diverse Continental artistic practices and thoughts in Vorticism, and suggests the significance of Hulme (despite not officially a Vorticist) in engendering Vorticism, which I discuss in Chapter 4. Overall, I argue the significant influence of German arts on Vorticism which should not be overlooked despite Vorticism's self-fashioning nationalist rhetoric.

Italian Futurism

I have specified 'Italian' Futurism to denote the seminal movement led by F. T. Marinetti in Italy, which subsequently became a much wider, pan-European drive, particularly in Russia with its local variants. Despite the fact that Vorticism was a direct consequence of the English artists' refusal of and distinguishing measure against their works being affiliated with Futurism, from its beginning Vorticism had been much confused with Futurism. The similarity of their spectacular, propagandist manners led many to regard Vorticism as a new Futurist fad, imitating the Italian movement's self-popularising drastic rhetoric and publicity stunts.⁶⁸ For example, an anonymous reviewer in the *New Statesman* remarked dismissively, 'what is Vorticism but Futurism in an English disguise [...] bottled in England, and bottled badly? . . . the two groups differ from each other not in their aims, but in their degrees of competence'.⁶⁹

Substantial scholarship has been devoted to Imagism and Vorticism's relationship with Italian Futurism since Wees and Cork's pioneering accounts in the 1970s. Marjorie Perloff argues in *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the*

⁶⁷ Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 126-127, 278n32.

⁶⁸ Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 82, 93.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Rainey, 'The Cultural Economy of Modernism', pp. 42, 64n20.

Poetry of the Pound Tradition (1985) that much of Pound's aesthetics was derived from Futurism, for example his notion of 'vortex'.⁷⁰ Subsequent studies, such as Lawrence Rainey's works, focus on the impact of Futurism's marketing and publicity manoeuvres on Imagism and Vorticism. Even in more recent scholarship, Vorticism has been regarded as significantly indebted to Futurism; Roberto Baronti Marchiò argues for Futurism's impact in England in 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England' (2000), insisting that the Vorticists 'inherited [from Marinetti] their imperative to total change through innovative artistic techniques'.⁷¹ Dominika Buchowska and Steven L. Wright also put forward a similar thesis in their recent essay, 'The Futurist Invasion of Great Britain, 1910-1914' in the *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* (2012).

In contrast, Paul Edwards denies Futurist impact on English literature in 'Futurism, Literature and the Market' (2004), suggesting Imagism's 'connection with the culture that Futurism embraced is almost entirely negative', and that Futurism's 'effect on [English] literature remained virtually non-existent'. As for Vorticism, he remarks that 'it is reasonable to consider Vorticism in its main feature as a Futurist avant-garde movement', acknowledging Futurism's 'unquestionable influence in forming a visual avant-garde in England'. Despite being an enthusiastic scholar of Lewis and Vorticism, Edwards however dismisses rather pessimistically the movement's epoch-making potential, opining that '*Blast* and Vorticism did not succeed in opening a space in British culture for the avant-garde', and suggests that 'there was to be no place for an

⁷⁰ Marjorie Perloff, *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 40, 42.

⁷¹ Roberto Baronti Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. by Günter Berghaus (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 100-121 (p. 121).

avant-garde literature in England' and 'as yet virtually no niche in the marketplace for Modernist writing'.⁷²

In my thesis, I seek to balance these two extremes of opinion on Futurist influence on Imagism and Vorticism by a careful comparative study, discussing a range of aspects such as publishing, aesthetics and group dynamics, in which Imagism and Vorticism strove to carve out a niche for the avant-garde in England and the United States. I address a number of aesthetic challenges brought to Imagism and Vorticism by Futurism, for example the 'great divide' 'between art and life, high art and mass culture' in avant-garde movements,⁷³ the relationship between rhetoric, polemics and aesthetics; the dualistic standoff between Futurism and Vorticism in a public contest of aesthetic originality and impact, for which the 'vortex' was devised as an emblem of distinction; as well as their definitions and interpretations of dichotomies such as 'life' and 'art', and 'representation' and 'abstraction' in the modern age. I also explore how the Vorticists regarded Marinetti's aesthetics and that of other Futurists, leading to questions on the individual and the collective, as well as the ownership and membership of artistic movements, which were problematically volatile in Imagism and Vorticism. Overall, I hope to demonstrate Futurism's important role in the self-definition of Imagism and Vorticism.

⁷² Paul Edwards, 'Futurism, Literature and the Market', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. by Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 132-151 (pp. 142, 145-146, 149-151).

⁷³ Paul Peppis, 'Schools, Movements, Manifestoes', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, ed. by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 28-50 (p. 34).

Chapter 1: French Currents in Imagism and Vorticism

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the cross-currents in Anglo-American and French avant-garde circles in the first two decades of the twentieth century and the impact of these interactions on Imagism and Vorticism, two artistic movements in England which benefited from the innovations of the European avant-garde. Cyrena N. Pondrom rightly judges that this process of artistic influence was not only limited to ‘technical imitation’, but can be traced more broadly to ‘conceptual and theoretical influence’.¹ To this can be added ‘innovation’ and *stratégies littéraires*, with the latter term indicating various methods of organising and promoting literary avant-garde groups and individuals.² *Imagisme* may be considered a *stratégie littéraire* founded on the vogue for Continental arts, but in fact it had many precedents and influences from France, as Hughes points out in his study of Imagism.³ In this chapter I chart the interactions in literature and the visual arts between England and France in the early twentieth century through the circulation networks of little magazines and the art world: such cultural exchange was important in modernising the English arts and encouraging the spirit of interdisciplinary experiments and aesthetics, especially in the creation and criticism of poetry and the visual arts.

Although nationalism is not a key concern in this chapter, ‘national’ considerations are crucial in understanding the context of such aesthetic interactions. Paul Peppis proposes a divide between ‘cosmopolitan’ and

¹ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 20.

² I borrow the term ‘stratégie littéraire’ from F. S. Flint’s letter to Amy Lowell on 24 January 1915: ‘Imagisme be damned! I don’t want to be called an Imagiste at all. I entered the thing as, a joke, – une mystification littéraire – stratégie littéraire si vous voulez. That Ezra would strut about as the inventor of a real new live aesthetic afterwards did not occur to me.’ Copp, *Imagist Dialogues*, p. 44.

³ Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists*, pp. 3-7.

'nationalistic' camps of English intellectuals in the Edwardian period; however, Faith Binckes argues that 'the composite nature of periodicals enabled them to represent both positions simultaneously', a scenario which was complicated by the various nationalities and countries of residence of the London artists in question.⁴ In *Imagisme* exists the curious combination of a French-sounding name and a movement to regenerate English poetry by American and British poets; in *BLAST* there are explicit references to the European avant-garde while the Vorticist members, of various nationalities, collectively proclaimed their movement as essentially English, creating an ambivalent divide 'with such subversive wit that the process of differentiation itself is opened to question'.⁵

During the short, turbulent lifespan of both Imagism and Vorticism, there were often debates on national and artistic identities and alliances, which were volatile and continually evolving. I will discuss the impact of such group dynamics on the development of the movements, which resulted in multiple aesthetic definitions and interpretations. The Imagists' disagreement on aesthetic standards and the way the movement was run led to their parting of ways, with French influence being a prominent point of contest. In contrast, the Vorticists capitalised on aesthetic tensions and multiplicities, aiming to 'catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions' (*B2*, 91), and in the puzzling coexistence of national and international aspirations claimed a position for the legitimisation of their radical artistic experiments in England.

In the following, I discuss the literary, interdisciplinary and visual art aspects of such Anglo-French exchange and its impact on Imagism and Vorticism. Through a review of key Imagists and Vorticists and their opinion of and

⁴ Faith Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde: Reading Rhythm (1910-1914)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 74.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

interactions with the French avant-garde, this chapter argues for the close and significant ties between the English and French avant-garde and their interdisciplinary experiments, with the little magazines being a crucial channel in enabling the exchange of aesthetic ideas, as well as being sites of experimentation in themselves. I also demonstrate that there was remarkable interest in France concerning the latest experiments in England, particularly from the poets Henri-Martin Barzun and Guillaume Apollinaire, and their respective journals *Poème & Drame* and *Les Soirées de Paris*. Overall, this chapter evaluates the Anglo-French avant-garde interactions in the early years of the twentieth century, and provides a Francophile perspective for the understanding of the development of Imagism and Vorticism's aesthetic experiments.

1. Anglo-French Literary Exchange

A. Promoting the New Poetry

Pondrom suggests that French influence on English poetry between 1908 and 1914 includes the following elements: 'Impressionist theory, the Bergsonian definition of the function of the image, ideas of asyntactical poetic form, and a concept of poetry as one of the non-representational arts'.⁶ These modern innovations and experiments in the arts of the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth century France were key catalysts for the renewal of English poetry and the engendering of Imagism. These changes came about in a two-way process: while the English poets paid close attention to the French poetry scene, French poets were also keen to expound theories about their poetry in English publications and in correspondence with fellow English poets, as well as showing interest in the latter's experimental works. In the following, I discuss this

⁶ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, pp. 20-21.

complex web of interaction first in relation to individual poets such as F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound and Horace Holley, and demonstrate the significance of French influences on the aesthetics and group dynamics of the collective venture of Imagism.

i. The ‘forgotten school of 1909’ and English Francophiles

In May 1915, Flint contributed an article, ‘The History of Imagism’, to the ‘Imagist Number’ of the *Egoist* in which he argued against the significance of Pound’s role in the movement. In the article, Flint sought to date the beginning of the movement which was subsequently known as Imagism to before Pound’s coinage, starting from the 1908 Poets’ Club and the subsequent poets’ gathering at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel in 1909, which championed *vers libre*, Japanese *haiku* and the image in English poetry, a group which Pound named the ‘forgotten school of 1909’ in his *Ripostes* in 1912. Flint named T. E. Hulme the ‘ringleader’ and Edward Storer the key poet of this particular kind of verse, but in fact it was Flint who brought Symbolist and post-symbolist poetry to the attention of the group as well as to the literary public in London. Pondrom notes that the labels of Symbolist and post-symbolist were often used interchangeably in England; Flint’s lengthy article ‘Contemporary French Poetry’ was considered the most detailed explication of French poetry at the time, which led to much attention and discussion on the subject in England.⁷ Building on the success of ‘Contemporary French Poetry’, Flint wrote a series of eight ‘French Chronicle’ for *Poetry and Drama* between March 1913 and December 1914, reviewing and discussing the latest currents in French poetry. Flint was evidently up to date on his sources: for example, the March 1914 ‘French Chronicle’ ‘was prompted by

⁷ Ibid., p. 84.

an anthology of Fantasist poems published in *Vers et Prose* (October-December 1913)',⁸ suggesting that he was closely in touch with the latest movements and publications in France.

Prior to Flint's study, pioneering efforts to introduce the latest French artistic currents in print had already begun with *Rhythm*, the avant-garde little magazine edited by John Murray Middleton, with regular contributions in French from two *fantaisiste* poets, Francis Carco and Tristan Derème. The latter's essay series 'Lettre de France', published in *Rhythm* between June 1912 and February 1913, 'were among the earliest published comments urging attention to *fantaisiste* poets as a group',⁹ ironically articulated in a London-based magazine and coinciding with the period which the Imagists claimed their unique collective identity under the French-sounding name *Imagisme*. In these essays Derème also called for both poetry and criticism to be 'seen in relation to the new definitions of the nature of human knowledge and its limitations' of the current era, advocating a poetry of 'personal vision', and a criticism 'whose primary function is to articulate the formal structure of the poem in the belief that thus meaning will be implicitly articulated'.¹⁰ These principles echo Bergson's philosophy and interestingly parallel Hulme's early thoughts on poetics as exemplified in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry'. They also anticipate Pound's subsequent interest in poetic form and the instantaneous impact of the Image.

Derème also emphasised simultaneously 'freedom of form', a product of the symbolist *cénacle*, and 'reconciliation of ideal conception and empirical experience', which was a reaction against symbolism that occurred in the post-symbolist period. Pondrom suggests that both of these emphases became

⁸ Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 14.

⁹ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 146.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

touchstones of Imagist poetry: the former aspect relates to the Imagists' preference for *vers libre*, and the latter concept is similar to Pound's description of his composition process of 'In a Station of the Metro', or rather that of the 'image': 'the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective' ('Vorticism', 205). The *fantaisistes*'s emphasis on concision was also similar to that of the Imagists: seeking perfection 'in presenting a narrowly limited poetic object', the *fantaisistes* 'carefully sought the precise word to convey a vivid impression in a few lines', of which the sources, similar to Imagist poetry, were 'impressionist pictorial technique and Japanese haiku'.¹¹

Following the pioneering work of Flint and *Rhythm*, several poets started to look towards France in their works and criticism, including Pound and Aldington. According to Flint's 'The History of Imagism', Pound's fascination with modern French poetry only began after he joined the poets' gathering in 1909, when at first 'he could not be made to believe that there was any French poetry after Ronsard' (71) – obviously a very old-fashioned view compared to other members'. In his article 'Paris' (*Poetry*, October 1913), Pound admitted that 'I spent about four years puddling about on the edges of modern French poetry without getting anywhere near it' (29-30), possibly the period before he met Flint and the latter's influence really settled in. But such an attitude underwent a drastic change over the next few years. One of the first signs of Pound's warming towards modern French arts can be observed in a letter to his mother in February 1911, urging her to read 'The New Art in Paris' in the *Forum* that month:

¹¹ Ibid., p. 150.

'There's an answer to a number of things. That ought to prove my instince [sic] for where I can breathe. . It's mostly news to me, but of the right sort.'¹²

The article, by Marius de Zayas, is mainly a review of the 1910 Salon d'Automme in Paris, in which he described his first encounter with geometrical forms in painting. Besides discussing the visual arts exhibition, de Zayas also gave a personal account of the Literary and Musical Matinées, in which French poetry was read and French music performed, heaping praise on the French's artistic sensibility: 'After having seen and heard so much of these three arts, I consider what Paris is: a unique city; with a unique public, and with a unique soul. [...] This is not a town, but a soul. This is not a people, but an intelligence.'

(187-188) The French were portrayed as a people who respect the freedom of expression of artists – a freedom Pound failed to find in London, where he faced only the hostility expressed in 'Salutation the Third' (*B1*, 45) and the 'incredible stupidity, the ingrained refusal of thought' (*Little Review*, December 1917, 6), which subsequently drove him away from London to Paris in 1920.

But in the early 1910s Pound underwent a conversion to more modern French aesthetics, apart from a troubadour walking tour in Southern France in summer 1912. Timothy Materer suggests that Pound's naming of *Imagisme* in August 1912 was intended to immediately evoke a parallel to artistic movements in France; employing a French name, 'an old but still powerful technique for publicizing cultural movements', *Imagisme* at once suggests foreignness and affiliation with the French verse tradition rather than the English.¹³ French influence is a notion which consistently perpetuated Pound's subsequent explanations of the origins of the movement's name. Writing to Margaret

¹² Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 242.

¹³ Materer, 'Make It Sell! Ezra Pound Advertises Modernism', p. 18.

Anderson on 17 November 1917, Pound stated that he made the name *imagistes* ‘on a Hulme basis – and carefully made a name that was not & never had been used in France. I made one specifically to distinguish “us” from any of the French groups catalogued by Flint in the P.R. [Poetry Review]’ (*P/LR*, 155). Looking back on Imagism in ‘A Retrospect’ in 1918, Pound reconfirmed the modelling of the movement on French counterparts: ‘we thought we had as much right to a group name [...] as a number of French “schools” proclaimed by Mr Flint’ (*LE*, 3). Writing to René Taupin in 1928, Pound stated that ‘the idea of the image owes “something” to the French Symbolists via T. E. Hulme, via Yeats < Symons < Marllarmé. Just as bread owes something to the man who processes the wheat, etc.’¹⁴ Pound explicitly and repeatedly acknowledged the fact that his reception of modern French poetry was closely linked to his English contemporaries, suggesting the significant role of the Imagist collective in his acquaintance with French avant-garde poetry.

Having adopted the name *Imagisme* to imply a movement under French influence (if not a foreign import), Pound further perpetuated that impression by openly praising French poetry over English works. In his article ‘Status Rerum’ (*Poetry*, January 1913), Pound commented that with regard to poetry, ‘[t]he important work of the last twenty-five years has been done in Paris’ instead of England, and suggested that ‘the work has been excellent and the method worthy of our emulation. [...] There has been little serious consideration of their method. It requires an artist to analyze and apply a method.’ (123-124) This demonstrates that instead of simply wishing to imitate their style, Pound’s interest was in the theoretical basis of the achievement of contemporary French poets, which was pronounced in his subsequent writing on the topic. In this

¹⁴ Translated from French, quoted in Scott Hamilton, *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 216n50.

article, preceded by three poems by H.D., Pound also gave considerable coverage and praise to the then virtually unknown Imagistes, thereby further strengthening the connection between *Imagisme* and the contemporary French poetry that he endorsed.

In addition to the theoretical impulses coming from modern French poetry, Pound stressed the educational value of modern French poetry for English poets in his article ‘Paris’. As a summary of ‘The Approach to Paris’ series in the *New Age* for American readers, it contains brief reviews of individual poets and recommended readings, with Pound championing the superiority of French poetry over English poetry, seemingly including the experiments of *Imagisme*:

If our writers would keep their eye on Paris instead of on London – the London of today or of yesterday – there might be some chance of their doing work that would not be démodé before it gets to the press. Practically the whole development of the English verse art has been achieved by steals from the French, from Chaucer’s time to our own, and the French are always twenty to sixty years in advance. As the French content and message are so different from the American content and message, I think the Americans would be less likely to fall into slavish imitation and would learn hardly more than the virtues of method. (27)

Pound’s Francophilic attitude was not only displayed through his praise of French work, but also in his concept of French poetry as prime content for little magazines. In discussion with Amy Lowell about setting up a new review in a letter dated 23 March 1914, Pound suggested that besides other contributions, ‘we should, I think, print a reasonable amount of French, or else *reprint* a ten to twenty page selection from some French poet in each number. This would be cheaper than trying new stuff and we could get the man’s whole work before us

instead of depending on the scraps he happened to submit.' (*SL*, 34, original emphasis) This demonstrates that Pound shrewdly leveraged on the interest in French poetry in England for the practical success of the proposed magazine – not on literary excellence, but rather as driven by the demands of the readership market.

Among the Imagists, Aldington was also a keen Francophile, although like Pound he was also a latecomer to the field. In hindsight he recalled that in 1911 he had 'never suspected the existence of the French vers libristes' when he started writing in free verse inspired by ancient Greek poetry, and expressed his gratitude to Pound of 1912-14 for introducing him to a diverse range of Continental influence ancient and modern, with the latter including Verlaine, the Symbolistes, Flaubert and the Neo-Latins.¹⁵ Aldington presently carried out French-inspired experiments in verse by engaging actively with the French poetry scene. At the end of his review 'Plays, Books and Papers' (*New Freewoman*, 15 December 1913), Aldington declared his intention to steer the *New Freewoman* (renamed the *Egoist* in the next issue) towards the French literary scene, marking the novel aspiration towards literary excellence in international terms:

THE NEW FREEWOMAN will endeavour to keep its readers informed of the literary movements and events in Paris. [...] in France there is a number of reviews which are run solely in the interest of literature, to popularise some artistic movement, or to help young writers to obtain an audience. [...] the majority are interesting, many original, some written by young men of genius.

A good many people are uninterested in literature outside their own country,

¹⁵ Richard Aldington, *Richard Aldington: An Autobiography in Letters* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), p. 28; Richard Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake: A Book of Reminiscences* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), p. 111.

only because they are unacquainted with it. THE NEW FREEWOMAN hopes to indicate to these latter those works of young France which are best worth their attention. (250, original emphases)

By 1914, Aldington had become very active in promoting French literature, frequently publishing reviews and translations of Remy de Gourmont, Apollinaire and other experimentalists in the *Egoist* and *Poetry*.¹⁶ In contrast to the authority of Flint, Aldington humbly and frankly acknowledged his limited knowledge on the subject in 'Some Recent French Poems' (*Egoist*, 15 June 1914): 'I am afraid I haven't Mr. Flint's amazing energy ['to read *all* the modern French poetry published'], so that the knowledge I have of these new poets is somewhat scrappy and is particularly all derived from the reviews they are kind enough to send me. [...] It is thus impossible for me to pretend to write critically on the subject; the best I can do is to reproduce certain of the poems printed this year which have interested me.' He appealed again at the end of the article, 'I ask pardon of all those French poets whose works I have omitted to mention in this short anthology. If they will send me their revues I will try and repair the omissions in some future number.' (221, 223, original emphasis) The problem with scarcity of materials was not only faced by Aldington; I will discuss this further in relation to the cultural exchange between the English and French little magazines.

Throughout and after the First World War Aldington (together with Lowell) persisted in promoting Anglo-American and French poetry, as well as supporting key French intellectuals such as Gourmont, but their effort was largely ignored in France due to the war and the lack of suitable channels. In a letter to Lowell dated 17 June 1920, Aldington discussed this negligence with regret: 'it's

¹⁶ Charles Doyle, *Richard Aldington: A Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 27-28.

singular that none of the French notices ever mentioned the part we played in Gourmont's latter years. Do you know I have a large bundle of letters from him which prove some nice things about you and me? [...] He speaks with great gratitude of "la dame Americaine."¹⁷ But the lack of recognition did not put off Aldington's interest in French literature and criticism. After the war he wrote criticism on French literature in various English papers, including *The Times*. His familiarity with the French literary scene is demonstrated in the same letter to Lowell, in which he discussed the recent literary criticism in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* and various other French periodicals with high regard: 'There have been some fascinating articles [...] which made one's hair stand on end with envy. They get at the writer's very vitals, they illuminate the whole work of art and end you scurrying back to it to compare your view with theirs. It is real criticism because it makes you understand more and enjoy more. [...] Standards may be a nuisance to the creator but you can't have criticism without them.'¹⁸ It is evident that French literary excellence played a significant role in Aldington's development both as a poet and a critic.

ii. French Innovations and Imagist Rivalries

Pondrom observes that '[a]s the poetic revival gained strength in England and America' and as more and more English poets became aware of the latest currents in French poetry, the 'knowledge of current French work became a status symbol, and rivalry developed among those who claimed priority in introducing it to others'.¹⁹ Such rivalry was particularly prevalent among the Imagist circle: the contest to introduce the innovations of modern French poetry

¹⁷ Aldington, *Richard Aldington*, p. 57.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹⁹ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 28.

and other novel aesthetic gestures into their own poetic and polemical works was an important factor in the dispute concerning the artistic direction of the movement in which the key Imagists were so bitterly embroiled in from late 1914. Indeed, Pound's sudden interest in contemporary French verse circa. 1912 might have arisen out of competition with fellow Imagists, firstly Flint and Aldington, and subsequently also Lowell. In the following, I substantiate and extend Pondrom's account of this rivalry by discussing Pound and Aldington's works and interactions with the French literary avant-garde.

Pound's only series of critical articles on contemporary French poets before the war was 'The Approach to Paris', published between 4 September and 16 October 1913 in the *New Age*. Surveying a wide range of poets and discussing their works and technique, the article demonstrates Pound's significant albeit idiosyncratic interest in and knowledge of the subject. These articles are much like Flint's previous survey 'Contemporary French Poets' and the concurrent 'French Chronicle', only that Flint's accounts were more thorough and objective, while Pound was selective in his focuses probably to serve his own developing aesthetic theories.²⁰ In 'The Approach to Paris. II' Pound wrote with even greater exaggeration on the superiority of French poetry than previously in 'Status Rerum', going as far as to declare that, '[f]or the best part of a thousand years English poets have gone to school to the French, or one might as well say that there never were any English poets until they began to study the French. [...] The great periods of English have been the periods when the poets showed greatest powers of assimilation' (577). This series and Pound's subsequent article 'Paris' can be regarded as attempts to establish himself both in England and the United States as a knowledgeable guide of French poetry, as well as a

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 174, 201-202.

leading innovator in English poetry – an innovation which is clearly tied to the French avant-garde.

‘The Approach to Paris’ was significant for the development of Pound’s aesthetic theories, as he strove to discover and highlight aesthetic concepts and impulses in contemporary French poetry for his own practice. Pondrom points out that it was in the series where Pound first applied the notion of ‘vortex’, in his discussions of Jules Romains’ ‘Ode à la foule qui est ici’ in the fourth article (25 September 1913). Pound was seemingly intrigued by what Pondrom describes as ‘the moment when the poet-narrator experiences an intensity that enables him, in some kind of fusion of the consciousness of the poet and the being of the crowd, to voice his own vision as the thought of the crowd’, a moment which Pound described the poet ‘becomes the “crater” or vortex’.²¹ This calls to mind the moment of epiphany which ‘In a Station of the Metro’ was based on, and it is revealing that the theory behind Pound’s creative impulse finds a parallel in French avant-garde poetic theory.

Pound’s interest in how the poet’s individual voice can triumph and dominate over the crowd is also evident in his discussion of Henri-Martin Barzun’s work. In his article ‘Paris’, Pound commented on Barzun’s poetry and described the potential he saw in Barzun’s simultaneous poems written ‘for a dozen voices at once as they write an orchestral score’: ‘The proletariat would seem to be getting something like a coherent speech. This seems to me significant. Though M. Barzun’s propositions may seem, at first, fitted for comic rather than for serious expression, I am not sure that he has not hit upon the true medium for democratic expression, the fitting method of synthesis.’ (29) This suggests that Barzun’s simultaneist poetry was of interest to Pound, supporting

²¹ Ibid., p. 173.

Jay Bochner's argument that the processes of juxtaposition and fragmentation in simultaneist poetry are evident respectively in Pound and Eliot's works.²² In fact, the method and effect of simultaneist poetry are not unlike the polyphony of voices in Eliot's *The Waste Land* which Pound assisted in editing.

After Pound's open rift with fellow Imagists, the objective to uphold his reputation as a leading poet and poetry critic was reinforced in his polemical writings, including those on French poetry. Besides displaying his knowledge on the subject, Pound was also keen to demonstrate his literary network and personal connections with the French poets. A particularly notable example which demonstrates this 'power struggle' for French connections amongst the Imagists is the case of the influential French Symbolist poet, novelist and critic Remy de Gourmont, who was not only respected by the French avant-garde but also by the English literary circle, as Pound remarked in a letter to Sarah Perkins Cope on 22 April 1934: 'My generation needed Rémy [sic] de Gourmont.' (SL, 257) As the death of Gourmont in 1915 coincided with the aggravating Imagist rivalries, Gourmont featured heavily in the discourses of Pound, Aldington and Lowell, in their attempt to legitimise their own strand of literary avant-garde.

In 'Remy de Gourmont' (*Fortnightly Review*, 1 December 1915), Pound lamented the death of Gourmont and recounted meeting the unanivist poets whom Gourmont supported in Paris in April 1913.²³ For Pound, Gourmont epitomised Paris' artistic merits, as he discussed analogically: 'Paris is the laboratory of ideas; it is there that poisons can be tested, and new modes of sanity be discovered. It is there that the anti-septic conditions of the laboratory exist. That is the function of Paris. It was peculiarly the function of M. Remy de

²² Jay Bochner, 'Architecture of the Cubist Poem', in *Architecture and Cubism*, ed. by Eve Blau and Nancy J. Troy (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 89-115 (pp. 97-98).

²³ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 28, 313n61.

Gourmont.' (SP, 415) This article is followed by another obituary by Pound in *Poetry* the following month. Subsequently, Pound also published a letter sent to him by Gourmont in the December 1917 issue of the *Little Review*, responding supportively to Pound's plans 'to found a magazine which should establish some sort of communication between London, Paris and New York'. Pound later published another series of letters from Gourmont, titled 'Dust for Sparrows', in the *Dial* between September 1920 and May 1921. Pound's publishing of these letters a few years after Gourmont's death might be motivated by both aesthetic and personal factors, as such a gesture came at a time of increasing discourse on French literature by Lowell and Aldington. But Pound's claims of his familiarity with Gourmont to justify acting as the latter's spokesperson in the Anglo-American literary world might not be entirely valid, as he confided to John Quinn in a letter on 11 August 1915: 'M. de Gourmont is almost a total stranger to me. I have never met him, and we have only exchanged a few very brief letters at very great intervals.' (P/Q, 34)

In comparison, Aldington's relationship with Gourmont, established before the First World War, seems to be a less superficial bond. Apparently Aldington 'knew of de Gourmont as early as his university days in 1911', or was introduced to his works in early 1912, shortly after meeting Flint.²⁴ And as Gourmont's novel 'The Horses of Diomedes' was serialised in the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist* between August 1913 and March 1914, Aldington would have had a working relationship with him as the Assistant Editor of the *Egoist* responsible for literary matters.²⁵ It is evident that Aldington and Gourmont did communicate on private matters too: writing to Harold Monro on 22 October 1914, Aldington informed him that Gourmont was financially hard-hit by the war situation in Paris,

²⁴ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 263.

²⁵ The same goes for Pound who preceded Aldington in the position.

and ‘asks me to try and get him some work over here and I thought perhaps you could squeeze an article by him into your next number’. Aldington took on the mission to do something ‘in a small way to maintain the tradition of the arts and of a Europe above nationalism’ by ‘translat[ing] essays, articles, and poems by Gourmont for English and American periodicals, and to send him on the money’: Gourmont’s article ‘French Literature and the War’, translated by Aldington without payment, was published in the last issue of *Poetry and Drama* in December 1914.²⁶ Aldington also solicited work for Gourmont from Harriet Monroe, where an article with a similar title ‘French Poets and the War’ (also translated by Aldington) and two poems in French by Gourmont appeared in the January 1915 issue of *Poetry*; he also sought financial support for Gourmont from Lowell.²⁷

Together with Lowell, Aldington further facilitated the publication of two articles by Gourmont in the *Boston Evening Transcript* in April 1915, as well as his own article on Gourmont in the *Little Review* in May 1915, coinciding with the Imagist Number in the *Egoist*. These publications were seemingly in exchange for Gourmont’s help to publish an article by Aldington on Imagism in the *Mercure de France*, of which Gourmont was one of the founders. The article was rejected as Imagism did not fit the *Mercure*’s wartime focus; but Aldington mentioned to Lowell in a letter on 5 April 1915 that he ‘will write a short article on Anglo-French friendship – jut [sic] to keep our name before the *Mercure*’, which also seemingly did not materialise.²⁸ In fact it was hard to publish on Imagism in England too:

²⁶ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 289; Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, p. 172; Aldington, *Richard Aldington*, pp. 11-12.

²⁷ Doyle, *Richard Aldington*, pp. 28, 35.

²⁸ Aldington, *Richard Aldington*, pp. 12-16. Aldington informed Lowell via an *Egoist* headed postcard on 6 May 1915: ‘Remy de Gourmont has done a charming paragraph on the Imagists in La France under the general heading “Les Idées du Jour”. I am getting some copies from Paris for you. Correspondence is beginning to come in about the Imagists; Monro has orders for copies.’ Amy Lowell Correspondence, 1883-1927 (MS Lowell 19), Houghton Library, Harvard

Aldington recalled in his autobiography that around 1915, '[l]iterary papers quietly disappeared, literary articles were not wanted, poems had to be patriotic'.²⁹

After his death, Gourmont remained a constant reference in discussions between Aldington and Lowell. Aldington wrote to Lowell on 20 November 1917: 'You remember how de Gourmont just before he died bequeathed to me the care for the "tradition des libres esprits"? I feel that you have kept alive this tradition while I have been plunged in more sordid confusions, in an ordeal which has perhaps strengthened my character but only at the expense of imagination'.³⁰ This suggests that Aldington saw Lowell as the guardian of the libertarian and innovative spirit in Anglo-American literature, in the relative comfort of the war-free United States where she managed to publish her own poetry and criticism, as well as the Imagist anthologies.

Coincidentally, this letter came around the same time as Pound's reentry into the field with a sudden outpouring of writings on French literature, nearly two years after Gourmont's death and Pound's own silence on the topic. Besides the aforementioned Gourmont letters, Pound also single-handedly filled the whole issue of the *Little Review* in February 1918 with his essay 'A Study of French Modern Poets'. The survey was written in a similar fashion to Flint's 'Contemporary French Poets' and aimed at competing with Lowell's *Six French Poets: Studies in Contemporary Literature* published in 1915, an intention which is clear from Pound's letter to Anderson on 13 September 1917: 'ANYHOW keep the little French anthology quiet until it is launched. Especially on account of dear

University. 'La France' presumably refers to the *Mercure de France*, although there is apparently no mention of Imagism or Aldington in the May 1915 issue of *Mercure*.

²⁹ Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, p. 165.

³⁰ Aldington, *Richard Aldington*, p. 26.

Amy. I think I can get about as much in one number as there is in her volume. (6 Fr. poets).' (*P/LR*, 122, original emphasis)

Pound's other articles of the period such as 'Irony, Laforgue and Some Satire' (*Poetry*, November 1917), 'The Hard and the Soft in French Poetry' (*Poetry*, February 1918), 'Unanimism' (*Little Review*, April 1918) and 'De Gourmont: A Distinction' in the Remy de Gourmont issue (*Little Review*, February & March 1919)³¹ can be regarded as an extension of the same effort to assert his authority in modern French poetry in the Anglo-American literary world. Addressing Monroe's query 'about the French articles accused of following in Amy's wake', Pound suggested including a note about his 'The Approach to Paris' series, to 'stave off any suggestion of Amy's having led me. [...] My series of articles must have been running in the N.A. when Amy landed here on her first great political circuit' (*SL*, 119). While Pound's polemics might be a rhetorical means to claim expertise on the subject, Jules Romains expressed appreciation of Pound's perceptive insights in a letter to him in May 1918: 'Your great sympathy for my way of experiencing the things of the universe and of art has certainly led to an excessive indulgence toward me. But I have so often suffered the incomprehension of my compatriots that your remarks can only be welcome ones.'³²

The Imagists' battle over the influence and expertise in modern French poetry was a lengthy one. As suggested earlier, Flint's article 'The History of Imagism' was an attempt to reject Pound as the founder of Imagism and to discredit him as an expert on modern French poetry; Flint also borrowed the French poet Fernand Divoire's concept of *stratégie littéraire* to criticise Pound

³¹ The issue contained two contributions from Aldington, an article titled 'Remy de Gourmont, After the Interim' and a poem in French 'Décor Banal'.

³² Translated from French, quoted in Hamilton, *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance*, p. 9.

and his *Imagisme*. Divoire was an active member of the French literary avant-garde who developed simultaneist poetry with Barzun, and his book titled *Introduction à l'étude de la stratégie littéraire* was published in 1912. Although Divoire received only passing mention in Flint's 'Contemporary French Poetry', Flint's use of the term 'stratégie littéraire' in a letter to Lowell on 24 January 1915, as well as in an unpublished French version of 'The History of Imagism', suggest that he knew of Divoire's book.³³ And the fact that Flint prepared a French version of the article is significant, implying that he was intent on bringing the Imagist rivalry to public notice in France.

Almost two decades later, Flint was still adamant about Pound's stratagem in establishing *Imagisme*, as he sought to set the record straight in 'Verse Chronicle' (*Criterion*, July 1932): 'Like most inventors, Pound did not create out of the void. The "image" he took from T. E. Hulme's table talk. The "ism" was suggested to him by the notes on contemporary French poetry which I wrote for Harold Monro's *Poetry Review*. The collocation of "image" and "ism" came to Pound after I had told him about Divoire's essays on "stratégie littéraire". Pound devised a "stratégie littéraire".' (686-687) It is apparent that the Imagists, particularly Pound, relied on much French-inspired *stratégies littéraires* in promoting their poetry. For the Imagists, French influence also took on another level of significance besides its aesthetic merits, and became one of the stakes in the contest for the control of the movement.

iii. The Parisian Imagist: Horace Holley

While many English poets were keen to promote French avant-garde poetics in England, there was significantly less work done on promoting the new

³³ Copp, *Imagist Dialogues*, p. 44; K. K. Ruthven, *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 67.

English poetics in France. One of the exceptions was Horace Holley – a crucial figure who, despite being peripheral to the English poetic circle, provided invaluable connections between the Imagists and the French avant-garde. An American expatriate who ran the Ashnur Gallery on Boulevard Raspail in Paris, Holley was a keen promoter of three expatriate Rhythmist painters working in Paris: J. S. Peploe and J. D. Fergusson, both Scottish, and the American Anne Estelle Rice.³⁴ Holley was also friendly with other English artists: in spring 1914 Wyndham Lewis asked Frederick Etchells, who was in Paris, to post prospectuses of the Rebel Art Centre in various places, amongst them ‘the American artshop in the Boul. Raspail’ (*Letters*, 60), suggesting that the shop was one of the outlets of English art in Paris which Lewis was acquainted with. Willard Bohn also opines that like *Des Imagistes*, *BLAST* was undoubtedly available for sale at Holley’s gallery.³⁵

Given Holley’s identity as an art gallery owner, his active promotion of Imagism in Paris might seem surprising. Holley’s connection with the French avant-garde seems to be largely mediated through Apollinaire, whose magazine *Les Soirées de Paris* had its office on the same street as Holley’s gallery. Writing under his own name, Holley contributed ‘Notes Anglaises’ to the ‘Chronique mensuelle’ of the magazine between December 1913 and March 1914, and under the pseudonym of O. W. Gamedoo in the July/August 1914 issue, possibly to mask the fact that he was praising his own poetry amongst other Imagist works.³⁶ A self-appointed promoter of Imagism, Holley introduced Fletcher to Skipwith Cannell in Paris,³⁷ and frequently discussed their works in

³⁴ John Gould Fletcher, *Life Is My Song* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), pp. 48-49.

³⁵ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 311n45.

³⁶ Willard Bohn, ‘Apollinaire and “The New Spirit”’, in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume III, Europe 1880-1940*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 120-142 (pp. 129-130).

³⁷ Fletcher, *Life Is My Song*, p. 57; Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 551.

'Notes Anglaises', presenting selections which were unorthodox and eclectic to the Imagism of *Des Imagistes*.

For example, in the final issue of *Les Soirées de Paris* (July/August 1914), Holley discussed in 'Notes Anglaises' *Des Imagistes*, the 'brief anthology of the new school of Anglo-American poetry', and introduced several Imagists with examples of their poetry, which Holley translated into French.³⁸ Holley's selection includes Aldington's 'Oneirodote',³⁹ Cannell's⁴⁰ 'L'Aigle'⁴¹ and 'La Danse',⁴² H.D.'s 'Sitalkas',⁴³ Fletcher's 'Irradiations' XXX & XXXII⁴⁴ and his own 'Devant un Gauguin'.⁴⁵ Among these poems, only H.D.'s 'Sitalkas' was included in *Des Imagistes*; some of the others were first published in the *New Freewoman*, where three of Holley's poems were published.⁴⁶ It is unclear whether Holley sought permission from the Imagists to translate and publish their poems, except for Cannell and Fletcher whom he personally knew and might have obtained works directly from them. The unorthodox selection also suggests that Holley knew of the works of the Imagists mainly through the *New Freewoman* instead of *Des Imagistes*, being a frequent contributor to the *New Freewoman* and the *New Freewoman* himself.⁴⁷ In fact, besides poetry, Holley

³⁸ Bohn, 'Apollinaire and "The New Spirit"', p. 133.

³⁹ 'Oneirodotes' was published in the 15 September 1913 issue of the *New Freewoman*.

⁴⁰ Skipwith Cannell's poems were published in various little magazines, including *Poetry* (August 1913, May 1914, September 1914 and June 1915), the *New Freewoman* (1 September 1913) and the *Little Review* (April 1915).

⁴¹ 'The Eagle' (in 'A Sequence') was published in the August 1913 issue of *Poetry*.

⁴² 'The Dance' was published in the 1 September 1913 issue of the *New Freewoman*.

⁴³ 'Sitalkas' was published in the 1 September 1913 issue of the *New Freewoman*. The title was misspelt as 'Sitalkis' in Holley's article.

⁴⁴ 'Irradiations' I-XI was published in the December 1913 issue of *Poetry*. It is likely that numbers XXX and XXXII were not published prior to Holley's review, although Fletcher claimed to have completed the series in summer 1913. See Fletcher, *Life Is My Song*, p. 64.

⁴⁵ 'Before A Gauguin' was originally published in English in Holley's *Creation: Post-Impressionist Poems* (1914), which he described as 'the first volume completely and entirely in free verse published by the group' (369), suggesting that he clearly regarded himself as an Imagist.

⁴⁶ One of Holley's poems, 'The Egoist', was published in the 1 September 1913 issue, which also contained a selection of Imagist poetry titled 'The Newer School', including H.D.'s 'Sitalkas' and Cannell's 'The Dance'.

⁴⁷ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 526, 583.

also contributed articles on various social topics in line with the periodicals' individualistic views.⁴⁸ A self-proclaimed Imagist who was generally not considered a member of the movement, it was nonetheless Holley who conducted the most sustained work in promoting Imagism in the Parisian avant-garde.

B. Little Magazines as a Medium of Artistic Exchange

Evidently much artistic exchange between England and France took place in the 1910s. Artists in London and Paris kept a close eye on publications across the channel, and were eager to exert their influence and reputation abroad. The little magazine was a crucial point of connection for this process: the English artists mainly came to learn about the latest French currents via the various little magazines published in France or from secondhand reports in the English periodicals, besides directly corresponding with poets and literary figures or making acquaintances on their visits to France. In the following, I will discuss the interactions between *Poème & Drame* and the English poetic circle, particularly Aldington's role in developing the connections. And amongst the various French little magazines, *Les Soirées de Paris* was the only one to mention Imagism in its pages; its founder and editor Apollinaire was friendly towards English artists, which made mutual artistic exchange possible. *Les Soirées de Paris* is also exemplary in its interdisciplinary approach and might have provided a prototype for *BLAST*. I wish to substantiate as well as nuance Bohn's account of this extraordinary Anglo-French artistic exchange,⁴⁹ and discuss the substantial

⁴⁸ Holley's contributions include 'A New Name for a New Virtue' (*Freewoman*, 11 April 1912), 'The Social Value of Women's Suffrage' (*Freewoman*, 15 August 1912) and 'Epstein's Oscar Wilde Monument. An Interpretation' (*New Freewoman*, 1 July 1913). He also wrote two letters to the editors of the *Egoist*, 'On this Spiritual Reality' (1 May 1914) and 'Imagists' (15 June 1914).

⁴⁹ I am particularly indebted to Chapter 2 of Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*.

evidence in and the context of the little magazines published in both England and France in the 1910s, which testify to the French influence as well as interest on new artistic experiments in England.

i. Early Interactions and *Poème & Drame*

When Flint set out to work on his article ‘Contemporary French Poetry’ in 1912, Alexandre Mercereau, one of the founders of Dramatism and the co-editor of the French little magazine *Vers et Prose* served as his chief advisor, who actively forwarded Flint reading materials and facilitated his correspondence with various French poets. Flint corresponded extensively with French poets and literary figures, and the knowledge and news he gained through the process formed an important basis for his articles on French poetry.⁵⁰ Flint’s discussion was however somewhat biased due to his reliance on review copies and the partisanship of French poets; Flint replied to Mercereau’s request to impugn the Unanimist school and praise the Dramatist poets in a letter on 19 June 1913 that ‘he would be willing to give them a “full-dress show” if only they would send him copies of their works’.⁵¹ Kenneth Cornell opines that Flint and Aldington’s discussions of contemporary French poetry ‘are in some ways unsatisfactory’, as ‘[t]heir discussion was limited to periodicals and books which chanced to come into their hands, and those poets who were vigorously declamatory assumed an importance not justified by their work’.⁵²

Despite such bias, the English poets’ work in introducing French poetry to England was attentive and thorough, as seen from the broad range of schools

⁵⁰ A selection of these letters is published in Pondrom, *The Road from Paris* and Copp, *Imagist Dialogues*.

⁵¹ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 11, 13.

⁵² Kenneth Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period: French Poetic Currents, 1900-1920* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1970), p. 129.

and poets which their studies encompassed. Their critical and creative work relating to French avant-garde poetry was noticed by the French poets, most notably Henri-Martin Barzun, who was the founder and editor of the French little magazine *Poème & Drame*, which ran for ten issues from March 1912 to July 1914.⁵³ The magazine seemed to have connections with Monro's *Poetry and Drama*, as advertisements for the latter were found in the September-October 1913 and January-March 1914 issues, featuring Flint's 'Contemporary French Poetry'; the fact that Flint's expertise was promoted in a French literary magazine is remarkable.⁵⁴ And according to Barzun in the January-March 1914 issue, he was invited by Monro during his last visit to London 'to give a lecture on the art of simultaneous poetry', suggesting an affiliation between the two journals, incidentally sharing the same name. In fact, Barzun boasted that *Poetry and Drama* was founded 'following the example of *Poème et Drame*', probably an exaggeration of his journal's influence. But Barzun did recognise correctly the similarity of the cause of the poetic collective championed by The Poetry Bookshop with the utopian ideals of the poetic common L'Abbaye de Créteil (84, see appendix), of which he was a founding member and the main financier.

Barzun's experimental poetry was likewise noticed and discussed by the English poets: Flint had written about Barzun in 'Contemporary French Poets', and his discussion of Barzun in the September 1913 'French Chronicle' was translated by the latter and published as '*L'Art Poétique Simultané*' in the September-October 1913 issue of *Poème & Drame* (83-84). Flint and Pound's discussions of Barzun might have led Aldington to look into simultaneist poetry,

⁵³ Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group, 1910-1914* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 259. For information on Barzun and *Poème & Drame*, I am indebted to the 'LES PETITES REVUES' blog (petitesrevues.blogspot.com) and its owner Mikael Lungan.

⁵⁴ See the appendix for a list of selected mentions of the English avant-garde in French periodicals between 1913 and 1914; sections of particular interest are included in the text.

and he discussed the works of Barzun in ‘Plays, Books and Papers’ (the *New Freewoman*, 15 December 1913), a review of drama and books of English and Continental origins. In the article, Aldington gave an in-depth review of Mercereau’s short stories collection *Gens de là et d’ailleurs* and mentioned other French periodicals, including a highlight of the contents of the current issue of the *Mercure de France*, *L’Effort Libre* (journal of the Unanimistes) and *Les Bandeaux d’Or*, which featured the works of a number of post-symbolist poets.⁵⁵ Aldington also reviewed the September-October 1913 issue of *Poème & Drame* and discussed the simultaneous poems of Barzun, commenting that ‘there are distinct possibilities in the idea’. Like Pound, Aldington appreciated the principles in general, but admitted that poetry written in the style is ‘too rhetorical and too full of imitative noises’ (250), perhaps reminiscent of Futurist poetry.

However, by the time this review was published, Aldington had sent Barzun “the first poem in simultaneity written in English” – entitled “*Les Cloches de Rome*”, although he made no public mention of it.⁵⁶ Barzun acknowledged the poem in the January-March 1914 issue of *Poème & Drame* and was evidently enthusiastic about Aldington’s interest, considering it a recognition of simultaneist poetry’s popularity and declaring that ‘[t]he invention has passed the Channel and *Poème et Drame* will publish a simultaneous poem in English by Richard Aldington.’ (72, 75; see appendix) This exchange also led Barzun to translate the discussion of himself and Simultaneist poetry in Aldington’s article and publish it as ‘*Chronique de Londres*’ in the same issue (35-36). Prior to the demise of *Poème & Drame*, Aldington again mentioned simultaneous poetry in

⁵⁵ These magazines are mentioned by Flint in ‘French Chronicle’ (*Poetry and Drama*, June 1913, p. 230); Aldington might have learnt about them from Flint.

⁵⁶ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 20, 310n36; Ellen Ginzburg Migliorino, ‘Aspects of Simultaneity in England and the United States’, *Quaderni del Novecento Francese* 10 (1987), pp. 293-315.

'Some Recent French Poems': 'I regret that the typographical resources of THE EGOIST do not permit me to include any of the simultaneous poems of M. Barzun, M. Voirol and M. Divoire. These works may be studied in their journal, "Poème et Drame."' (223, original emphasis) These burgeoning interactions suggest a mutual interest between the English and French poetic avant-garde, which unfortunately did not have further opportunities to develop, as both nations soon became embroiled in the war.

ii. *Les Soirées de Paris* and Imagism

Founded by Apollinaire and his colleagues, *Les Soirées de Paris* positioned itself as a key magazine of the European avant-garde and was subscribed to by many artists of the Parisian avant-garde circle, including Sonia Delaunay, Umberto Boccioni, Giorgio de Chirico, Marc Chagall and Francis Picabia.⁵⁷ It also acknowledged other like-minded magazines across Europe and beyond: on the inside front cover, there is a list of various avant-garde periodicals and their correspondence address, including French magazines *Vers et Prose* and *La Phalange*, Futurist publications *La Voce* and *Lacerba*, as well as the Berlin-based Expressionist magazine *Der Sturm*. Less prominence is given to other magazines only listed by name, which in the final issue include the Anglo-American magazines *Poetry*, the *Egoist* and *Poetry and Drama*, possibly in connection with Flint's article on Imagism. But these listings are not simply nominal: there are indeed copies of the *Egoist* and *Poetry* in Apollinaire's library, and he should also have received *Poetry and Drama* and *Des Imagistes*, as well as having read *BLAST*.⁵⁸ Such evidence implies that *Les Soirées de Paris*

⁵⁷ Bohn, 'Apollinaire and "The New Spirit"', p. 129.

⁵⁸ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 14-15, 22, 309n19.

clearly had international aspirations and was keen to explore avant-garde experiments and groups outside of the Paris / French context.

The brief but significant interactions between *Les Soirées de Paris* and the English poets resulted in the publication of Flint's article 'Imagistes' in the July/August 1914 issue (372-383). The association had begun on the English side: Flint reviewed Apollinaire's book of poetry *Alcools* in the December 1913 'French Chronicle', having acknowledged the receipt of a review copy in the previous article, and the mention of this review in the next 'French Chronicle' happened to come to the attention of Apollinaire himself. Bohn suggests that 'probably through the intermediary of Mercereau, Apollinaire obtained a copy of the column and wrote to Flint concerning his recent review' in English on 20 March 1914 on *Les Soirées de Paris* letterhead: 'I have read in your *French Chronicle of Poetry and Drama* (March 1914) you must have reviewed in December last my poeme [sic] book *Alcools*. I will be very glad if I can to read your interesting critic'. Bohn gathers that '[a]lthough no copies of *Poetry and Drama* are to be found in Apollinaire's library, Flint presumably complied with his request to send him the December issue'.⁵⁹

As a result of their correspondence, Flint and Apollinaire 'appear[ed] to have agreed to exchange publications, a common practice among members of the avant-garde'. In the June 1914 'French Chronicle', Flint included a brief description of the February and March issues of *Les Soirées de Paris* as 'a very modern review, futurist, cubist' (220). Bohn notes that Apollinaire also received a review copy of the anthology *Des Imagistes* 'one or two months earlier which, if not sent by Flint, was surely sent at his suggestion'. This collaboration led to Apollinaire commissioning Flint to write a review of *Des Imagistes*, which

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 13-15. Original emphases.

appeared as ‘Imagistes’ in the final issue of *Les Soirées de Paris*.⁶⁰ It was indeed a remarkable moment for both English poetry and the French avant-garde before the disruptions of war abruptly interrupted the budding relationship, as the article introduced Imagism to the Continental arena and established it as a worthy member of the European avant-garde. Textually speaking, the discussion of Imagism was very much situated in an avant-garde context: in the ‘Chronique mensuelle’, following the aforementioned ‘Notes Anglaises’ by Holley (365-369), Apollinaire reviewed the Larionov and Goncharova exhibition at the Galerie Paul Guillaume (370-371). Flint’s article is also interrupted by black and white reproductions of three of Fernand Léger’s paintings and a caricature of Apollinaire by Marius de Zayas (375-378), which clearly situates Imagism in a European avant-garde context, juxtaposed with the radically innovative literature and visual arts of the period.

The article begins with the list of Imagists’ rules published in ‘Imagisme’ (*Poetry*, March 1913) with the additional point of ‘Le mot juste’, probably an act of paying tribute to the French context. The reproduction of the three doctrines is significant as it indicates that, despite being drafted by Pound, Flint concurred with them in 1913 and still in July 1914, before their subsequent rift over the Imagist collective. These are followed by a brief description of the movement and a selection of Imagist poetry, which included Aldington’s ‘To A Greek Marble’ and ‘In the Via Sestina’, H.D.’s ‘Hermes of the Ways’ I & II, William Carlos Williams’s ‘Postlude’, Pound’s ‘Liu Ch’e’ and ‘The Return’, as well as Flint’s ‘Hallucination’. All of these poems were published in *Des Imagistes*, in contrast to Holley’s unorthodox selection just pages before; the poems were also printed in English, instead of the translated version offered by Holley. Although

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

Imagism's association with *Les Soirées de Paris* remained brief as the magazine terminated with this issue, this momentous publication does indicate the recognition of the English avant-garde by their Continental counterparts.

Aldington was also very much interested in *Les Soirées de Paris*. In his article 'Some Recent French Poems', Apollinaire was 'the only poet to be cited by name' in an anecdote depicting Flint's prodigious reading of French poets; Bohn argues that this 'indicates that [Apollinaire] had acquired a certain prestige among the Imagists, who certainly were aware of Flint's forthcoming article in *Les Soirées de Paris*'.⁶¹ In the article Aldington also quoted two poems of Apollinaire from the April 1913 and April 1914 issues of *Les Soirées de Paris*, but admitted that '[i]t is a matter of regret to me that I have no copies of "Les Soirées de Paris" by me at the present moment. From what I can hear this review, edited by M. Guillaume Apollinaire, is one of the most up-to-date and interesting of the French journals. Happily one or two of the other revues quote from "Les Soirées de Paris.'" (223)⁶² Although it is doubtful whether Aldington had read the magazine himself at that point, his praise in the article for Blaise Cendrars's poem 'Journal' (which was amongst Cendrars's very first publications),⁶³ as well as his quotation from Max Jacob's 'Printemps et cinematographe melés', both published in the April 1914 issue, suggests that he was paying close attention to the contents of the magazine even if they were from secondary sources.

Probably facilitated by Flint, Aldington wrote to Apollinaire on 7 June 1914 'to propose several projects': firstly to '[solicit] books to review by Apollinaire and his friends, and a selection of poems from *Les Soirées de Paris* for publication in *The Egoist*'; secondly to 'exchange their respective reviews', where 'thereafter

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶² The poems were reprinted in *Le Gay Scavoir* in March 1914 and in the *Mercure de France* on 16 May 1914 respectively. Ibid., pp. 21, 311n38.

⁶³ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 267; Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period*, p. 153.

Apollinaire received each issue of *The Egoist* as soon as it appeared and most of the back issues'. Apollinaire responded in kind and sent Aldington several issues of *Les Soirées de Paris*, which in the 1 July 1914 issue of the *Egoist* Aldington 'promised to review the journal in a future issue', but 'was never able to keep that promise' for 'reasons undoubtedly connected with the outbreak of the war'.⁶⁴ Since *Les Soirées de Paris* ceased publication with the July/August 1914 issue, it would make no sense for a posthumous review. This also cut short the Imagists' brief connection with *Les Soirées de Paris*, which had started only a few months prior to the magazine's demise.

iii. Apollinaire and Vorticism

Under Apollinaire's direction, there existed a close relationship between poetry and pictorial art in *Les Soirées de Paris*, which was highly innovative at the time.⁶⁵ Bohn notes that the March 1914 issue 'featured six abstract paintings by Francis Picabia, two of which were printed in colour – which was totally unprecedented in an avant-garde journal'. Moreover, the reproductions intersperse the magazine in a more or less random fashion and seemingly bear no relationship to the adjacent articles; they were 'intended not to illustrate a particular discussion but to announce that much of the review would be devoted to modern art'.⁶⁶ Such a layout design was also adopted in *BLAST*, for example where Edward Wadsworth's works interrupt Pound's poetry, and the interspersing of the works of Etchells and William Roberts in Ford Madox Hueffer's 'The Saddest Story', in similar fashion to the interruption of Flint's article 'Imagistes' by avant-garde works as previously discussed. Although a

⁶⁴ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 21, 311n41.

⁶⁵ Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period*, p. 123.

⁶⁶ Bohn, 'Apollinaire and "The New Spirit"', pp. 129, 131.

similar strategy of juxtaposing painting and writing was also found in English magazines such as *The Yellow Book* and *Rhythm*, the disjunctive style in which paintings and prose / poetic works were presented in *BLAST* arguably bears closer resemblance to that of *Les Soirées de Paris*.

BLAST was available in Paris soon after its publication in early July 1914: Bohn suggests that '[I]ike *Des Imagistes*, *Blast* was undoubtedly for sale at Horace Holley's Ashnur Gallery', and notes that Gertrude Stein also received a copy brought to Paris by the publisher John Lane toward the end of June.⁶⁷ Soon afterwards, Apollinaire reviewed the magazine in the column 'Les Arts' in the *Paris-Journal* on 15 July and mentioned it again briefly in 'La Vie anecdotique' in the *Mercure de France* on 1 August 1914.⁶⁸ In the former article, Apollinaire evidently relished the French influence in the revolutionary spirit of the English artists, only recognising (probably wilfully) French genius praised in *BLAST* and ignoring the 'blasts' it received. The fact that Apollinaire singled out Wadsworth and Lewis's works to praise, as well as his references to Lewis's articles 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work' and 'The Exploitation of Vulgarity', suggests that Apollinaire did pay attention to the contents of the magazine, and possibly did read Lewis's discussions of contemporary art which included critiques of Cubism. It is also interesting that Apollinaire highlighted 'poetry' in the magazine – perhaps due to his identity as a poet, yet one wonders what Apollinaire would have made of Pound's poems in *BLAST* if he did indeed read them. Overall Apollinaire was affirmative about the venture, and remarked that

⁶⁷ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 311-312n45.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 22, 311n45. *Paris-Journal* was a daily paper in the 1910s and an important vehicle for literature. Many avant-garde writers were among its contributors, for example Apollinaire, as well as writers respected by the avant-garde, for example Gourmont. Excerpts from Apollinaire's articles are reprinted in the Appendix.

the English were ‘beginning to enter into the modern movement in art and literature’.

BLAST was mentioned briefly in the latter article where Apollinaire remarked upon the similarities between the Vorticists’ ‘blasts’ / ‘blesses’ and the ‘merde’ / ‘rose’ in his manifesto ‘L’Antitradition futuriste’, clearly seeing this as an imitation of his concept, itself inspired by a vignette which took place at the hometown of another French poet Adrien Blandignère. Apollinaire also described the Vorticist group as comprising ‘new English artists and poets’, again stressing the interdisciplinary nature of the publication. The fact that *BLAST* was mentioned twice in Apollinaire’s writings soon after its publication and in a relatively short time span suggests that he was impressed by what Vorticism and the English artists had to offer, despite their late uptake of the avant-garde experiment and certain imitative gestures.

Similar to the paradoxical coexistence of ‘blast’ and ‘bless’ towards France and England, Vorticism’s relationship with the European avant-garde was also a curious mixture of attraction and repulsion. Bohn observes, ‘[i]ronically, although the Vorticists denied the influence of continental models, they were eager to be recognized by the very schools they rejected’, as seen from the fact that, at about the same time the first issue of *BLAST* appeared, an anonymous article in English titled ‘Some Modern Tendencies in English Art’ was sent to Apollinaire for publication in *Les Soirées de Paris*, which did not materialise due to the magazine’s demise. Bohn describes that ‘[w]hile the article mentions a number of different artists, the bulk of the article is devoted to individuals associated with the Rebel Art Centre including Wyndham Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, David Bomberg, Malcolm Arbuthnot, Jacob Epstein, C. R. W. Nevinson, and Henri

Gaudier-Brzeska.⁶⁹ The inclusion of Nevinson amongst the group suggests that the article was probably written by early June 1914, before Nevinson and Marinetti published 'VITAL ENGLISH ART. FUTURIST MANIFESTO' on 7 June 1914, which led to the establishment of Vorticism in attempt to distinguish the English artists from the Italian Futurists.

As this article was clearly an act of self-promotion to the European avant-garde similar to the actions of the Imagists, it is intriguing that its writer was not identified. Pound, who was also an Imagist and turned to writing art criticism in 1914, might be a likely suspect, although Pound recalled in a letter to James Laughlin on 30 January 1934 that, 'I think I did a brief note on Alcools when Apol / sent it to me eighty or whatever years ago / but I cdnt say much for it / and dont remember corresponding with the author'.⁷⁰ Here Pound's memory might be faulty, as it seems impossible that Apollinaire would have sent him *Alcools* without the two of them corresponding (as Pound would certainly have been eager to expand his connections and develop his expertise in French poetry before the war), and the fact that Pound did not publish such a review between 1913 and 1914 makes it doubtful whether Apollinaire had indeed known him and sent him a review copy.⁷¹ Moreover, judging from the broad range of artists covered in the article, Pound seems an unlikely author when one compares this with the style of his art criticism written in 1914: highly idiosyncratic, and only focusing on artists he liked and found superior than others, such as Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska and Wadsworth, a trend and bias which persisted in his writings throughout his career.

⁶⁹ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and James Laughlin: Selected Letters* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), p. 21.

⁷¹ *Alcools* was published in Paris in April 1913. The only passing mention of this in Pound's 'The Approach to Paris' was in the last article on 16 October 1913: 'Apollinaire has brought out a clever book.' (728)

Hulme is another likely author, as he had written much on modern art in 1914 and was regarded as the publicist of avant-garde art in England. However, it is doubtful whether he might give so much emphasis to the Rebel Art Centre artists as a group, due to his deteriorating relationship with Lewis, as well as his preference for Epstein and to a certain extent Bomberg's works. The most likely candidate, it would seem, is the unabashedly self-promoting Lewis who founded the Rebel Art Centre, who knew all the artists named in the article and their works well, and who would no doubt have been keen to promote his own movement in modern art to Continental counterparts via the influential medium of *Les Soirées de Paris*, in like fashion to the Imagists.

Despite Pound's admission that he did not know Apollinaire well, there are tangible links in his works to that of Apollinaire's. Bohn deduces that Pound's use of the unusual term 'super-position' in his 1914 article 'Vorticism', instead of the more common 'superimposition' in English or 'juxtaposition' in French, suggests that he had read Apollinaire's article 'Simultanisme-Librettisme' (*Les Soirées de Paris*, 15 June 1914), in which Apollinaire used the term 'super-posées' to praise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay's collaboration in *La Prose du transsibérien* (324). Bohn concludes that 'in the search for a solution to his aesthetic problems', Pound did appropriate Apollinaire's concept of simultaneity in Imagism.⁷² However, despite the likelihood of Pound having read the article, this is a somewhat anachronistic claim, as Imagism had already been established two years before, although its aesthetics according to Pound was still continually being discussed and modified in 1914 and beyond. Apollinaire's dual role as poet and art critic in *Les Soirées de Paris* might have also influenced Pound's

⁷² Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, pp. 39-40.

subsequent literary career development within the decade, particularly his turn to art criticism during wartime.⁷³

Seeking to establish Pound's relationship with Apollinaire, occasionally Bohn seems too eager to exert evidence of Pound's Francophile sentiments to the point of taking Pound's rhetoric at face value and possibly over-interpreting their significance. With Pound describing Jean de Bosschère as 'undoubtedly about the most "modern" writer Paris can boast, not excluding Apollinaire' in a letter to Anderson on 30 June 1916, Bohn concludes that 'what is interesting [...] is not that Apollinaire had supposedly been dethroned by Bosschère but that Pound previously thought he was the most modern poet in Paris. While he had dropped to second place since April, presumably he was just as modern as before.'⁷⁴ However, one doubts whether Pound really had such a 'ranking' of Parisian writers in mind, and given his often exaggerated and idiosyncratic praises for the artists he liked and championed, this statement might not be as significant as Bohn's literal interpretation of Pound's appraisal of both writers suggests. Bohn also interprets Pound's suggestion in the 'Art Notes' on 25 April 1918 that the Friday Club artists were 'simply in the current of the time' compared to the avant-garde of *Les Soirées de Paris* literally, as 'imply[ing] that Apollinaire's review was at least four years ahead of its time';⁷⁵ such a meticulous quantification of Pound's comments neglects the aspect of exaggeration in his rhetoric.

⁷³ I discuss Pound's role as an art critic in Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 32.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

2. Cross-Currents between Literature and the Visual Arts

A. Poetry and the Visual Arts

i. Theory and Practice

The differing nature of poetry and the visual arts has been a long standing debate in aesthetics, and there have been plenty of attempts to cross the material boundaries in creating interdisciplinary works of art. In nineteenth century France poets began to experiment with the visual, and strove to evoke ambience and mood in poetry in the same way as they would immediately be perceived by the viewer of a painting. Théophile Gautier's theory of *transposition d'art* summarises the trespassing of the material boundaries between the various artistic media, which in poetry is manifested as 'the poet seek[ing] to evoke with words the spirit or style of a painter or painting'.⁷⁶ An example is Whistler's painting *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*, which inspired Swinburne's poem 'Before the Mirror'; the poem was inscribed on the frame of the painting when it was exhibited in 1865 and 1872,⁷⁷ making it a work of art across two artistic media.

However, despite such intention to imitate the visual arts, poetry cannot be rid of its material limits. Peter Dayan comments that poetry 'depend[s] on the appreciation of its subject-matter, as mediated through words', in contrast to other art forms such as music, which could 'be taken as harmony without subject-matter'. It might be easier for painting to imitate the abstraction of music, for example Whistler's paintings which were heading 'towards abstraction and away from representation, towards an arrangement of colours and away from the expression of ideas', a common goal amongst the European avant-garde,

⁷⁶ L. C. Breunig, *The Cubist Poets in Paris: An Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 75.

⁷⁷ Peter Dayan, *Art as Music, Music as Poetry, Poetry as Art, from Whistler to Stravinsky and Beyond* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), p. 28.

including the new English art. But poetry ‘appeared destined to remain an art in which harmony depended on subjects’; even though ‘[p]oets could (and did) revolt against the subject’, they could never finally evacuate the ‘unavoidable function of reference, or the subject, in writing, mediated through the sense of words’.⁷⁸

To free poetry from its material limitations, French avant-garde poets began to experiment with the fundamental component and structure of poetry – language and form. Their innovations include *vers libre*, ‘ideas of asyntactical poetic form’,⁷⁹ poetry with visual forms and the use of nonsensical words, which are also found in Futurist and Expressionist poetry. Through these new experiments, avant-garde poets strove to legitimize poetry ‘as one of the non-representational arts’,⁸⁰ just like its musical and visual counterparts. Although the Imagists did not adopt these radical structural innovations in their poetry, the interdisciplinary experiments of the French avant-garde did inspire Vorticism, a movement which set out to radicalise art across different artistic media. In the following, I discuss the French ‘Cubist’ poets and their influence on Vorticism.

ii. Interdisciplinary Cubism

The term ‘Cubist’ was originally a description of painterly aesthetics, but its multivalence and to a certain extent ambivalence made it applicable also to poetry and the other arts. L. C. Breunig uses the term ‘Cubist’ to denote particular French poets in the early twentieth century who wrote poetry along similar principles as Cubist painting, and justifies this association by challenging

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁹ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 20.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

the origins and meaning of the Cubist label: ‘Is “cubist painting” any less absurd than “cubist poetry”? It is true that there are cubes in a few of the early paintings of Braque and Picasso, [...] but hardly enough to have inspired the name of a rich new ism. The word must have taken on connotations as its usage developed. Its brevity and its concreteness were in part responsible for its success. Where other isms because of their abstractness fell by the wayside [...] the word “cubism” lent itself to any number of associations.’⁸¹ In contrast, Jay Bochner points out the vagueness of cubism as a label and argues that ‘simultanism would have served better than cubism to describe cubism’, particularly the works of the Delaunays and Cendrars.⁸² However, my focus is not to dispute the name of the style, but rather to discuss the common properties shared by the poetry and the visual arts of the French avant-garde, for which the label ‘Cubist’ will suffice.

Bochner suggests that cubist poetry and paintings are united by an ‘apparent naivete, or childishness, or untutored expression’, ‘a return to the isometric perspective of pre-Renaissance and much children’s drawing’ which feature an ‘equality’ of depth and focus on the subject and the background, as in Picasso’s analytical cubist works with fragmented perspectives and Gertrude Stein’s poetry.⁸³ Breunig observes that besides the use of visual forms such as ‘calligrams and other kinds of visual poetry and typographical innovations’, the Cubist poets were also attracted by ‘geometrical shapes in the verbal imagery: rectangles, spheres, triangles, oblongs, ovals, and especially horizontal and vertical lines, which generated such images as towers, bridges, cords, rails,

⁸¹ Breunig, *The Cubist Poets*, p. xv.

⁸² Bochner, ‘Architecture of the Cubist Poem’, pp. 90, 97.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 91-92. Bochner argues that the label of Cubist and Simultaneist can be applied to the works of many Anglo-American poets and provided many examples in his article.

cables, rays, horizon lines, and so on'.⁸⁴

But instead of a one-way imitation of the visual arts, the interactions between poetry and the visual arts should be considered as bi-directional, as Bochner highlights the interdisciplinarity of the French avant-garde: 'Rather than seeing each artistic medium destroying its own natural abilities to represent, or glorifying its complete incompleteness, we might conceive of each attempting to extend its techniques into the facilities of the others as a claim upon a wider context. One can watch poetry in 1912 looking for space, or spaces, just about the time pictures began to appropriate writing.'⁸⁵ Breaking with traditions in their artistic experiments, Cubist painters and poets set out in common to rediscover the potentials of language as building blocks in their art, besides the shared questioning of materiality and perspectives. Breunig opines that what intrigued the Cubist poets 'was not so much the principles of synaesthesia, which had intrigued the Symbolists, but rather the shifting of the letters and words from their function as signifiers and their use as components in a cubist structure [...] as more or less independent forms'.⁸⁶ And much as Apollinaire proclaimed 'I too am a painter', Juan Gris and Serge Férat inserted poetry into their artworks,⁸⁷ in an attempt to simultaneously traverse aesthetic boundaries and to give poetry a material presence. The latter goal is manifested in poetry with a renewed focus on words, so that instead of assisting the conveyance of the subject, 'the materials became the meaning', which Bochner argues as evident in William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore's works with their emphasis on an

⁸⁴ Breunig, *The Cubist Poets*, p. xxvii.

⁸⁵ Bochner, 'Architecture of the Cubist Poem', p. 94.

⁸⁶ Breunig, *The Cubist Poets*, p. xxv.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. xxvii. 'Et moi aussi je suis peintre' is the planned title in 1914 to a volume to Apollinaire's picture-poems, subsequently published as *Calligrammes* in 1918. Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters*, p. 211.

economical use of words.⁸⁸

Bochner comments that in the appropriation of fragments of text from other sources in Cubist poetry and painting, there is a common ‘sharpened presence of Otherness, a distancing from the authorial hand that paints or writes, while, along with this greater anonymity, the hand can intervene, recolor, reshape, reproject’. The introduction of text to works of visual art takes on additional significance and conspicuousness, as a foreign medium which at once exhibits ‘visual appearance’ and ‘verbal communicated meaning’, in a deliberate act of ‘appropriat[ing] the Other’s body with the Other’s different medium’.⁸⁹ The shared interest in these aesthetic innovations led to collaborations between visual artists and poets, most famously Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay’s *La Prose du transsibérien*, in which Cendrars’s poetry is complemented with Delaunay’s strokes and shapes of bright colours, ‘to be absorbed simultaneously with the poem’.⁹⁰ The fragmented narrative and the abstract paintings also resemble the disjunctions between the poet’s thoughts and images from the ‘moving’ landscape of the train journey, which the combination of the various perspectives stands against ‘the narcissism of the single, symbolist view’,⁹¹ and creates a unique manifestation of an interdisciplinary avant-garde aesthetics.

iii. A Parallel to Cubism: Vorticism’s Interdisciplinary Experiments

Breunig opines that ‘[o]n the whole the instances of collaboration would seem sufficient to put an end to discussion of the legitimacy of “cubism” as a literary term. But collaboration is not identification’.⁹² In contrast to the

⁸⁸ Bochner, ‘Architecture of the Cubist Poem’, p. 103.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁹² Breunig, *The Cubist Poets*, p. xxiii.

ambivalent affiliation of the Cubist poets to Cubism as a movement, the Vorticists seemingly formed a firmer interdisciplinary alliance in their experiments across diverse artistic media, presented programmatically in *BLAST*. Although such an interdisciplinary vision was perhaps only subscribed to by the movement's main drivers Lewis and Pound (who were coincidentally writers), and paradoxically despite their wishful claims, the results of their experiments were never fully realised due to the disruptions of war, nonetheless Vorticism's breaking of the boundaries between artistic media and genres should be appreciated. By drawing a parallel with the interdisciplinary connections between Cubist poetry and painting, I aim to highlight the Vorticist interdisciplinary experiments and works in media other than the conventional visual arts, such as literature and photography.

Although the Imagists learnt much from contemporary French poets, Imagist poetry does not strive to be visual, as the image is defined as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' ('A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste', 200), with the visual quality being used as a 'metaphor for the direct apprehension of emotion in poetry'.⁹³ In contrast the Vorticists, particularly Pound and Lewis, learnt from the French avant-garde artists the traversing of material boundaries between the written word and the visual arts. Breunig provides a useful checklist of ways that the Cubist poets promoted their alliance with the visual arts: firstly, as art critics defending the new painting like Apollinaire; secondly, as collaborators providing text for illustrations like Cendrars or Apollinaire, whose book of poetry *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée* was illustrated with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy;⁹⁴ and thirdly, as poets using

⁹³ John T. Gage, *In the Arresting Eye: The Rhetoric of Imagism* (Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 15.

⁹⁴ Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire on the Edge: Modern Art, Popular Culture, and the Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodolpi, 2010), p. 15.

techniques borrowed from or exchanged with the painters.⁹⁵

Parallels in Vorticism can easily be observed. In terms of art criticism, Lewis discussed the rationale behind Vorticism and its relationship with the European avant-garde extensively in the two issues of *BLAST*; Pound wrote voluminously from 1914 onwards in defense of the new arts, and championed Vorticism as an art critic (under the thin disguise of a pseudonym) in the *New Age* between 1917 and 1920; Hulme also keenly discussed the trajectory of a modern aesthetics in his short career as an art critic. And despite not exactly the close collaboration between poetry and painting as in *La Prose du transsibérien*, *BLAST* was a remarkable interdisciplinary joint-venture, with its juxtaposition of and dual-focus on literature and the visual arts. For example, amongst the poems published in *BLAST*, Pound's 'Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess' shows considerable evidence of influence by the visual arts. Not only is the poem subtitled 'theme for a series of pictures', it is filled with colours, movements, lines and shapes, and even the effect of light: 'bright queens', 'alive with light', 'Luminous green' and the shifting beams of 'Blocked lights' (*B2*, 19), much like Sonia Delaunay's simultaneist painting with the use of vivid bright colours and lighting effects suggestive of movements.

The interdisciplinarity of Cubism as a style of painting as well as tendencies in literature are likewise found in Vorticism. Breunig proposes six aesthetic similarities between Cubist painting and poetry: Multiple perspective and the shifting of personal pronouns; concept of solid space and meaningful blanks between lines of verse; recognition of the flat surface of the canvas and the widespread use of the present tense; art as experimentation and the acknowledgment of the autonomy of the art object (as in the poetry of Max Jacob

⁹⁵ Breunig, *The Cubist Poets*, p. xvi.

and Pierre Reverdy); attitude of willful negligence (as in the works of Pablo Picasso, Apollinaire and Jean Cocteau); and ‘Simultanism’, which meaning changes depending on whether it is used by painters (referring to the contrasting colors of the Delaunays), or by poets more or less synonymous with discontinuity or the juxtaposition of disparate phrases.⁹⁶

Evidently such interdisciplinary similarities are found in Pound and Eliot’s poetry. Pound’s ‘In a Station of the Metro’, despite being composed before his Vorticist phase, introduced the innovation of intentional blanks between words as a formal feature and juxtaposing phrases to create an ‘image’ as a compositional means of poetry. Subsequently, Eliot built *The Waste Land* on a series of collages and monologues, in which the scenes and protagonists shift intermittently and traverse time and space. Indeed, the juxtaposition, synecdoche, ellipsis, and the making of meaning via the ‘luminous moment’ in Cubist painting and poetry⁹⁷ function on similar mechanisms as the ‘image’ and the ‘vortex’.

Being a painter and a writer, many of Lewis’s works are interdisciplinary explorations, for example his *Timon of Athens* portfolio, a series of drawings based on Shakespeare’s play, and his play *Enemy of the Stars*, an experiment in creating literature by means of painterly abstraction as in his paintings. Published in late 1913 but completed in part in 1912, the *Timon of Athens* portfolio is notably ‘Lewis’s only major engagement with a literary text in his visual art’. ⁹⁸ As a pre-Vorticist work, the portfolio demonstrates some prototypical Vorticist qualities as well as significant Cubist and Futurist

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. xxiv.

⁹⁷ Bochner, ‘Architecture of the Cubist Poem’, pp. 97-98.

⁹⁸ Michel, *Wyndham Lewis*, plates 18-20; Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2000), p. 87.

influences: the visual language of the coloured sketches is predominantly Futurist in terms of pictorial construction and technique, where the density of lines and curves presents a sense of dynamism and relays the struggle of Timon. It is evident that Lewis was more intrigued by the character of Timon than the authorial aspects of Shakespeare, and that he saw psychological connections between the ancient protagonist and the modern world.

Ronald Bush suggests that Pound was impressed by the formal complexity of the series, and regarded that the “dynamic” movement’ of the ‘forms in combination’ shows ‘narrative potentiality’,⁹⁹ providing an aesthetic solution to the limitations imposed by the brevity of the Imagist poem. In the drawings, human faces are designed to be icon-like, recalling a primitive and archaic aesthetics similar to Epstein’s sculptures. The monochrome act dividers are more visually restrained and geometrically abstract, where the intricate patterns weaved by short strokes are visually similar to the pictorial construction and techniques of synthetic cubist works, even Suprematism or the post-war style of Piet Mondrian. For example, the drawing *Act III* portrays four characters in a frame filled with many visual fragments, where the characters are simultaneously depicted and captured in a dense grid-lock of interacting lines, curves and dots, fixing their action on the page rigidly; the abstract style renders the figurative heads barely discernible. Besides the full-page sketches, there are also smaller drawings in the portfolio titled *Two Soldiers* and *Two Designs*, which the intersection of lines and blocks Lewis subsequently employed, more lucidly and tightly-constructed, in his woodblock icons *Designs* (1913), interspersed in the two issues of *BLAST*.

⁹⁹ Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p. 46.

Similar to the breakthrough in the visual arts where new techniques were employed for new aesthetic effects, Lewis radicalised literary language in *Enemy of the Stars* in many ways. Toby Avard Foshay describes the play as Lewis's attempt 'to shape the linguistic and literary medium in accordance with criteria developed within the visual arts'.¹⁰⁰ Julian Murphet however interprets the play as Lewis's efforts to oust 'the literary text [as] the painting's expressly disavowed content' and to achieve 'the *deliterarization* of paint', suggesting it in fact is a revenge on literature on behalf of painting, where 'the "literary" is ingeniously reverse-engineered – stylistically, lexically, tropologically and narratively – as *anti-literary*, mechanical, two-dimensional and above all promotional'.¹⁰¹ But Lewis's intention to experiment with abstraction in language, to parallel the 'stark radicalism of the *visuals*' (*Letters*, 491, original emphasis) should be taken into consideration when reading the play.

Lewis's literary abstraction included 'isolat[ing] sentences and sentence fragments' by doing away with conjunctions, and 'replac[ing] exposition with clusters of incongruous images and metaphors', which 'interrupted continuity and cause-effect relationships' and impacted on the sequential logic of the narrative. Wees suggests that these 'spatial fragments' share 'the same feeling of compressed energy that [Lewis] produced through the interlocked facets of his Vorticist paintings and drawings'.¹⁰² The juxtaposition of diverse images regardless of conventional grammar evokes an effect similar to that of abstract painting and parallels the simultaneity of Orphist and Futurist dynamism, yet it oddly resists temporal implications: alongside an eclectic use of past and present tenses, the narrative seems to stall in an atemporal utopia, a unique

¹⁰⁰ Toby Avard Foshay, *Wyndham Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of the Intellect* (Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 44.

¹⁰¹ Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism*, pp. 154-155, 160. Original emphases.

¹⁰² Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 182-183.

Vorticist space-time continuum reflective of Lewis's skepticism about the time-cult of Bergson and Futurism.

The Cubist experiments with new aesthetic media and forms, such as collage and readymade, also inspired Vorticist inventions of new means of art creation. The vortoscope, constructed by 'placing the lens of a camera within a triangular tube lined with mirrors', which 'act[s] as a prism splitting the image formed by the lens into segments',¹⁰³ was invented by the photographer Alvin Coburn Langdon and named by Pound in late 1916. In a letter to Quinn dated 24 January 1917, Pound described it as 'enabl[ing] a photographer to do sham Picassos'. Despite Pound's opinion of the vortograph as a mediocre medium compared to painting and sculpture, as well as the brevity of the experiment, nonetheless a Vorticist invention during wartime helped, in Pound's words, 'upset the muckers who are already crowing about the death of vorticism' (*EPVA*, 281). But publicity aside, the invention of vortography, as well as Pound and Lewis's efforts in bridging literature and the visual arts, indeed echo the interdisciplinary experiments of Cubism.

B. French Magazines as 'Business Models' for the *Little Review*

i. Literature and the Visual Arts

The English artists learnt from the interdisciplinarity of the French avant-garde in another way – designing little magazines. A study of Pound's correspondence with Margaret Anderson, editor of the *Little Review* suggests that the seemingly Francophile praise Pound heaped on *Les Soirées de Paris* and the *Mercure de France* might be due to more utilitarian reasons than simply

¹⁰³ Tom Normand, 'Alvin Langdon Coburn and the Vortographs', in *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Vivien Greene (London: Tate Pub., 2010), pp. 84-91 (pp. 85, 87).

an appreciation of their aesthetics. Bohn notes, '[w]ishing to expand [the *Little Review*'s] scope, [Pound] advised the editors to include modern art in addition. The presence of a number of photographs in each issue, for example, would give the review greater visual appeal and would stress its commitment to modern aesthetics in general'.¹⁰⁴ The practice of juxtaposing paintings and prose / poetry in *Les Soirées de Paris* was on Pound's mind when he suggested printing pictures of art works in the *Little Review* in a letter to Anderson on 13 September 1917: 'There is a chance to do what the "Soirées de Paris" was doing before the war. (Only we have real literature as well.)' (*P/LR*, 123) Bohn suggests this comment as proof that 'Pound was familiar with Apollinaire's journal' and 'was acquainted with all it had to offer'; however, Pound possibly might only be familiar with the July/August 1914 issue with Flint's article 'Imagisme', and the previous issue where Apollinaire used the term 'super-posées'. The emphasis on 'real literature' also implies that Pound potentially regarded the articles in *Les Soirées de Paris* as propaganda for artists and movements without much literary merit, in contrast to what Bohn describes as the 'successful literary reviews' in Apollinaire's magazine.¹⁰⁵

It is rather more likely that this comment was made out of a sense of name-dropping and competition; in a letter to Lewis on 27 April 1921, Pound described that the *Little Review* was to include in each number 'about twenty reprints [sic] of ONE artist, replacing Soirées de Paris.' (*SL*, 166) This implies a different meaning to Bohn's interpretation that Pound was suggesting a move 'in the tradition of *Les Soirées de Paris*';¹⁰⁶ it is evident that Pound clearly wished to out-do the famous periodical in terms of the variety (if not quality) of the contents.

¹⁰⁴ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 40.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

In the same letter Pound further added, ‘[f]ormat of *L.R.* will be larger and reprints therein as good as possible. It will also be on sale at strategic points here.’ (*SL*, 166) This indicates that for Pound, the reproduction of artworks in the *Little Review* after *Les Soirées de Paris* was a means to boost sales, altogether with the enlarged physical size of the magazine and ‘strategic points’ of sale in Paris. This is a combination of the marketing strategies of *Les Soirées de Paris* and *BLAST*, with the latter’s unusually huge size, eye-catching pink cover and reproductions of Vorticist artworks.

Pound began to discuss the practicalities of adding visual art to the *Little Review* in a letter to Anderson on 13 September 1917, where, in view of the strategies of the American little magazine *The Soil*, Pound suggested, ‘[w]ould “JH” run an art section? Would the galleries that run the better artists pay for the necessary plates, or are they all too rotten, or is there any just man among them with whom one could make alliance. “The Soil” is obviously cracked. It is also obviously run to some extent in the interest of Coady’s gallery. They are some brains in the concern.¹⁰⁷ On the Mercure each man is responsible for his own “Chronique”. If we “got in” an art critic, or art editor, we could say he or she was independent, and that we weren’t responsible. “jh” is of course the first person to consider.’ (*P/LR*, 122-123)

Such a means of promotion could work in several ways: not only could the *Little Review* ‘make alliance’ and collaborate with art galleries, as Pound regarded *The Soil* as a promotional outlet of its art editor R. J. Coady’s art gallery, but that the *Little Review* could also add an art criticism section, which, seemingly independent, can be a more effective mouthpiece of Vorticism, as

¹⁰⁷ Another reason why this venture might have interested Pound is that ‘[a]n ad for the gallery in *The Soil* made this promise: “The Art Value and the Market Value of each Work Permanently Guaranteed.”’ (*P/LR*, 126) By promoting the Vorticist artists, not only did Pound wish to generate publicity for the movement, but also to ‘sell’ and establish the commercial value of their works.

Pound discussed, '[a]rt-editing shouldn't limit itself to vorticism. That is one reason why an independent critic is better than one nominally under the general editors.' (*P/LR*, 123) Pound further pushed Anderson for action: 'Our question is: Is there anyone with who[m] we can make an alliance, say an alliance for a year or so. We want all the available energy poured into our vortex. You people have got to arrange this, if it is to be arranged, I cant do anything about it here. For one thing I am too much allied with Lewis and Brzeska to form any new connections; for another it is a job for your end of the concern. Everyone here has got their "organ".' (*P/LR*, 124, original emphasis) It is evident that the purpose behind all these changes Pound proposed for the *Little Review* is to benefit the promotion of the Vorticist artists. Pound also concurred with Quinn's opinion on the anonymity of the critic: 'I think he is right in believing that we have more force by reason of our resources being shrouded in mystery.' (*P/LR*, 125) Such *stratégies littéraires* might have encouraged Pound to begin writing art criticism in the *New Age* pseudonymously just two months later.¹⁰⁸

Concerning the nature of the proposed new column in the *Little Review*, Pound suggested, '[a]rt-editing dont of necessity mean writing gasssss about pictures, it can confine itself to selecting one or more pictures to be reproduced each month' (*P/LR*, 123), probably having in mind Hulme's 'Contemporary Drawings' series in the *New Age* in 1914. Pound expressed essentially the same belief in an 'Art Note' two years later on 27 November 1919: 'the critic can do no more for his public than try to persuade them to fill their eyes with good work, to fill their visual memories with the effects of good work. You cannot explain to a man that a drawing is bad or indifferent or "uninspired"; you can only show him good drawing often enough and hope that in time he may come to know the

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Pound and the 'Art Notes'.

difference.' (60-61) The continuity of this attitude between Pound's letter to Anderson and the article suggests Pound's plans for the *Little Review* as precedents for the 'Art Notes', which for him was a means to put forward the works of the Vorticists 'often enough' that their artistic and commercial values might be recognised by the public.

ii. Collaborations and Conglomerations

Bohn argues that '[n]ot only did Pound suggest that *The Little Review* model itself on *Les Soirées de Paris*', he also 'advised Margaret Anderson to include a column modeled on Apollinaire's "La Vie anecdotique" in the *Mercure de France*' in a letter dated 5 November 1917. But again as in the case of *Les Soirées de Paris*, the inspiration that the *Mercure* gave Pound was more than just an appreciation of French literary genius and the 'successful literary reviews' which Bohn suggests.¹⁰⁹ More significantly, Pound regarded the organisation of the *Mercure* as worthy of emulation, for the benefits of pooling resources together and achieving an economy of scale.

Pound had known of the *Mercure* for quite some time, with *Exultations* (1909) and *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) reviewed positively by its editor Henri Davray, whom Pound also visited at the journal's office in Paris in May 1912.¹¹⁰ Pound's earnest interest in modeling an Anglophone publication on the *Mercure* is first observed in 1914, when he tried to 'persuade Amy Lowell to fund a journal that might be an English equivalent to the *Mercure*, which for both him and Ford

¹⁰⁹ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 273, 308, 330, 449; Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents*, pp. 206, 279.

represented an ideal of freedom from the limits of particular interests and particular publishers'.¹¹¹

Following his split from fellow Imagists, Pound turned to other potential sponsors to realise his plan. In his letter to Quinn on 11 August 1915, Pound discussed his plans to take over an English magazine and declared: 'Let us therefore consider the *Mercure de France*, the ideal FORMAT. It is a fortnightly review, now, on account of the war, published monthly.' Then Pound described the contents of the periodical: essays, fiction, poems, and the 'Review of the fortnight' by a committee of writers. Pound regarded the *Mercure* as 'a two fold magazine, one part creative & one part critical', adding that, '[i]t is, I suppose, the soundest property in Europe. I dare say no one reads all of it, but no enlightened man is without it, he reads the sections that deal with the subjects in which he is interested.' Pound further provided a list of 'the sort of stuff one could get in an Americo-English "Mercure"', including the work of Joyce, Yeats, Fenollosa and contemporary French work (*P/Q*, 32-33, original emphasis), suggesting his eagerness to realise an Anglo-American counterpart project to the *Mercure*.

Pound's looking to the *Mercure* in 1915 might have resulted from dissatisfaction with *BLAST*. In the same letter to Quinn he wrote, '[t]he "Mercure" is probably the only magazine in the world which is not sunk in provincialism. *BLAST* IS A HIGHLY DIVERTING but highly specialized magazine, it might suffice for the presentation of Wyndham Lewis' curious genius, but it can not and never intended to become a general source of information or a general presentation of international letters. It cannot print scholarly work, no matter how interesting.' (*P/Q*, 34, original emphasis) Writing a month later on 9 September

¹¹¹ Christina Britzolakis, 'Making Modernism Safe for Democracy: *The Dial* (1920-9)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol II, North America 1894-1960*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 85-102 (p. 91).

1915, Pound also reckoned that Lewis's fiction might be 'fitter for Blast' than for the new magazine (*P/Q*, 48), which he subsequently failed to take control of. Understandably, Pound was constantly on the lookout for a suitable magazine which could accommodate a broad range of artistic critique, an 'Americo-English "Mercure"' which can become his 'official organ' (*P/LR*, 6); and thus his intention to shape the *Little Review* into his ideal magazine of the *Mercure*'s standards and format.

In his letter to Anderson dated 5 November 1917, Pound's emphasis on the 'rubic' [sic] that 'Gustav [sic] Kahn, Apollinaire, etc. do on the Mercure' is actually not about the French writers or their merits as Bohn argues,¹¹² but for columns to be '[i]ndependent inside your rubic' (*P/LR*, 140), an 'independence' for both the *Little Review* and its contributors. In the letter Pound mentioned the *Minaret*, a Washington-based little magazine which published modern French and German poets but had by then ceased publication. It struck Pound that 'we might incorporate to mutual advantage', which he further elaborated: 'I mean if you note the format of the "Mercure" you will find the rubics or little chronicles at the end. Lettres Portugaise[s], Lettres d'Hollande, Lettres Allemande[s], etc. These chronicles are, I believe, independent, and under the control of the men whose name appears on the cover.' He added, 'Not to copy the Mercure too closely, I think we might have Washington, Boston, even Chicago, as separate rubics in the L.R., and as good men would want to be independent, they might, if discoverable, have control of their sections.' (*P/LR*, 137)

No doubt excited by his 'boiling' ideas of this 'union of small papers' across America, Pound wrote another much longer letter to Anderson on the same day, explicating the potential merger plan to 'absorb several small papers' and giving

¹¹² Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 33.

‘a few absorbent suggestions’ to Anderson’s wish ‘to absorb everything’. Pound suggested another potential collaborator – *The Pathfinder*, a little magazine published between 1906 and 1911, and even ventured to appoint his sworn enemy Lowell ‘to be the Boston rubic’, despite writing a hostile letter to her just two months before on 30 August 1917, accusing her of writing ‘nonsense [...] about “bitterest” enmities’ to Anderson and ‘stamped[ing] me into accepting as my artistic equals various people whom it would have been rank hypocrisy for me to accept in any such manner. There is no democracy in the arts.’ (SL, 122) Pound even jokingly suggested absorbing *Poetry*: ‘I think Alice Henderson might do “Chicago”. (In fact “Poetry” itself would do excellently well as an absorbed rubic . . . HUSH, HESH YO! NOISE, CHILE. Harriet would commit murder if she overheard us.)’ (P/LR, 138-142, original emphasis) This comment was probably made in jest rather than in malice, as Pound was contributing steadily to *Poetry* in 1917, despite falling out with Monroe over his involvement with the *Little Review*.¹¹³

It is evident that the *Mercure* was the prototype of these new plans for the *Little Review*. Not only did Pound request to put the *Mercure* on the *Little Review*’s free subscription list in the same letter (possibly to solicit connections), he also praised its standards and organisation:

Nail a copy of the “Mercure” to your wall, and keep your eye[s] on its magnitude. (remember its quondam quality, and make allowances for effect of war on France if you happen [to] get a current number.) [...]

IT IS RIDICULOUS that the English speaking world can’t turn out a magazine as good as the “Mercure”. Even as good as the “Mercure” was at its best when all its contributors were in their best vigour. The “Mercure” represents

¹¹³ Joseph Parisi and Stephen Young, eds., *Dear Editor: A History of Poetry in Letters: The First Fifty Years, 1912-1962* (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 198-200.

the opinion not of one man but of a committee, or rather of a selected lot. (Some of them block heads, but still the most intelligent available.) (*P/LR*, 139-140)

Pound saw that in appropriating the format of the *Mercure* with distinct sections and editorial teams, not only could the *Little Review* achieve economy of scale, it could also ‘pool resources’ together, have a ‘combined’ and ‘wider subscription list without conceding an inch of our OWN position re/ what is fit to read’, and ultimately ‘build up a stronger party of intelligence in America’. Following the example of ‘L’Alliance Francaise’ of the little magazines, Pound was convinced of the social impact such an organisation of the *Little Review* would bring: ‘an American society [...] ought to make us its official mouthpiece. IF it isn’t defunct.’ Pound further persuaded Anderson on the advantages of the plan with a rhetorical question: ‘Will your paper consent to Amalgate, on these terms, by so doing you will get a wider public, and chance of higher returns in every way?’ (*P/LR*, 137-140, 142, original emphasis) For Pound, the French way of running an arts magazine was the key to battling the cultural backwardness of the Anglo-American world, and was worthy of emulation in promoting the Anglo-American avant-garde. Such promotion decidedly overlooks the issue of national competition in the wartime context, and strives to achieve a balance between the individual genius and the magnified forces of the collective, which Pound had struggled with since his Imagist phase.

3. Visual Arts

A. French Innovations and New English Art

This last section concerns the influence of French avant-garde visual arts on the English arts in the 1910s, particularly in relation to Vorticism. Visual arts on

the Continent had been known to a number of progressive English artists and critics for some time, although the public had largely been ignorant until milestone exhibitions such as the Allied Artists Association (AAA) Exhibitions (from 1908 onwards) and the two notorious Post-impressionist Exhibitions (November 1910 to January 1911, and October to December 1912) brought the art of the European avant-garde to London and created a considerable stir in public opinion.¹¹⁴ However, despite their radicalism in the eyes of the English public, Post-impressionist paintings were not the contemporary avant-garde by Continental standards. In France, mid-nineteenth century Impressionism was followed by Post-impressionism, a generic name for diverse painters and practices such as Cézanne and the Fauvist School, with a particular focus on the use of colour and the means of representation. Cubism took root in the mid-1900s with Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), a large-scale painting which 'ignore[s] the rules of perceptible space, naturalistic coloration, and the rendition of bodies in natural proportions'.¹¹⁵ The repercussions of this dramatic shift in the mode of artistic representation were widespread in the European avant-garde and even in England, where painters quickly took up similar experiments; for example, the use of multiple and fragmented perspectives, abstraction, geometrical shapes and mask-like faces in representing the body influenced Lewis's works. The French fascination with African sculpture also initiated a return to primitivism, which can be observed in Hulme's aesthetic theories, as well as Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein's sculptures.

¹¹⁴ An account of the English's (un)familiarity with French visual experiments can be found in J. B. Bullen, 'English Criticism and French Post-Impressionist Painting', in *Studies in Anglo-French Cultural Relations: Imagining France*, ed. by Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 47-67.

¹¹⁵ Anne Ganteführer-Trier and Uta Grosenick, *Cubism* (Köln; London: Taschen, 2009), p. 7.

Dayan observes that ‘internationalism’ played an important role in the Parisian avant-garde, observing that ‘the interart aesthetic is internationalist as well as intermedial. It refuses absolutely to consider the quality of art as bounded by national borders’.¹¹⁶ It is true that labels like ‘Fauvism’ and ‘Cubism’ had no explicit national connotations (unlike Expressionism and Futurism), and artists regardless of their nationality were free to experiment in the style of these schools. Significantly, many of the artists associated with Vorticism had lived in Paris prior to the start of the movement: Lewis stayed there from 1902 to 1908 chiefly to study painting, and Hulme and Eliot also resided in the city around 1910 and attended Bergson’s lectures at the Collège de France. Others including Pound, Etchells, Epstein and Bomberg visited Paris and witnessed the vibrant art scene there. Roger Fry also organised the Exposition de Quelques Artistes Indépendants Anglais at Galerie Barbazanges in Paris in May 1912, a small-scale exhibition which showcased the works of Bloomsbury painters and future Vorticists, including Etchells, Lewis and Helen Saunders.¹¹⁷

Another group of painters with substantial French connections is the Rhythmists, a circle of predominantly Scottish and American artists of Fauvist style working in Paris; only Jessica Dismorr (later a Vorticist) was English.¹¹⁸ In 1912 this group held a very prominent show at the Stafford Gallery in London, and participated in the international exhibition ‘Kunstausstellung des Sonderbundes’ in Cologne, with *Rhythm* describing the latter as a representation of ‘English Art’, ironically a misrepresentation of the national identities of the

¹¹⁶ Dayan, *Art as Music*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Mark Antliff and Vivien Green, eds., *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World* (London: Tate, 2010), p. 181; Judith Collins, *The Omega Workshops* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), pp. 22-23.

¹¹⁸ Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde*, p. 76.

Rhythmists,¹¹⁹ yet nonetheless a demonstration of a definite reach of Anglo-American artists in the Continental arena.

In late 1913, the Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition (October 1913) and the Exhibition of the Work of English Post-Impressionists, Cubist and others (December 1913 to January 1914) provided opportunities for progressive English artists to showcase their works in avant-garde settings, for example the Cubist Room in the latter exhibition, and alongside French works.¹²⁰ However, Didier Ottinger suggests that as English avant-garde art had not yet manifested itself as a distinct school like other European avant-garde movements, ironically Lewis 'had no other choice but to agree to be described as a "Cubist"'.¹²¹ Progressive groups at the time include the London Group (which evolved from the more selective Camden Town Group) and the Bloomsbury artists (including the Grafton Group which ran the Omega Workshops); yet these groups were considerably diverse, were in constant flux of amalgamation and antagonism, and the group names are seemingly only a convenient way for them to exhibit together rather than indicating a unanimous aesthetics.¹²² As awareness of the European avant-garde increased in England, the English artists sought to distinguish their works from those on the Continent by establishing their own variety of avant-garde art.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 133, 138.

¹²⁰ Antliff and Green, *The Vorticists*, pp. 181-182. Clive Bell compared Lewis's 'Kermesse' favourably to Delaunay's *L'Equipe de Cardiff* also on display (Clive Bell, 'The New Post-Impressionist Show', *The Nation* (25 October 1913); Morrow and Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 269), while John Cournos in his review 'The Battle of the Cubes' (*New Freewoman*, 15 November 1913) held an opposite view.

¹²¹ Didier Ottinger, 'Cubism + Futurism = Cubofuturism', in *Futurism*, ed. by Didier Ottinger (Paris; Milan: Éditions du Centre Pompidou; 5 Continents, 2009), pp. 20-41 (p. 39).

¹²² Rebecca Beasley, '"A Definite Meaning": The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme', in *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, ed. by Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 57-71 (pp. 59-60, 62).

B. Vorticism's Reactions and Sense of Form

In March 1914, Lewis and fellow artists founded the Rebel Art Centre which immediately preceded the Vorticist movement. Vorticism was officially established in June 1914 to counteract the subjugation of English art by Italian Futurism, although it also declared war on the ‘violent boredom with that feeble European abasement of the miserable “intellectual” before anything coming from Paris, Cosmopolitan sentimentality which prevails in so many quarters’ (*B1*, 34). The Vorticist style absorbed much from the innovation of the European avant-garde, resulting in a terse, abstract visual language, paradoxically coupled with a distinctly nationalist artistic consciousness and polemics, which critiques Cubist aesthetics among other Continental movements.¹²³

Despite the Vorticists’ attempt to make themselves distinct, there exist many similarities between the works of the contemporary French avant-garde and that of the Vorticist artists, particularly in relation to their visual language and subject matter. For example, the theme of Lewis’s *Smiling Woman Ascending a Staircase* (1911) is incidentally similar to Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912), and the latter’s dynamism and abstraction might have urged Lewis to differentiate and experiment with a more rigorous type of geometrical abstraction in the *Portrait of an Englishwoman* (1913, reprinted in *BLAST*), ‘utilis[ing] architectural and mechanical forms for the rendition of the female body’,¹²⁴ where the static blocks suggest neither movement nor clearly representational elements. Paul Edwards argues that Cubist geometry impacted on Lewis’s work despite his criticism of Cubism: Lewis was ‘engaged with the

¹²³ I will discuss Lewis’s assessment of the European avant-garde presently, and also in Chapters 3 and 5.

¹²⁴ Jane Beckett and Deborah Cherry, ‘Reconceptualizing Vorticism: Women, Modernity, Modernism’, in *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 59-72 (p. 131n114).

expressive potential of the human body, and tended to use Cubism as a manner in which to accentuate the “sculptural” qualities of his figures rather than to explore it for its own sake as an alternative to traditional pictorial space'.¹²⁵ In the painting, the jagged alignment of blocks of different shapes in varied colour tones and finishes creates a collage much alike synthetic cubism; despite being more homogenous in its material composition, the deconstruction of the human face and the bold alternative approach to conventional representation are nonetheless radical.

Wadsworth's painting *A Short Flight* (1914, reprinted in *BLAST*) also demonstrates a remarkable resemblance to Robert Delaunay's *Hommage à Blériot* (1914) in terms of subject matter and visual style: both feature notions of modern technology such as aeroplanes, as well as propellers and the Eiffel Tower in Delaunay's painting.¹²⁶ The particular style of *A Short Flight* is in striking contrast to Wadsworth's signature abstract and linear woodcuts, and clearly parallels the Orphist use of circular discs and geometrical shapes in creating impressions of movements and light on canvas. Yet there are also a few distinguishing differences: Wadsworth's use of colour was probably more restrained than Delaunay's vivid colour tones, as Gaudier-Brzeska described the painting as 'a composition of cool tones marvelously embodied in revolving surfaces and masses' in 'Allied Artists' Association Ltd.: Holland Park Hall'.¹²⁷ The execution of *A Short Flight* is also more definite: in contrast to Delaunay's blurred, approximate lines and edges, Wadsworth's geometrical shapes display a rigorous, almost calculated precision and firm outlines, potentially anticipating

¹²⁵ Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 56.

¹²⁶ Delaunay composed multiple paintings and sketches on the same theme in a quick succession in 1914; eight of these survived. See Roland Wetzel, *Robert Delaunay: Hommage à Blériot* (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2008).

¹²⁷ Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol.2, *Synthesis and Decline* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1976), p. 369. The *BLAST* reprint was in black and white and the painting is now lost.

the strict geometrical abstraction and constructivism of Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitzky and Piet Mondrian.

Another potential source of influence for *A Short Flight* is Delaunay's *L'Equipe de Cardiff*, displayed at the Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition. Yet as the title *A Short Flight* suggests, its subject matter is the geometrically defined plane at its centre, whereas *L'Equipe de Cardiff* only depicts modern technology and the urban environment as periphery and not as its focus. A plane, a partially-visible ferris wheel and the Eiffel Tower are all in the background, in contrast to the football players in the foreground and the prominent print advertisement (with some versions featuring Delaunay's name), which displays the influence of synthetic cubism with the incorporation of texts not found in Vorticist works. Despite certain differences between Wadsworth and Delaunay's works, Richard Cork records that Wadsworth subscribed to *Les Soirées de Paris* during the latter half of 1913, which probably 'helped him understand the latest developments in Europe more fully',¹²⁸ and via which French avant-garde paintings provided a tangible influence on his work.

The Vorticists' response to French avant-garde visual art was a mixture of praise and criticism, as evident in Lewis's commentaries in *BLAST*, which demonstrate the Vorticists' admiration for and antagonism towards Cubism in the formers' efforts to establish a unique aesthetic identity. In 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work', Lewis criticised Picasso's still lives and collages, demonstrating his close attention to the latest developments in Cubism. He described Picasso's synthetic cubist works as 'NATURES-MORTES' and made the criticism that even Picasso's clever design cannot compensate for their lack of purpose and vitality: 'Most of Picasso's latest work (on canvas as well) is a

¹²⁸ Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age. Vol.1, Origins and Development* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1976), p. 104.

sort of machinery. Yet these machines neither propel nor make any known thing: they are machines without a purpose.' (*B1*, 139-140, original emphasis) The Vorticists sought to repair this lack of vitality, and at the same time contain Futurist dynamism in calculated geometrical forms.

Lewis further extended his criticism of Cubism in *BLAST 2*, where his stance remained virtually unchanged. However, as Vorticism had been established for a year, Lewis could pronounce with more confidence and specificity the differences between Vorticist and Cubist art and theories. The Cubists' 'posed Nature-Morte' was repudiated by Vorticism 'as an absurdity and sign of relaxed initiative', and Lewis also expressly chastised the lack of human subjects in Cubists' still life: 'HOWEVER MUSICAL OR VEGETARIAN A MAN MAY BE, HIS LIFE IS NOT SPENT EXCLUSIVELY AMONGST APPLES AND MANDOLINES. Therefore there is something to be explained when he foregathers, in his paintings, exclusively with these two objects.' (*B2*, 41, original emphasis)

Moreover, Lewis criticised Cubist representation for being too scientific and neat by explaining the Vorticist view on nature:

Any portion of Nature we can observe is an unorganized and microscopic jumble, too profuse and too distributed to be significant. [...] to make any of these minute individual areas, or individuals, too proudly compact or monumental, is probably an equal stupidity. Finite and god-like lines are not for us, but, rather, a powerful but remote suggestion of finality, or a momentary organization of a dark insect swarming, like the passing of a cloud's shadow or the path of a wind. (*B2*, 40)

Lewis further raised his objections to the 'placid empty planes' and 'dead and unfruitful tendency' of the Cubist collage, arguing that: 'These tours-de-force of taste, and DEAD ARRANGEMENTS BY THE TASTEFUL HAND WITHOUT, not

instinctive organisations by the living will within, are too inactive and uninventive for our northern climates', and he also criticised Fry's Omega Workshops for following this 'decorativeness' (*B2*, 41, original emphasis). Here it is evident that Lewis exploited national and regional stereotypes in his arguments, and appealed to the Northern character in art as better in representing the reality than the Cubists' studio works.

In addition, Lewis challenged the Cubists' depiction of human subjects via their pictorial construction of multiple and fragmented perspectives. Describing such approach as 'masonry', Lewis opined this 'dehumanizing' initiative ought to present the human body as 'a more durable, imposing and in every way harder machine'. However, Picasso's structures were 'not ENERGETIC ones' with no living force, only with the quality of 'deadness'. Therefore Lewis deemed such 'masonry' forms as 'inappropriate in the construction of a man, where, however rigid the form may be, there should be at least the suggestions of life and displacement that you get in a machine', offering the Vorticist alternative of endowing the human form 'with something of the fatality, grandeur and efficiency of a machine' (*B2*, 43-44, original emphasis). Lewis's stance against Cubism and Picasso is clear in his strong-worded evaluation: 'The whole of the modern movement, then, is, we maintain, under a cloud. That cloud is the exquisite and accomplished, but discouraged, sentimental and inactive, personality of Picasso. We must disinculpat[e] ourselves of Picasso at once.' (*B2*, 41)

Despite Lewis's open rejection of Picasso, paradoxically in his review of the 1915 London Group show in *BLAST* 2, he used the tag 'Vorticist or Cubist section' to describe artists from the Vorticist group (including Wadsworth, Roberts and Gaudier-Brzeska) as well as Nevinson, Epstein and Bernard Adeney, giving the following explanation: 'The two principal sections of this

group are in many ways contradictory in aim. If you arrange to exhibit together, you also tacitly agree not to insist on these contradictions, but only on the points of agreement or on nothing at all.' Lewis further suggested '[t]hat Vorticists and Cubists should, like Chinaman [sic] "look all the same," is equally natural. So, curiously enough, the members of both sections of this group have a strange family resemblance, among co-sectionists, for the critic.' (*B2*, 77-78) This compromise of the Vorticist artistic identity might be a convenient and popularising measure in wartime by aligning themselves to the more well-known Cubist movement, but such an evaluation sits uneasily alongside Lewis's harsh criticism of Cubism and attempts for distinction in the preceding pages of *BLAST*

2. David Wragg suggests that Lewis's criticism of Cubism constitutes an 'attempt to disguise Vorticism's borrowings by detaching himself from what he saw as the Cubists' inadequacies';¹²⁹ such a paradoxical pattern of attraction and repulsion is also noted in Vorticism's ambivalent evaluations of Expressionism and Futurism.

Being the most vocal propagandist of Vorticism, Pound was noticeably reliant on Lewis's aesthetic evaluations in his polemics on Vorticism. Pound explained the rationale behind the naming of Vorticism as that '[o]ne needed a name to distinguish the qualities of Lewis' work from the nature mortisme of Picasso's cubism and more generally to distinguish what was being done in London from continental work, if there were any such dividing line' (*EPVA*, 150). He also discussed the differences between Vorticism and Cubism in a letter to Quinn on 10 July 1916: 'The split from the cubists is, as Lewis has written somewhere, because the cubists are always doing things "mort," "dead.'" (*EPVA*,

¹²⁹ David Wragg, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure', in *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*, ed. by Steve Giles (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 87-137 (p. 97).

238) Pound addressed the issue frequently in hindsight, suggesting that 'vorticism from my angle was a renewal of the sense of construction. Color went dead and Manet and the impressionists revived it. Then what I would call the sense of form was blurred, and vorticism, as distinct from cubism, was an attempt to revive the sense of form [...] I got started on the idea of comparative forms before I left America.' (*EPVA*, 153n4)

The above analysis of the works and the visual and textual rhetoric of Vorticism suggests that the relationship between Vorticism and the French avant-garde as one which inextricably involves both influence and reaction, where the Vorticists simultaneously appropriated French artistic innovations and developed their own in response. For the Vorticists, the aim of their interdisciplinary experiment lies in stipulating and striving for formal excellence and developing new ways of representation across artistic media, as well as distinguishing English avant-garde work from its Continental counterparts.

Conclusion: The ‘Foreignness’ of the English Avant-Garde

As this chapter demonstrates, there existed many tangible connections between the French and the English avant-gardes in the early twentieth century. The experiments of the European avant-garde (of which Paris played a crucial role) motivated the English artists to modernise their artistic language, as shown by the many examples of Imagism and Vorticism. The enthusiasm about the French avant-garde scene led to many interesting Anglo-French interactions via various channels, such as little magazines, exhibitions and personal correspondence. Through these interactions, the English artists learnt about the innovations and promotion networks of the French avant-garde, and strove to emulate these methods in promoting their own art. The history of Imagism and

Vorticism is therefore partially, to use Pound's expression, 'a history of successful steals from the French' ('The Approach to Paris. II', 577).

However, despite the English artists' readiness to embrace the innovations and challenges of the European avant-garde, English society at large was skeptical towards foreign influence in the arts, an attitude further reinforced when patriotism was increasingly demanded of the public during the war. Pound confided to Quinn in a letter on 21 May 1915: 'Even the "New Age" [...] always tries to keep me from talking about Paris, and from really free expression (not but that they give me a fling now and then).' (P/Q, 27-28) Press censorship aside, the restriction of recognition of artistic talents to national identity and the awkward positioning of the 'other' were detrimental to Vorticist's international aspirations. The Curzon Committee, convened to investigate purchasing and display policy at the Tate Gallery, was adamant against foreign influence in their 1915 Report, stating that: 'we have not in our mind any idea of experimentalising by rash purchase in the occasionally ill-disciplined productions of some contemporaneous continental schools, whose work might exercise a disturbing and even deleterious influence upon our younger painters'.¹³⁰

Gaudier-Brzeska serves as a case in point. Despite being a Vorticist member, his immediate posthumous reception in England suffered due to his French nationality, and Pound complained about the lukewarm attitudes of English museums towards acquiring his sculptures in a letter to Quinn on 13 July 1915: 'MacLagan offered to put the matter before the chiefs of the S. kensington, but says they haven't a suitable room AND that it is almost sure to be vetoed at Whitehall. The "Tate" can't show it, as that water closet is reserved for "British

¹³⁰ Brandon Taylor, 'Foreigners and Fascists: Patterns of Hostility to Modern Art in Britain before and after the First World War', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, ed. by David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 169-198 (p. 177).

Art'.' (P/Q, 30, original emphasis) Pound's sarcastic comment is revealing of the evaluation of Vorticism and contemporary European art in England: under the increasingly anti-alienist atmosphere, the apparently nationalist rhetoric of Vorticism in *BLAST*, underlined with hints of subversion and ambivalence, might be understood as a strategy to disguise its international aspirations and membership, although such an approach was largely unsuccessful in popularising the movement, and its foreign members inevitably posed constraints on its reception as an 'English' movement.¹³¹ Pound also faced similar hurdles in his plans to revamp the *Little Review* according to French prototypes, where he recognised the need to disguise the French influence for the principally American audience as a need for 'the coating, the axle grease, the stuff which [would] make us appear "not too wholly foreign and exotic"' (P/LR, 141), a telling metaphor which suggests the hostility and suspicion that the Anglo-American public had towards Continental cultural imports.

These issues highlight the paradoxical situation which Vorticism found itself in during the war: its claims for art in England to be on a par with the European avant-garde was simultaneously a welcoming of radical foreign influence in the arts, a double-edged manoeuvre despite the Vorticists' reactions against and critique of their Continental counterparts. The Vorticists' 'nationalistic' art creation was fundamentally sustained by international innovations, a connection which they sought to disentangle superficially with their polemics. Their attempt to create a new art for England by means of paralleling and reacting against the European avant-garde was ultimately defeated by the political reality of narrow definitions of national identity and the war.

¹³¹ I discuss Vorticism's stance on nationalism further in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Ezra Pound's Interdisciplinary Experiments

Introduction

This chapter discusses Pound's significant role as the founder of Imagism and co-founder of Vorticism. Pound's aesthetics, though idiosyncratic at times and frequently evolving, was responsive to broader tendencies of the European avant-garde, which enabled him to develop interdisciplinary theories and practices crucial for the definitions and experiments of both movements. This chapter explores Pound's aesthetics in the formative years of his career in London, where alongside the transformation of his poetics he developed a keen interest in the visual arts, particularly with regard to the avant-garde in Continental Europe and England. Paralleling the development in his aesthetics, there was also significant expansion in his literary and artistic affiliations and networks. These interactions were fundamental to the fostering of Imagism and Vorticism, and above all Pound's concept of the 'primary pigment'. Proposed in relation to Vorticism, the term denotes a critical framework that is theoretically applicable to all the arts as 'a language to use' and 'a language to think in' (*LE*, 194), which allows for a systematic theory of the complementary forms of different artistic media.

Pound stood apart from fellow Imagists and Vorticists in his interdisciplinary aspirations and his vision of cultural renovation through the arts, a notion which transcends historical periods. Not only did his interests range from literature to economics and encompass different ages and traditions, his ideas also changed very rapidly during this fruitful period, in his exploration of an aesthetics not limited to poetry but also applicable to the other arts. I evaluate Pound's aesthetic conceptions particularly by exploring the interdisciplinary theories in his

prose writings of the period, which laid bare his aesthetic objectives for Imagism and Vorticism, through which a broader contextual basis can be established to consider Pound's aesthetics and that of the two movements. Charting Pound's evolving aesthetics and demonstrating the aesthetic continuities in his apparently drastic turn from Imagism to Vorticism, this chapter aims to substantiate his impact on both movements in his development of theories and practices of interdisciplinary experimentation across different forms and genres.

1. *Imagisme*: First Step towards an Avant-Garde Movement

Although Pound had associated himself with various literary circles since his arrival in London in 1908, Imagism was his first attempt to define his poetics and to gather a following of like-minded individuals. It was also his first step towards the avant-garde: prior to Imagism, Pound's poetics favoured medieval poetry, an attitude which changed gradually as Pound contemplated a more modern poetics. He made his famous statement for new poetry in 'Prol[e]gomena' in February 1912: 'Twentieth century poetry [...] [will] move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be [...] "nearer the bone". It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power [...] it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjective impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither.' (*LE*, 12)

As Wallace Martin observes, the concept of the image began with Pound's historical investigations into Provençal poetry, leading to the notion of 'Luminous Detail' and subsequently the Imagistes' image, which instead of an abrupt rupture with Pound's previous poetics was rather a continuous development

from it, with a consistent heavy emphasis on technical innovations throughout.¹ In late 1912 Pound named the poetry by H.D., Richard Aldington and himself ‘Imagisme’, as a movement for precise expression. After sending Imagiste poems to *Poetry*, he propagated the movement’s aesthetics in ‘Imagisme’ and ‘A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste’, published in the March 1913 issue. ‘Imagisme’ reveals the Imagists’ desire for direct presentation in poetry with rules such as ‘[d]irect treatment of the “thing”, and “[t]o use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation’ (199). In the latter article Pound also defined the ‘Image’ as that which ‘presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’ (200), and elaborated on the rules of language and rhythm. Martin Kayman argues that although Pound’s personal values ‘appear[ed] as a supplement to or exemplification of a public movement’ in the explanatory notes, the doctrine of the school was ‘in fact effectively made up of his personal values’.²

Imagism was intended as a group movement from the start. It was inclusive for the utilitarian purpose of gathering strength, stressing aesthetic commonalities over differences between members, as can be seen in the emphasis on technique taking precedence over style or subject matter. Yet as Kayman suggests, ‘[t]he operation as a whole seems designed to represent Pound’s personal poetic criteria worked out in his personal pursuit of a “language” under the collective and authoritative authorship of a “school”’.³ In hindsight Pound remarked to Glenn Hughes in a letter on 26 September 1927 that ‘[t]he name was invented to launch H.D. and Aldington before either had

¹ Wallace Martin, *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 176.

² Martin A. Kayman, *The Modernism of Ezra Pound: The Science of Poetry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

enough stuff for a volume. Also to establish a critical demarcation long since knocked to hell', adding that '[Flint] and Ford and one or two others shd. by careful cataloguing have been in another group, but in those far days there weren't enough non-symmetricals to have each a farm to themselves.' (SL, 213) More contributors subsequently came on board, including Flint and Lowell, and the Imagists published anthologies as a group between 1914 and 1917.

Despite appearing as a collective, the Imagists made it very clear that they were no more than a group of 'individualists'. H.D. described *Des Imagistes* as an anthology of 'all the writers who don't belong to the Georgians',⁴ suggesting a loose alliance formed out of antagonism towards other contemporary groups. Competition amongst artistic movements was keen and Imagism was launched amidst inter-group rivalries. For example, Edward Marsh discussed the Imagists' ventures in a letter to fellow Georgian poet Rupert Brooke on 22 June 1913: 'there's a movement for a "Post-Georgian" Anthology, of the Pound-Flint-Hulme school, who don't like being out of GP, but I don't think it will come off.'⁵

Seen in retrospect, 'Georgian' 'refers to any verse of the 1912-18 period which shares the prevailing characteristics of the anthology: plain language, clear detail, realism, a strong feeling for the countryside and a belief, widely shared by the reading public, that the new poetry really was new, a radical departure from the grand rhetoric of the Victorians.'⁶ Such a description might easily fit Imagism's programme, were it not for its more 'foreign' and exotic credentials: two of the founding members, Pound and H.D., were American; their founding doctrines were published in the Chicago-based *Poetry*; the disparate influence of their poetry ranging from ancient Hellenic verse to Japanese *haiku*

⁴ Quoted in Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 589.

⁵ Quoted in Robert Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme* (London: Allan Lane, 2002), p. 147.

⁶ Dominic Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 97.

to contemporary French poetry; not to mention the name of their movement *Imagisme*, with a characteristic French -e ending in similar fashion to groups of the French avant-garde. All these set the Imagists apart from the Englishness of the Georgian poets.

But the publication circumstances of Imagist poetry often did not give an accurate picture of its nature and intentions. Edited by Pound, *Des Imagistes* was more of an attempt to promote his literary friends rather than the movement: for example, James Joyce's inclusion probably owed more to Pound's generous gesture of literary solidarity rather than his adherence to Imagist principles.⁷ Following its American publication in the *Globe*, the English version was published by the Poetry Bookshop where, '[h]aving promoted the Georgians and found audiences for Futurism, Harold [Monro] was equally generous to the Imagists [...] [in publishing] their first anthology.'⁸ Certain little magazines were also less-than-ideal publishing outlets: as Rebecca Beasley argues, being published in the *New Freewoman* (subsequently the *Egoist*) associated Imagism with anarchist tendencies, and affected 'the ideology that imagism was understood to be communicating'.⁹ And while Imagist poetry found an outlet in the little magazines, they only reached a limited audience: Pound admitted to Lowell in his letter on 1 August 1914 that 'the public' who took note of the poems just consisted of 'a few hundred people and a few reviewers' (*SL*, 38).¹⁰

Gradually Pound began to feel the limitation of the Imagist theories: Imagism was often mistaken as 'poetry which focused on objects in nature and rendered

⁷ Pound first wrote to Joyce in late 1913 following Yeats' suggestion of potential contributors to *Des Imagistes*. See *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce*, ed. by Forrest Read (London: Faber, 1968), pp. 1, 17-18.

⁸ Hibberd, *Harold Monro*, p. 141.

⁹ Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 81.

¹⁰ For the publishing constraints of Imagism, see Sarah Lee, 'The *Imagisme* Brand and Imagist Rivalries', in *Affirming the Gold Thread: Aldington, Hemingway, Pound & Imagism in Torcello and Venice*, ed. by H. R. Stoneback and Matthew Nickel (Florida English, 2014), pp. 63-73.

them concrete',¹¹ and after all 'Imagism' only applies to poetry, as Pound noted, '[o]bviously you cannot have "cubist" poetry or "imagiste" painting' (*GB*, 81). Other Imagists seemed content to apply the mechanism of the 'image' only in their own poetic medium, in contrast to Pound's drive for interdisciplinary pursuits and cultural renovation. It was with such frustrations in mind that Pound began to embrace the alternative in the visual arts and formulate an interdisciplinary aesthetics which possess a more encompassing impact.

2. From Imagism to Vorticism: An Aesthetic Evolution

My thesis is that Pound's turn from Imagism to Vorticism was not due to a preference for the visual over the verbal, but because of the possibilities he saw in the visual *for* the verbal, and that despite the apparent differences between Imagism and Vorticism, there were indeed many aesthetic continuities in Pound's conceptions of the movements, which were subject to change as his theories developed. I discuss the causes of his interest in the visual arts, his idea of the artist-critic, his views on language and vision as well as key aesthetic concepts of the movements, including 'image', 'vortex' and 'primary pigment'. From a contextual reading of Pound's accounts of Imagism and Vorticism, I argue that his conception of the 'image' remained essentially unchanged in Vorticism where it appeared as 'vortex', which has the added emphasis on interdisciplinarity, encoding the precision of expression in different artistic media.

A. Discovering the Visual

In *A Genealogy of Modernism*, Michael H. Levenson suggests that 'the recent successes of avant-garde movements in the plastic arts and the

¹¹ Douglas Messerli, 'Vorticist Lewis / Vorticist Pound', *The Art Quarterly*, I (1978), 397-402.

advantage of their aesthetic theories', as well as veritable 'talent' in visual artists as the reasons for 'the sudden importance for Pound of certain painters and sculptors'.¹² While I do not disagree with this view, I wish to explicate in greater details the reasons behind Pound's association with these visual artists and the subsequent change in his aesthetics which such association brought about. There are four broad reasons: Firstly, it was in view of the publicity which European avant-garde movements like Futurism and Cubism were capable of generating that Pound decided to steer Imagism towards the visual arts. This was coupled with his increasing frustration with Imagism, both with its doctrines and its members. As an interdisciplinary movement, Vorticism is 'a designation that would be equally applicable to a certain basis for all the arts' (GB, 81), thereby offering Pound a wider, pan-arts platform for his aesthetic theories. It also offers a more distinct and robust identity, as Pound explained, '[i]n the 'eighties there were symbolists opposed to impressionists, now you have vorticism, which is, roughly speaking, expressionism, neo-cubism, and imagism gathered together in one camp and futurism in the other.' ('Vorticism', 206)

Secondly, A. David Moody suggests that Pound found more inspiration, 'more *virtu* in certain sculptors and painters than in his fellow *Imagistes*'.¹³ In a letter to John Quinn on 23 August 1915 Pound declared: 'so far as I am concerned "VORTICISM," and the reason why I embroiled myself with a tribe of former friends etc. etc. etc. ad infinitum has been solely Brzeska and Lewis.' (EPVA, 235) Pound's friendship with the visual artists made him realise the inadequacies of his Imagist theories with their sole focus on poetry. The 'talent' that Levenson only mentions in passing actually encompasses a range of

¹² Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 121.

¹³ A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet. 1, the Young Genius, 1885-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 237. Original emphases.

visual techniques, both inspirational and applicable to Pound's own art, which he learnt from or found resonance in the visual artists, including the sense of connection with art traditions of the past and the use of juxtaposition. For example, Pound described his feelings when sitting for Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture, *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound*: 'sculpture was so unexpected in one's "vie littéraire." I had always known musicians and painters, but sculpture and the tone of past erudition ... set me thinking of renaissance life, of Leonardo, of the Gonzaga, or Valla's praise of Nicholas V.' (GB, 48) Pound was impressed by Gaudier-Brzeska's ability to attain the excellence of past traditions with new means of expression in his artistic media, which was stimulating for Pound in terms of the creative process in literature. Pound also learned from the Vorticist sculptors to expand his use of juxtaposition in poetry, 'to juxtapose as they did styles and subjects centuries and continents apart'; Dasenbrock argues that this method of 'temporal and cultural montage' allowed Pound 'to reconcile his antiquarian and modern tendencies' and 'to [become] a modern poet'.¹⁴

Thirdly, in the visual arts Pound was able to find a formal referent for poetry. Pound's Imagist and Vorticist periods are characterised by a quest for precision and concreteness, and it is not difficult to imagine his excitement when he found a counterpart 'hard' aesthetics in the visual arts. This formal referent for Pound initially only existed in sculpture, but upon the recommendation of Jacob Epstein, Pound sought it also in the drawings of Lewis, as he recounted in a letter to Quinn on 10 March 1916: 'Years ago, three I suppose it is, or four', he told Epstein that he found sculpture 'so much more interesting' than painting, to which Epstein replied, '[b]ut Lewis's drawing has the qualities of sculpture',

¹⁴ Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, p. 100.

which set him off looking at Lewis (*P/Q*, 67). Pound admired contemporary sculpture for its manifestation of form: in contrast to the immaterial nature of poetry, what Pound found appealing in the visual arts is the visibility and undisputable evidence of skill and craftsmanship, the works' concreteness and physical representation of beauty, the 'direct treatment of the thing'. Ronald Bush also suggests that the question of artistic structuring and construction so evident in paintings like Lewis's inspired Pound to think about 'structural terms' in relation to the poetic medium, which is crucial to his subsequent composition of *The Cantos*.¹⁵

Altogether, the awareness of a new sense of form, colours, subject matter and design in the visual realm contributed to Pound's literary practice and confirmed his interdisciplinary aspirations. As Pound summed up his learnings from the visual artists in *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*,

What have they done for me these vorticist artists? They have awakened my sense of form, or they "have given me a new sense of form," [...] These new men have made me see form, have made me more conscious of the appearance of the sky where it juts down between houses, of the bright pattern of sunlight which the bath water throws up on the ceiling, of the great "V's" of light that dart through the chinks over the curtain rings, all these are new chords, new keys of design. (*GB*, 126)

For Pound, the visual arts constituted a new sensitivity and a new source of creativity: not only did the visual artists give him an education in visual language, it was more fundamentally an education in the processes of observation and perception, in 'giv[ing] people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing' ('Vorticism', 202). Furthermore, there is the artistic potential to

¹⁵ See Chapter 2 in Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos*.

convey not only the ‘thing’, but more abstract notions such as the sense of form and the emotions of the artist.

Lastly, Pound’s association with the visual artists was for interdisciplinary artistic comradeship, as he wrote in his letter to the editor of *Reedy’s Mirror* on 18 August 1916 that, ‘[t]he pleasure in the vorticist movement was to find oneself at last *inter pares*.’ (EPVA, 218, original emphasis) Pound had been amazed by the fact that ‘[c]ertain artists working in different media have managed to understand each other. They know the good and bad in each other’s work, which they could not know unless there were a common speech.’ (‘Vorticism’, 208) Pound remarked on the interdisciplinary understanding of Lewis in a letter to the editor of the *Egoist*: ‘It interests me to find that my surest critic is a contemporary painter who knows my good work from my bad – NOT by a critical process, at least not by a technical process. It is interesting philosophically or whatever you choose to call it. Anyhow it indicates a “life” or a sameness somewhere that we are both trying with our imperfect means to get at. Our alliance must be with our own generation and usually with workers in other arts.’¹⁶ It is evident that Pound saw connections between the different arts and recognised the potential of interdisciplinarity as the way forward in artistic creation, which explains his drawing of Imagism towards Vorticism as an attempt to facilitate interdisciplinary interactions and correspondence to the mutual benefits for each artistic medium, under the ideal framework of the ‘primary pigment’ where the creative impulse operates across different artistic media.

¹⁶ Ezra Pound, ‘The Caressability of the Greeks (Correspondence)’, in *Egoist* (16 March 1914), p. 117. Original emphasis.

B. Becoming an Artist-Critic

As Pound increasingly associated himself with the visual artists, he looked for means to enable himself to contribute to the Vorticist movement beyond his capacity as a poet. With this purpose in mind, he began to write about the new arts as a ‘layman’ but ‘a thoughtful man [...] skilled in some other art’. Paradoxically, Pound seemingly began writing art criticism with a disclaimer that he had no wish to become an art critic: ‘The gods forbid that I should set myself up as an art critic. I do not much believe in any criticism of the arts save that which is made by artists, that is I want a painter on painting, a poet on verse, a musician on music. Their criticism can be technical and exact.’¹⁷ This suggests Pound’s recognition of the Whistlerian artist-critic, ‘whose authority derived from his superior intellectual and perceptual capabilities, rather than his formal training or position in the establishment’.¹⁸ Being skilled in his art, the artist-critic can provide insightful criticism from a practitioner’s perspective.

Not being a visual artist himself, Pound first assumed his role as artist-critic with poetry by connecting the poetic movement Imagism to the interdisciplinary movement Vorticism: he expounded the relationship between the two movements in ‘VORTEX. POUND.’, his statement in *BLAST* on Vorticism with respect to poetry, as well as in his subsequent article ‘Vorticism’. But Pound was keen on expanding the impact of his criticism and his assimilation into the visual arts, which drove him to begin developing interdisciplinary theories, as well as promoting Vorticism via polemical writing and art criticism. Pound was undoubtedly a vocal art critic and Vorticism’s chief propagandist outside of *BLAST*: between 1914 and 1915 he published ten articles on a range of topics on modern art, including Vorticism and individual Vorticists in various journals

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 49.

such as the *Egoist* and the *New Age*; he also wrote five letters to the editors concerning these articles in which he defended and reinforced his views.¹⁹ Of these, ‘Vorticism’ in the *Fortnightly Review* (1 September 1914) and the ‘Affirmations’ series in the *New Age* (between January and February 1915) are particularly notable for his explication of Vorticist aesthetics and the combined discussions of Imagism and Vorticism. Levenson opines that Pound’s efforts were not ‘merely [to explain] Vorticism to a reluctant public’, but that he was ‘equally intent to legitimize the place of literature within the general movement in the arts’,²⁰ a move which reinforced his status as an artist-critic.

To consolidate his position as the artist-critic in interdisciplinary Vorticism, Pound turned to the painter Whistler and the art critic Walter Pater as role models. He cited them in support of his theories in his ‘Vortex’ statement in *BLAST* as well as his subsequent article ‘Vorticism’:

It is no more ridiculous that a person should receive or convey an emotion by means of an arrangement of shapes, or planes, or colours, than that they should receive or convey such emotion by an arrangement of musical notes. I suppose this proposition is self-evident. Whistler said as much, some years ago, and Pater proclaimed that ‘All arts approach the conditions of music.’
('Vorticism', 199)

It should be noted that the appeal of Whistler and Pater for Pound lies in their aesthetic principles and interdisciplinary aspirations, as well as their positioning of the artist in society, but not necessarily in their aesthetics *per se*, which were bound by the Romanticist and at best Impressionist fashions of their times. In the

¹⁹ See Donald Gallup, *Ezra Pound: A Bibliography*, 3rd edn (Charlottesville; Godalming: The University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 233-238.

²⁰ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 127.

following, I discuss their respective impact on Pound's aesthetics and positioning as the artist-critic.

Beasley discusses in depth the influence of Whistler on Pound in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, and suggests that 'Pound's reading of Whistler created fundamental elements of his theoretical architecture: his conception of art as a science, his justifications of abstract design, and his belief in the authenticity and dynamism of unfinished art'. As Pound had known little about the visual arts, Whistler 'provided [him] with a congenial model of an anti-academic critic-practitioner: a spokesperson for the avant-garde, who simultaneously cultivated an impression of artistic individualism'. Whistler was an artist turned critic, and Pound aspired to follow the same path: Beasley argues that Pound's insistence that 'only the practitioner had the authority to write criticism' can be related to 'Whistler's uncompromising stance in his "Ten O Clock lecture"'. And like Whistler, Pound also attacked the 'pedagogical and moral impetus of mid-nineteenth-century art criticism' and 'the social function of art' in his writings, thereby displaying an 'ambivalent view of criticism'.²¹

Besides the role and positioning of the artist-critic, Pound also adopted Whistler's critical vocabulary in discussing Vorticism. Beasley argues that Pound's adoption of an art critical terminology was not only 'an attempt to register the aesthetic qualities of literature that he thought were neglected by the philological tradition in which he had trained', but also 'a means of defining his own professional standpoint, that of the Whistlerian artist-critic'.²² Pound's critical vocabulary in the visual arts was limited to start with. In 'Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery' (*Egoist*, 16 March 1914) he described how Cubist patterns 'make a beautiful arrangement of lines or colour shapes on a flat surface' (109); this

²¹ Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 37.

²² Ibid., p. 49.

wording is almost an exact repeat of his quotation from Whistler in ‘VORTEX. POUND.’: ‘You are interested in a certain painting because it is an arrangement of lines and colours.’ (*B1*, 154) The use of similar critical vocabulary suggests that Pound was attempting to understand the European avant-garde and formulate Vorticist aesthetics through the lens of Whistler. Beasley comments that in the ‘Affirmations’ series in 1915, ‘Pound had settled on a more stable set of terms, drawing on what he called the “musical conception of form”’. Besides Whistler, Pound had also learnt from Laurence Binyon and Huntly Carter, the *Egoist*’s art critic, leading to an expansion of his critical vocabulary in the visual arts.²³

Pound also found support for an interdisciplinary aesthetics in Pater, quoting ‘[a]ll arts approach the conditions of music’ from Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* as Vorticism’s ancestry (*B1*, 153). The phrase comes from the essay ‘The School of Giorgione’, in which Pater also wrote: ‘the highest sort of dramatic poetry [...] presents us with a kind of profoundly significant and animated instants, a mere gesture, a look, a smile, perhaps – some brief and wholly concrete moment – into which, however, all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history, have condensed themselves, and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present’.²⁴ Such descriptions are uncannily similar to Pound’s definition of the image in ‘A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste’ as well as the vortex in *BLAST*, suggesting aesthetic borrowing from Pater:

All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us,

²³ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁴ Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 133.

[...] All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future,
is pregnant in the vortex, NOW. (B1, 153, original emphases)

Mary Ellis Gibson suggests ‘Pound’s luminous detail and Pater’s “cunning detail” are close cousins’, and Pater’s belief that the excellence of an art is in its intensity and its ability to condense was manifested in Pound’s defence of the new arts,²⁵ as well as in his aesthetic definitions of both Imagism and Vorticism. Pater’s writing on the Renaissance also ‘presented Pound with the possibility of a historicism that was neither empiricist nor antiquarian’,²⁶ which is instrumental for Pound’s composition of *The Cantos*. In fact, Pound frequently connected Vorticism to the Renaissance for their shared focus on ‘precision’. In ‘Affirmations, VI. Analysis of this Decade’ (*New Age*, 11 February 1915), he praised the Vorticists because they ‘dare to put forward specifications for a new art, quite as distinct as that of the Renaissance, and [...] they do not believe it impossible to achieve these results.’ He compared Vorticism’s mission with that of the Renaissance:

The Renaissance sought a realism and attained it. It rose in a search for precision and declined through rhetoric and rhetorical thinking, through a habit of defining things always “in terms of something else.” Whatever force there may be in our own decade and vortex is likewise in a search for a certain precision; in a refusal to define things in the terms of something else: in the “primary pigment.” The Renaissance sought for a lost reality, a lost freedom.

We seek, for a lost reality and a lost intensity. We believe that the Renaissance was in part the result of a programme. We believe in the value of a programme in contradistinction to, but not in contradiction of, the individual

²⁵ Mary Ellis Gibson, *Epic Reinvented: Ezra Pound and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 31-33.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

impulse. Without such vagrant impulse there is no art, and the impulse is not subject to programme. (411)

Pound linked Vorticism to the Renaissance with their common quests for precise definition, directness of presentation and the rejection of rhetoric; he also simultaneously emphasised the inter-dependence and independence of artistic programmes and the impulse of individual artists. In line with Pater's emphasis in 'The School of Giorgione' that 'each art brings with it an individual quality which is directly traceable to its physical medium',²⁷ Pound's concept of the 'primary pigment' indicates the precise expression unique to each artistic medium. Such a notion of interdisciplinarity does not indicate synaesthesia: instead, Pound used the concept to denote the primary form in which conceptions and emotions present themselves to the vivid consciousness, 'the most highly energized statement [...] most capable of expressing' (*B1*, 153), which is best manifested by the tools of the respective artistic medium. The term 'pigment' stands for the basic unit which can be arranged or organised into patterns by the artist, for example words in poetry, or indeed colour in painting, which was the original impetus for Pound's conception of 'In a Station of the Metro', which I will discuss later.

Overall, the similarities between Whistler and Pater's aesthetic theories and that of Pound's testify to their influence on Pound's development of Imagist and Vorticist theories. Despite not being a visual artist himself, Pound gradually assumed the position of an artist-critic in the visual arts in his association with Vorticism. This identity is most apparent in his writing of the 'Art Notes' in the *New Age*, ironically under a pseudonym. Nonetheless, the venture is a remarkable achievement and reflects Pound's understanding of the visual arts

²⁷ Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 204.

and interdisciplinary aesthetics developed in London. In the following, I discuss the evolution of Pound's aesthetic ideas during the period. As Pound turned increasingly towards interdisciplinary discourse, some critics argue that Pound's primary medium of concern changed from poetry to the visual arts. However, a detailed reading of Pound's Vorticist aesthetics suggests that he did not replace the verbal with the visual, but instead emphasised their respective merits as compensatory for one another in his theory of the primary pigment.

C. Language, Vision and Interdisciplinarity

In 'Vorticism', Pound discussed the process of the 'search for oneself' in his poetic voice as a search for 'sincere self-expression', the ability to express oneself with accuracy and precision in language. Not only that, Pound hoped that such expressions could be 'real' with 'seeming verity', of being direct, truthful presentations that can stand the test of time and not only 'impressions', that 'with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing' ('Vorticism', 202). His question is really how to ensure an accuracy between the sensation received and the expression of it, to ensure the 'greatest efficiency' (B1, 153) in the process of representation. In the article he described certain poems of his as 'impersonal', being 'objective reality' not only from the poet's perspective, while another poem aimed to represent or imply 'a state of consciousness'. He termed these concrete, 'absolute metaphor[s]' 'Imagisme', and argued that 'they fall in with the new pictures and the new sculpture', with the common aim of 'arrangement' and precise expression despite the differences in artistic media. He further illustrated this idea with examples across the arts: 'Whistler and Kandinsky and some cubists were set to getting extraneous matter out of their art; they were ousting literary values. The Flaubertians talk a good deal about

"constatation." "The 'nineties' saw a movement against rhetoric.' ('Vorticism', 202)

Levenson considers Pound's endorsement of the painters' 'ousting literary values' as 'a striking thing for a poet to do'.²⁸ However, Pound's use of the expression does not intend to discredit language as a means of communication. Rather, he used it as an analogy for the common quest to purify the artistic medium in both painting and poetry. It was the goal of modern painters to reject the nineteenth-century convention of including diverse signifiers in paintings: such 'extraneous matter' include 'words, sounds, time, narrativity, and arbitrary "allegorical" signification and the "linguistic" or "textual" elements'. Instead, the stylistic ideal of modernist and abstract paintings ought to be the 'pure, silent, illegible visuality of the visual arts'.²⁹ Similarly, in literature writers moved against rhetoric, and promoted initiatives such as *le mot juste* and 'direct treatment of the thing', in order to present without commenting, as well as to strengthen the tie between language and the object depicted.

A later article of Pound's, 'Epstein, Belgion and Meaning' (*Criterion*, April 1930) clarified the 'literary content' of art more clearly:

[F]ew plastic artists have been strong enough to depend on form alone, dispensing with the stimulus or support of a literary content. [...] In England the courage reached its known maximum in the period 1911 to 1914 as shown in the work of Wyndham Lewis, Gaudier, and in a few works of Epstein [...] In drawing, this movement, so far as the general public knows, passed out of English work with Lewis' artillery designs, where he was forced to include a

²⁸ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 130.

²⁹ Quoted in Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, p. 204; W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 96.

narrative or at least literary content but still held firm the original direction of his will. (*EPVA*, 163)

This suggests Pound regarded ‘narrative’ or ‘literary content’ in painting as opposite to the arrangement of forms by the artist, just as in poetry ‘rhetoric’ is opposite to ‘precision’ or ‘presentation’. Levenson understands the expression as a metaphor for ‘unnecessary verbiage’, but he seems oblivious to the modern artists’ mission to abolish the narrative intent of nineteenth-century paintings, in a similar fashion to the Imagists’ rejection of rhetoric in poetry.

Levenson also interprets Pound’s endorsement of the visual medium as necessarily demeaning his own linguistic medium, and argues that as the definitions of the ‘primary pigment’ and Pound’s poetic ‘rel[y] on concepts borrowed from the fine arts’, they are therefore fragile.³⁰ However, Pound’s references to the visual arts (as well as to music) in his writing on aesthetics never amounted to a depreciation of his own medium, but were a means to reiterate the idea that the same aesthetic standards are applicable to all artistic media. For example Pound argued in ‘The Serious Artist’ (*New Freewoman*, 15 October 1913): ‘By good art I mean art that bears true witness, I mean the art that is most precise. You can be wholly precise in representing a vagueness. [...] If you cannot understand this with regard to poetry, consider the matter in terms of painting. [...] The touchstone of an art is its precision. This precision is of various and complicated sorts and only the specialist can determine whether certain works of art possess certain sorts of precision.’ (162-163) Here Pound drew on the analogous example of painting to illustrate the importance of precision in art, and suggested that only artist-critics can make the relevant artistic judgement.

³⁰ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 130.

Levenson also regards Pound's labelling of his poetry as 'Vorticist' as his implicit admission of intrinsic limitations in the poetic medium. Quoting Pound's description in a letter to Harriet Monroe on 10 April 1915 that '[t]he pictures proposed in the verse ['Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess'] are pure vorticism', Levenson comments: 'In this [Pound] strains against his linguistic medium [...] Pound relies, as he must, on such abstract characterizations since no verbal description, however precise, can hope to attain the *density* of a properly visual form [...] it seems plain that modernist poetry could not continue to develop by emulating the methods of painting and sculpture.'³¹ However, the original context of Pound's emphasis on 'pure vorticism' was his rejection of the label 'futurist' (*EPVA*, 290); for Pound, the stress on the 'Vorticist' character of his poetry is for distinction, and does not indicate a triumph of the visual over the verbal. Levenson's assessment also implies an incorrect understanding of Vorticism only encompassing the visual arts rather than being interdisciplinary in nature, a common misconception which Pound strove to dispel by tying his discussions of Imagism with Vorticism.

Beasley further develops Levenson's argument about Pound's preference for the visual over the linguistic medium in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, and I outline below some of her arguments which I will counter. Firstly, she suggests that the alliance of Imagism and the *New Freewoman* (subsequently the *Egoist*) was based on the common objective of purging language, and that its editor Dora Marsden's 'proposals for the purging of language, like imagism's, rest on a fantasy of a natural language, one that can adequately present the "thing" in all its vibrancy and immediacy'. Secondly, Pound's turn to the visual arts suggests that he regarded 'the visual arts as able

³¹ Ibid., p. 131. Original emphasis.

to effect a more adequate conjunction' between the thing and the representation.³² Beasley suggests that Pound subscribed to Gourmont's view of 'the primacy of vision', where the visual is conceived as prior to the verbal; for Gourmont, 'abstract ideas must be transformed into visual images to be effectively communicated'.³³ Beasley argues that in 'The Serious Artist', 'Pound's choice of "thought" [...] as an equivalent to "line", rather than "phrase" or "sentence" is testimony to his anti-verbalism'; and the fact that Pound 'turn[ed] to visual arts first' in defining 'great art', and did not subsequently list out his ideal masters of poetry is indicative of his prioritising of the visual over the verbal.³⁴

I shall tackle these arguments in turn. Firstly, Marsden's anti-verbalism stemmed from Bergson and Max Stirner's theories: the former 'argued that "thinking" inevitably falsifies the primary state of "Being", which can only be apprehended through "experienced emotion"', and the latter 'maintained that "language", or "the word" tyrannizes hardest over us, because it brings up against us a whole army of *fixed ideas*'. Marsden thus declared that "analysis of the process of naming" is "more urgently needed than anything thinkable in the intellectual life of to-day".³⁵ It is indeed this 'process of naming' which Pound took up to review and refine in the Imagist movement; but unlike Marsden's programme, Imagism champions a purging of excess language, of rhetoric instead of language *per se*. The 'image', as 'word beyond formulated language' and 'the furthest possible remove from rhetoric' ('Vorticism', 200, 204), expresses experiences and emotions via poetry by a fresh arrangement and a pared-down usage of words, in contrast to the conventional language of Victorian poetry filled with grandiose rhetoric. It is clear that Pound was not as

³² Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 84.

³³ Ibid., pp. 53-54,

³⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 82. Original emphasis.

radical as Marsden in abolishing the linguistic medium; he only wished to eliminate rhetoric and attain precise expression in the linguistic medium, an act which is far from ‘anti-verbalism’.

Carr remarks that despite sharing Hulme’s principle of the image, Pound did not subscribe to the ‘Nietzschean, Bergsonian view of language as inherently crude and inadequate’: instead, he retained his faith in the linguistic medium. Carr also suggests Pound’s statement ‘technique is the only gauge and test of a man’s lasting sincerity’ (298) in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: IX. On Technique’ implies that the artist ‘meets a moral duty rather than an epistemological challenge when he tries to use language “accurately”’, which differs from Marsden’s philosophical enquiries. Carr concludes that ‘Pound believed that there are realities beyond language that the artist strives to capture, so in that sense he [was] aware of language’s limitations, but he want[ed] to claim that the artist can overcome them’.³⁶

Patricia Rae offers a useful assessment of Pound’s view of language as between two schools of opinion, mystical transcendentalist and skeptical illusionist. The former believes in ‘an indelible union between signifier and signified and thus in a universe of fixed identities’, that language has ‘a natural affinity with things’. The latter holds a Nietzschean skepticism towards language, arguing that ‘poetical language *cannot* be idealised as natural and immediate’. Rae regards Pound as in between the two extremes: his affirmation of poetic language represents an optimistic hope or striving towards the representational ability of words; similarly, his recognition of the lack of a natural or primordial language nonetheless fuels his drive towards the Chinese ideogram as a

³⁶ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 389-390.

self-apparent language which immediately evokes the thing depicted with visual accuracy.³⁷

Pound's admission of the weaknesses of the linguistic medium should not be taken to suggest an anti-verbal attitude; after all, words are the materials for poets just as colours for painters. Instead, Pound emphasised the technique and arrangement of the artist as prerequisite for good art, which is universal in all artistic media. Pound's definition of the 'primary pigment' as 'the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred pictures' (*B1*, 153) also comes to the defense of the respective merits and inadequacies of each artistic media. Pound frankly admitted the indirectness or limitation of the linguistic medium in expressing certain notions in 'Wyndham Lewis' (*Egoist*, 15 June 1914): 'From the beginning of the world there has been the traditional struggle [...] of driving the shaft of intelligence into the dull mass of mankind. I daresay one's own art seems always the hardest. One feels that Mr. Lewis has expressed this struggle. One feels that in literature it is almost impossible to express it for our generation.' A few paragraphs later Pound suggested,

if anyone asked me what I mean – not what I mean *by* any particular statement, but what *I* mean, I could point to that design [from *Timon of Athens*] and say "That is what I mean" with more satisfaction than I could point to any other expression of complex intense emotion. I mean that Mr. Lewis has got into his work something which I recognise as the voice of my own age, an age which has not come into its own, which is different from any other age which has yet expressed itself intensely. (234, original emphases)

³⁷ Patricia Rae, *The Practical Muse: Pragmatist Poetics in Hulme, Pound, and Stevens* (Lewisburg Pa.; London: Bucknell University Press; Associated University Presses, 1997), pp. 222-224. Original emphasis.

Here Pound was not suggesting the visual arts as an intrinsically more powerful or communicative artistic medium than poetry, but praised Lewis's works for expressing precisely the contemporaneous artistic mentality.

Pound was also aware of the slipperiness and possible futility in describing visual aesthetics in words. Reflecting on his discussion of Epstein's works Pound admitted, 'perhaps these are only phrases and approximations and rhetoric. They are the sort of phrases that arise in the literary mind in the presence of Epstein's sculpture.' Yet, speaking as a 'layman', he concluded, 'a contemplation of Epstein's work would instil [sic] a sense of form in the beholder. That is, perhaps, the highest thing one can say of a sculptor.'³⁸ It is evident that there are things which cannot be as well expressed in one media compared to another, for example the 'sense of form' which is more apparent in works of visual art rather than poetry, but such instances do not indicate the visual as more capable than language in presentation and expression.

Therefore I object to Beasley's opinion that Pound's anecdote about the composition of 'In a Station of the Metro' suggests that 'imager poetry aims to achieve the intensity and immediacy of seeing'.³⁹ It is true that Pound's account of the compositional process in 'Vorticism' differed from his previous version in 'How I Began' (*T. P.'s Weekly*, 6 June 1913), but the admission that colour was the primary pigment of the scene does not indicate that he considered poetry or words secondary to the visual as Beasley argues.⁴⁰ The context of the article should also be taken into account, where Pound had been thinking about and was advocating an interdisciplinary aesthetics. I argue that Pound's emphasis lies in his attempt to 'record the precise instant when a thing outward and

³⁸ Ezra Pound, 'Affirmations, III. Jacob Epstein', in *New Age* (21 January 1915), pp. 311-312 (p. 312).

³⁹ Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 106.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective', and in his discovery of the 'equation' of precise expression of the 'sudden emotion' aroused by visual perceptions, first in 'little splotches of colour', and then in the superimposition of two ideas expressed in words as in the resultant poem. Pound suggested the significance of the image as its capacity to communicate and recreate the exact same impression for the reader as it occurred to the poet, and the mission of the modern artist is 'to render the *image* as we have perceived or conceived it' ('Vorticism', 203, 205, original emphasis). Rather than suggesting the superiority or dominance of vision over the linguistic medium, the visual stimulus is simply the impetus for the emotion arising in the artist that could be expressed by either non-representative painting or precise expression in poetry, or indeed in any other artistic medium.

But this account of the compositional process as an illustration of the primary pigment is challenged by Julian Murphet, who argues that the 'primary pigment' is a 'pseudo-concept': Pound's emotional impulse had to be 'translated back into [his own] primary pigment', and the composition of the poem 'actually turns on a transposition *between* pigments, between media, between forms, virtually in defiance of the entire doctrine'. In contrast, Murphet suggests Pound's 'Vorticist rewriting of Imagism' in the article 'turns on the buffer of the "painterly pigment" between the primary form and its final poetic realization', which suggests what took place was actually 'a pulsion between media'⁴¹ instead of a direct manifestation of the mechanism of the primary pigment which Pound frequently explicated.

However, it is evident that Pound's account did not suggest the poetic image as the primary pigment in this instance, or that the poem was the 'first

⁴¹ Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism*, pp. 151-152. Original emphasis.

intensity', the direct expression of his emotion. Pound in fact admitted that 'my experience in Paris should have gone into paint', which was 'the first adequate equation that came into consciousness'. Pound's theory that 'certain emotions or subjects find their most appropriate expression in some one particular art' does not reject a translational process across different artistic media, and Pound's poem in fact exemplifies the successful translation of the visual primary pigment into his own artistic medium after multiple attempts of precise expression with innovative form and technique. I argue that the account serves to illustrate Pound's argument that the expression of the *image* in poetry is essentially the same as that in abstract painting ('[t]he image is the poet's pigment'), where both depend on the artist's arrangement of the basic units of his particular art, be that words or colours. Pound's suggestion of a parallel in Kandinsky's theory of the language of form and colour stresses the interdisciplinarity of the creative impulse, which is another dimension of the 'primary pigment' ('Vorticism', 201, 203-205).

Understanding that the visual can be at times more appropriate than language in the perception, conception and expression of things 'not immediately expressible in words'⁴² did not lead Pound to denounce Imagism or poetry, but rather to pronounce its adherence to Vorticism, intended as an interdisciplinary umbrella for all the arts, with an emphasis on the complementary quality and resonance between different artistic media. Where language falls short, it can be complemented by the visual arts and other artistic media; but language also has its unique function that the other arts cannot achieve. Therefore, only an interdisciplinary aesthetics can adequately cover all

⁴² Ibid., p. 150.

means of expression in conserving the verisimilitude of the ‘thing’ presented, which is an important part of Pound’s envisioning of the primary pigment.

Pound’s ‘investigation into the signifying power of language and form’⁴³ was driven by his concern with the ‘thing’ rather than the medium, as he explained in a letter to Iris Barry on 27 July 1916 with an analogy: ‘Shifting from Stendhal to Flaubert suddenly you will see how much better Flaubert writes. And YET there is a lot in Stendhal, a sort of solidity which Flaubert hasn’t. A trust in the thing more than the word. Which is the solid basis, i.e. the thing is the basis.’ (*SL*, 89, original emphasis) Here Pound indicated that the accurate presentation of the subject is as important as literary technique, much as technique and means of representation in any other art. Pound’s conception of Vorticism was thus not reliant on the visual media alone or on the notion of synaesthesia, but rather the imposing of a common standard in the arts – the precise expression of the thing – which is made possible by exploiting the respective merits and differences in various artistic media.

There is plenty of evidence in Pound’s writings which supports this balanced interdisciplinary view. As Beasley indeed notes, Pound was initially insistent that ‘we do not all of us think in at all the same sort of way or by the same sort of implements’ in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris, VI: On Virtue’ (*New Age*, 4 January 1912), and in ‘The Wisdom of Poetry’ (*Forum*, April 1912) he also stressed ‘the variety of individuals’ thought processes’, indicating his repudiation of the primacy of the visual and his awareness of different means of artistic perception.⁴⁴ I argue against Beasley’s view of Pound’s subsequent subscription of the visual as a replacement of the verbal, as he continued to emphasise the respective merits of different artistic media and their equal status.

⁴³ Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Before the founding of Vorticism, Pound already emphasised the distinctions between different artistic media in ‘The Caressability of the Greeks’ (*Egoist*, 16 March 1914): ‘I don’t in the least suppose that I like a work of Epstein’s for the same reasons that he likes it. If I were more interested in form than in anything else I should be a sculptor and not a writer. Epstein working in form produces something which moves me who am only moderately interested in form. Rummel who is interested in sound produces a composition of sounds which moves me who am only moderately sensitive to sound. I, if I am lucky, produce a composition of words which moves someone else who is only moderately interested in words.’ (117) Being a poet, Pound’s materials were words even though his impetus might be a visual impression.

Pound acknowledged the formal differences between different artistic media in ‘VORTEX. POUND.’, but he also argued that these differences by no means suggest one medium may be privileged over another. In *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*, Pound suggested that Gaudier-Brzeska saw fundamental differences between sculpture and painting, which led to the conclusion that ‘combinations of abstract or inorganic forms exclusively, were more suitable for painting than for sculpture’ (GB, 26), diverging from Lewis’s visual aesthetics. Yet despite acknowledging differences in their materials and methods, Pound pointed towards the common goal of artists working in different artistic media:

It is [the poet’s] business so to use, so to arrange, these names as to cast a more definite image than the layman can cast; in like manner it is the painter’s or the sculptor’s business so to use his planes, his colours, his arrangements that they shall cast a more vivid, a more precise image of beauty upon the mind of his spectator, than the spectator can get of himself or from a so different department of art. This is the common ground of the arts, this combat

of arrangement or “harmony.” The musician, the writer, the sculptor, the higher mathematician have here their common sanctuary. It does *not* mean that the poet is to describe post-impressionist pictures, or that the sculptor is to carve allegorical figures of the dramatist’s protagonists. In different media, which are at once the simplest and the most complex, each artist works out the same and yet a totally different set of problems. And he uses the medium for which the combination of his talents most fits him. (*GB*, 121, original emphasis)

Here Pound demonstrated his confidence and endorsement of poetry as a medium of expression, much as painting and sculpture, or even music and mathematics, and suggested that although each art expresses differently in its unique forms, there is the common underlying principle of casting ‘a more precise image’ of the thing presented by means of ‘arrangement’. Pound’s association with the visual artists and the frequent mention of the visual arts in his theories, often taken as a preference for the visual over the linguistic medium, is in fact a drive towards encompassing the precise presentation of the real across different artistic media in his interdisciplinary theories of Vorticism.

D. Redefining the Arts

Although Pound did not reject words as the creative medium of poetry, whether his usage of language is precise or not is another matter. This can be considered with regard to two aspects: the precision of naming and the precision of expression. The process of naming is reflected in Pound’s invention and (re)definition of terms such as ‘image’, ‘vortex’ and ‘primary pigment’, which define ‘Imagism’ and ‘Vorticism’ as standards of excellence in the arts in their search for precise expression. The precision of expression in the linguistic

medium involves matters of style, such as the rejection of rhetoric in poetry, as well as the clear explanation of one's ideas in prose. I argue that although Pound established precise names for his aesthetic ideas, his polemical discussions often failed to express these ideas precisely, resulting in much confusion in his definitions of Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics.

In Pound's conception, Imagism was an attempt to define his artistic objective in naming precisely the drive towards precise expression in poetry. Pound defined the 'image', the touchstone of the movement in 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' as 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', which gives 'that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art' (200-201). The word 'complex' evokes a transformative process with multiple possible outcomes, one that Hugh Witemeyer suggests 'conveys meaningful experience virtually without the mediation of language'.⁴⁵ Coupled with universal sensations of epiphany in 'the greatest works of art', the 'image' is seemingly an impulse transformable into the other arts.

In the same article Pound also suggested the 'image' as against 'abstraction' and 'mediocre verse', and advised on the precise use of language in poetry: 'Use no superfluous [sic] word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.' (201) Pound insisted on the precision and concreteness of linguistic expression in poetry, as he stated in a letter to Monroe in January 1915: 'Poetry must be as well written as prose [...] Language is made out of concrete things. General expressions in non-concrete terms are a laziness; they are talk, not art, not creation. They are the reaction of things on the writer, not a creative act *by* the

⁴⁵ Witemeyer, 'Early Poetry 1908-1920', p. 48.

writer.' This is no doubt a complaint against 'all sorts of wish-wash and imitation and the near-good', which in Pound's opinion included Lowell's 'looser work' (*SL*, 48-49, original emphases).

Pound's subsequent association with visual artists made him realise that workers in the other arts were also striving to attain this precision of expression, and that commonalities could be found in their quest in different artistic media. Pound's turn to an interdisciplinary aesthetics was driven by his wish for precise expression – to reconcile the object and representation – in all artistic media. Therefore Pound extended the process of the 'image' to the other arts, and renamed it 'vortex' to 'update' what the term entails: 'a correlated aesthetic which carries you through all of the arts' (*GB*, 81). This intention is exemplified in a letter from Pound to Monroe, mentioning that his article on 'Imagisme' would be published under the title 'Vorticism' (*EPVA*, xxiii n9a). The change of terminology from 'image' to 'vortex' can thus been seen as a review of the process of naming to expand the former term's signification to arts in different media, combined with publicity concerns: obviously, one needs a 'correct name' for one's intentions, and 'Vorticism' would be the new name for an avant-garde movement, which is more appropriate to designate interdisciplinarity than 'Imagism', only applicable to poetry.

By affiliating Imagism with Vorticism, Pound incorporated the Imagist objective of precise expression into the aesthetics of the latter movement. He also redefined the 'image' as 'not an idea', but 'a radiant node or cluster [...] from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing', which he named the 'vortex', a creative channel or mechanism which applies to all the arts. As Pound commented, '*[In]omina sunt consequentia rerum*, and never was that statement of Aquinas more true than in the case of the vorticist movement'

(‘Vorticism’, 207, original emphasis), the process of precise expression across the arts necessarily invokes for itself a precise name.

With Pound’s ideal conception of the ‘image’ and the ‘vortex’ elucidated, it is not difficult to understand why Pound maintained a dual-identity of being an Imagist and Vorticist. As Carr observes, Pound ‘emphasises that he is an *imagiste*, something that is not negated by the fact that “vorticism” is the overarching term that includes “*Imagisme*” in poetry’ throughout his 1914 article “Vorticism”.⁴⁶ Carr also correctly assesses that ‘as far as poetry was concerned Vorticism was for Pound at the time more a new name than a new school’,⁴⁷ one might say it is in fact as much as a name as Imagism, dictated by the necessity of the ‘image’ or the ‘vortex’. Intended to be precise names, the ‘image’ and ‘vortex’ (as well as Imagism and Vorticism) are versions of the same attempt to champion precision of expression as the essence of artistic creation. Although new ideas do not require new names to come into being, new and (most importantly) precise names are essential for them to be communicated and correctly understood. This expansion of the arsenal of the linguistic medium is at the same time a process of honing the precision of language in representing the real.

However, the significant overlapping between Pound’s terms ‘image’ and ‘vortex’ has never been easy to understand. The establishment of a precise name for the creative mechanism, namely ‘image’ turned ‘vortex’, both touchstone concepts named by Pound and crucial to the understanding of the meanings and processes of Imagism and Vorticism, were ironically problematised by Pound’s unstable conceptions and constant redefinitions of the key terms, as he modified his aesthetic ideas and reoriented the emphases of

⁴⁶ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 675.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 697.

his theories according to changes in his thinking or as reactions against criticism and competition. His polemics and art criticism were also undermined by imprecise expression and artistic definitions. Imagism and Vorticism thus came to represent not precision, but instead hint at a great deal of ambivalence under Pound's diverse and almost liberal applications of the terms, an issue which continues to puzzle readers. The confusion between the two movements was complicated by the excessive borrowing from Imagism to Vorticism, including not only Pound's own aesthetic statements but also that of fellow Imagists, for example in his (possibly unauthorised) citing of H.D.'s poem 'Oread' as an exemplary Vorticist poem. This wilful operation must have been particularly irksome to the Imagists, who would have regarded Pound as the hijacker of Imagism instead of Lowell.

The permeability and seeming interchangeability between Imagism and Vorticism also cast doubts on whether these gestures were simply Pound's *stratégies littéraires*, a simple (re)packaging of the term(s) for publicity purposes, or whether they truly possess independent, concrete aesthetics of their own – more so for Pound's conception of Vorticism than Imagism. Vorticism was suspected of being a marketing ploy as much as Imagism was. The editorial of the *New Age* on 10 September 1914, shortly after Pound's article 'Vorticism' was published, suggested that Pound's Vorticism was simply a gesture of friendship for Lewis:

Mr. Pound, however, tries to establish some connection between "Vorticism" in painting and design and "Imagism" in verse. As usual, he is very obscure and the more so for the pains he takes to disguise the real relations. I imagine myself that the only connection between the two was due to the accident of friendliness. Mr. Pound happened to like Mr. Wyndham Lewis, and there you

are! That this is a thousand times more probable than Mr. Pound's explanation appears from this: that while he defines Imagism, his own contribution to the common stockpot, quite clearly, he nowhere in the article has a clear word to say on the subject of Vorticism. (449)⁴⁸

It was indeed Pound's shifting definitions of Imagism that complicated if not mystified his aesthetic intentions and made his explanations evasively rhetorical; in fact, it is not only the 'image' or 'vortex' in Pound's critical terminology that have been problematic. Despite his insistence on precise expression, paradoxically Pound often created confusion for his readers in his art criticism by muddling certain terms or imbuing them with multiple meanings. Beasley cites the 'avalanche of criticism' which the *New Age* received in response to Pound's 'Affirmations' series and comments that,

while Pound's terms themselves are not particularly unusual, the weight he makes them carry is [...] in Pound's criticism such words [as 'mass' and 'plane'] are so frequently repeated, and endowed with such a heavy positive valence that the subject matter buckles under their weight. As Pound develops his critical framework for vorticist art he makes these terms carry a defining force and his readers, understandably, question their validity. [...] a recurrent concern is that Pound's promotion of vorticist art appears too closely related to the empty rhetoric of advertising merchants.⁴⁹

The repetition and lack of specificity in Pound's vocabulary might have resulted from a deficiency in his vocabulary in art criticism, as well as in line with the dualist, ambivalent rhetoric of *BLAST*. Pound's erratic definitions may also have been deliberate, for example as he declared in 'Affirmations, IV. As for Imagisme' (*New Age*, 28 January 1915): 'Having omitted to copyright the word

⁴⁸ Quoted in Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

[Imagisme] at its birth I cannot prevent its misuse. I can only say what I meant by the word when I made it. Moreover, I cannot guarantee that my thoughts about it will remain absolutely stationary.' (349) No doubt this statement was made in reaction to Lowell's appropriation of Imagism for her own ends;⁵⁰ but it also suggests that Pound did not see the 'image' or 'vortex' as fixed ideas, but rather as evolving concepts, methods or even labels according to the situation at hand. The definitions of Imagism and Vorticism as the recording of Pound's evolving ideas on precise artistic expression were thus compromised by his own imprecise expression, as well as his propagandist promotion of the artistic vision of the English avant-garde.

Yet Pound had anticipated the considerable bewilderment generated by his processes of precise naming and expression, as he recorded that readers who were used to 'mellifluous phrases' and 'thoughts that have been already thought out by others' '[made] fun of the clumsy odd terms that we use in trying to talk of [the new arts] amongst ourselves'. Pound defended the new terms and expressions by arguing that new ways of thinking and language are required for understanding the innovations of the new art: 'Any mind that is worth calling a mind must have needs beyond the existing categories of language, just as a painter must have pigments or shades more numerous than the existing names of the colours.' ('Vorticism', 204) Pound's belief in an interdisciplinary aesthetics also stemmed from his realization that '[t]he sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.'⁵¹ The only way to achieve a comprehensive 'language' is by appealing to the sums of artistic expressions across all artistic media, traditions and cultures, a process of

⁵⁰ Melissa Bradshaw, *Amy Lowell, Diva Poet* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 73-74.

⁵¹ Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 34. Original emphasis.

innovation and experimentation which inevitably and constantly stretches the ‘existing categories of language’, which summarises Pound’s utopian vision and aesthetic mission.

3. Pound’s Wartime Contributions to Vorticism

As Lewis put it, *BLAST* and indeed Vorticism were ‘surrounded by a multitude of other Blasts of all sizes and descriptions’ (*B2*, 5). The beginning of the war in August 1914 quickly led to the dispersal of the newly-formed Vorticist group: the various male English artists took up war duties, and Gaudier-Brzeska was killed on the Western Front in June 1915. As an American citizen in London, Pound naturally rose to the position of the spokesperson of the movement. During the war, he continued to promote Vorticism and define its aesthetics in his polemical essays, notably with the ‘Art Notes’ series in the *New Age*, in which under a pseudonym he championed many Vorticist artists and the art of the European avant-garde. He also acted as agent and publicist for fellow artists to arrange for exhibition and sales of their works, as well as soliciting financial support and publication opportunities from patrons, editors and sympathisers.

I argue that Pound’s involvement in these pragmatic issues was fundamental to Vorticism’s survival in the war, when the production of actual works was limited. Often neglected or dismissed as propaganda, the ‘Art Notes’ are in fact valuable resources for exploring Pound’s practice and transformation of the role of the artist-critic into propagandist for Vorticism, in his championing of the visual avant-garde and creating *stratégie littéraire* in the realm of art criticism. Being a final example of Vorticism in practice, the notes showcased its avant-garde interdisciplinary aesthetics in the form of art criticism. More broadly speaking, the case of Pound and the ‘Art Notes’ also contributes towards an

understanding of the pragmatic structures of avant-garde activism and rhetoric in wartime and post-war London. Pound's determination to perpetuate both the aesthetics and grouping of the Vorticist movement despite the precariousness of war reflects his unyielding mission to bridge Vorticism to the European avant-garde, as well as to bring recognition to the English avant-garde as equivalent to their Continental counterparts. In the following, I will elaborate on Pound's wartime service to Vorticism and its lasting legacy in twentieth century English art.

A. Patronage for Creation

While Pound might have been reluctant to link works of art to the 'market', money inevitably found its way into his consideration and championing of Vorticism as with the circulation of contemporary visual art. As early as in January 1915, Pound touched upon the commercial implication of Imagism while explaining his row with Lowell to Monroe: 'There are two ways of existing in la vie littéraire. As De Gourmont said some while since: "A man is valued by the abundance or the scarcity of his copy." The problem is *how*, how in hell to exist without over-production. In the Imagist book I made it possible for a few poets who were not over-producing to reach an audience. That delicate operation was managed by the most rigorous suppression of what I considered faults.' (SL, 48, original emphasis) Pound realised the way to success for artists, or indeed movements, whether in poetry or the visual arts, is to maintain such a balance of output and subsistence.

In early 1915, Pound and the New York-based lawyer and art patron John Quinn began a series of correspondence which engaged the latter as an important patron for modern English literature and art. Their correspondence in

fact began concerning the consumption of art: Quinn protested against Pound's comment about 'American collectors buying autograph mss. Of William Morris, faked Rembrandts and faked Van Dykes' (*P/Q*, 4) as libel. In reply, Pound persuaded Quinn to help revoke the tariff imposed on books published outside America just like that for paintings, and responded enthusiastically to Quinn's wish to purchase works by Gaudier-Brzeska, a matter which Pound went about rather strategically. He first commented on Gaudier-Brzeska's dire financial situation: 'when he comes back from the trenches, if he does come, I imagine he will be jolly hard up'. He then persuaded Quinn that, 'if a patron buys from an artist who needs money (needs money to buy tools, time and food), the patron then makes himself equal to the artist: he is building art into the world; he creates.' Pound also assured Quinn that in buying through him 'there will be no waste in dealer's commissions' (*SL*, 51-54).

Pound's 'working' relationship with Quinn, which this letter inaugurated, became a considerable scheme in financially supporting Vorticist artists. Quinn subsequently bought many Vorticist works with the assistance and brokerage of Pound, as well as financed the *Little Review* upon Pound's request. With the support from Quinn, there was a change in Pound's attitude towards measuring the worth of artwork in financial terms; for example he wrote to Quinn on 18 April 1915, only a month after his first letter, advising that, '[a]s to Lewis, I think his prices will soar like Matisse's when once they start. Anyhow your collection is not complete until you have a few of his best things' (*P/Q*, 26), invoking speculation in the commercial value of art. And writing to fellow Vorticist Helen Saunders on 9 September 1916 Pound bragged, '[Quinn] has taken practically all the Lewis drawings. It runs to £375, which ought to contradict the premature reports of the

death of “le mouvement”.⁵² Although Pound maintained his aesthetic standards during the war, it is clear that he was influenced by the contemporary practice to measure the esteem of works of art in terms of commercial success.

Quinn’s patronage played an important role in sustaining Vorticism throughout the war and beyond, in terms of both providing a financial lifeline for artists as well as conserving Vorticist works, which might have been dispersed without a trace during the war if they were not gathered under a single collector in the relative safety of the United States. As Vivien Greene remarks, ‘[t]he Vorticist group essentially disintegrated after the war, each artist setting forth in a divergent direction’; Quinn’s collection of their art in the Vorticist period was essential to the perpetuation of the movement’s legacy, even to this day.⁵³ That fortuitous coincidence was largely due to Pound’s single-handed, untiring negotiation with Quinn on behalf of fellow Vorticists.

B. The ‘Art Notes’ as Vorticist *stratégie littéraire*

Towards the end of the war there came another opportunity for Pound to boost Vorticism in London. He produced a series of articles titled ‘Art Notes’ for the *New Age* under the pseudonym of B. H. Dias beginning on 22 November

⁵² In the letter Pound informed Saunders, ‘[w]ith the exception of Ed[ward] Wad[sworth] [Quinn] has about cleared up the whole show’, including Saundar’s paintings *Cannon*, *Dance* and *Balance*, as well as Jessica Dismorr’s *Movements* (EPVA, 292). These paintings of Saunders’s were only exhibited at the New York exhibition and not included in the Doré Galleries exhibition (Anna Gruetzner Robins, “Reforming with a Pick-Axe”: The First Vorticist Exhibition at the Doré Galleries in 1915’, in *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Vivien Greene (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), pp. 59-65 (p. 61)). Quinn initially only agreed to buy some of the works, but changed his mind ‘out of an apparent sense of responsibility’, writing to Pound on 12 August 1916: ‘Perhaps I am violating my own feeling and also your feeling that I should have only “representative things” [...] But, poor devils, they sent the things over here and no one else is likely to buy them. If I were thinking only of myself I wouldn’t take any of the others and concentrate on the Lewis drawings.’ Quoted in Vivien Greene, ‘Ezra Pound and John Quinn: The 1917 Penguin Club Exhibition’, in *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, pp. 75-83 (p. 79).

⁵³ Vivien Greene, ‘John Quinn and Vorticist Painting: The Eye (and Purse) of an American Collector’, in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford; New York Oxford University Press 2013), pp. 175-196 (p. 184).

1917, which continued at intervals until 8 April 1920 (*EPVA*, 30n12). In the same period Pound also became the magazine's music critic, writing under another pseudonym William Atheling from 6 December 1917 to 6 January 1921.⁵⁴ Pound discussed the work in a letter to his father on 24 January 1918: 'Am doing art and music critiques under pseudonyms, paying the rent. rather entertaining work. || NOT to be mentioned.|| It may be I have at last found a moderately easy way to earn my daily. Bloody queer what a man will do for money. MUSIC!!!!'⁵⁵

He explained the venture in greater detail to Quinn in a letter on 19 February 1918: 'I am writing regularly for [A. R. Orage] as B. H. Dias and Wm. Atheling. The former on art, where E. P. would be hopelessly suspect of Vorticist Propaganda, and the elderly Atheling on music because no one writer should publicly appear to know about everything. These wind shields are to be kept secret. Dias only puts over as much as the N.A. reader is supposed to be able to stand.' (*EPVA*, xxii n1a) Writing under a pseudonym gave Pound the 'independence' necessary to promote Vorticism, an idea which might have been brewing in Pound's mind for some time, as he wrote in a letter to Margaret Anderson on 10 August 1917: 'On the New Age all contributions signed with initials are supposed to be the editor. Wouldn't it have more effect if two people were writing, than if, as per, 1st. correspondent. they were supposed to be the same person. ???' (*P/LR*, 110, original emphases) However, when he wrote to Anderson again on 13 September 1917 remarking that 'I am too much allied with Lewis and Brzeska to form any new connections', the venture with the *New Age* seemingly had not yet materialised. Reflecting on the lack of an ideal 'organ' (*P/LR*, 124) to promote Vorticism perhaps drove Pound to actively procure such an opportunity.

⁵⁴ Gallup, *Ezra Pound*, p. 246.

⁵⁵ Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents*, p. 411. Original emphases.

It is uncertain whether Pound was invited by the *New Age* for the post or whether he volunteered his services, but in either case his collaboration with the journal at this point appears curious. Despite Pound's commendation of the magazine for 'permit[ting] one to express beliefs which are in direct opposition to those held by the editing staff',⁵⁶ his 'Affirmations' series in 1915 was 'nipped [...] in the middle because I have dared to write an article praising an American writer of vers libre, one Edgar Masters. They say it's an insult to their readers to praise vers libre after they have so often condemned it' (*SL*, 54). His affiliation with the journal also undoubtedly succumbed to the pressure of readers' reactions against Pound's polemics as previously mentioned.⁵⁷ The fact of Pound serving as music and art critic for the paper despite such significant ideological differences is striking, but the collaboration is understandable in view of a lack of writers available during the war, particularly towards the end of the war and the immediately post-war period.⁵⁸ Faith Binckes points out that the *New Age* 'had a reputation for hosting exchanges between figures with divergent opinions, and also benefited from the irresolvable nature of the argument on national identity and tradition. Publishing conflicting views not only produced exciting copy, thereby enhancing the appeal of the paper, it also extended the potential audience, by diminishing partisanship'⁵⁹ – in other words publicity much needed during the war.

Pound wrote the 'Art Notes' pseudonymously to avoid being 'suspect of Vorticist Propaganda', yet the attention and sympathy that Dias gave to the new art and the English avant-garde artists (particularly the Vorticists) are striking: in

⁵⁶ Ezra Pound, 'Affirmations, II. Vorticism.', in the *New Age* (14 January 1915), pp. 277-279 (p. 277).

⁵⁷ For a more in-depth account on the ideological differences between Pound and the *New Age*, see Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, pp. 89-94.

⁵⁸ Martin, *The New Age under Orage*, pp. 193-194.

⁵⁹ Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde*, p. 75.

the notes there are frequent mentions of Lewis, Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Wadsworth and others, often in high regard. Such a stance would certainly have aroused suspicion towards the uncanny identity of B. H. Dias, a name suspicious enough as disguise, despite the writer's apparent knowledge of other advanced artists on the Continent. Nonetheless, Pound was able to continue writing the series for two years, often championing his friends in these articles. I argue that these notes were not only a means to 'pay the rent', but that Pound did take genuine interest in them and regarded them as a prime opportunity to promote Vorticism in England, and in which Pound's own visual aesthetics can also be elucidated. In the following, I discuss Pound's arguments in relevant articles in chronological order, referring to Pound as Dias where the notes are concerned.

Mentions of the Vorticists first began in the notes on 23 May 1918. Subtitled 'Gaudier-Brzeska', Dias devoted the whole note to reviewing the Gaudier-Brzeska retrospective exhibition at the Leicester Gallery. Dias wrote that the death of Gaudier-Brzeska 'was one of the great losses of the war, and we need not quibble over Mr. Pound's statement (in the catalogue preface) that it was the greatest individual loss which the arts have sustained in war'. Not only did Dias quote Pound's preface in the exhibition catalogue, he also mentioned the memoir Pound wrote two years before as supporting information of his discussion: 'The unity of Gaudier's career, through all the bewildering external changes, shows here, as in the growth of the form of animal head and neck from plate XXX of the "Memoir," to plate XXIV [sic]. One can scarcely help being minutely technical in trying to make people understand the work of a master of his craft who is "so strange" to the public.' (58) The juxtaposition of Dias and Pound's views is uncanny, and it is not difficult to imagine Pound's excitement

when he devised this way of promoting the works of the Vorticists as well as his own.

In order to establish the credentials of Dias, the notes covered diverse topics in the arts. For example Dias discussed the standards of architecture in the note ‘Building: Ornamentation!’ (12 September 1918), and the next note ‘Kinema, Kinesis, Hepworth, Etc.’ (26 September 1918) focused on cinema and photography. Dias judged that ‘the cinema is not Art’ and that photography as ‘poor art’ by extension, as ‘it has to put in everything, or nearly everything. If it omits, it has to omit impartially. It omits by a general blurr [sic]. It cannot pick out the permanently interesting parts of a prospect. It is only by selection and emphasis that any work of art becomes sufficiently interesting to bear long scrutiny.’ (352) Dias’s comment on photography is indeed very similar to what Pound had written the year before in ‘The Vortographs’: ‘Vortography stands below the other vorticist arts in that it is an art of the eye, not of the eye and hand together. It stands infinitely above photography in that the vortographer combines his forms *at will*. He selects just what actuality he wishes, he excludes the rest. He chooses what forms, lights, masses, he desires, he arranges them *at will* on his screen.⁶⁰ The same insistence on the anti-mimetic and the artist’s selection or arrangement is observed in both articles, which is also in accordance with Pound’s Vorticist aesthetics.

Once he had established the persona of Dias, Pound orchestrated a series of remarkable *pas de deux* in early 1919, exploiting his two identities in support of Vorticism. On 27 February, a letter from Pound was published in response to the article by Dias titled ‘Wyndham Lewis at the Goupil’ in the previous issue, in which Pound protested, ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis is one of the five or six painters in

⁶⁰ Anonymous note in the catalogue of Alvin Langdon Coburn’s exhibition in February 1917. EPVA, 156, original emphases.

this country whose work has any significance [...] Neither Mr. Dias nor anyone else is qualified to speak of Mr. Lewis's work unless they have seen both the Baker collection and the collection of fifty "drawings" (mostly in rich colour) which I sent to New York for the Vorticist Exhibition, at which they were all of them sold, the best of them being now in Mr. John Quinn's collection.' (283) Pound's letter was no doubt designed as a *stratégie littéraire* in promoting and getting more readers interested in Lewis's art, dropping hints of Lewis's works' whereabouts and stressing their success in their marketability, with Pound strategically hiding the fact that Quinn was the sole buyer of the works at the exhibition.⁶¹

In the notes just two weeks later on 13 March, Dias retorted: 'I cannot [...] use these columns for the criticism of any painting save that which has been publicly exhibited. I have, as a matter of fact, seen the Baker collection, but I can include neither that nor the works of Mr. Pound sent to New York in an estimate of Mr. Lewis's work unless I am also to include the unexhibited work of Mr. Lewis' contemporaries. I am, however, quite willing to admit that Mr. Lewis is one of the dozen, or perhaps even the half-dozen English painters, whose work merits international attention.' Dias's response was indeed Pound's attempt to further the interest or intrigue in the readers in not only Lewis, but also his Vorticist associates. In the same note Dias also remarked, 'I have been going patiently to art shows for some years, but I cannot at the moment recall the names of any other English painters whose work I should care to possess, save that of the very "advanced" group, Wadsworth, Etchells and Roberts, and in the cases of these three I should want to make a very rigorous selection. None of these men and none of the members of the London Group are in Mr. Lewis' class.' (310) Such explicit praise demonstrates Pound's determination to boost Lewis as

⁶¹ Greene, 'John Quinn and Vorticist Painting', p. 177.

much as he could. This war of the personas and pseudo-interaction between Pound and Dias choreographed by Pound is indeed intriguing; what is more, the editorial staff of the *New Age* was definitely not an unknowing accomplice in the act.

In the next issue on 20 March, Pound sent two letters under his and Dias's name respectively to the *New Age* in reaction to a writer's comment on destroying pictures and books that do not conform to his personal standards. This was again a feat that could not have escaped the notice of the editorial staff, and indeed impossible without their explicit endorsement. While Dias wrote politely that 'I do not, however, wish to over emphasise my own view, and under no circumstances would I consider destroying Mr. Schiff for any of his opinions whatsoever', Pound reacted in a much more exaggerated and defiant manner: 'give me, I pray you, O little gods and great editors, an impertinent cosmos without either Papal or Schiffal indices expurgatorii' (331). This 'characterization' of the personas appearing simultaneously alongside each other on the same page reinforced the impression that Dias and Pound were really separate identities, and is remarkable in demonstrating the *stratégie littéraire* that Pound manoeuvered not only in the promotion of Imagism, but also Vorticism.

An issue further on, Dias gave a clear overview of the Baker collection on 27 March, explicating the previous discussion in like manner as the notes 'Imagisme' and 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' revealed the long-awaited answer to the mystery of *Imagisme*. Dias described the patron of the collection Captain Guy Baker, who, 'alarmed at the rapidity with which the best of Wyndham Lewis' work was being absorbed by America, determined to retain in England a collection of Lewis as representative as that possessed by the Quinn collection in New York. It was a patriotic labour on his part.' This comment cleverly ties

patriotism with art (and particularly that of the English avant-garde which was then still far from conventional approval), appealing and leveraging on the readers' jingoistic sentiments at a time when the war only ended four months ago. Dias further recapped this notion in the next paragraph: 'whether the collection go to the nation or not it is to be hoped that, at any rate, some adequate and illustrated catalogue of the collection will be issued, and that at least a suitable record of Baker's patriotic endeavor will not be lost.' (342) This advanced marketing for a prospective product was cleverly designed to be in accordance with post-war nostalgic sentiments and to appeal to the memory of the lost, including Baker who had recently died in the influenza epidemic (*P/LR*, 73).

In the same note Dias also commented on the distinction between the true collector and the art dealer: 'There is a vast difference between the collector who acquires the work of living artists during their vital period and the dealer-collectors who only acquire work of aged and declining men, or of dead artists with established commercial accretion. [...] The collector who buys from young men, trusting to his own vision, partakes in their further creation; he is not a patroniser of, but a participant in, the arts, and his selective intelligence may be worth more to the arts than the work of a dozen dilettantes and inferior workers.' (342) The concept is essentially the same as what Pound described in his first letter to Quinn, of the patron 'mak[ing] himself equal to the artist' in sponsoring the act of creation (*SL*, 53). After the war which devastated the avant-garde and entailed for Pound also the significant personal loss of his friend Gaudier-Brzeska and other intellectuals such as T. E. Hulme, Pound was only more convinced of this necessity to provide for living artists, and under the mask of Dias he expressed this conviction as passionately as speaking as himself.

Dias further devoted the whole of his note on 25 September to the discussion of ‘Capt. Guy Baker’s Collection at the South Kensington Museum’, which he suggested as a boost to the reputation of English art. Dias highlighted the works of Roberts, Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska and Eric Gill following a very detailed enumeration of all of Lewis’s paintings on display, and remarked that ‘[a]ll these things should be borne in mind by people who are wont to sigh after Paris and to suppose that all advances, artistic and bureaucratic, proceed from the left bank of the Seine’ (364). Dias’ endorsement of the English avant-garde was again combined with a sense of national competition and superiority, aligning art criticism and valuation with patriotic discourse.

Overall, the ‘Art Notes’ provide a rich resource of Pound’s views on the arts, which demonstrate his diverse interests and interdisciplinary aspirations. The notes also chart Pound’s transformation from an artist-critic of poetry to a more all-rounded, interdisciplinary commentator. Despite the problems of aesthetic identity and integrity that the pseudonym brings, Dias and Pound cannot be seen as two different mentalities; after all, the notes and Pound’s polemics were written by the same person who was passionate in promoting the English avant-garde. The notes enabled Pound to simultaneously act as an art critic and a propagandist of fellow Vorticist artists, and thus to promote the movement in an unexpected way, in creating stirs by staging fake wars and debates in a magazine that was previously hostile to Vorticism’s pursuits. While the ‘Art Notes’ serve as a case of the promotion of Vorticism with novel *stratégies littéraires*, such an intent should not be considered as undermining to Pound’s serious and substantial efforts in promoting the English avant-garde.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates Pound's aesthetic definitions in relation to Imagism and Vorticism by discussing the influence of artistic precedents and contemporaries in his quest for precise expression. A re-reading of Pound's naming of new concepts, such as 'image', 'vortex' and 'primary pigment', suggests these as his attempts to revise the artistic language of different media, with a greater focus on the mechanism and means of expression over materiality and medial restrictions. I have posited 'Imagism', both the name and the content of the movement, as the outcome of Pound's naming of how he envisioned the creative impulse to operate in poetry via the 'image' with an emphasis on precise expression. Similarly, 'Vorticism' is the updated version of Imagism which extends the quest for precise expression to artistic media other than poetry, displaying the ambition of Pound's interdisciplinary theories.

Pound went to great lengths in defining and defending these names, and despite the fact that he at times failed to express his ideas in precise language in his polemical accounts, which tarnished the credibility of his aesthetics for readers and critics to this day, a close analysis of his interdisciplinary theories nonetheless expands the understanding of the aesthetics of both Imagism and Vorticism. Pound also played a crucial role in the practical operation of the movements, and his achievement as a moderniser far exceeded the boundary of his poetry, being simultaneously a practising poet, theorist, literary and art critic, propagandist, 'salesperson' and literary agent / art dealer for the movements and fellow members. Altogether, Pound's contributions to the founding and development of Imagism and Vorticism, and his innovative efforts in developing interdisciplinary theories and artistic networks were critical to the development of the English avant-garde, leaving a lasting legacy in English modernism.

Chapter 3: ‘Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World’: Vorticism and German Influence

Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between Vorticism and contemporary German arts and culture, a topic which received relatively less critical attention than the French and Italian influences which I discuss in Chapters 1 and 5, yet which is no less tangible and significant. Expressionist art works were exhibited in London in the 1910s and discussed in the Vorticist magazine *BLAST*; German philosophers, past and present, had also been read in England. Key Vorticists Wyndham Lewis and Edward Wadsworth both studied in Munich: Lewis at the Akademie Heymann during the first half of 1906, Wadsworth at the Knirr Art School between 1906 and 1907, besides training as an engineering draughtsman and learning German. Another Vorticist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska lived in Nuremberg in 1909 and then in Munich. T. E. Hulme, an important theorist of modern English arts, met the art historian and theorist Wilhelm Worringer in Berlin in 1911, and introduced the latter’s theories to England following a period of study in Germany between 1912 and 1913.¹

In this chapter I explore the many connections that existed between Vorticism and contemporary German arts, tracing the influence of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, Wassily Kandinsky’s art theories and Expressionist artworks and techniques on Vorticist aesthetic theories about form, abstraction

¹ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol.1, pp. 139, 215; Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, pp. 99, 143; Paul Edwards, "You Must Speak with Two Tongues": Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist Aesthetics and Literature', in *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 113-20 (pp. 114, 116); Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition', p. 75; Sheppard, 'Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison', p. 149; Barbara Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth: A Painter's Life* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1989), pp. 17-19. I discuss Hulme's ideas on poetics and visual aesthetics in Chapter 4.

and the creative process. I also discuss Vorticism's changing attitude towards German arts and culture: its nationalist rhetoric, programme, aims and aesthetics were curiously inconsistent in the two issues of *BLAST* divided by the war, with *BLAST* 2 seeking to distinguish between political and artistic nationalism in the wartime context. The interactions between Expressionism and Vorticism were further complicated by the ambiguities expressed in their multivalent polemics and works. Through a discussion of Expressionist aesthetics, particularly Kandinsky's, and a textual analysis of *BLAST* and Vorticist aesthetics, I aim to demonstrate the significance and application of German influence on Vorticism, and the movement's aesthetic positioning as a 'Northern avant-garde' movement despite its nationalist claims.²

1. German Expressionism and Kandinsky

'German Expressionism' is a very broad term describing many diverse styles and works in different artistic media. Shulamith Behr comments that 'Expressionism' as a retrospective label 'did not constitute a cohesive movement or style; individual artists and groups were widely dispersed and differed in their background and training'. In addition, Expressionist artists were also involved in 'a range of institutions, artifacts and practices' such as 'the artists' promotion of an authentic and innovative aesthetic, their social and political status, their relation to official or professional associations and their search for new patrons and exhibiting outlets', thereby preventing a 'homogeneity of style' or 'communality of interests'.³ For the purpose of my discussion, 'Expressionism' refers to the artistic associations of Die Brücke and more particularly Der Blaue

² I borrow this term from Klein, "Our Compatriots Improve": Vorticism, Germany, and the Paradoxes of the Northern Avant-Garde'.

³ Shulamith Behr, *Expressionism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 6, 9-10.

Reiter, which were the first champions of the abstract style of painting subsequently denoted by the name ‘Expressionism’.

Both of these groups were roughly contemporary and known to the Vorticists. Die Brücke was founded by four architectural students in Dresden in 1905 and subsequently moved to Berlin in 1911. Lacking in artistic experience and training, the members pursued artistic creation out of a ‘faith in their own untested powers of self-expression’, and ‘saw themselves as pioneers in a revolution to overthrow the established order in both art and life’, remarkably laying down no aesthetic principles in their founding programme.⁴ The Brücke artists worked collectively as painters and printmakers, and their visual aesthetics ‘featured simplified or distorted forms, unusually strong, unnatural colors, and thick layers of vigorous brushwork’, depicting subject matter ‘from their everyday, bohemian lives’. The group disbanded when internal rivalry broke out in 1913, where Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s ‘self-aggrandizing group history’ caused dissent amongst members,⁵ not unlike Pound’s rift with fellow Imagists over the control and definition of the collective movement.

In contrast, Der Blaue Reiter was a loose-knit group established in Munich in 1911 by the painters Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, with exhibitions organised in 1911 and 1912, as well as the publishing of *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, the group’s magazine in 1912.⁶ The movement was conceived as a ‘publishing organ’ rather than an artistic ‘group’, with an intention to showcase

⁴ Wolf Dieter Dube, *Expressionists and Expressionism* (New York: Skira/Rizzoli, 1983), p. 11; Helmut Friedel and Annegret Hoberg, *The Blue Rider in the Lenbachhaus, Munich* (Munich; London: Prestel, 2000), p. 13; Museum of Modern Art, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), p. 54.

⁵ Museum of Modern Art, *German Expressionism*, p. 54.

⁶ Friedel and Hoberg, *The Blue Rider in the Lenbachhaus*, p. 13.

diverse individual aesthetics.⁷ Kandinsky remarked in the catalogue of the first Der Blaue Reiter exhibition that, 'we are not trying to propagate one precise and particular pictorial style; we rather intend to show, by the variety of forms represented, the manifold ways in which the artist manifests his inner desire'.⁸ Group members held diverse aesthetic aims and interests, as reflected in the interdisciplinary inspirations, as well as the pan-national and pan-historical collection of art in the *Almanac*. As Walter L. Adamson describes, the magazine is 'a celebration of the common aims and ideals of a variety of nationalities, ancient and modern, Western and non-Western, and it never offers the slightest hint of any exclusionist spirit'.⁹

Despite the differences between Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter, there existed certain similarities: both groups were determined to achieve an aesthetic and spiritual renewal, and to express (often anguished) emotions by means of colourful paintings with free forms and austere woodcuts. Der Blaue Reiter's interdisciplinary collective of individuals, with its aim to exhibit and publish, was also very similar to Vorticism. There existed many individual differences between Vorticist members, but they nonetheless came together as a collective for the purposes of gathering force and publicity for their art. As William Roberts described in hindsight, the group's activities, such as the publication of *BLAST* and exhibitions, were founded on 'a criss-cross of opposed interests between rivals eager to establish themselves and their own particular brand of abstract

⁷ Jessica Horsley, "There You Have Munich": *Der Blaue Reiter* (1912); *Revolution* (1913); and *Der Weg* (1919), in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume III, Europe 1880-1940*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 727-749 (p. 732).

⁸ Quoted in Steve Edwards and Paul Wood, *Art of the Avant-Gardes* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 2004), p. 48. Original emphasis.

⁹ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, pp. 163-164.

art'.¹⁰ Besides the similarities in the nature of the collective, Gasiorek also suggests 'the range of [the *Almanac's*] contents make[s] it a European forerunner of *BLAST*'.¹¹ Indeed, the *Almanac's* aesthetic aspirations were similar to Ezra Pound's historical method and Gaudier-Brzeska's series of historical vortices in his 'Vortex' statement, which displayed a similar ethno-focus on arts from all ages and regions. However, *BLAST's* nationalist-inflected rhetoric poses a paradoxical opposition to the universalism of *Der Blaue Reiter*, and indeed Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska's aesthetic beliefs.

The influence of German Expressionism on Vorticism stemmed largely from two key individuals: the art theorist Wilhelm Worringer and the painter Wassily Kandinsky. Worringer was himself a significant influence on Expressionism; his doctoral thesis *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) endorsed abstraction as a legitimate means of expression, thereby providing theoretical impetus for the Expressionists' experiments. Worringer theorised that there are two fundamentally opposing purposes in human creative activity: empathy, which arises from a relation of harmony with nature and results in naturalistic and representational art, and abstraction, which arises from an 'immense spiritual dread of space' and leads to inorganic, crystalline forms like those produced by 'primitive' peoples. Worringer opined that this 'approximation to abstract forms' serves not only as 'a point of tranquility and a refuge from appearances', but also eternalises the object 'from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence' and 'approximate[s] it to its *absolute value*',¹² a value of necessity and regularity in

¹⁰ William Roberts, *The Vortex Pamphlets* (London: Canale Publication, 1956-1958), quoted in Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 130.

¹¹ Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)'p. 292n5.

¹² Quoted in Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou, eds., *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 72-76. Original emphasis.

face of the terrifying external world. Many contemporary readers found Worringer's thesis of 'the urge to abstraction [as] the outcome of a great inner unrest' validly encapsulated the contemporary historical situation of a crisis of modernism, a sense of an impending apocalypse culminating in the First World War. As the artist Paul Klee remarked: 'The more terrible this world (like today's, for example), the more abstract our art'.¹³

Peter Lasko points out that Worringer '[saw] abstraction principally in terms of mathematical regularity, not in terms of personal creativity or self-expression', different from the 'more mystical, occult approach' of Expressionist abstraction, particularly Kandinsky's.¹⁴ And although Worringer's works have often been credited for providing the fundamental theoretical basis for Expressionism and the new arts in Germany,¹⁵ his intention was not to promote cultural nationalism. Rose-Carol Washton Long argues that, in his *Form in Gothic* (1910), Worringer did not envision the creation of 'a national art form', but rather 'sought to establish a transnational Gothic style in Northern Europe to counterbalance the dominance of the classical Italian Renaissance tradition', and to 'align the most experimental European artists with a larger, more global approach to content and form'.¹⁶ These objectives are manifested in *BLAST*'s persistent emphasis on the 'Northern' character of English art in opposition to 'Southern' Italian Futurism, and Gasiorek recognises that 'Vorticism drew on Worringerian ideas when it associated "Northern" art with mysticism, satire, and universality and

¹³ Edwards and Wood, *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, p. 23; quoted in Susanna Partsch, *Paul Klee, 1879-1940* (Köln; Los Angeles: Taschen, 2007), p. 34.

¹⁴ Peter Lasko, *The Expressionist Roots of Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 100.

¹⁵ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 158.

¹⁶ Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Brücke, German Expressionism and the Issue of Modernism', in *New Perspectives on Brücke Expressionism: Bridging History*, ed. by Christian Weikop (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 11-30 (pp. 12-13).

“Southern” art with passion for life’.¹⁷ I will further discuss the influence of Worringer’s ideas in Vorticist aesthetics via Hulme in Chapter 4.

Worringer’s theories of abstraction significantly shaped the Expressionists’ aesthetic theories and practices, and amongst the Expressionists Kandinsky assumed a unique position as both a theorist and a practitioner. A Russian artist who spent most of his career in Germany, Kandinsky’s significance was established by his numerous interdisciplinary experimental outputs, which in the 1910s included abstract paintings, prose-poems illustrated with woodcuts (*Sounds*), an interdisciplinary publication (*Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*) with an experimental drama (*The Yellow Sound*), as well as art theory (*On the Spiritual in Art*). Adamson argues that for Kandinsky, ‘the separation of the arts was mutually “harmful”, not only from the point of view of each art’s development but, perhaps even more importantly, because of the need for the arts to contribute together to a regeneration of culture.’¹⁸ This idea is similar to Pound’s envisioning of an American ‘Risorgimento’, a renaissance in art and culture. And although the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not taken up by Vorticism, Lewis’s multiple talents as editor, manifesto writer, critic / essayist, painter, playwright and novelist contributed to the unique interdisciplinary ambition of *BLAST*.

Prior to the *Der Blaue Reiter* period, Kandinsky had already been developing new art theories in a prototypical group, Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM), which put ‘artistic synthesis’ as the focus of their art, and sought to pursue forms which enable the expression of the mutual interpenetration of experiences in the inner world and impressions from the

¹⁷ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, p. 299.

¹⁸ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 161.

external world.¹⁹ Kandinsky described the creative process in mystical terms in the catalogue of the second NKVM exhibition:

At an unknown hour, from a source that is still sealed to us, [...] the Work comes into the world. Cold calculation, splashes leaping up without plan, mathematically accurate construction (laid bare or concealed), silent, screaming drawing, scrupulous finish, colour in fanfares or played pianissimo on the strings, large, serene, cradling, fragmented planes. Isn't that Form? Aren't those the Means? [...] A human being speaks to human beings about the superhuman – the language of art.²⁰

Kandinsky further developed this spiritualist approach in his treatise *On the Spiritual in Art* (1911), arguing for a spiritual awakening in artistic creation in reaction to the degrading materialism of realist art. This leads to an imperative for a new artistic language, represented by abstraction and colour as universal languages of expression, and a ‘drawing together’ of different artistic disciplines. Altogether, these means enable the expression of the ‘inner necessity’, the inner meaning of art.²¹ Kandinsky also advocated a return to primitivism, arguing that the artistic objectives of the primitive ‘pure artists’ corresponded to the Expressionists’ vision, in their common quest to capture ‘the inner essence of things’ and reject ‘the external, the accidental’ (CWA, 127-128). This connection was inspired by Worringer’s theory of a historical cycle of *Kunstwollen* (artistic volition), a concept adopted from German aesthetician Alois Riegl.²²

¹⁹ Incidentally this is similar to Pound's understanding of the 'image' as 'the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective' ('Vorticism', p. 205).

²⁰ Quoted in Wolf Dieter Dube, *The Expressionists*, 2nd edn (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), pp. 95, 96.

²¹ Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*, 2nd edn (Chichester, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 158-160.

²² Christopher Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928: The Quest for Synthesis* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 68-71.

Kandinsky suggested that this change in ‘inner mood’ back to primitivism came about from external turmoil: ‘When religion, science, and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse’, then ‘man’s gaze turns away from the external towards himself’ (*CWA*, 145). Such social changes resulted in the ‘abstraction’ tendency arising when men are fearful of the external world, which made ‘inner necessity’ once more significant to artistic creation, and primitive aesthetics once again suitable to represent the era. And thus the Expressionists’ ‘respon[ded] to the alienation and lack of unity of modern social existence’ at ‘the end of the epoch of classical reconciliation with the external world’ by endorsing a primitive aesthetics.²³ Adamson comments that the Expressionists’ adoption of primitive artifacts does not suggest ‘a return to a world of preindustrial artifacts’, but rather signals towards ‘a world respiritualized by the widening reception for works of art’.²⁴ Kandinsky opined that ‘[l]iterature, music, and art are the first and most sensitive realms where this spiritual change becomes noticeable in real form’, manifesting as an aesthetic tendency ‘toward the nonnaturalistic, the abstract, toward inner nature’ (*CWA*, 145, 153).

Kandinsky’s efforts in reconciling such dichotomies as ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’, as well as ‘primitive’ and ‘contemporary’ in his quest to attain ‘a modern return to a primitivist aesthetics after a period of a materialist suppression of the spiritual’ were not without ambiguities and contradictions.²⁵ An instance is the relationship between the ‘inner meaning’ and the means of representation. Focusing on the former, Kandinsky was ambivalent about form and did not conclude abstraction was the only way to express ‘inner necessity’,

²³ Edwards and Wood, *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, p. 23.

²⁴ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 163.

²⁵ David Pan, *Primitive Renaissance: Rethinking German Expressionism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), pp. 100-101, 108-109.

which he regarded as independent of the means of representation. The spiritualism he advocated also ran counter to his attempts to be objective and scientific by dogmatising about the emotional effects of colours, which David Pan suggests leads to a superficial understanding of the significance of the work of art, one that is inevitably affected by the specific cultural context of the viewer.²⁶ But despite the fact that '[Kandinsky's] career [was] determined by [the] tension between the primitivist and the universalist understanding of the spiritual significance of abstract form', Pan recognises Kandinsky's works for uniquely 'link[ing] abstraction to primitivism in a way that renders European art into an enactment of the primitive rather than an objectification'.²⁷

Although Kandinsky's theories might be self-contradictory, attempts to put theory into practice can be observed in the *Almanac*, particularly in Kandinsky's essay 'On Stage Composition', complementary to his theatrical work *The Yellow Sound*.²⁸ Other contributors also provided examples in support of the new theories proposed and shared Kandinsky's emphasis on mysticism in art. For example, Marc commented that 'the *mystical inner construction* [...] is the great problem of our generation',²⁹ and proposed a spiritual alignment amongst the 'savages' of Germany, including 'the Brücke in Dresden, the Neue Secession in Berlin, and the Neue Vereinigung in Munich [NKVM]' (61), as all striving to 'create, out of their work *symbols* for their own time, symbols that belong on the altars of a future spiritual religion, symbols behind which the technical heritage cannot be seen' (64, original emphasis). Another translation of Marc's German text is even more explicit about the dominance of the spiritual, suggesting that

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 116, 120; Williams, *Art Theory*, pp. 158-160.

²⁷ Pan, *Primitive Renaissance*, p. 120.

²⁸ Horsley, "There You Have Munich", p. 736.

²⁹ Wassily Kandinsky and others, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 59. Original emphasis. Hereafter referenced in parenthesis in the text.

behind the symbols ‘the technical creator disappears from sight’,³⁰ rendering the creative process intensely metaphysical.

The *Almanac* provides examples of this combination of a primitive aesthetics, and the concern with form also featured prominently. For instance August Macke wrote in ‘Masks’: ‘To hear the thunder is: to perceive its secret. To understand the language of form means: to be closer to the secret, to live. To create forms means, to live. [...] Are not savages artists who have forms of their own powerful as the form of thunder? [...] Man expresses his life in forms. Each form of art is an expression of his inner life.’ (85) Macke’s idea of the embodiment of primitivism in form and the creative process was similar to that of Kandinsky’s, and he also emphasised form as a universal ‘language’ capable of communicating inner meaning regardless of the artistic media: ‘Forms are powerful expressions of powerful life. Differences in expression come from the material, word, color, sound, stone, wood, metal. One need not understand each form. One also need not read each language.’ (88) These esoteric thoughts are echoed by the concept of the ‘primary pigment’, Pound’s attempt at theorising a unifying creative standard across different artistic media as discussed in Chapter 2.

Kandinsky also provided a thorough discussion of form and abstraction in his essay ‘On the Question of Form’ in the *Almanac* as a continuation of *On the Spiritual in Art*. He argued form was only a means of artistic creation rather than the ultimate objective, due to its connection only with the current age: ‘Form is always temporal, i.e. relative, for it is nothing more than the means necessary today through which the present revelation makes itself heard.’ He opined that form should be conducive to the inner sound: ‘Sound, therefore, is the soul of

³⁰ Quoted in Dube, *The Expressionists*, p. 20.

form, which only comes alive through sound and which works from the inside out. *Form is the outer expression of the inner content.* We should never make a god out of form. We should struggle for form only as long as it serves as a means of expression for the inner sound.' (149, original emphasis) He also suggested form as subjective for different individuals in addition to time periods: 'Since form is only an expression of content, and content is different with different artists, it is clear that there may be *many different forms at the same time* that are *equally good.* [...] Form reflects the spirit of the individual artist. Form bears the stamp of the *personality.* The personality cannot, of course, be regarded as something outside of time and space. It depends to a certain extent on time (epoch) and space (people).' (150, original emphases) Therefore Kandinsky concluded, '[e]ach form that is the external expression of the internal content should be considered valid, and each form should be considered genuine (= artistic).' (152-153)

Kandinsky summarised,

We should approach a work so that its form affects the soul and through the form its content (spirit, interior sound). Otherwise we elevate the relative to the absolute. [...] *The most important thing in the question of form is whether or not the form has grown out of inner necessity.* The existence of the forms in time and space can be explained as arising out of the inner necessity of time and space. (153, original emphasis)

He concluded more forcefully later: 'in principle it makes *no difference whether the artist uses real or abstract forms. Both forms are basically internally equal.* The choice must be left to the artist, who must know best by which means he most clearly can give material expression to the content of his art. To express it abstractly: *in principle there is no question of form.*' (168, original emphases)

Pan suggests that Kandinsky's opposition to realist representation, concentration on technical questions and art for art's sake – 'the characteristics of art in a materialist age' – demonstrates his attempt 'to conceive of an art that is both nonrepresentational and intimately connected with the society's construction of substantive values', subordinating representational accuracy to inner form, and 'inner form to a higher, spiritual value'. As Kandinsky emphasised, '[i]t is not form (material) that is of prime importance, but content (spirit).'³¹

Kandinsky also sought to further reconcile the dichotomy between realism and abstraction by explaining that they are in fact the 'two poles [which] open two ways that lead ultimately *to one goal*: to '[reveal] the inner sound of the painting'. The poles are thus 'equalized' and Kandinsky suggested that '[b]etween these two antipodes we can put the equals sign:

Realism = Abstraction

Abstraction = Realism

The greatest external difference becomes the greatest internal equality.' (158, 164-165, original emphases)

This apparently paradoxical conclusion points to a problematic duality in Kandinsky's aesthetics, based on which he argued abstraction as a legitimate means of representation. This dualist view of abstraction had repercussions in Vorticist aesthetics as revealed in the two issues of *BLAST*, which I will discuss presently.

Kandinsky also discussed other topics related to artistic creation in the essay, for example the role of the art critic: '*The ideal art critic [...] would try to feel how this or that form works internally, and then he would convey his total*

³¹ Pan, *Primitive Renaissance*, p. 111.

experience vividly to the public. Such a critic would need the soul of a poet, because the poet has to feel objectively in order to express his feelings subjectively. This means that the critic would need creative ability.' (172, original emphases) Adamson suggests that '[t]he need to separate the critical enterprise from critics and return it to artists themselves' as 'a central notion in Kandinsky's avant-garde practice from the beginning', exemplified by the strict limitation of contributors to the *Almanac* to artists exclusively.³² The Vorticists also adopted such elitist attitude with their emphasis on the critical intention and element in their creative works, best exemplified by Pound in his championing of the artist-critic which I discussed in Chapter 2. *BLAST* was also run with the intention for artists to explain their art, declaring that 'as this paper is run chiefly by Painters and for Painting, and they are only incidentally Propagandists, they do their work first, and, since they must, write about it afterwards' (*B2*, 7).

Kandinsky concluded the essay by arguing the 'inner content of a work' in the modern age comprises of two functions: firstly, to reveal the '[d]isintegration of the soulless, materialistic life of the nineteenth century, i.e. the collapse of the material supports that were considered the only solid ones and the decay and dissolution of the various parts'. Secondly, to represent the '[c]onstruction of the spiritual and intellectual life of the twentieth century that we experience and that is already manifested and embodied in strong, expressive, and distinct forms' (186-187). The Vorticists similarly attempted to oust outdated notions in art by introducing a modern aesthetics, although their motivation was simply aesthetic and not spiritual.

However, Kandinsky's aesthetic theories were subjected to dramatic developments just as Pound's were. For example in 1913, after a period of

³² Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 161.

perceiving an increasing sense of separation between art and nature, he finally experienced the two as ‘completely independent realms’. This led him to ‘develop the concept of “pure art” in a new way – not simply to refer to art based on internal necessity, as it had in 1911, but to refer to an art of construction in which all traces of nature are eliminated’.³³ Despite the focus on *On the Spiritual in Art* in *BLAST*, Lewis seemed to be aware of such crucial changes in Kandinsky’s aesthetics, as reflected in his criticism in ‘A Review of Contemporary Art’ in *BLAST* 2. Although the Vorticists also rejected the direct copying of nature and insisted on the separation of art and mimetic representation, they did not see abstraction as the only means of representation, and refused to completely reject representational elements in their works. In the following, I will discuss the ways in which the Vorticists engaged with Expressionist ideas in their works in the two issues of *BLAST*.

2. BLAST

Comprising visual artworks, polemical and creative prose as well as poetry by various Vorticists, the two issues of *BLAST* are the primary texts of Vorticism. The rhetoric of its manifestos announced the movement as combative and seething with contradictions: the Vorticists strove to achieve the impossible feat of establishing themselves in a resolutely ambivalent aesthetic position ('neither side or both sides and ours')³⁴ by adopting an aesthetics which combines modern subject matter and geometrical abstraction. *BLAST* is likewise a site of tension between word and paint, as well as art and politics. Published on the eve of the war in July 1914, *BLAST* does not contain many references to Germany in a combative context. The only instance is the reference to the hairdresser, the

³³ Ibid., p. 165.

³⁴ B1, 30. Hereafter referenced in parenthesis in the text.

'HESSIAN (or SILESIAN) EXPERT' (25) in the First Manifesto: Scott W. Klein interprets these as referring to Hessian soldiers who had traditionally been mercenary troops, and Silesia as 'a geopolitical entity [which] was highly contested throughout its tumultuous history'. This reference thereby signals the Vorticist attempt in *BLAST* to achieve a national reconfiguration, to reorient the geo-politics by having Germans working for the British, and thus shifting the nature of the contemporary political order.³⁵ But this satirical instance is brief, and I argue that the political reality was less significant for Vorticism than German aesthetic influence, which can be traced in the range of artworks in diverse artistic media created by various Vorticists, evident through a textual analysis of *BLAST*.

References to German arts and culture are apparent in the Second Manifesto, which is more discursive than the First with its dramatic blasts and blesses, but is nonetheless presented in numbered points instead of continuous prose. Bold statements such as '[t]he Art-instinct is permanently primitive', '[t]he artist of the modern movement is a savage' (33) and 'the Art that is an organism of this new Order and Will of Man' (39), are variously reminiscent of the rhetoric and dialectics of Nietzsche, Worringer, Kandinsky and *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*. The notion of 'will' is of German origin: Schopenhauer proposed that 'the experiences of the Will (emotions and strivings) [are] superior to those of Representation (ideas, morals and reason)'.³⁶ This metaphysical conception was transformed by Nietzsche into a rejection of the frivolity and morbidity of the repressed and enervated modern society, with theories of the 'relations of power between forces', of one's 'feelings of power over other people or things', and the

³⁵ Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition', pp. 81-82; Klein, '"Our Compatriots Improve": Vorticism, Germany, and the Paradoxes of the Northern Avant-Garde'.

³⁶ Behr, *Expressionism*, p. 32.

idea of the *Übermensch*, ‘a new creative being who could transcend religion, morality and ordinary society’.³⁷ In *BLAST* the concept of individual ‘will’ was expanded into the collective will of the nation, with the aim of endorsing the English people’s creative potential and genius. The emphasis on the primitive can be read as an adoption of Worringerian ideas, and Richard Cork also suggests that the notion was poised against both the Bloomsbury group’s aesthetics of improving life and the Futurists’ fetishisation of modern machinery.³⁸

Apart from the use of these Germanic notions in the rhetoric of *BLAST*, German influence is also rife in Lewis and Pound’s works. Klein notes the formal similarities between Lewis’s play *Enemy of the Stars* and Kandinsky’s *The Yellow Sound*: both being closet drama, refuse dialogue and clear narrative, interspersed with works of graphic art on the printed page, and even commonly feature emblematic characters against abstract landscapes.³⁹ In the spirit of Worringer, Lewis’s play further alludes to the geographical regions of a Northern avant-garde, with the ‘Baltic’ costume (55) and ‘texts in Finnish’ (76); the protagonist Arghol enjoyed life in Berlin (81) but rejected Stirner’s *The Ego and Its Own* (76),⁴⁰ suggesting the Vorticists’ rejection of individual anarchism. Nietzschean influence is also evident: the concept of ‘will’, its link with ‘battling egos’ and power relations amongst individuals, as well as an elitist belief of creativity and the artist’s identity are manifested.

Pound declared in his aesthetic statement ‘VORTEX. POUND.’ that the ‘ANCESTRY’ of Vorticism comprised ‘Picasso, Kandinski [sic], father and mother,

³⁷ Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 56-57.

³⁸ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, pp. 244-245.

³⁹ Klein, ‘How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition’, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

classicism and romanticism of the movement' (154, original emphasis). This claim seemingly set up an antithetical relationship between Cubism and Expressionism, thereby creating a hypothetical, contradictory aesthetic space, one that provides 'ancestry' and parentage to Vorticism as a result of the unexpected unity of polar opposites on which the movement thrives. Despite the unexplained arbitrariness, Cork judges that Pound's claim 'was a justifiable claim, for Vorticism did strive to attain a centralising amalgam of the romantic and the classical, the explosive urge and the passion for ordered control', a contradictory position which provides Vorticist works with 'much of their essential tension',⁴¹ much as Macke's belief that the form of art is a result of tension, as well as Kandinsky's dichotomies between primitivist and universalist impulses, and representation and abstraction.

Apart from this brief mention in *BLAST*, Pound also referred to Kandinsky's theory of colour and form in his September 1914 article 'Vorticism', in which he explained his concept of the 'primary pigment' and argued that '[t]he image is the poet's pigment', just as colour is the basic representation unit of painting as legitimised by Kandinsky. Pound suggested, 'with that in mind you can go ahead and apply Kandinsky, you can transpose his chapter on the language of form and colour and apply it to the writing of verse'. He illustrated this with his personal experience of composing 'In A Station of the Metro' based on an 'equation' 'not in speech, but in little splotches of colour' ('Vorticism', 203).

Despite quoting Kandinsky's theory to support his own, Pound was also intent on asserting the originality of Imagism and Vorticism, remarking that 'when I came to read Kandinsky's chapter on the language of form and colour, I found little that was new to me. I only felt that someone else understood what I

⁴¹ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, p. 262.

understood, and had written it out very clearly.' The need to justify Vorticist aesthetics almost became propaganda when Pound concluded the article with the claim that, '[i]t cannot be made too clear that the work of the vorticists and the "feeling of inner need" existed before the general noise about vorticism' ('Vorticism', 203-204, 209), ironically employing the key concept of Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* to illustrate the inherent value of Vorticist aesthetics. Pound also suggested a distinction in a letter to Quinn on 29 February 1916: 'No, I don't think Kandinsky [is] the last word. He starts out with some few sane propositions, but when it comes to saying "blue = God", "pink = devil", etc. etc. we do not follow.' (P/Q, 63, original emphasis) Despite Pound's apparent understanding of Kandinsky's theories, in 'Affirmations, II. Vorticism' he confessed: 'I think [Lewis is] a more significant artist than Kandinsky (admitting that I have not yet seen enough of Kandinsky's work to use a verb stronger than "think")' (278). This suggests Pound's understanding of Kandinsky relied on polemical theory rather than visual aesthetics, which underlined the Vorticists' shortcoming in aligning theory and practice in their art and their excessive reliance on rhetoric and polemics, partly caused by the rushed development and short duration of the movement.

A. “Inner Necessity”: Review of Kandinsky’s book

By far the most direct and extensive evidence of Expressionist influence in *BLAST* is Wadsworth's review of *On the Spiritual in Art*, which consists mostly of Wadsworth's translation of excerpts, all of which come from the chapter 'The Language of Forms and Colours'. Paul Edwards regards the review as 'an informative paraphrase and summary, showing no particular point of view of its own other than what is implicit in treating Kandinsky's ideas as worthy of

consideration', and notes that 'Wadsworth makes no polemical claim for Kandinsky's (as Pound does in his "Vortex") being a source of Vorticism'.⁴² The review is indeed a positive one; in his introduction Wadsworth praised Kandinsky as 'a psychologist and a metaphysician of rare intuition and inspired enthusiasm', who 'writes of art [...] in its relation to the universe and the soul of man', and 'as an artist' but 'not as an art historian' (119). However, Wadsworth did make a number of editorial changes to Kandinsky's text, which orient the latter's arguments as endorsement of the newly-formulated Vorticist aesthetics. In the following, I will identify and discuss significant divergences between Wadsworth's version and Kandinsky's original, in order to assess the differences between Expressionist and Vorticist aesthetic inclinations.⁴³

To begin with, different from the original order, Wadsworth first presented the passages defining 'inner necessity' before returning to the earlier discussions of 'the emotional significance of form and colour'. However, Kandinsky's extensive theories on the possible psychic effects of colours, despite being fundamentally linked to the concept of 'inner necessity', were very much overlooked compared to Wadsworth's intensive focus on form. Colour was only mentioned as far as to justify form as a legitimate means of artistic expression, as Wadsworth argued: 'Colour is more habitually accredited with powers of emotion than form, but by establishing a common root principle with regard to the emotional effects of form and colour Herr Kandinsky destroys this erroneous opinion.' (122) Wadsworth's bypassing of the significant subject of

⁴² Paul Edwards, 'Blast and the Revolutionary Mood of Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism', in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 199-219 (p. 201).

⁴³ I conducted research on Wadsworth's editing of Kandinsky's text following Richard Sheppard's brief comment of certain omissions. See Sheppard, 'Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison', p. 150.

colour suggests an interpretative bias, which indicates a lack of Vorticist interest on the topic.

Other noteworthy omissions occur where Kandinsky's arguments were excerpted from their discursive context; the fact that they do not always appear in full often obscures the metaphysical postulations of Kandinsky's ideas, which might be an act of deliberate excision by Wadsworth in line with the Vorticist skepticism about the spiritual. For example, discussing the 'three mystical fundamentals' of the inner necessity, 'the three necessary elements of a work of art [which] are closely united to one another' (119-120), Wadsworth omitted Kandinsky's theorising of their interaction and the temporal-spatial grounding, which reads as follows: 'i.e., they interact upon each other, a phenomenon that in every age expresses the unity of the work of art. The first two elements, however, embrace the temporal and the spatial, constituting in relation to the element of the pure and eternally artistic, which is beyond time and space, a kind of relatively opaque outer skin.' Also omitted from the end of the same excerpt is the prioritising of the 'inner sound' over the means of representation: 'Personal and temporal style give rise in every epoch to many precisely determined forms, which, despite their considerable apparent dissimilarity, are so organically related that they can be described as one single form: their inner sound is ultimately one overall sound.' (CWA, 174) These omissions might be due to the fact that the concept of the 'inner sound' (or 'inner timbre' in Wadsworth's translation) was not given as much prominence in this review as that of 'inner necessity', potentially reflecting the Vorticist rejection of the metaphysical postulations of Expressionist aesthetics. The Vorticists also insisted on distinctively specific and 'precisely determined' forms as an external reality, and

rejected any internal, spiritual dimensions such as the ‘inner sound’ proposed by Kandinsky.

Another significant omission occurs on the same page shortly after: ‘The inevitable desire to express the objective is the force which is here termed Inner Necessity, and which to-day extracts ONE universal form from the subjective and to-morrow another. . . .’ (120, original emphasis). The omission indicated by the ellipsis reads: ‘It is the constant tireless impulse, the spring that drives [us] continually “forward.” The spirit progresses, and hence *today’s inner laws of harmony are tomorrow’s external laws, which in their further application continue to have life only by virtue of this same necessity, which has become externalized.*’ (CWA, 174-175, emphasis added) The italicised statement is later on re-inserted in the review, preceded by Wadsworth’s comment: ‘Once having accepted the emotional significance of form and colour as such, it follows that the necessity for expressing oneself exclusively with forms that are based on nature is only a temporary limitation similar to, though less foolish than, the eighteenth century brown-tree convention.’ Following the insertion of Kandinsky’s statement, Wadsworth exclaimed: ‘And so logically this axiom must be accepted: that the artist can employ any forms (natural, abstracted or abstract) to express himself, if his feelings demand it.’ (122) Such editing suggests that Wadsworth was not entirely faithful to the original text in his review, but in fact manipulated Kandinsky’s writing as support for the Vorticist endorsement of non-representational forms and the artist’s right for self-expression. At the same time, excision of mentions of the spiritual reflects that aspects in Kandinsky’s writings which were irrelevant to Vorticist aesthetics were left out and neglected, such as the internal vision and the progress of the ‘spirit’ emphasised by Kandinsky.

Scholars have queried Wadsworth's wilful selection of Kandinsky's arguments for his own thesis. Michael Levenson challenges the objectivity of Wadsworth's arguments in 'mak[ing] a point about form, the legitimacy of abstraction' by mounting the defence 'in psychological terms, the artist's need for self-expression'.⁴⁴ Cork suggests that despite Wadsworth's admiration for Kandinsky's advocacy of total abstraction, by 'interpret[ing] Kandinsky's teachings more as a confirmation of the artist's right to use any combination of forms he desires', Wadsworth was in fact non-committal towards 'an exclusively abstract vocabulary'.⁴⁵ Wadsworth's legitimisation of abstraction as one of the means of artistic expression was also based on a wilful interpretation of Kandinsky's ambivalence on abstraction as approval: by omitting the ambiguity and fluidity evident in Kandinsky's writings, Wadsworth portrayed Kandinsky's championing of abstraction as firm and unquestioned rather than ambivalent.

For example, Wadsworth's review included the following passage: 'On the other hand, there is no perfect concrete form in art. It is not possible to represent a natural form exactly. [...] The conscious artist, however, who cannot be content with recording material objects, seeks unconditionally to give expression to the object represented' (122-123). But he omitted the preceding paragraph in Kandinsky's text which reads: 'Today, the artist cannot manage exclusively with purely abstract forms. These forms are too imprecise for him. To limit oneself exclusively to the imprecise is to deprive oneself of possibilities, to exclude the purely human and thus impoverish one's means of expression.' (CWA, 166) Wadsworth also omitted Kandinsky's statement that form is merely external and thus optional: 'the artist today is free to base his art entirely upon that inner principle from which today's external limitation is derived, and which may thus be

⁴⁴ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, p. 215.

defined as follows: *the artist may utilize every form as a means of expression.*' (CWA, 175, original emphasis) Wadsworth's selective discussion of Kandinsky's principles indicates the Vorticist bias towards abstraction: by wilfully selecting and interpreting Kandinsky's theories, Wadsworth implied Kandinsky's endorsement of abstraction as in accordance with the Vorticist ideals.

Wadsworth also made excisions where Kandinsky's theories seem incompatible with Vorticist aesthetics. Following the passage '[a]nd one sees that the common relationship between works that have not become effete after centuries, but have always become more and more powerful, does not lie in externality, but in the root of roots – the mystical content of Art' (121), Wadsworth did not include the rest of the paragraph: 'We see that the dependence upon "schools", the search for "direction", the demand for "principles" in a work of art and for definite means of expression appropriate to the age, can only lead us astray, bringing in their train misunderstanding, obscurity, and unintelligibility. The artist should be blind to "accepted" or "unaccepted" form, deaf to the precepts and demands of his time.' (CWA, 175) This idea stands in stark contrast with the Vorticist claim in 'Our Vortex': 'The chemistry of the Present is different to that of the Past. With this different chemistry we produce a New Living Abstraction.' (147) It is highly likely that the partial omission of Kandinsky's theories from the review was motivated by the differences in Kandinsky and the Vorticists' stance towards organised art movements, as well as the relationship between the means of expression and the *zeitgeist*.

Douglas Messerli suggests that the publication of Wadsworth's review in *BLAST* proves that 'it is obviously the spiritual that Lewis, like Kandinsky, seeks in abstraction', and Edwards also opines that it 'shows the importance of

[spiritual] aspirations as an ingredient in Vorticist aesthetics'.⁴⁶ However, Wadsworth's opinion should not be conflated with Lewis's, and Gaudier-Brzeska also wrote dismissively about Kandinsky in his review of the Allied Artists' Association exhibition in 1914 (*Egoist*, 15 June 1914): 'Alas, I also know all his twaddle "of the spiritual in art." [...] My temperament does not allow of formless, vague assertions' (228). And on the contrary, significant references to the spiritual have been constantly excluded from the review. For example, the paragraph beginning with '[t]he more abstract the form, the more purely and therefore the more primitive it will resound' (123-124), is preceded in Kandinsky's text by '*[s]o it is clear that the choice of object (= a contributory element in the harmony of form) must be based only upon the principle of the purposeful touching of the human soul.* Therefore, the choice of object also arises from the *principle of internal necessity.*' (CWA, 169, original emphases)

Wadsworth also did not include another passage which argues for the importance of representational form over total abstraction based on an 'inner vibration': 'Just as every word spoken (tree, sky, man) awakens an inner vibration, so too does every pictorially represented object. To deprive oneself of the possibility of thus calling up vibrations would be to narrow one's arsenal of expressive means.' (CWA, 169) At the end of the review, Wadsworth also emphasised 'the value of one's feelings as the only aesthetic impulse' (125) rather than the 'deeper and more spiritual standpoint of the soul' (119), suggesting the artist's subjective judgment as more important than spiritual inclinations.

To conclude, although Wadsworth's translation is in general very faithful to Kandinsky's text, an examination of his editorial practice reveals that the

⁴⁶ Messerli, 'Vorticist Lewis / Vorticist Pound', p. 399; Edwards, '"You Must Speak with Two Tongues"', p. 116.

excerpts have been selected in support of the Vorticists' formal experiments and aesthetic standpoints, rather than a direct, comprehensive presentation of Kandinsky's view. Truncated by Wadsworth's editing, Kandinsky's discursive treatise assumed the disjunctive manifesto style of Vorticist arguments. Other problematic treatments include the selective focus on form over colour in contrast to Kandinsky's equal emphasis, the interpretation of Kandinsky's attitude towards abstraction as endorsement rather than ambivalence, and the neglect of the spiritual which the Expressionists regarded as essential to artistic creation. For the Vorticists, abstraction might well be an 'inner necessity', but one which manifests in representations of external reality in contrast to the Expressionists' introspective and metaphysical vision.

B. 'Vortices and Notes'

Expressionism also received some mention in Lewis's diverse series of essays on modern art, in which he discussed Vorticism's aesthetics alongside that of the European avant-garde. Lewis's familiarity with Expressionism is well-demonstrated: he engaged with its aesthetic discourses and provided commentary on Expressionist works, such as their woodcuts in a note dedicated to a relevant exhibition. Lewis regarded the Germans, with their character being 'disciplined, blunt, thick and brutal, with a black simple skeleton of organic emotion', 'best qualify for this form of art' (136), justifying their aesthetic merit with national stereotype. This 'Germanic' quality apparently influenced Vorticism, as Lewis praised Wadsworth's woodcut also on display in the same article; Klein also suggests that the manifestos of BLAST are visually similar to the 'bold block lettering of the manifesto of Die Brücke', and that 'Before Antwerp', Lewis's drawing which featured on the cover of BLAST 2, also 'adopts the "blunt thick

and brutal" black lines of the Expressionist woodcut to signal the fight against German political aggression'.⁴⁷

Lewis also discussed the polyphonic potential of modern paintings in relation to Expressionism in 'Orchestra of Media', opining that '[t]he possibilities of colour, exploitation of discords, odious combinations, etc., have been little exploited'. Compared to Matisse's 'harmonious' palette, Lewis remarked that 'Kandinsky at his best is much more original and bitter. But there are fields of discord untouched.' (142) The use of musical terminology is reminiscent of Kandinsky's writing, although by 'discord' Lewis meant unconventional and even unpleasing artistic formulae, which he suggested the modern artist to experiment with in 'The Exploitation of Vulgarity' (145), and as manifested in his angular, geometrically abstract representations of modernity. An example is Lewis's painting *Workshop* (1914-1915), where despite the muted, muddish palette, the set of 'harsh and jarring choice of colours'⁴⁸ displays the most variety in Lewis's paintings of the time, reflecting his wish to employ 'all the elements of discord and ugliness' in attacking 'traditional harmony' (142). Notably, the blue-colour patch in the middle represents an aporia delicately balanced by interacting lines and planes, a static space amongst the dynamic construction,⁴⁹ like the ideal Vorticist's position, 'at the heart of the whirlpool [...] a great silent place where all the energy is concentrated'.⁵⁰

In 'The Melodrama of Modernity', Lewis endorsed the Futurist painter Giacomo Balla as 'a rather violent and geometric sort of Expressionist',

⁴⁷ Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition', pp. 75-76.

⁴⁸ Tate Gallery, 'Wyndham Lewis: Workshop c.1914-5', in *The Tate Gallery 1974-6: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions*.

⁴⁹ Paul Edwards, 'Inventing Abstraction: Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism', presented at the BLAST 2014 Conference, Bath Spa University, 24 July 2014.

⁵⁰ Violet Hunt, *I Have This to Say: The Story of My Flurried Years* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 211.

considering his ‘purely abstract’ paintings as in ‘a purer region of art’ than Marinetti’s ‘sentimental rubbish about Automobiles and Aeroplanes’ (144). Lewis regarded Expressionism as closer to the Vorticists’ ideals than Futurism as the Vorticists looked for ‘a new word’ to distinguish themselves amongst all things ‘Futurist’, suggesting that, ‘[i]f Kandinsky had found a better word than “Expressionist” he might have supplied a useful alternative’ (143), implying similarities in their aesthetic aspirations.

Yet these appraisals are more than just art criticism; Lewis was fundamentally concerned with evaluating new aesthetic theories from the European avant-garde and aesthetic solutions in Vorticism for the artist in the problematic modern age. He complained in ‘Futurism, Magic and Life’ that, under the doctrines of European intellectuals including Nietzsche, Strindberg and Bergson, ‘the intellectual world has developed savagely in one direction – that of Life [...] Everywhere LIFE is said instead of ART'; and that ‘[w]ith Picasso’s revolution in the plastic arts, the figure of the Artist becomes still more blurred and uncertain.’ (132, 135, original emphases) This indicates Lewis’s dissatisfaction with contemporary Continental philosophy, although his view on the role of the modern artist, like Kandinsky’s, was similar to Nietzsche’s conception. Lasko comments that, ‘[s]imilar to Nietzsche’s notion of man’s perfectability – his rise to *Übermensch* [...] – Kandinsky saw the development of man as in an upward moving triangle, led at the peak by the individual genius artist, towards a greater spiritual/intellectual [...] understanding, when abstract communication will eventually become a reality’.⁵¹ A close parallel is observed in Lewis’s vision of the Vorticist utopia, where the artist ‘will eventually arrange things for the best’, ‘cease to be a workman, and take his place with the

⁵¹ Lasko, *The Expressionist Roots of Modernism*, p. 109. Original emphasis.

Composer and Architect'. He even ventured that the artist 'should have been able to remain in his studio, imagining form, and provided he could transmit the substance and logic of his inventions to another man, could have, without putting brush to canvas, be the best artist of his day' (135). This seemingly transcendental scenario is indeed much like Kandinsky's conception of the spiritual in art.

Lewis also concurred with Kandinsky's rejection of 'nature', of which Kandinsky wrote in an art review in 1910:

In painting [...] it is insufficient simply to render the appearance of nature, its external reality, for it contains too much that is accidental. What is necessary [...] is that beneath a greater or lesser degree of "reality" should lie, apparent or concealed, a firm permanent structure: the structure of those parts that are independent, that relate to one another, and that united within the picture, constitute the structure of the whole. (*CWA*, 80)

This rejection of the external for a fundamental meaning and design in painting corresponds to Lewis's lengthy argument in 'Life is the Important Thing!', advocating the artist's intellectual control in artistic creation, instead of passively receiving and copying sensations from nature – yet another rebuke of Nietzschean vitalism which indicates the Vorticist preference for the intellectual over the bodily. Lewis also stressed that the artist's control is 'in no way directly dependent on "Life." It is no EQUIVALENT for Life, but ANOTHER Life, as NECESSARY to existence as the former.' (130, original emphases) However, although Lewis's rhetoric is seemingly reminiscent of Kandinsky's 'inner necessity', his belief of the artist as 'the creator of form' differed from the

Expressionists' spiritualist view,⁵² a significant distinction which Lewis was to make clear in *BLAST* 2.

3. BLAST 2

Published in July 1915, *BLAST* 2 is a much more sombre publication than the first issue mainly due to the war context, yet it is no less important in defining and promoting Vorticist aesthetics. Titled 'War Number', *BLAST* 2 is however ironically ambivalent about the war. The Vorticists discussed 'war' as an ideological construct while evading its political reality and implications by reorienting the war against Germany from the political context to the cultural context, and by imposing an almost arbitrary distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' Germany, differentiating between its 'contemporary politics and militaristic culture' and 'history and aesthetics'.⁵³ My analysis will focus on how the Vorticists strove to achieve this ambivalent position, and how they waged war against the German arts and aesthetics, particularly against Expressionism and Kandinsky in *BLAST* 2.

Despite the ongoing war, the editorial laid out the 'serious mission [*BLAST*] has on the other side of World-War' as to renew and elevate the status of art and culture during and beyond the war, declaring that 'art should be fresher for the period of restraint', and that '[t]he art of Pictures, the Theatre, Music, etc., has to spring up again with new questions and beauties when Europe has disposed of its difficulties.' The Vorticists were determined to persist in their mission, insisting that '[w]e will not stop talking about Culture when the War ends!' (*B2*, 5)⁵⁴ By juxtaposing nationalist and aesthetic concerns, the Vorticists implied that their

⁵² Sheppard, 'Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison', p. 165.

⁵³ Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition', p. 71.

⁵⁴ Page numbers of *BLAST* 2 will be referenced in parenthesis in the text hereafter.

movement was not intended as a wartime combative gesture, but rather as a serious and continuous drive in developing the arts, arguably regardless of the external environment. Here exist questions of priorities between artwork and polemics, artistic and patriotic duties, as well as *BLAST*'s identity as promotional material of Vorticist art. For the Vorticists, culture remained hierarchically above the war, and they were defiant against the latter's destructive effects. Lewis protested sarcastically that, '[t]he Public should not allow its men of art to die of starvation during the war, of course, (for men of action could not take their places). But as the English Public lets its artists starve in peace time, there is really nothing to be said. The war has not changed things in that respect.' He suggested, '[u]nder these circumstances, artists probably should paint, fight, or make a living in some trade according to their inclination or means' (23). This is a remarkably ambivalent and non-committal comment towards both war and art.

Elsewhere in the issue, Lewis also used Gaudier-Brzeska's 'beautiful drawing from the trenches of a bursting shell' to exemplify Vorticism's resistance to the war as with other Continental avant-garde movements: 'It is surely a pretty satisfactory answer to those who would kill us with Prussian bullets: who say, in short, that Germany, in attacking Europe, has killed spiritually all the Cubists, Vorticists and Futurists in the world. Here is one, a great artist, who makes drawings of those shells as they come towards him, and which, thank God, have not killed him or changed him yet.' (78) However, the fact that Gaudier-Brzeska had died when *BLAST* 2 was published with the above statement (as well as a notice of his death) marked a significant point of departure in the Vorticist ambivalence towards the war: they became more engaged in it, with Lewis joining the army and Wadsworth the navy shortly afterwards. Yet by 'those who would kill us with Prussian bullets', the Vorticists implied not only the Germans,

but also more significantly those who discouraged the new arts, including many critics in England, and thus complicating the concepts of ‘nationality’ and ‘enemy’ in wartime, blurring the lines between artistic culture and political nationhood.

A. Blasting / Blessing Germany

In line with the Vorticists’ ambivalence towards the war, *BLAST* 2 offers a two-sided vision of Germany in its characteristic blast / bless format. This was however conducted more discursively than in the first issue, with the punchy manifestoes replaced by more sustained commentary, which operates under a polemical framework where ‘Germany’ is redefined in terms of arts and culture in order to enable artistic criticism. The editorial states that:

Germany has stood for the old Poetry, for Romance, more steadfastly and profoundly than any other people in Europe. [...] This paper wishes to stand rigidly opposed, from start to finish, to every form that the Poetry of a former condition of life, no longer existing, has foisted upon us. It seeks to oppose to this inapposite poetry, the intensest aroma of a different humanity (that is Romance) the Poetry which is the as yet unexpressed spirit of the present time, and of new conditions and possibilities of life. Under these circumstances, *apart from* national partisanship [*sic*], it appears to us humanly desirable that Germany should win no war against France or England. (5, emphasis added)

By defining Germany in cultural terms and heralding a new aesthetics over an older one, the Vorticists linked the winning of the war in the national context to the rejection of Romantic tendencies the cultural context, which the Vorticists were more concerned with, and legitimised the blasting of Germany on both political and aesthetic grounds.

In *BLAST* 2 the Vorticists also defined and defended their aesthetics by reacting to criticism. In response to ‘Junkerism in Art’, the *Times* review of the Vorticist Exhibition at the Doré Gallery in 1915, in which the *Times* art critic Arthur Clutton-Brock described Vorticist artworks as Prussian Junkerism,⁵⁵ Lewis retorted: ‘Many people tell me that to call you a “Prussian” at the present juncture is done with intent to harm, to cast a cloud over the movement, if possible, and moreover that it is actionable. But I do not mind being called a Prussian in the least. I am glad I am not one, however, and it may be worth while to show how, aesthetically, I am not one either.’ He continued to argue the aim of Vorticism as explicitly against German ‘Romantic’ art, the ‘florid and disreputable canvasses of nymphs and dryads, or very sentimental “portraits of the Junker’s mother” that an artistically backwards individual would create (78). Here Lewis aligned the anti-patriotic accusation against Vorticism to its mission to criticise nineteenth-century decadence; and by suggesting the latter art as Germanic, he implied that the Vorticists’ initiatives were indeed patriotic efforts. In the same article, Lewis also turned malignant criticism to the Vorticists’ aid in defining their aesthetic aims by arguing their ‘rigidity’ as an alternative means to redefine ‘beauty’ against its former conception (79).

Despite the focus on aesthetics, *BLAST* 2 also contains some crude national stereotypes and caricatures of Germany, as well as repudiations of these. In Lewis’s ‘War Notes’, Germany is depicted as a violent, tyrannising and patronising nation; the Germans are

inclined to gouge out people’s eyes preparatory to bowling, to prevent them making a run. If they ever play Rugby football they will take knives into the scrum with them and hamstring and otherwise in its obscurity disable their

⁵⁵ Robins, "Reforming with a Pick-Axe": The First Vorticist Exhibition at the Doré Galleries in 1915', p. 60.

opponents. They will use red pepper, and they will confuse the other side by surreptitiously slipping a second and even a third ball amongst the players. They will be very hard to beat until the team opposed to them are armed with Browning pistols and the goalkeeper is entrenched, with barbed wire and a maxim! (9)

This suggests that the innate primitive, violent and sly instincts of the Germans can only be stopped by armed forces, thereby paralleling the current war situation. However, such exaggeration and stereotyping were also challenged in Lewis's snub of similar fantasies of a friend: "Do you think so" I said sharply. I felt that he had been exceeding the bounds of the licence given an IMPARTIAL man in time of War.' (12) If the Vorticists were critical about claims of impartiality, they would have been even more skeptical of outright jingoism.

To further dissociate their criticism from political connotations, the Vorticists instigated an arbitrary divide between 'official' and 'unofficial' Germany. Besides 'Romance', 'official Germany' in terms of politics was also condemned, though not for their warmongering, but for their rejection of the aristocracy and for leaning towards the popular. Describing 'democratization' as 'vulgarity', Lewis remarked that German officials 'have become infernally philosophic and democratic [...] Their wicked and low degeneration and identifying of themselves with the people will recoil on their own heads. No wonder they have an admiration for English cunning, as they describe moderate British good-sense.' (10) Yet despite praising the English, Lewis also called for their enlightenment, suggesting that if 'organized intellectual life' could be added to the English national character,

foreign nations would no longer be able to call them "The unphilosophic race."

Any German claim to World-Dominion would be ludicrous. The modern Englishman is naturally better liked abroad than the modern German, apart

from politics: in fact, the only pull the German has, and that is an enormous one, is his far greater respect for, and cultivation of “the things of the mind.”
(11)

Paul Peppis observes that English intellectuals reacted to ‘rising European competition’ by ‘advocating a policy of cultural internationalism as the proper way to “modernize” English art and literature’, ‘mak[ing] English culture and cultural doctrine both more cosmopolitan and more nationalistic’. The prime example of such a stance is Vorticism, ‘a self-consciously English avant-garde movement’.⁵⁶ *BLAST* 2’s editorial suggests that the war had brought about such a change in the English people’s attitude towards culture, ironically by introducing German influence in English society: ‘Art and Culture have been more in people’s mouths in England than they have ever been before, during the last six months. Nietzsche has had an English sale such as he could hardly have anticipated in his most ecstatic and morose moments, and in company he would not have expressly chosen.’ (5) This is simultaneously an affirmation of German culture, and paradoxically also a blasting / blessing of the English revival in the arts, manifested in Lewis’s ambivalent opinion of Englishmen reading Nietzsche, which can be interpreted as either an approving or condescending attitude. Praise for German culture is similarly found in the Vorticists’ open advocacy of German artistic models such as Bach and Goethe, the latter of whom is described as ‘set[ting] free the welt-schmerzen of the Suicidal Teuton’ (70). These references to older and established German artistic influences seem surprisingly anachronistic for Vorticism as a contemporary movement, in addition to its rejection of Romantic German aesthetics.

⁵⁶ Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 53, 84.

Above all, it is striking how the Vorticists readily and openly acknowledged ‘unofficial’ Germany’s influence on and contribution to art, including Vorticism in wartime:

When we say that Germany stands for Romance, this must be qualified strongly in one way. Official Germany stands for something intellectual, and that is Traditional Poetry and the Romantic Spirit. But unofficial Germany has done more for the movement that this paper was founded to propagate, and for all branches of contemporary activity in Science and Art, than any other country. It would be the absurdest ingratitude on the part of artists to forget this. (5)

This demonstrates that Vorticist attitudes towards German arts and culture were not shaped by the war or jingoistic intentions, but primarily by aesthetic concerns. As Klein remarks, ‘for Lewis and *Blast* “Germany” is not monolithic. Its military politics must be considered separately from its philosophy and its art, and the philosophy and art must, in turn, be subdivided both temporally and spatially’, in Vorticism’s reaction against ‘nineteenth-century decadence’ and endorsement of ‘aspects of the North that might bear fruit for a renewal of English aesthetics’.⁵⁷ Lewis described that ‘[i]n Vorticism the direct and hot impressions of life are mated with Abstraction, or the combinations of the Will’ (78), where the combination of English energy and German discipline provides a succinct analogy of the German influence on Vorticism, suggesting an abstract visual language as well as the artist’s intellectual control. Overall, the Vorticists’ upholding of the merits of ‘unofficial Germany’ in wartime defied patriotic concerns, making their stance against Germany dangerously ambiguous.

⁵⁷ Klein, ‘How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition’, p. 78.

B. ‘A Review of Contemporary Art’

The Vorticist attitude towards Expressionism in *BLAST* 2 is largely presented in Lewis’s lengthy article, in which he discussed significant movements of the European avant-garde and distinguished Vorticist aesthetics by a critique of these movements. The article consists of an overview followed by sections devoted to the discussion and critique of Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism, as well as contemporary English art. Lewis’s ideas are explicated in numbered point form, which despite the calm tone is reminiscent of the manifestos in *BLAST* and possesses a declarative quality. In the following, I will focus the discussion of Expressionism; Lewis’s opinion on Cubism and Futurism are discussed in Chapters 1 and 5 respectively.

The severe criticism of Expressionism in Lewis’s article poses a huge contrast to the affirmative attitude towards it in *BLAST*. Lewis declared criticism as his authorial intention in the opening statement: ‘I will point out [...] the way in which the English VORTICISTS differ from the French, German or Italian painters of kindred groups’ (38, original emphasis). Midway through the article he reiterated, ‘These reviews of other and similar movements to the Vorticist movement appear disparaging. But in the first place this inspection was undertaken, as I made clear at the start, to show the ways in which we DIFFER, and the tendencies we would CORRECT, and not as an appreciation of the other various groups [...] They are definitely a criticism, then, and not an appraisement.’ (41, original emphases) The change in the Vorticist stance towards Expressionism and the critical intention might have been motivated both aesthetically and politically. Klein suggests that Lewis ‘attempt[ed] to differentiate himself from an artist [Kandinsky] and a national movement that might from another angle appear perhaps too similar in motivation and

manifestation to Vorticism',⁵⁸ leading to his positing of a distinction by geographical demarcation. Alternatively, Gasiorek sees the move as reflective of Lewis's intention to differentiate his opinion on Kandinsky from that of Wadsworth's praise expressed in *BLAST*,⁵⁹ implying personal and artistic rivalries within the movement. In any case, giving so much critical attention to a German art movement without self-censorship in wartime is remarkable, and indicates Vorticist's acknowledgment of the significance of Expressionism to modern art as part of the contributions of 'unofficial' Germany.

Lewis's criticism is essentially directed against two characteristics of Expressionism, namely the Expressionists' theosophical inclinations and metaphysical approach in art, as well as their views on representation and abstraction, which are indeed intertwined concerns. Firstly, Lewis criticised the Expressionists as 'ethereal, lyrical and cloud-like, – their fluidity that of the Blavatskyish soul', and Kandinsky as 'the only PURELY abstract painter in Europe', who, being 'passive and medium-like' (40, original emphasis), is

docile to the intuitive fluctuations of his soul, and anxious to render his hand and mind elastic and receptive, follows this unreal entity into its cloud-world, out of the material and solid universe. He allows the Bach-like will that resides in each good artist to be made war on by the slovenly and wandering Spirit. He allows the rigid chambers of his Brain to become a mystic house haunted by an automatic and puerile Spook, that leaves a delicate trail like a snail. It is just as useless to employ this sort of Dead, as it is to have too many dealings with the Illustrious Professional Dead, known as Old Masters. (43)

Lewis concluded, 'Kandinsky's spiritual values and musical analogies seem to be undesirable, even if feasible: just as, although believing in the existence of

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁹ Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)', p. 309.

the supernatural, you may regard it as redundant and nothing to do with life. The art of painting, further, is for a living man, and the art most attached to life.' (44)

Lewis's rejection of Kandinsky's metaphysical and intuitive approach is founded on an objection to the emphasis on the medium and mechanism of representation ('supernatural') at the cost of the actual subject matter ('life'). The criticism of the Expressionists' spiritual approach outweighed the Vorticists' rejection of 'life' in *BLAST*, which is here employed to ground artistic creation in a more realistic approach, as in the Vorticists' active control and organisation of creativity and form, which they considered appropriate for the mechanised modern age. Besides the spiritual inclination, Lewis also mocked Kandinsky's colour theory and argued that the reliance on external stimulants and fluctuations such as 'colours and forms' was against 'the painter's temperament'. He explained with a metaphor: 'My soul has gone to live in my eyes, [...] Colours and forms can therefore have no DIRECT effect on it.' (44, original emphasis) Instead, he advocated the painter's intellectual control of sensations, balanced by an adequate presentation of subjective emotion.

Lewis's insistence on the 'unavoidable representative element' (45) implies his belief in a physical, material and empirical grounding of art, in contrast to Kandinsky's metaphysical and solely imaginative conception. As Gasiorek discusses, '[i]t is clear that Vorticism was influenced by Expressionism but for Lewis it was Expressionism's emphasis on going beyond superficial perceptions to deeper underlying truths that was of decisive importance. [...] This approach suggested two possible artistic directions: the transcendentalism of a Kandinsky in which truth was sought in a realm beyond the material world, or the materialism of a Franz Marc in which truth resided in the material environment.'

Lewis's interest lay in this second aspect of Expressionism, not the first.⁶⁰ Therefore Lewis reoriented his dismissive attitude towards 'life' and reality in *BLAST* to an affirmative one in this issue, in order to reject the spiritual emphasis of the Expressionists.

Secondly, Lewis also disagreed with the Expressionists' views on representation and abstraction, which are most antithetical to Vorticist principles as Lewis stated: 'In dealing with Kandinsky's doctrine, and tabulating differences, you come to the most important feature of this new synthesis I propose.' Lewis attacked the notion of non-representational paintings, arguing that one is '[a]lways REPRESENTING' in the 'most seemingly abstract paintings', and that 'it is impossible [...] to avoid representation in one form or another' (42, original emphasis). He criticised Kandinsky's abstraction as 'avoid[ing] almost all powerful and definite forms' in nature, which makes his work 'wandering and slack', and asserted that '[y]ou cannot make a form more than it is by the best intentions in the world' (40). This is an explicit rejection of the Expressionists' spiritualist approach to abstraction, and suggests the Vorticists' abstraction as a new artistic vision which is not grounded in metaphysical realms as in Expressionism.

But besides criticising Expressionist abstraction, Lewis also simultaneously questioned the contrary approach of realistic and mimetic representation. He argued against representation which relies entirely on the 'appearance of surrounding Nature', and declared that the 'unselective registering of impressions' and the 'attempt to avoid all representative element' as 'equal

⁶⁰ Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Modern Art in England Circa 1914: T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis', in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 51-67 (pp. 60-61).

absurdit[es]'. Lewis criticised the shortcoming of a sole reliance on imitation at length:

you cannot convey the emotion you receive at the contact of Nature by imitating her, but only by becoming her. To sit down and copy a person or a scene with scientific exactitude is an absurd and gloomy waste of time. It would imply the most abject depths of intellectual vacuity [...] The essence of an object is beyond and often in contradiction to, it's simple truth: and literal rendering in the fundamental matter of arrangement and logic will never hit the emotion intended by unintelligent imitation. Not once in ten thousand times will it correspond. It is always the POSSIBILITIES in the object, the IMAGINATION, as we say, in the spectator, that matters. Nature itself is of no importance. The sense of objects, even, is a sense of the SIGNIFICANCE of the object, and not its avoirdupois and scientifically ascertainable shapes and perspectives. [...] Imitation [...] will never give you even the feeling of the weight of the object, and certainly not the meaning of the object or scene, which is it's [sic] spiritual weight. (45, original emphases)

Just as Lewis rejected the Expressionists' desire to ground art in the metaphysical realm, here paradoxically he also rejected attending solely to the physical realm, arguing that art creation or representation should be based on an exploration of the possibilities and immanent significance of the object by the artist, instead of rendering mimetically with scientific exactitude. The work of art created in this way should also be appreciated by the spectator with his imagination. Given Lewis's objection to the Expressionist notion of the 'spiritual', his use of the terms 'spiritual weight' and 'significance' might be surprising; however, here he implied not a transcendental stance, but rather the meaning of the object as per the artist's critical perception and intellectual judgment.

Vorticism thus provided an antidote to both Expressionism and Futurism by uniquely proposing a ‘synthesis’ (42) between the real and the metaphysical. Lewis suggested the mission of the modern painter is to communicate emotions while maintaining rigidity in form and medium, to achieve a balance between ‘[t]he human and sentimental side of *things*’ and ‘the inhuman plastic nature of *painting*’ (44, emphases added), with a calculated combination of life and imagination. This concern with the mechanism of representation and medium is in fact similar to Pound’s concept of the ‘primary pigment’, which correlates the respective excellence of different artistic media to conveying particular emotions.

Lewis went on to theorise how such a form of representation can be achieved in painting, suggesting that, ‘I would put the maximum amount of poetry into painting that the plastic vessel would stand without softening and deteriorating: the poetry, that is to say, that is inherent in matter.’ Lewis defined poetry as ‘the warm and steaming poetry of the earth, of Van Gogh’s rich and hypnotic sunsets, Rembrandt’s specialized, and golden crowds, or Balzac’s brutal imagination’, and judged that ‘[t]he painter’s especial [*sic*] gift is a much more exquisite, and aristocratic affair than this female bed of raw emotionality. The two together, if they can only be reconciled, produce the best genius.’ (44) The aim of Vorticism is to uphold the ‘hard’ quality of painting in serving as a vehicle for ‘soft’ emotional matter by the control excised by the artist’s intellect, in ‘assimilat[ing] perfectly to each other’ (44) these two extremes. This aesthetic aim is also similar to the goal of ‘concreteness’ and direct presentation of Imagist poetry and the conveying of emotion via the artist’s arrangement of his materials, as Pound had argued, which testifies to his understanding of Vorticist aesthetics and their similarities to the Imagist objectives, despite the seemingly arbitrary quality of his interdisciplinary theories.

Lewis further suggested that '[t]he Imagination' is 'not to be a ghost, but to have the vividness and warmth of life, and the atmosphere of a dream, uses, where best inspired, the pigment and material of nature' (45). This statement explains the paradox in Lewis's earlier declaration that, '[w]e must constantly strive to ENRICH abstraction till it is almost plain life, or rather to get deeply enough immersed in material life to experience the shaping power amongst its vibrations, and to accentuate and perpetuate these' (40). Such a process of artistic creation is encapsulated in Lewis's 'Vortex' statement: 'You must catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions: – not settle down and snooze on an acquired, easily possessed and mastered, satisfying shape.' (91, original emphasis) The combination of the material grounding of reality, as well as the artist's imaginative interpretation and arrangement, thus produces 'a New Living Abstraction' (*B1*, 147), which is in fact a dualist notion combining 'life' and 'abstraction'.

Although Lewis proposed this synthesis with much confidence, he also saw that such a balance was disrupted by the process of modernisation. He remarked, 'when Nature finds itself expressed so universally in specialized mechanical counterparts, and cities have modified our emotions, the plastic vessel, paradoxically, is more fragile. The less human it becomes, the more delicate, from this point of view.' (45) The 'plastic vessel' refers to painting as an artistic medium, whose qualities and function inevitably undergo changes according to the society in which it situates. This demonstrates the Vorticist reflection on the medium of painting in response to the increasingly technological society, where the Vorticists believed that art should become more anti-human in the modern age. Instead of 'represent[ing] men as more beautiful, more symmetrically muscular, with more commanding countenances than they usually,

in nature, possess', like artists in the past had done, Lewis argued that 'in our time it is natural that an artist should wish to endow his "bonhomme" when he makes one in the grip of an heroic emotion, with something of the fatality, grandeur and efficiency of a machine.' He added, '[i]n any heroic, that is, energetic representations of men to-day, this reflection of the immense power of machines will be reflected' (43-44). Evidently, Vorticism advocated new means which paralleled the advancement in technology to represent the human subject in the modern age. For example, Lewis and Roberts' representation of human forms by means of geometrical shapes and lines in paintings such as *Portrait of an Englishwoman* and *Combat* shows a sleekness and angular quality like mechanical structures. However, Lewis also criticised the Futurist fetishisation of machinery and argued that nature is also a valid source of 'arrangement' (46), another paradoxical stance which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Through criticising Expressionism, Lewis argued the significance of the Vorticist goal to reconcile emotion and form in painting in a perfect balance, in contrast to the Expressionists' unquestioned succumbing to excessive intuitive emotions, as well as their adoption of formless abstraction as a means of representation. As the Vorticists objected to abstraction as defined by Expressionism, Lewis argued that a redefinition of the term 'abstract', 'for want of a better word', was essential. He argued for an alternative definition according to the Vorticist vision, 'in the sense that our paintings at present are' (46-47). This can be illustrated by Lewis's painting *Workshop*. The title is rather abstract: while it might hint at an interior, Cork interprets the painting as an urban cityscape,⁶¹ an implicit criticism of the Cubists' obsession with studio subjects. In *BLAST* 2

⁶¹ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol.2, p. 336.

Lewis related an anecdote to this painting, which highlights the pertinent issue of representation in Vorticist aesthetics:

A Vorticist, lately, painted a picture in which a crowd of squarish shapes, at once suggesting windows, occurred. A sympathizer with the movement asked him, horror-struck, ‘are not those windows?’ ‘Why not?’ the Vorticist replied. ‘A window is for you actually A WINDOW: for me it is a space, bounded by a square or oblong frame, by four bands or four lines, merely.’ (44, original emphasis)

Through this anecdote, Lewis justified the Vorticist’s unconventional interpretation of representation and abstraction by drawing attention to ‘the disparity between the spectator’s and the artist’s capacity for impersonal vision’. While the spectator was shocked by the apparent representation which the shapes signify, Lewis defined them as spaces created by intersecting lines, an abstraction which defies representational readings. Lewis suggested that the Vorticist could see beyond the immediate object or image that appears to the eye, and ‘could “represent” where the bad artist should be forced to “abstract.”’ (44) The intellectual design intrinsic to the Vorticist is represented not as ‘ANY IMAGE OR RECOGNIZABLE SHAPE’ (47, original emphasis), although they might take on comprehensible forms when expressed. Lewis thus suggested it is natural that ‘[t]he artist, in certain cases, is less scandalized at the comprehensible than is the Public’ (44), at a time when aesthetics was undergoing rapid change and when abstraction seemed to oust realism as the means of representation in the modern age.

This attempt at redefining representation and abstraction echoes Kandinsky’s esoteric argument in ‘On the Question of Form’, that realism and abstraction are indeed equivalent to one another. But the Vorticists attempted to

go beyond settling for either an equivalent or polarised relationship between the two, to overcome and reconcile oppositions by establishing a position of duality in their polemics and aesthetics, and to take sides where they saw fit in an opportunistic manner. However, although the Vorticists attempted to establish a visual style which synthesises representation and abstraction, being neither imitatively realist or spiritually abstract, the theories they offered are largely cerebral and interior to the artist. Their intention to present an ‘essence [...] beyond and often in contradiction to’ the object’s physical appearance (45) as illustrated by *Workshop* also paradoxically assumes a certain mystical dimension for their theories.

Like Wadsworth’s wilful interpretation of Kandinsky’s theories, Lewis’s failure to engage with the entirety of Kandinsky’s theories resulted in a one-sided view of Expressionist aesthetics. The ambivalent and opportunistic stance of Vorticism also situates its aesthetic theorising on a dubious middle-ground, and Cork suggests that Lewis was ‘content to remain flexible’ and ‘swing from representational content over to non-figuration at will’.⁶² And although Lewis delivered a clearer explanation and a stronger case for Vorticist aesthetics in *BLAST* 2, where aesthetic commentary is helpful in understanding the Vorticist vision, it arguably remained under-developed and under-represented by the scarce amount of Vorticist works due to the interruptions of war, in contrast to the Expressionists who attempted to manifest their experimental theories in practice, for example as demonstrated by Kandinsky’s theory, paintings and interdisciplinary experiments. In this regard, the Vorticists were really ‘Propagandists’ (7) despite their denial, and ‘Primitive Mercenaries’ (*B1*, 30) in their attempt to define a dualist aesthetics mainly by polemical means. But their

⁶² Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, p. 252.

uniqueness also lies in their refusal to compromise with the aesthetics of both the traditional and the other avant-gardes in art; by exploiting dichotomies and distinctions, Vorticism was a movement which strove to question and critique existing artistic ideas in the process of developing their unique artistic vision.

Conclusion

Through a textual analysis of the two issues of *BLAST*, this chapter illustrates the multiple connections that existed between German arts and Vorticism. This transnational aesthetic affinity was based on a cultural geography rather than the political territory, evident in the Vorticists' differentiation between 'official' and 'unofficial' Germany. Yet the Vorticists also advocated England, the 'industrial island machine' (*B1*, 23), as the rightful leader of the 'Northern avant-garde', suggesting that a largely conventional conception of nationality and region was still in place. This dualist attitude is evident in the various ways in which the Vorticists adopted and appropriated the broad range of German influences in *BLAST* – some openly acknowledged, some continued and redefined, some knowingly manipulated to suit Vorticist theories and the contemporary context of the First World War, in *BLAST*'s incremental, layered and often contradictory responses. Indeed, aspects of Vorticist aesthetics can be clarified and developed by tracing their lineage and differences in relation to various German influences.

The Expressionist-Vorticist artistic exchange fundamentally revolved around the idea and practice of abstraction, and it is in the Vorticist appropriation of abstraction that a crucial difference in material meaning can be identified. If for the Expressionists, abstraction represents a unity of material and meaning – both as the means and the end of achieving the spiritual imperative of art, its

inner necessity – then for the Vorticists, abstraction is merely a means of representing the modern era, without a spiritual dimension and not the ultimate goal of their reforms of modern artistic vision. Thriving on ambivalence and duality, the Vorticists positioned themselves as ‘Primitive Mercenaries’, a notion rife with contradictions in various ways. In their synthesis of artistic virtues from both England and Germany, Vorticism’s polemics and aesthetics paradoxically both paralleled and neglected the ongoing conflict in reality in their utopic vision on art.

Chapter 4: T. E. Hulme: Theorist of the English Avant-Garde

Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of T. E. Hulme's contribution to Imagism and Vorticism in facilitating the international exchange of aesthetic ideas in an avant-garde context. Hulme has not often taken centre stage in academic studies of the movements, the prime reason being that he is not generally considered an active member of either movement. The 'Complete Poetic Works of T. E. Hulme' was first published in the *New Age* on 25 January 1912, prior to the appearance of *Imagisme* later on that year; and although Hulme gleefully joined the Vorticists' heckling of the Futurists in June 1914, he was excluded from *BLAST* due to his personal conflicts with its editor Wyndham Lewis.¹ By discussing the frequently neglected but crucial significance of Hulme's efforts in relating the European avant-garde to the English intellectual circles, and particularly the influence of his aesthetic theories on Imagism and Vorticism, this chapter aims to show that Hulme was one of the crucial figures of the two movements, and to explore his intellectual positioning alongside his contemporaries such as Pound and Lewis.

As an ardent promoter of the European avant-garde who was keen to regenerate the English arts, Hulme's expansive European influences include his study and advocacy of *vers libre*, the French philosopher Henri Bergson and the 'image' in poetry. Hulme's promotion of contemporary German aesthetic theories such as that of Wilhelm Worringer's, synthesised with his own, boosted modern art in England upon his return from Germany in 1913. One of the outcomes from the drive towards geometrical abstraction was the founding of Vorticism, an

¹ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 81, 83.

interdisciplinary movement which attempted to absorb the best artistic practices on the Continent and to combine the notion of avant-garde with English national identity.

Hulme's pioneering efforts and legacy in the English avant-garde and modernism lie mostly in his theoretical postulations about poetry and the visual arts, achieving 'a creative transformation of new ideas contributing to the emergence of a new art' as Wallace Martin suggests.² Hulme's experiments with poetic practice strongly inspired the style of Imagism, and his critical vocabulary and aesthetic statements had a lasting impact on Pound's works and rhetoric. Hulme also exerted a considerable social impact on the English art scene via the Frith Street evenings he organised for intellectuals and artists between 1911 and 1914.³ As Robert Ferguson comments, 'Hulme was keenly cosmopolitan, and [the] Frith Street guest lists reflect a man actively inviting foreign influence on his thinking, enthusiastically absorbing whatever he found to be good in it and in many cases being a leading importer into England of intellectual goods', which provided a brewing ground for avant-garde art and thoughts in London before the war.⁴

Hulme studies has benefited significantly from Michael H. Levenson's suggestion that a 'temporal and historical dimension' should be taken into account when studying Hulme's aesthetic progression.⁵ In *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme* (1994), Karen Csengeri established a comprehensive foundation for Hulme studies by presenting Hulme's writings in a chronological manner, which is crucial to the contextualising and understanding of Hulme's disparate and at times contradictory views in different periods of his career. Both

² Martin, *The New Age under Orage*, p. 181.

³ Beasley, "A Definite Meaning": The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme', p. 58.

⁴ Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, p. 146.

⁵ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 37.

Levenson and Csengeri also relate these relatively distinct phases to influences of various sectors of the European avant-garde, where significant transitions in Hulme's thoughts were brought about by his interactions with contemporary intellectuals such as Bergson, Pierre Lasserre and Worringer. In this chapter, I demonstrate Hulme's impact on and divergences from Imagism and Vorticism by tracing the transitions and progressions in his aesthetics through his writings in three distinct phases in his career, namely his explorations in language, redefinition of aesthetics as influenced by and reacting against Bergsonian theories, and his art criticism.

1. Explorations in Language: 1906-1909

A. ‘Cinders’ and ‘Notes on Language and Style’ (c. 1906, 1907; unpublished during lifetime)⁶

Both ‘Cinders’ and ‘Notes on Language and Style’ comprise a series of sketchy, cursory aphorisms and observations. Loosely organised under diverse headings, there is frequent omission of pronouns, verbs and conjunctions which points to a hasty composition process (like shorthand) rather than a deliberate literary style. Although dating from 1906 and 1907 respectively, Hulme made additions to these notes throughout the next decade,⁷ and it is thus impossible to attribute a date to individual statements, or to reconcile apparent anachronistic thoughts according to Hulme’s distinct aesthetic phases. As a result, these notes should be considered as providing an (albeit brief) overview of his thoughts rather than being labelled as products of a particular period. Yet I discuss these essays foremost as they contain many germinal ideas which continued to

⁶ All dates and publication details of Hulme’s writings are taken from *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, ed. by Karen Csengeri (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

⁷ CW, 7. Hereafter referenced in parenthesis in the text.

preoccupy Hulme throughout his career. For example, the concept of ‘cinders’ is key to Hulme’s early thought, an image suggesting the infinity and plurality he had experienced physically in the vast landscape of Canada. Another significant feature is Hulme’s frequent use of metaphors and analogies in illustrating his thoughts which he applied to his prose writing on a range of different subjects, possibly due to his skepticism about language as an epistemological tool. In the following, my discussion will focus on Hulme’s exploration of language.

Counter Language

‘Counter language’ is a crucial notion in Hulme’s aesthetics which he began to develop early on in his career. In ‘Cinders’ he compared the plurality of the world to an ash-heap and explained the nature and function of language: ‘In this ash-pit of cinders, certain ordered routes have been made, thus constituting whatever unity there may be – a kind of manufactured chess-board laid on a cinder-heap. Not a real chess-board impressed on the cinders, but the gossamer world of symbolic communication already spoken of.’ (9) This ‘gossamer world’ is language invented for the purpose of communicating, which is mistaken for reality when its symbolic, arbitrary nature is neglected. Hulme argued against an over-reliance on language, emphasising that it is only ‘an invention for the convenience of men’, and that the arbitrary relation between the signifier (language) and the signified (reality) mocks those ‘Hegelians who triumphantly explain the world as a mixture of “good” and “beauty” and “truth”’ (8).

The belief that language is only ‘counters’ invented by human beings to denote reality but not reality itself persisted in Hulme’s thoughts. Scholars have related this skepticism to Nietzsche, whom Hulme had read and was ‘influenced [by] both in form and thought [...] [and] whose radical critique of traditional

Western assumptions troubled but compelled him'. Nietzsche and his contemporaries 'argued that philosophical systems, scientific theories and language itself were simply a misleading and falsifying set of abstractions'; for Nietzsche, 'all words have become vague and inflated' owing to 'centuries of exaggerated feeling'.⁸ Hulme identified with 'Nietzsche's recognition that neither language nor logic can ever represent reality' and that '[t]he order language imposes on the world is illusory'; therefore he adopts Nietzsche's concept of language as 'basically metaphorical',⁹ as only an approximation to reality.

In 'Notes on Language and Style', Hulme frequently challenged the function of language as an epistemological means and a communication tool. He compared language to algebra, both using symbols to represent reality: in 'reasoning in language [...] [w]e replace meaning (i.e. *vision*) by words. These words fall into well-known patterns, i.e. into certain well-known phrases which we accept without thinking of their meaning, just as we do the *x* in algebra. *But* there is a constant movement above and below the line of meaning (representation). And this is used in dialectical argument. At any stage we can ask the opponent to show his hand, that is to turn all his *words* into *visions*, in realities we can see.' (24, original emphases) Hulme argued that meaning ultimately lies in material things one can see rather than in symbolic language, which are only counters of reality.

Hulme further debated the necessary linkage between language and reality in a sub-section titled 'Language (I) – (IV)', in which he stressed the distinction between thought and language. He argued the fact that 'all the predominant metaphors are naturally agricultural, e.g. field of thought, flood, stream' was due

⁸ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, pp. 137-138; David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 259.

⁹ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 138; Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*, p. 259.

to language having its roots in primitive society. Hulme postulated that, '[i]f only the making and fixing of words had begun in the city stage in the evolution of society and not in the nomadic. (But ideas expressed would have been the same. So thought and language not identical.)' (28) Hulme argued that language is only a matter of changing style and 'does not naturally come with meaning' (29), and therefore is subordinate to reality and thought. Such a realisation motivated Hulme's investigations into the relationship of language with thought and poetry. Just as there is '*no* inevitable simple style' in language, no absolute language or expression that exists as the *only* direct linkage to reality, absolutes in thought might also not exist, as he wondered: 'Is there *no* simple thought, but only styles of thought?' His conception of language as 'a compound of old and new analogies' also drove his proposition for 'great exactness' in organising the 'mosaic of words' in poetry (29, original emphases). The abrupt extension to poetry seems to suggest that Hulme saw a relationship between thought and poetry, based on the common need to be rendered in precise language.

Hulme thus concluded the section as follows:

- (i) Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images.
- (ii) Language is only a more or less feeble way of doing this.
- (iii) All the connections in language [...] only indicate the precise relation or attitude or politeness between the two simultaneously presented images. (29)

Hulme postulated that thought forms when two visual images are juxtaposed, which the 'precise relation' can be approximated by language as a limited conveyor of thoughts. This mechanism is to a certain extent similar to Imagist juxtaposition, in which the superimposition of two scenes suggests a 'precise relation', indicative of the conception or emotion the poet seeks to convey, as

illustrated by Pound's poem 'In A Station of the Metro'. Hulme's insistence on the exactness of expression via the imperfect medium of language also influenced the Imagist approach of 'direct treatment of the thing' as a solution in presenting subject matter accurately and succinctly in poetry.

Skepticism towards Materials and Meanings

In 'Notes on Language and Style', Hulme displayed much skepticism towards materials (language and poetry) as epistemological tools, which is extended to literature and authorship as a whole. He derided literature as 'like pitching, how to throw phrases about, to satisfy a demand. An exercise for the time being, no eternal body of knowledge to be added to' (31). Hulme judged that there is no intrinsic value in literature as in language: 'every book read is in some sense a disappointment, something you had previously found out for yourself' (38), and he mocked literary men as 'always first completely disillusioned and then deliberately and purposely creative of illusions. A writer always a feeble, balanced, artificial kind of person. The mood is cultivated feeling all the time.' (39) Doubting literature's power of enlightenment, Hulme presented a deflated view of the function and value of poetry in society: 'Poetry after all for the amusement of bankers and other sedentary arm-chair people in after-dinner moods. No other. (Not for inspiration of progress.) [...] Entirely modern view of poet as something greater than a statesman [...] In old days merely to amuse warrior and after banquet.' (38)

Accordingly, Hulme rejected any social impact the poet was perceived to have, and regarded the act of writing poetry as essentially a personal means of expression, which is not universal but only relevant to the poet: 'Poetry not for others, but for the poet. Nature infinite, but personality finite, rough, and

incomplete. Gradually built up. Poet's mood vague and passes away, indefinable. The poem he makes selects, builds up, and makes even his own mood more definite to him. Expression builds up personality.' (39) His emphasis on the individualistic quality of literature stemmed from a rejection of 'artificial deliberate poised', empty rhetoric that bear no relation 'to ordinary life and people': 'Literature as red counters moving on a chess-board, life as gradual shifting of cinders, and occasional consciousness. Unfortunately can now see the trick, can see the author working his counters for the peroration. So very few more possible enthusiasms left.' When the mechanism and inadequacies of language are exposed, literature no longer seems superior or redemptive to life. As such, Hulme concluded the futility of literature as 'entirely the deliberate standing still, hovering and thinking oneself into an artificial view, for the moment, and not effecting any real actions at all.' (40)

Hulme's realisation and conviction that language is only 'counters' for reality led him to devise a way in which reality can be presented with certitude. Carr suggests Hulme was 'very taken by [Remy] de Gourmont's argument (a development of Nietzsche's view of language) that poetry introduced fresh and vital metaphors into the language, which would eventually pass as dead metaphors [...] into prose'. This led Hulme to distinguish between 'two different kinds of language use': prose and poetry, as 'two different kinds of knowledge, which he had found defined in Bergson's philosophy'.¹⁰ Hulme hypothesised on the relevant mechanism as follows:

- (i) New phrases made in poetry, tested, and then employed in prose.
- (ii) In poetry they are all glitter and new coruscation, in prose useful and not noticed.

¹⁰ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 161.

- (iii) Prose a museum where all the old weapons of poetry kept.
- (iv) Poetry always the advance guard in language. The progress of language is the absorption of new analogies. (Scout, so nearest to flux and real basic condition of life.) (27)

Hulme's envisioning of 'poetry' is different from the conventional conception: it attempts to present the thing directly with new and highly exact expressions and analogies, instead of conventional, everyday language. Poetry is the 'advance guard in language' where new phases and analogies are produced, and progress is defined as relaying the reality as closely as possible. The mention of 'flux' as the 'real basic condition of life' indicates a Bergsonian influence, and Hulme believed that a new poetic language was necessary to represent modern reality.

B. 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' (delivered November 1908; unpublished during lifetime)¹¹

Hulme further developed this prose / poetry distinction at length in his writings between 1908 and 1909. He also proposed many new ideas about poetry, beginning in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', in which he laid out his ideals of poetry in a dialectical manner, which to a certain extent resembles a manifesto on poetry though written in continuous prose. Hulme's lecture clearly has a revolutionary intent, as he claimed with exaggeration that 'I have not a catholic taste but a violently personal and prejudiced one. I have no reverence for

¹¹ Vincent Sherry suggests the lecture was 'revised for delivery in 1914', which constitutes it as 'a palimpsestuous debate': Sherry argues that certain features, for example the preference of sight over hearing, the implicit reference to Worringerian 'space-shyness' and 'Egyptian monumental art', and the lecture's 'rhetorical complexity' suggest later revisions (Vincent Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 38-39). However, I will demonstrate presently that Hulme's adoption of Worringerian theories in this lecture is different from that in his writings on the visual arts in 1913-1914, which suggests inconsistencies if the lecture (or at least the influence of Worringer) is dated to the same year.

tradition.' (50) In the lecture, Hulme connected the changes in poetry to that in verse form, which were related to historical progression and paralleled evolutions in the visual arts. Despite offering much advice on the technical aspects of poetry, it is obvious that Hulme was devising an aesthetic theory with interdisciplinary applications. Therefore his subsequent turn to the visual arts was not a sudden move, but simply a change in the medium he used to discuss his ideal conception of art in the modern age. In the following, I will discuss Hulme's conceptions of the modern period and an appropriate aesthetics.

Necessities of the Period

At the beginning of the lecture, Hulme criticised the view of poetry having metaphysical significance as outdated, and stated that poetry is merely 'a tool which we want to use ourselves for definite purposes': 'We are a number of modern people, and verse must be *justified* as a means of expression for us.' (50, emphasis added) He subsequently exerted a similar insistence towards the visual arts. Hulme noted that the *weltanschauung* of a particular period drives the sensibility of the people, and in turn influences the form and content of the poetry written. Here his view of history was not yet cyclical and anti-progress as manifested in his later writings, nor influenced by Worringer's theory of abstraction, as he regarded the ancient people's inner necessity 'to create a static fixity' via their works as a response to their uncertain surroundings explains 'many of the old ideas on poetry', and '[h]ence they put many things into verse which we now do not desire to, such as history and philosophy' (52).

This attitude argues against Sherry's dating of the lecture despite Hulme's employment of a similar concept to Worringer's theory of space-shyness. Instead of suggesting a recurring tendency to abstraction, Hulme diverged from

Worringer in his opinion that the sentiment resulted in many ‘old ideas’ in poetry, including ‘the elaborate rules of regular metre’ and ‘fixed and artificial form’. Such a rejection of the mentality and art of the ancient suggests Hulme was not as yet aware of Worringer’s emphasis on the recurring tendency to abstraction which Hulme subscribed to in his art criticism in 1913-1914, when he drew on Worringer’s argument to defend Jacob Epstein’s work, claiming similarities in the form of ancient and modern art as a manifestation of a similar mentality. Such inconsistencies in Hulme’s discussions of the relationship between the ancient and modern suggest that his theories of poetry and the visual arts were composed at different time periods, as different conclusions were drawn from the same analysis of the mentality of ancient people in artistic creation.

Hulme borrowed from Gustave Kahn when arguing that ‘there is an intimate connection between the verse form and the state of poetry at any period’; where there is ‘invention or introduction of a new verse form’, it leads to ‘the efflorescence of verse at any period’. Moreover, verse forms ‘develop and die’ with time like language and images: ‘They disappear before the new man, burdened with the thought more complex and more difficult to express by the old name. After being too much used their primitive effect is lost.’ (50) Hulme opined that for a static art like poetry, there is a need to ‘find a new technique each generation’, different from the performance arts which have ‘immutable technique’ as their ‘expression is repeated every generation’. Hulme declared, ‘[e]ach age must have its own special form of expression, and any period that deliberately goes out of it is an age of insincerity’, a belief not unlike the Expressionists’. Hulme also contended that new art forms ‘do not come by a kind of natural progress of which the artist himself is unconscious. The new forms are deliberately introduced by people who detest the old ones.’ (51) In order to make

poetry suited to the current generation, continuous effort is required to update it in terms of poetics and techniques.

Modern Poetics and Techniques

Developing ideas similar to those in 'Notes on Language and Style', Hulme redefined the function of modern poetry as the expression of individuality, and contended 'the whole trend of the modern spirit' as moving away from 'absolute truth' and 'perfection, either in verse or in thought'. Therefore he suggested '[i]n all the arts, we seek for the maximum of individual and personal expression, rather than for the attainment of any absolute beauty' (52-53), in line with the modern *weltanschauung*. This brings changes to the form and subject matter of poetry: Hulme argued against 'the absolutely perfect form' and 'minute perfections of phrases and words', and suggested 'the tendency will be rather towards the production of a general effect'. Modern poetry also 'no longer deals with heroic action[;]' it has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phrases in the poet's mind' (53). However, he regarded such subject matter as 'virile thought', which cannot be conveyed by '[i]mitative poetry' that only expresses 'sentimentality' (51).

Hulme used the parallel evolution in the visual arts to justify these new approaches to poetry: 'There is an analogous change in painting, where the old endeavoured to tell a story, the modern attempts to fix an impression [...] for example in Whistler's pictures. We can't escape from the spirit of our times. What has found expression in painting as Impressionism will soon find expression in poetry in free verse.' (53) This statement is similar to Pound's suggestion of painting's 'ousting literary values' in the same way as Imagism eliminates rhetoric in poetry ('Vorticism', 202). It is interesting to note that

Hulme's examples of Impressionism and Whistler were not the avant-garde of the time, indicating that at this stage he had not yet begun to take up the more radical influence in the arts as manifested in his writings on art in 1913-1914.

Hulme opined that the expression of the new *weltanschauung* also requires a change in the manner in which poetry is composed. He called for the 'tak[ing] away [of] the predominance of metre and a regular number of syllables as the element of perfection in words', as well as regularity in poetic form: 'We are no longer concerned that stanzas shall be shaped and polished like gems, but rather that some vague mood shall be communicated' (53). Similarly, rhythm is not suited to 'the new visual art' of poetry, which 'depends for its effect not on a kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of visual images should exhaust one' (54). The resemblance to Impressionist and Symbolist technique is not coincidental. Hulme suggested French *vers-libre* as the model to express 'certain impressions' (50), but made clear that his intention was not to discuss French poetry: 'The kind of verse I advocate is not the same as *vers-libre*, I merely use the French as an example of the extraordinary effect that an emancipation of verse can have on poetic activity.' (52)

The rejection of the conventional components of poetry might be extreme, but is necessary for the modern sensibility, as Hulme considered that the 'principal features of verse at the present time' as that 'it is read and not chanted': 'I quite admit that poetry intended to be recited must be written in regular metre, but I contend that this method of recording impressions by visual images in distinct lines does not require the old metric system.' (54) Hulme argued that modern poetry is an art for the eye rather than the ear, relying on the reproduction of stimulating visual (i.e. exact) images rather than 'the hypnotic

effect of rhythm' (56), ironically using a musical analogy to illustrate this point: he likened the 'piling-up and juxtaposition of distinct images in different lines' in poetry to musical structure, where '[t]wo visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both.' (54)¹² Hulme concluded that, '[t]his new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear' (56). Contrary to music, sculpture is three-dimensional, material (in the sense that it is physical and concrete mass), and has a visual presence. Defining the new poetry as a 'visual art' and as analogous to the conventional understanding of the visual arts, Hulme's use of metaphors and analogies to emphasise the autonomy of poetic language highlights the interdisciplinary thrust of his avant-garde aesthetic. Such a stance subsequently led Hulme to pursue these qualities in works of visual arts instead of poetry.

Hulme also argued the rejection of rhyme, regular metre and rhythm as necessary to strip bare poetry of formal regularities to its essence, directness, which distinguishes poetry from prose: 'there are, roughly speaking, two methods of communication, a direct, and a conventional language. The direct language is poetry, it is direct because it deals in images. The indirect is prose, because it uses images that have died and become figures of speech.' Hulme argued that while the images in poetry are original and '[arrest] your mind all the time with a picture', prose 'allows the mind to run along with the least possible effort to a conclusion [...] resembling reflex action in the body', a mechanical action that one can perform 'almost without thinking'. Hulme justified 'the

¹² Ethan Lewis points out that contrary to Hulme, Ernest Fenollosa proposed that 'two things added together do not produce a third thing, but suggest some fundamental relation between them', and Fenollosa considered relations as 'more real and more important than the thing which they relate', which influenced Pound's poetics. Quoted in Ethan Lewis, "This Hulme Business" Revisited or Of Sequence and Simultaneity', *Paideuma*, 22 (Spring & Fall 1993), pp. 255-268 (p. 263).

abolition of regular metre' in connection with his principle of the image, an act which would 'at once expose all this sham poetry' that disguises 'dead image' behind the shield of metre. He concluded, '[o]ne might say that images are born in poetry. They are used in prose, and finally die a long lingering death in journalists' English. Now this process is very rapid, so that a poet must continually be creating new images, and his sincerity may be measured by the number of his images.' (55) The innovations proposed by Hulme were to have repercussions not only in his ideas on poetry and language, but also on Pound's poetic theory of *Imagisme*.

C. 'Searchers after Reality – II: Haldane' (*New Age*, 19 August 1909)

In 1909 Hulme began to contribute articles on philosophy to the *New Age*, which shows that the evolution of his aesthetic views had exerted a notable impact on his philosophical discussions. For example, in his review of the British philosopher R. B. Haldane's *The Pathway to Reality*, Hulme employed the prose / poetry distinction to define 'visual' (concrete, realistic) and 'counter' (abstract, metonymic) types of philosophers, condemning Haldane as the latter type 'without ever having been in actual contact with the reality'. Here Hulme consolidated and substantiated his previous arguments on the counter nature of language, a fault he proposed as rectified by poetry, a 'visual concrete' language:

It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. (95)

Hulme argued that the 'image' in poetry is more concrete than conventional language: originating from intuition and resulting in the conveyance of 'visual

meanings', the image is 'the very essence of an intuitive language' which conserves phenomenological accuracy and ensures that the poet / philosopher would not lose sight of reality, as the use of ordinary, counter language would inevitably result in. Hulme's analogy '[v]erse is pedestrian, taking you over the ground prose – as a train delivers you at a destination' (95) distinguishes between the continuous visualisation of the 'physical thing' in poetry and the 'abstract process' in prose: whereas the pedestrian is aware of every step he takes, which is physical and actual, the train moves in an automated 'mechanism [...] so arranged' that the journey is completed by the passenger 'almost without thinking', like the reflex actions of the human body which goes unnoticed by the consciousness (55).

Although the references to intuition and sensation are reminiscent of Bergson, Sanford Schwartz argues that Hulme's distinction between visual and counter language owed more to Nietzsche and Gourmont than to Bergson, who 'maintains that language by its very nature removes us from immediate experience. Hulme, however, [...] [introduced] a historical dimension to his view of language, [claiming] that the abstract counters of ordinary discourse were originally concrete visual metaphors'.¹³ By providing a mechanism by which poetic language loses its aura and becomes prose due to repeated use or out of convenience, Hulme's proposition 'dissolves the traditional distinction between "literal" and "figurative" language'. However, Schwartz also criticises the arbitrariness of Hulme's proposition in 'equat[ing] prose with the counters of ordinary language', 'restrict[ing] the production of new visual metaphors to poetry', and 'reduc[ing] metaphor to little more than a means of communicating

¹³ Sanford Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-Century Thought* (Princeton, N.J.; Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 57. See also pp. 83-85.

vivid sensory impressions'.¹⁴ Although Hulme's poetic theory is not perfect, his thoughts on poetic language were influential to Pound and Imagism.

D. Poetics: Hulme versus Pound

The innovation of Hulme's theories, including the prose / poetry distinction, his belief in the autonomy of poetic language and its capability for portraying immediate experience, were fundamental to Imagism and left much mark on Pound's poetic practice and polemical writings. Admittedly, Hulme did not found or practice *Imagisme*, and Pound's concepts of the 'image' and language were very different from his. In contrast to Pound's definition of the 'image' as a 'complex', Hulme's 'image' is a real, visual entity, which compensates for the shortfall of language in conveying reality; Hulme also likened its mechanism to 'a Bergsonian moment of intuition'.¹⁵ Peter Howarth argues Hulme's conception of poetry as being 'a compromise for a language of intuition' is a frank admission of 'what Pound would not [admit] when he declared that "the Image is the word beyond formulated language"'.¹⁶ Carr also observes that where Hulme's prose / poetry distinction emphasises their antithetical nature, in Imagist doctrine it is the intensity of language, not a special form of it which defines poetry.¹⁷

Other significant differences between Hulme and Pound (and the Imagists at large) include the traditional structural attributes of poetry which Hulme was dedicated to abolishing. In contrast to Hulme's rejection of 'the old metric system', and his proposition that poetry is 'read and not chanted' and is therefore for the eye / intellect rather than for the ear (54-56), Pound wrote in

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹⁵ Helen Carr, 'Edwardian, Georgian, Imagist, Vorticist, and "Amygist" Poetry', in *A History of Modernist Poetry*, ed. by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 159-85 (p. 168).

¹⁶ Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 41.

¹⁷ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 161.

'Prol[e]gomena' (*Poetry Review*, February 1912) that 'the artist should master all known forms and systems of metric' (*LE*, 9). The Imagists also emphasised rhythm as the third rule in 'Imagisme' advised, 'to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome' (199). Although the Imagists strove to modernise poetry, their prime objective was precise expression, rather than Hulme's intention to radically reform the structural components of poetry.

Despite these aesthetic differences, Carr suggests that Hulme '[gave] Pound and the other imagists a language in which to talk about poetry';¹⁸ it is evident that Pound borrowed many concepts and expressions from Hulme. For example, in 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: IX. On Technique' Pound employed the concepts of counter language and prose / poetry distinction, describing poetry as 'an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols. In so far as it is an art of pure sound, it is allied with music, painting, sculpture; in so far as it is an art of arbitrary symbols, it is allied to prose. A word exists when two or more people agree to mean the same thing by it.' (298) As in Hulme's 'Notes on Language and Style', Pound also used the analogy of algebra to argue that 'Imagisme is not symbolism' in his article 'Vorticism': 'The symbolist's *symbols* have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7. The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs *a*, *b*, and *x* in algebra.' ('Vorticism', 201, original emphases)

Pound's use of 'Dawn in russet mantle clad' in the article as an example of 'first intensity' in poetry ('Vorticism', 201), as well as previously in 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', calls to mind Hulme's example of 'the hill was clad with trees' (55) in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', where both made a conscious reference to Shakespeare's use of the image. Pound also declared 'I believe in technique as

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

the test of a man's sincerity' in 'Prol[e]gomena' (*LE*, 9), seemingly echoing Hulme's standard that '[the poet's] sincerity may be measured by the number of his images' (55). The continuities between Hulme's aesthetic concepts and critical vocabularies and Pound's support Alun R. Jones' assessment of Hulme as 'more than anyone else in this period responsible for clearing away the débris left over from Victorian romanticism and for pioneering the new poetic ground upon which his successors have built'.¹⁹ The breadth of Hulme's scope and ideas certainly had much impact on the London intelligentsia, not only in terms of a poetic revival, but also in terms of his aesthetic theories underpinned by his reading of Bergson's philosophy.

2. Redefinitions: 1911-1913

Between 1911 and 1913, Hulme's aesthetics underwent significant redefinitions. Firstly, he subscribed to *L'Action Française*'s distinction between 'Romanticism' and 'Classicism', and discussed its impact in aesthetic terms in his article 'Romanticism and Classicism'; this also led to his distancing from and later rejection of Bergson. Secondly, he began to venture into political commentary, contributing five articles to the *Commentator* and the *New Age* between 1911 and 1912, including 'A Tory Philosophy'. Thirdly, his sojourn in Germany between 1912 and 1913 brought him into contact with the German avant-garde circles evident in his 'German Chronicle' which discusses poetry, and his adoption of Worringer's theories in discussing modern art in England. In the following, I chart these aesthetic transitions by analysing several important articles written in this period.

¹⁹ Alun R. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme* (London: Gollancz, 1960), p. 35.

A. ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ ([late 1911 / early 1912], unpublished during lifetime)

Despite being a keen promoter of Bergson in England since 1909, Hulme began to have doubts about Bergson’s theories following his meeting with Pierre Lasserre of *L’Action Française* in Paris in April 1911. Hulme first mentioned *L’Action Française* in ‘A Note on the Art of Political Conversion’ (*New Age*, 22 February 1911), and in ‘Mr. Balfour, Bergson, and Politics’ (*New Age*, 9 November 1911) he admitted that his views on Bergson changed upon learning about Lasserre’s anti-Bergsonianism and Classicism (xix, 164-165).²⁰ However, Hulme’s ‘Notes on Bergson’ series in the *New Age* ran from October 1911 to February 1912, and Csengeri points out that his doubts about Bergson occurred over a relatively wide period of time (125). Levenson notes that ‘in his initial enthusiasm [Hulme] had attempted to make the doctrines converge’, and the ‘defence of the classical spirit’ moves into ‘an exposition of Bergsonian theories of art’.²¹ A new interest in politics is also evident: Hulme expressed his admiration of the works of Charles Maurras, Lasserre and *L’Action Française* as having ‘almost succeeded in making [romanticism and classicism] political catchwords’, a powerful distinction which had ‘become a party symbol’ and can be taken to denote political belief (60). Hulme’s combination of artistic and political discourses is also evident in ‘A Tory Philosophy’, and his interest in politics remained with him throughout his career.

In ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, Hulme defined and devised a dualistic divide between the two terms. Instead of denoting styles in literature and the arts, Hulme employed the terms in a psychological context, similar to the term

²⁰ ‘Classicism’ for *L’Action Française* denotes the imitation of seventeenth-century style, but it can also refer to a need for restraint and equilibrium advocated by post-symbolist poets. Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period*, p. 128.

²¹ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, pp. 85, 230n18.

weltanschauung to suggest a ‘particular view of the relation of man to existence’.²² ‘Romanticism’ is defined as resulting from the belief that ‘man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities’ who will make ‘Progress’ where facilitated by society, and ‘Classicism’ as ‘the exact opposite to this’: ‘Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him’, a notion similar to the religious concept of original sin (61).²³ This dualistic divide is similar to Hulme’s later subscription to Worringer’s theory of empathy and abstraction, both pairs as cyclical in time: Hulme still believed that new aesthetic media and forms bring about artistic innovations and new sensibilities, but pointed out that ‘any convention or tradition in art’ is like ‘organic life [which] grows old and decays’ (63), and this process swings the balance back to the opposite attitude. Hulme had earlier sustained the notion that poetic language degenerates into prose in a one-way process in ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry’, but here the two attitudes instead operate as a continuous cycle.

‘Romanticism and Classicism’ was originally titled ‘The New Philosophy of Arts as Illustrated in Poetry’ in its lecture form,²⁴ with Hulme mapping out the fundamentally philosophical Romanticism / Classicism divide in poetry in a similar fashion as he would subsequently apply Worringer’s theories to modern art. This suggests that at this stage Hulme still believed in the aesthetic value of poetry and regarded himself a competent practitioner / theoretician of poetry. Hulme suggested Classicism in verse was represented by diverse poets from Horace to the modern, and Romanticism mainly by Romantic poets as per modern day categorisation. He also added that he subscribed to Nietzsche’s

²² Rae, *The Practical Muse*, p. 49.

²³ In contrast to ‘Classicism’ as a period label, Hulme’s definition of the term suggests an attitude of critique and skepticism towards the Renaissance and Humanism.

²⁴ Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, p. 112.

view that ‘there are two kinds of classicism, the static and the dynamic’, and put forward Racine and Shakespeare as respective examples.²⁵ Hulme further elaborated on what he meant by the ‘classical’ in verse: ‘even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man.’ (62)

Hulme argued the current period as a ‘period of exhaustion’ from romanticism, and that ‘[w]e shall not get any new efflorescence of verse until we get a new technique, a new convention, to turn ourselves loose in’. Hulme indicated a similar cycle in painting, quoting diverse painters such as Raphael, Titian, Turner and Constable as examples: ‘All the masters of painting are born into the world at a time when the particular tradition from which they start is imperfect’ (63-64). These disparate poetic and painterly examples contrast with Hulme’s sole focus on Impressionist art in ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry’, and reflect that his notions of ‘Romanticism’ and ‘Classicism’ are not bound by historical periods, but depend on the mentality and creativity of particular individuals and ages spurred on by new techniques and conventions.

Yet Hulme envisioned that adhering only to either attitude can be problematic, and admitted that ‘I have got to find a metaphysic between [the classical view which conform] to certain standard fixed forms’ and ‘the romantic view which drags in the infinite’, in order to found ‘a neo-classical verse’ which ‘involves no contradiction in terms’. Such a quest is complicated by the ‘counter’

²⁵ David Thatcher notes that this distinction was erroneously attributed to Nietzsche (Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*, p. 285). Mark Antliff records that the French art critic Joseph Billiet proposed a ‘living classicism’ with Bergsonian connotations in 1911 to counter the ‘reasoned classicism the Action française advocated’ (Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 27-29), which might be Hulme’s source of influence. Jones remarks that ‘Hulme’s theory of poetry seems to demand classical restraint and impersonality on the one hand, and yet, on the other, concedes to the poet the power of individual creation’ (Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme*, p. 50), which seemingly fits the ‘Bergsonian paradigm’ of Billiet’s version of classicism (Antliff, *Inventing Bergson*, p. 29).

nature of language, which ‘expresses never the exact thing but a compromise’. Hulme advised that ‘[l]anguage has its own special nature, its own conventions and communal ideas’, and that it is only by ‘a concentrated effort of the mind’ and by avoiding seeing things in ‘conventional ways’ that ‘you can hold it fixed to your own purpose’, a ‘fundamental process at the back of all the arts’. This implies the interdisciplinary application of Hulme’s realisation that the ‘terrific struggle with language’ is not limited to words and poetry, but also exists in ‘the technique of other arts’, as a universal struggle of expression of the creative intuition.

Hulme proposed a solution that ‘beauty may be in small, dry things’: ‘The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description’. He concluded, ‘[w]herever you get this sincerity, you get the fundamental quality of good art without dragging in infinite or serious’ (68-69). Reaffirming the modernist poetics he proposed in ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry’, here Hulme provided practical guidelines for the modern poet, prototypical of the celebrated Imagist doctrines ‘direct treatment of the thing’ and ‘use no superfluous [*sic*] word’, along with the emphasis on the conscious exercise of good poetic technique. Hulme ‘prophes[ied] that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming’ and reiterated the prose / poetry distinction he made in his article on Haldane, quoting the entire paragraph almost verbatim (69-70). This suggests that he still held onto the prose / poetry distinction as well as the importance of poetry at the time,²⁶ before gradually shifting the mapping ground of his philosophical ideas to the visual arts after his sojourn in Germany.

²⁶ As ‘The Complete Poetic Works of T. E. Hulme’ was first published in the *New Age* on 25 January 1912, it might be projected that this lecture was composed prior to the date, possibly in late 1911.

Pound was to take up the position Hulme left as the theorist of modern poetry: inspired by Hulme's lecture on Bergson in which the former stressed that 'the artist does not *create* a truth but *discovers* it', and that the real challenge to a poet was to satisfy this 'passionate desire for accuracy', Pound declared in 'Prol[e]gomena' that Twentieth century poetry will be 'austere, direct, free from emotional slither' (*LE*, 12).²⁷ It was not long before Pound consolidated the new ideas from Hulme into *Imagisme*. Pound might also have had Hulme's discourse on Romanticism and Classicism in mind when he declared 'Picasso, Kandinski [sic], father and mother, classicism and romanticism of the movement' in his 'Vortex' statement (*B1*, 154); yet Pound's embrace of Kandinsky's Romanticism is the opposite of Hulme's rejection of such 'dilettante' abstraction in 'Modern Art, III: The London Group' (295).

Frank Kermode suggests that although Pound regarded Vorticism as a 'classicising movement', 'the Vorticist artist is an individual exceptionally endowed to know truth by a special mode of cognition', which is in itself a romantic notion. Similarly, the 'image' and 'vortex' are also essentially romantic symbols: "ideas" rush in and out of [the image], but it is not in itself discursive, and cannot mean anything except what it is', suggesting a belief in the immanence of the creative mechanism found in Romantic intellectuals such as Pater and Oscar Wilde. In comparison, Vorticist abstraction is more ambiguous, exhibiting the Hulmian ambiguity about 'vitality' and a curious mixture of Romanticism and Classicism. The vortex denies organic life and is "a sort of death and silence in the middle of life", having absolutely no connexion [sic] with the "vital"; paradoxically, the Vorticist work of art is *living*, but so 'differen[t] from ordinary modes of life [...] that one can say it is dead'. Kermode regards the

²⁷ Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 170. Original emphases.

Vorticists' rejection of organic life as 'in the interests of a higher kind of life and truth', which again promotes art and the artist to a superior position, suggesting an affiliation to Hulme's elitist and individualistic stance.²⁸

B. 'A Tory Philosophy' (*Commentator*, April - May 1912)

In this series of political commentaries, Hulme restated the Romanticism / Classicism divide and applied it to the political arena; he also highlighted the destructive power of vague expressions and words and their impact on politics. A month before the publication, Hulme delivered a lecture to the Heretics Club at Cambridge on 25 February 1912 titled 'Anti-romanticism and Original Sin', which was very similar in structure and content to the article. The Club President C. K. Odgen reported in the *Cambridge Review* that Hulme 'emphasised the importance of much repetition of certain words – words of power – in the formation of prejudices and ideals, and the general clouding of our judgements [sic] . . . Dynamic, Vibration, Rhythm . . . were words which he abhorred and on this note of abhorrence the paper came to a close'.²⁹ This suggests that Hulme was concerned about the fact that language, a medium which can be easily manipulated to deceive or hypnotise the public, was being deliberately tied to incorrect epistemologies.

Insisting on the Classical view that human nature is constant and that progress is impossible, in the article Hulme challenged those who believe in progress and the use of clichés to transmit such belief, which he mockingly referred to as 'words of power', for example "breaking down barriers", freedom,

²⁸ Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1957), pp. 134-135. Original emphasis.

²⁹ Andrew Thacker, 'A Language of Concrete Things: Hulme, Imagism and Modernist Theories of Language', in *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, ed. by Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 39-55 (pp. 40, 43-44).

emancipation', and above all, 'the epithet NEW': 'One must believe that there is a NEW art, a NEW religion, even a NEW age.' (237, original emphases) The denouncement of the 'new' is a move towards conservatism propelled by Hulme's adoption of the Classical attitude; it might also imply implicit criticism on the (Fabian-inclined but on the whole liberal) journal the *New Age* which Hulme regularly contributed to, both before and after this series but not this particular one.

Hulme condemned such deliberate epistemological misuse of language to propose irrational ideas to the mind, and attacked the Rhythmist group for subscribing to the Romantic attitude: 'Everything must be dynamic, even publishers' advertisements. Nobody knows exactly what it means, but that doesn't matter; it is your only epithet. There are other words of this kind. [...] And now there is a whole set of people who live on the word "rhythm". They have a paper. [...] When you meet people who have got "dynamic" on the brain in this way, you simply know that they are suffering from this modern disease, the horror of constancy.' (243-244) Hulme persuaded his readers not to be deceived by these 'words of power' into the believing such heresies: 'If you can only release yourself from this obsession by the words "dynamic" and "change", you will find that there is nothing absurd or repugnant in the notion of a constant world, in which there is no progress. [...] There is great consolation in the idea that the same struggles have taken place in each generation, and that men have always thought as we think now.' He also described religion and old literature respectively as 'a great stability' and a 'strange emotion of solidarity, to find that our ancestors were of like nature with ourselves' (245).

Here Hulme's rejection of the new and embrace of tradition contradict his insistence on the new in terms of artistic creation in 'Romanticism and

Classicism', and it seems that he regarded the Romanticism / Classicism divide as manifested differently in art and politics. Whereas in the realm of politics Hulme rejected progress and emphasised the constancy of man, in art he advocated a return to Classicism via innovation and 'a new technique, a new convention' (64), paradoxically carrying out the ideological shift back to tradition by novel means appropriate to the modern age. Hulme's subsequent adoption of Worringer's theory of two types of *weltanschauung* was a synthesis and refinement of these stances: abstraction and empathy are cyclical and equally valid, with the former as more apt in expressing the inner necessity of the modern age.

C. Aesthetics: Hulme, Bergson and Pound

Hulme's skepticism towards language encouraged him to follow Bergson in challenging the superficiality of conventional language as a means of expression, particularly in 'The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds', a series of lectures given in late 1911. Believing that the mind is a continuum, Hulme argued that words cannot be 'an accurate description of a man's actual state of mind' and his 'fundamental self', and illustrated this with an example: 'The feeling of "annoyance" as it occurs to any one person is perfectly individual, and is coloured by his whole personality. Language, however, has to use, to describe this particular state of "annoyance", the same word in every case, and is thus only able to fix the objective and impersonal aspect of the emotion. Every emotion is composed of a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate each other without any precise outline. In this lies the individuality of the emotion. As soon as you begin to analyse and to attempt to describe it in words you take away from it all the individuality which the emotion possesses as

occurring in a certain person.' (176) Following Bergson, Hulme regarded words as discrete entities which cannot adequately express the continuous flux of the mind.

Hulme also subscribed to Bergson's theory in discussing the creative process. In 'Bergson's Theory of Art' (subtitled 'Notes for a Lecture'; undated and unpublished during lifetime), Hulme commented that '[Bergson] has not created any new theory of art. [...] But what he does seem to me to have done is that by the acute analysis of certain mental processes he has enabled us to state more definitely and with less distortion the qualities which we feel in art.' (191) Bergson's thesis is that '[t]he intellect is an analytic faculty capable only of understanding the world in terms of conceptual abstractions', and '[r]eality can only be grasped by intuition, a faculty of concrete experience that bursts through the everchanging surface appearances of objects to capture their "real duration".³⁰ Hulme suggested that a thorough understanding of things is only possible through artistic creation, in which the artist 'pierce[s] through here and there, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action', the 'primary need' of the intellect (193-194).

As conventional language hinders the human ability to think, to express and to perceive, Hulme suggested that Bergson's theories liberate us from the 'stock types which are embodied in language', whether emotions or material reality, and make it possible to discuss art with 'a definite conception of reality and not mere metaphors invented specially for the purpose of describing art'. The artist is someone who has a firm grasp on reality, 'able to emancipate himself from the moulds which language and ordinary perception force on him and [...] able to

³⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

see things freshly as they really are'. Hulme also subscribed to Bergson's concept of an 'essentially aesthetic emotion' in works of art, which Hulme defines as a 'life-communicating quality', a 'kind of instinctive feeling which is conveyed over to one, that the poet is describing something which is actually present to him, which he realizes visually at first hand' (202-204). Hulme subsequently rejected this theory in the last of his published art criticism, 'Modern Art, IV: David Bomberg's Show', which I discuss later on.

Despite Hulme's promotion of Bergson, it has been pointed out that his retelling of Bergson's philosophy is 'to a certain extent a misreading of the original'. For example, Schwartz suggests that Hulme 'seems less interested in recovering real duration than in rendering the objects of perception as precisely as possible', which such emphasis on the objective side of experience is more akin to Husserl's stance.³¹ Another significant difference is that for Bergson 'duration was a temporal and fluid phenomenon', whereas Hulme 'emphasized the spatial fixity of artistic forms':³² Hulme's association of 'abstraction with movement and sensation with fixity', his 'granting [of] priority to the spatial over the temporal', and seemingly being 'far more attracted to stasis rather than motion, form rather than flux',³³ all aligned him with the Vorticists in their common contempt for the dynamism of Bergson and Futurism.

Another principal divide between Hulme and Bergson concerns their views of language, which might imply a selective reading by Hulme. Although Bergson's *image* led Hulme 'to conceive poetry as an objectification of response rather than a vehicle for the communication of a subjective state, accompanied

³¹ Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism*, pp. 52-54.

³² Thacker, 'A Language of Concrete Things: Hulme, Imagism and Modernist Theories of Language', p. 55n23.

³³ Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism*, p. 56.

by appropriate evocative description',³⁴ and that both Hulme and Bergson regarded language as 'an imprecise form of expression that frustrates the poet's attempts to relate his experience',³⁵ Mary Ann Gillies points out that their differences lie in the relationship they conceive between *durée* and language:

Although Bergson looks upon language as a spatialization of *durée*, albeit a necessary one if we are to interpret our intuitions intelligibly, Hulme sees it as a special way of representing the elements that make up the *durée*. Thus, for Hulme, intuition may be embodied in language, the highest expression of which is poetry. He stresses that language should be vital and well chosen for its specific task.³⁶

Gillies' argument can be refined further. Despite Hulme's skepticism towards the epistemological capability of language, he nonetheless endorsed poetry, made up of precise language, as capable of relating intuition. Yet Hulme and Bergson's notions of the epistemological power of poetry differ in emphasis: Hulme stressed language, while Bergson stressed rhythm. Laci Mattison suggests that '[w]hile Bergson critiques language as static representation which does not correspond to our lived experience of change, he leaves room, however, for poetry as the form which, through rhythmical movement, uses language in such a way that it becomes something other than representation.'³⁷ Such reliance on the traditional component of rhythm in a musical or aural sense is antithetical to Hulme's conception and closer to Imagism; Hulme had previously criticised both 'the hypnotic effect of rhythm' (56) in 'A Lecture on

³⁴ Martin, *The New Age under Orage*, p. 174.

³⁵ Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal & Kingston; London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 45.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Laci Mattison, 'H.D.'s Intuitive Imagism: Memory, Desire, and the Image in Process', in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, ed. by Paul Ardin, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 228-242 (p. 231).

Modern Poetry' and the word 'rhythm' for its confusing and mystical implications in 'A Tory Philosophy'.

Bergson's distrust for the eye / intellect led to his preference for music as 'superior to the plastic or literary arts by virtue of its focus on pure duration', which prevents the listener from 'dividing and "intellectualizing" temporality'. He used many musical analogies in his writings, for example comparing *durée* to a melody, where musical pitches can be 'translated into language to grasp something that has nothing in common with language', and suggests that 'musicians in contrast to poets or painters [are] delving "deeper still" to grasp "certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his own feelings.'"³⁸ Compared to Hulme's skepticism towards a 'musical art',³⁹ this attitude again fits better with Pound, who quoted Pater's 'All arts approach the conditions of music' (*B1*, 154) as a touchstone of the interdisciplinary Vorticism, and composed 'In A Station of the Metro' through a kind of translational process such as Bergson advocated. Kermode reads Pound's wish for poetry to 'aspire to the condition of music' as coming from his belief that 'music is all form and no discourse'⁴⁰ – a notable variance from Hulme's epistemological mode of poetry and his emphasis on the expression of ideas and things rather than the formal features of poetry as stated in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry'.

Pound came to Bergsonian thought via Hulme's lectures in late 1911, and shortly afterwards his aesthetics was significantly transformed from the arcane poetics of *Canzoni* to his call for a new poetry in 'Prol[e]gomena', following Hulme's suggestion that poets should seek to discover subjective truth /

³⁸ Mark Antliff, 'Bergson on Art and Creativity', in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, ed. by Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 299-300 (p. 299).

³⁹ Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Kermode, *Romantic Image*, p. 137.

emotions and render the findings in their works with accuracy.⁴¹ Gillies argues that the imagist doctrines demonstrate that Pound was moving away from Provençal poetic theories to ‘more recent thought’ as the basis for his poetry; in particular, his ideas about language ‘are reminiscent of Hulme’s statements and probably owe something to Bergson’. She argues that the most Bergsonian statement is found in Pound’s definition of the image, with its ‘freedom from time limits and space limits’ and its presentation of ‘an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’, which are similar to Bergsonian *durée* and ‘the aesthetic experience at the centre of Bergson’s art theory’.⁴²

But above all, Pound was more concerned with presenting the ‘thing’ rather than revealing its essence via poetry. Kermode suggests that the difference between Hulme and Pound’s focus on poetic language can be observed when Pound directed Hulme to the distinction between the language of Cavalcanti and Petrarch, where the former ‘hands over sensations bodily’ while the latter is ‘fustian and ornament’. Hulme reacted to this intellectual stimulus by delving into ‘the metaphysics of such distinctions’, whereas for Pound ‘the problem begins and ends with the establishing of the genuine thing-ness of the image; he wants *things*, not ideas’, and ‘a theory of poetry based on the non-discursive *concreto*’. The ideogram was favoured by Pound as a form of construction as ‘[i]t was constructed not of ideas but of things; it had no intellectual content whatever, and it did not discourse’, where the ‘thing’ is implied in the relation between juxtaposed images. Pound’s concept of the image or the ideogram is similar to ‘the Symbolist Image’, with which the poet can create without ‘having Schopenhauer or Bergson or indeed any other Western philosopher’. The

⁴¹ Carpenter, *A Serious Character*, p. 170.

⁴² Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, pp. 48-49.

ideogram is ‘an analogous symbol [of the real] without metaphysical trappings’, which Kermode regards as ‘another variety of the Romantic Image’.⁴³

Martin suggests that ‘Pound may have found Hulme’s discussions of the image and the language of poetry valuable, but he probably never understood, or even tried to understand, their philosophic origins’. Hulme’s image is a ‘philosophical concept [which] combines the communication of sensations with the creation of ideas’; Pound’s image is ‘psychological’, involving ‘not sensation and ideation, but emotion or other unspecified psychic “energies”’. Instead of the philosophical aspect of poetry and language, Pound was more concerned about technique: ideally poetry should live ‘close to the thing’ as to become a vital part of contemporary life, and much of his writings about poetry before 1915 concerns with the technique rather than the aesthetic of poetry.⁴⁴

Pound’s approach necessarily attributes a significant role to language and individual words besides the formal aspects of poetry. Since poetry could not ‘be written with something other than words’, Pound strove to endow physical presence to words as if the thing is immediately seen.⁴⁵ This was common to the modernist ‘inclination to reform language to “something more metallic and resistant”, as Andrew Thacker notes: ‘For Pound, Hulme and others the central problematic of language was its need to be reformed for the purposes of clarity; for many this led to a kind of obsession with the physicality or thingliness of language’, ‘a desire to turn words into things’.⁴⁶ Language is made concrete by the use of precise, accurate words (*le mot juste*) and the elimination of rhetoric

⁴³ Kermode, *Romantic Image*, p. 136. Original emphases.

⁴⁴ Martin, *The New Age under Orage*, pp. 174-181.

⁴⁵ Kermode, *Romantic Image*, p. 136.

⁴⁶ Thacker, ‘A Language of Concrete Things: Hulme, Imagism and Modernist Theories of Language’, p. 47.

from expressions, which becomes capable in evoking matter by an effective metonymical process.

Despite Pound's confidence in words as the key component of poetry, he agreed with Hulme that a new method of presentation is needed, which they found in the juxtaposition of images. For both, the image is a means to present the real; for Pound it has the additional advantage of enabling poetry to convey feelings without being discursive. Hulme's concept of the 'image' and 'intuitive language', borrowed from Bergson, led to the groundbreaking practice of using 'juxtaposition, metaphor, or paradox [as] the primary means of awakening us to neglected aspects of experience'.⁴⁷ Juxtaposition works on a metaphorical basis closer to intuition than empiricism: by relating two things, it sidesteps the necessary making of meaning by language which denotes the thing. Instead of saying 'x is y', the juxtaposition 'x is *like* y' implies the shared attributes between things rather than the essence of the things themselves; the focus on the 'relation between things' rather than the presentation of things then free the component words from the trapping of semiotic implications.⁴⁸ Altogether, it is both the hardening of language and the emphasis on the 'relation between things' which enable the poet to present the real, whether it be the concrete thing, or the evasive, introspective experience, feeling or idea.

D. Departure from Poetry: 'German Chronicle'

Sometime between 1912 and 1914 Hulme turned his attention away from poetry to the visual arts. In his article 'This Hulme Business' (*Townsman*, January 1939), Pound speculated two reasons behind Hulme's turning away

⁴⁷ Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism*, p. 60.

⁴⁸ On this point I am indebted to and inspired by the discussion in Gage, *In the Arresting Eye*, pp. 57-62, and Lewis, "This Hulme Business" Revisited or Of Sequence and Simultaneity, particularly p. 263.

from poetry: firstly, Hulme ‘had read Upward’, or as Pound recalled with more specificity in a letter to Michael Roberts in July 1937, ‘[h]e had read Upward’s new work. I didn’t till I knew Upward.’ (SL, 296) This probably refers to Allen Upward’s historical or philosophical writings, for example *The New Word* (1907); yet Pound did not seem to regard Upward’s influence as negative. Secondly, Pound mentioned that Hulme’s ‘[Frith Street] evenings were diluted with crap like Bergson and it became necessary to use another evening a week if one wanted to discuss our own experiments or other current minor events in verse writing’. This would probably be the period between 1911 and 1912, when Hulme was intensively writing and lecturing on Bergson, and the poets therefore felt the need for a secession group to focus on poetry. However, Hulme invited Pound to give a lecture on poetry at Cambridge in the autumn of 1912,⁴⁹ suggesting that he still found poetry worthwhile at the time.

But by the time Hulme wrote the ‘German Chronicle’ (commissioned by Harold Monro for the *Poetry Review* and written in late 1912 or early 1913 soon after Hulme’s arrival in Berlin,⁵⁰ but not published until June 1914 in *Poetry and Drama*), he was ready to reject poetry as an artistic medium to convey reality. Patrick McGuinness describes the article as ‘one of the earliest pieces of open-minded and informed criticism of Expressionist and post-Expressionist poetry in Germany, and ranks with Flint’s longer essay, “Modern French Poetry”, as a key text in [English] Modernist reception of European literatures’.⁵¹ By reviewing the poetic and avant-garde scene in Berlin, Hulme nonetheless presented a pessimistic and dismissive view of poetry at large.

⁴⁹ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, p. 139.

⁵⁰ Here I adopt Ferguson’s dating rather than Csengeri’s dating of August 1913 (CW, 74), with the former substantiated with biographical details and the correspondence between Hulme and Harold Mono, then editor of the *Poetry Review*.

⁵¹ T. E. Hulme, *Selected Writings* (Manchester: Fyfield, 1998), p. xv.

In the last part of the article, Hulme displayed reservations about poetry, in contrast to his previous eager poetic pursuits. Here it seems that Hulme had given up the prose / poetry distinction which he previously insisted on, as he complained that ‘the same reaction against softness and diffusiveness seems to me to be observable in the verse as in the prose’ (77). More significantly, he stated the factors which led him to reject poetry as the ‘elements of rhythm, sound, etc.’, which traditionally complements the one-dimensional ‘line of words’. This combination however takes the original observation from ‘the thing clearly “seen” to this almost blind process of development in verse’, a reversal of the intention to present the real, as Hulme argued: '[The poet] sees “clearly” and he must construct “clearly”. This obscure mixture of description and rhythm is one, however, which cannot be *constructed* by a rational process, *i.e.*, a process which keeps all its elements clear before its eyes all the time.’ Rhythm muddles the lines of words, and the intelligent man ‘cannot trust himself to this obscure world from which rhythm springs’ (80, original emphases). Hulme’s rejection of traditional poetic devices starting from ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry’, coupled with his vehement repudiation of Bergsonian flux and rhythm, finally led to his rejection of the poetic medium, perhaps in realisation that rhythm is inevitable in poetry even in free verse.

Hulme also related the issue to his own experience of composing poetry: by adopting the method of ‘mention[ing] one by one the elements of the scene and the emotions it calls up’, Hulme suggested that ‘[q]ualities of sincere first-hand observation may be constantly shown, but the result is not a poem’ (80-81).⁵² Hulme observed that the German Expressionist poets seemed to be employing

⁵² Ethan Lewis demonstrates that Hulme’s poetry remains sequential and does not achieve simultaneity as Pound’s use of juxtaposition does. See Lewis, "“This Hulme Business” Revisited or Of Sequence and Simultaneity", pp. 261-262.

the same method as his, and commented that their rational despite radical experiments ‘are destined rather to alter German prose than to add to its poetry’ (81). The end of Hulme’s brief career as a poet was probably due to a combination of factors: dissatisfaction with the epistemological power of language and conventional views of poetry based on metaphysical or mechanistic models,⁵³ as well as his realisation that intrinsically, poetry is not a form which can present reality with entire accuracy. As the war soon broke out, the article probably did not exert much immediate impact on the London intelligentsia, contrary to Ferguson’s claim.⁵⁴ Hulme’s more significant contributions to the English avant-garde in 1913-1914 were to be found in his articles on the subject of visual arts.

3. Visual Arts: 1913-1914

Hulme’s first recorded inclination toward an abstract, geometrical art began as early as 1911. While attending the Fourth International Congress of Philosophy in Bologna in April 1911, Hulme visited Ravenna and seeing Byzantine mosaics, he claimed, confirmed his view that Classicism was replacing Romanticism as the attitude for the modern age (105, 271). However, his praise for more realistic art by Giotto at Assisi in May 1911 suggests that he ‘initially found Byzantine art primitive, that he believed in progress in art and by extension in humans’, a belief only to change with his gradual subscription to the classical attitude. An acquaintance D. L. Murray remembered that in summer 1911 Hulme praised the Diaghilev Ballet for their experiment in ‘bring[ing] the *plastique* of ballet into line with non-humanistic ideals that inspired Egyptian, archaic Greek and Polynesian art’, which Ferguson sees as ‘an indication that

⁵³ Rae, *The Practical Muse*, pp. 49-51.

⁵⁴ Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, p. 137.

the Ravenna mosaics were now beginning to work inside him'.⁵⁵

Hulme probably started turning to a visual aesthetics in 1912 following the beginning of his interest in art from his trip to Italy the previous year.⁵⁶ W. H. Davies recalled that Hulme's Frith Street gathering was 'mostly for artists, and not so much for literary people'; Fletcher also commented that Hulme 'was far more interested in modern art and philosophy than poetry'.⁵⁷ Subsequent to Hulme's return from Germany in May 1913, his interest had definitely changed from poetry and Bergson to modern art, and he became an expert on Worringer, who according to David Bomberg was then 'unknown, except to Hulme'.⁵⁸ Finding Worringer's theory of abstraction and empathy in art stimulating, Hulme applied his theories to modern English art and published a series of essays of art criticism in the *New Age*. However, in contrast to Worringer who 'remained objective in his description and analysis, and impartial in his appreciation of both abstract and empathetic art', Hulme 'put Worringer's method to narrower and more polemic uses',⁵⁹ much as he employed Bergson's theories for his own aesthetic arguments. In the following, I will evaluate Hulme's writings on art and discuss the changes in his aesthetic theories.

A. Hulme as Art Critic

As all of Hulme's art criticism in the *New Age* was published within a very short period of time (December 1913 to July 1914), his arguments are often repetitive, yet there are significant differences between individual articles in which the radical development of his aesthetics during the period can be traced.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 150.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Beasley, '"A Definite Meaning": The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme', p. 58.

⁵⁸ Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, p. 150.

⁵⁹ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 80.

Much of Hulme's art criticism is a utilitarian projection of his philosophical thoughts, and he seems to be a somewhat reluctant, apologetic art critic, confessing that '[a]n article about one man's pictures is not a thing I should ever do naturally. [...] I would certainly rather buy a picture than write about it. It seems a much more appropriate gesture. Any more rotund or fluent expression than these short sentences must, however admirable, be artificial. [...] naturally one's expression is inadequate'. This is due to Hulme's skepticism towards language, whereby he saw 'literary expression' as not as profound as the visual arts, and words as only poor substitutes of intuition, having a 'certain physical difference of *pace*' from other forms of expression: 'What you feel before a picture is long, slow, seems important. The rattle of sounds which expresses it is quick, short and unimpressive.' (302-303, original emphasis)

This distinction between the qualities of different aesthetic media is curiously reminiscent of Bergson's art theories; as Hulme's insistence on Classicism in art was diminished by his turn to the Worringerian abstraction / empathy distinction as the aesthetic basis of art, Bergsonian theories were no longer severely suppressed in Hulme's aesthetics, but manifested in a curious mixture of influence and rejection in his writings. Of course, the ambiguities in Hulme's writings on art also lies in the fact that 'forms are of their nature rather indescribable, and even difficult, to point out. They depend [...] very often on a three dimensional relation between planes which is very difficult to get at' (303), an issue also faced by Pound when he ventured into art criticism.

Hulme's stance as an art critic seems to be pro-European avant-garde, and he appeared to have a good understanding of the current state of Continental art. In 'Modern Art, I: Grafton Group' Hulme proposed that '[o]ne might separate the modern movement into three parts, to be roughly indicated as

Post-Impressionism, analytical Cubism and a new constructive geometrical art. The first of these, and to a certain extent the second, seem to me to be necessary but entirely transitional stages leading up to the third, which is the only one containing possibilities of development.' (264) In his lecture 'The New Art and Its Philosophy' Hulme reiterated this perspective: 'You get at the present moment in Europe a most extraordinary confusion in art, a complete breaking away from tradition. So confusing is it that most people lump it altogether as one movement and are unaware that it is in fact composed of a great many distinct and even contradictory elements, being a complex movement of parts that are merely reactionary, parts that are dead, and with one part only containing the possibility of development', which he opined relies on the geometrical character. Hulme seemed particularly knowledgeable about the French avant-garde (perhaps a side-effect of his study of Bergson), but rejected most post-impressionists including Gauguin and Maillol, as well as Brancusi, 'analytical Cubism' and Metzinger's 'theories about interpenetration', only praising Cézanne's 'pyramidal composition'. He also criticised Futurism's 'deification of the flux' and 'the superficial notion that one must beautify machinery', possibly owing to his rejection of Bergsonian flux (277-278, 281-282).

Yet the focus of Hulme's art criticism was the English avant-garde, and his objective was clearly to promote English works and qualities which were comparable to continental standards. Hulme was generally critical of traditional and contemporary English art groups such as the New English Art Club and 'the faked stuff produced by Mr. Roger Fry and his friends' (299), and even the newly formed London Group, considering the English Post-impressionists as 'the preliminary and temporary stage of experimentation in the preparation of a

suitable method of expression for a new and intenser sensibility' (280). The prototypical Vorticists' works he described as 'interesting' yet 'unsettled'; they had departed from their 'Post-Impressionistic beginnings' but had not 'reached any final form' (294). In contrast, he had sufficient praise for the abstract works of Epstein and Bomberg, declaring that 'I have seen no work in Paris or Berlin which I can so unreservedly admire' (297-298) as Epstein's sculptures, and Bomberg's tendency to abstraction as 'not merely the result of a feverish hurry to copy the latest thing from Paris' (302), which were decidedly gestures to promote the originality and creativity of the English avant-garde.

Hulme's discussion of art largely relies on philosophical arguments (303), and his judgment and propositions provided an informed alternative critical approach to modern art supported by aesthetic theories, mainly Worringer's theory of abstraction and empathy. Hulme's theories are also steeped in empiricism, a fact observed from the compositional process of his poetry and his promotion of artists such as Epstein, 'whose theories of sculpture embodied Hulme's ideal more [...] than the work of any other artist'.⁶⁰ Pound in hindsight '[opined] that Hulme's greatest achievement was that he gave the sculptor Jacob Epstein a language through which to talk about his art',⁶¹ and in hindsight Bomberg 'claimed that most critics at the time "had not the remotest idea what we were doing. Hulme had and wrote about it, and in this way he became the spokesman for the innovators in the first exhibition of the London group.'"⁶²

Although Hulme tried to understand the works of the English avant-garde artists from their perspectives, he also expressed his disagreement with total abstraction. For example when explaining Bomberg's abstraction he remarked: 'I

⁶⁰ Quoted in Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme*, p. 93.

⁶¹ Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, p. 141.

⁶² Quoted in Ferguson, *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, p. 170.

think that in this merely intellectual use of abstraction Mr. Bomberg is achieving exactly what he sets out to achieve. But at the same time it is quite legitimate for me to point out why I prefer another use of abstraction.' (309) Nonetheless, Hulme's theories of modern art enabled many English artists to find theoretical support for their works and encouraged their experiments with form and abstraction, including the Vorticists. In the following, I analyse Hulme's art criticism in chronological order in tracing the development of his aesthetics and his opinion on English avant-garde art in 1913-1914.

B. Early Articles (December 1913 - January 1914)

Hulme's career as an art critic began with 'Mr. Epstein and the Critics' (25 December 1913), which was a reaction against mainstream criticism of the new art, especially that by Anthony M. Ludovici, another art critic published by the *New Age*. This is followed by a series of articles on modern art in the first half of 1914, mainly reviews of contemporary exhibitions, in which Hulme again differed from conventional aesthetic judgments. However, Rebecca Beasley points out that Hulme was indebted to Fry and Clive Bell in his employment of '[t]he key terms of the new formalist criticism – design, geometry, the relation of forms and planes, rhythm and abstraction [which] insisted on the independence of the art work as an expressive object in its own right, rather than as a signifier of some other, primary, reality'.⁶³ But Hulme's belief in the autonomy of works of art also potentially lies in their ability to relay reality, as he argued in 'Bergson's Theory of Art'.

In 'Mr. Epstein and the Critics', Hulme challenged the prejudice against the use of 'formulae taken from another civilisation' in modern art, for example the

⁶³ Beasley, "A Definite Meaning": The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme', p. 62.

archaic qualities of Epstein's 'Carvings in Flenite', where the 'emotion' expressed was considered 'unnatural' for 'a modern Western' artist. Hulme disputed this view by clarifying 'a misconception of the formulae' with his view on 'Classicism': 'Man remaining constant, there are certain broad ways in which certain emotions must, and will always naturally be expressed, and these we must call formulae. They constitute a constant and permanent alphabet. The thing to notice is that the use of these broad formulae has nothing to do with the possession of or lack of individuality in the artist. That comes out in the way the formulae are used.' (256) Such a view differs from his previous insistence on new forms and techniques as necessary for modern poetry, and suggests his view of history as cyclical, as influenced by his conception of the Romanticism / Classicism divide and Worringer's theory of the tendency to abstraction, both uniting disparate historical periods. Hulme argued that the seeming unnaturalness of the emotion was only due to 'a belief in "Progress"' which was 'breaking up', and therefore 'it is quite natural for individuals here and there to hold a philosophy and to be moved by emotions which would have been unnatural in the period itself', i.e. to identify with art from other periods and employ similar formulae in contemporary art. Hulme used his own 'repugnance towards the *Weltanschauung* [...] of all philosophy since the Renaissance' as a case in point: he argued that a new *weltanschauung* was emerging where 'the necessary expression of a certain attitude' is similar to Byzantine mosaic, which was mistaken to be an imitation of the past (257-258, original emphases).

In his next article 'Modern Art, I: The Grafton Group' (15 January 1914), Hulme reviewed the Grafton Group exhibition negatively and expounded his theories on modern art. Hulme defended the use of archaic forms as simply a convenient means to achieve 'a new constructive geometrical art': 'the particular

change of direction in the new movement is a striving towards a certain intensity which is already expressed in archaic form. [...] A certain archaism it seems is at the beginning a help to an artist. Although it may afterwards be repudiated, it is an assistance in the construction of a new method of expression. Most of the artists who prepared the new movement passed through this stage', citing Cézanne, Picasso and Epstein (265-266, 298). Hulme pointed out that it was precisely the lack of 'a sincere effort towards a certain kind of intensity' in the works of the Grafton Group artists which rendered their works as 'merely a cultured and anaemic imitation [...] a mere utilization of the archaic in the spirit of the aesthetic' (266). The sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska concurred with Hulme's endorsement of the archaic when he declared that the new sculpture 'has no relation to classic Greek, but that it is continuing the tradition of the barbaric peoples of the earth (for whom we have sympathy and admiration)' in his letter to the editor of the *Egoist* on 16 March 1914 (118).

Hulme also suggested that it takes time for the artist to develop a new expression, which is 'an unnatural, artificial, [...] external thing'. Here it seems that Hulme's idea of artistic expression remained influenced by the internal / external divide and the mechanism of the *élan vital* proposed by Bergson: 'The way from intention to expression does not come naturally as it were from in outwards. [...] A gap between the intention and, its actual expression in material exists, which cannot be bridged directly. A man has first to obtain a foothold in this, so to speak, alien and external world of material expression, at a point near to the one he is making for. He has to utilise some already existing method of expression, and work from that to the one that expresses his own personal conception more accurately and naturally.' (265) Although agreeing with Bergson on the significance of the intensive manifolds, Hulme opined that

initially one's internal vision can only be approached externally. This concept was important for Hulme and the passage was repeated almost verbatim in 'The New Art and Its Philosophy' in the following week.

C. 'The New Art and Its Philosophy' (lecture delivered on 22 January 1914, unpublished during lifetime)

In this lecture, Hulme delivered a thorough exposition of Worringer's theories of tendency to abstraction and its application to modern art. Given its length, it is also the most comprehensive record of Hulme's theories of the visual arts. Hulme acknowledged his debt to the works of Alois Riegl and particularly Worringer, whose views Hulme abstracted in his lecture (271). Continuities with Hulme's previous aesthetic preoccupations can be observed: the change in *weltanschauung* necessitates 'an intenser perception of things striving towards expression', away from the Romantic attitude since the Renaissance and towards 'the same kind of intensity as that expressed in certain archaic arts' (280). This new art requires new ways of expression, and 'will not aim at the satisfaction of that particular mental need' of beauty in the tradition of vital art (282).

Hulme emphasised his realisation of the change in *weltanschauung* came before that in art: 'I came to believe first of all, for reasons quite unconnected with art, that the Renaissance attitude was coming to an end, and was then confirmed in that by the emergence of this art. I commenced by a change in philosophy and illustrated this by a change in art rather than vice versa.' (270) In other words, Hulme's aesthetic investigations were philosophically driven and he regarded this change in art merely as a reflection of the change he observed in philosophy at the time: 'one's mind is so soaked in the thought and language of

the period, that one can only perceive the break-up of that period in a region like art', which is 'a kind of side activity' to thought (276). Hulme ultimately attributed his enthusiasm in the new art not to his appreciation of it, but to his belief in it being 'the precursor of a much wider change in philosophy and general outlook on the world' (285), as a signal for the change rather than being the important change itself.

As an art critic, Hulme was inevitably concerned with 'the language in which the artist or critic attempts to explain [modern] art', judging that '[t]he critic in explaining a new direction often falsifies it by his use of a vocabulary derived from the old position' (268), resulting in 'a false conception of the nature of art' (277). He pointed out that despite the 'emancipation' of the artist and the spectator, 'the mental, or more accurately speaking, the linguistic emancipations of the two, may not have gone forward parallel with the artistic one' (268), where conventional language impairs the comprehension of the new art. Hulme thus suggested that 'a certain change of sensibility in the artist' is necessarily expressed 'in a certain change of vocabulary' in his language (278), similar to Pound's insistence that the new art must be communicated 'beyond the existing categories of language' ('Vorticism', 204).

Hulme suggested that the new art requires new adjectives such as 'austere, mechanical, clear cut, and bare' to 'express admiration', instead of 'graceful, beautiful, etc.' conventionally used in describing art. He contended that 'there seems to be a desire for austerity and barenness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature and natural things' (278), an anti-Bergsonian desire manifested in his poetics in 'Romanticism and Classicism' and also in Imagist poetry. Hulme argued that Classical 'austerity' should be applied to all the arts: where this means less rhetoric in poetry, in art it is

exemplified as ‘a desire to avoid those lines and surfaces which look pleasing and organic, and to use lines which are clean, clear-cut and mechanical’ (279).

It is evident that Pound, who began writing art criticism shortly after Hulme, borrowed from the latter’s vocabulary in discussing modern art. In Pound’s review ‘Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery’, he wrote that Epstein presented ‘some austere permanence; some relation of life yet outside it. [...] There is in his work an austerity, a metaphysics, like that of Egypt – one doesn’t know quite how to say it. All praise of works of art is very possibly futile’ (109), which is reminiscent of Hulme’s insistence on austerity, as well as his ambivalent stance on art criticism.

New Sensibilities of Modern Art

Following Worringer’s abstraction / empathy distinction, Hulme argued that the ‘new art is geometrical in character, while the art we are accustomed to is vital and organic’, which latter is only ‘the satisfaction of one among other possible desires’. These two kinds of art ‘pursue different aims and are created for the satisfaction of different necessities of the mind’; they ‘spring from and correspond to a certain general attitude towards the world’. Hulme suggested that the re-emergence of geometrical character in art, which is ‘essential and necessary [...] in endeavouring to express a certain intensity’, signals the ‘re-emergence of the corresponding attitude towards the world’ and ‘the break up of the Renaissance humanistic attitude’ (269-272), which this change in the *weltanschauung* necessitates both a new way of expression and reception of art.

Despite the corresponding *weltanschauung* behind both modern and archaic art, Hulme insisted that the similarity in the style of these arts is only analogical and should not result in an exact reproduction, and that the similarity

is only intermediate while ‘certain original and peculiar qualities’ develop in modern art. Hulme proposed that the ‘tendency towards abstraction’ in modern art would culminate ‘not so much in the simple geometrical forms found in archaic art, but in the more complicated ones associated in our minds with the idea of machinery’: the ideal model of this new art is ‘engineer’s drawings, where the lines are clean, the curves all geometrical, and the colour [...] gradated absolutely mechanically’, although he refused to speculate the final outcome of such development (276, 279, 282).

However, despite Hulme’s advocacy of the ‘use of structural organisation akin to machinery’ (279) in modern art, he stressed that the resemblance is only analogical and coincidental: the new art is ‘having an organisation, and governed by principles, which are [...] exemplified unintentionally [...] in machinery’ (282), contrary to the Futurists’ superficial objective to celebrate machinery in their art. Hulme also argued that the similarity with machinery is only due to a common ‘feeling for form’ rather than the artist living in ‘an environment of machinery’, the chief inspiration for Futurism and Vorticism, or the ‘technical qualities of a material’ available. Although Hulme considered the association with machinery ‘takes away any kind of dilettante character from the [Modern] movement and makes it seem more solid and more inevitable’ (285), the mechanical qualities in the new art fundamentally result from ‘a change of sensibility’ and ‘a change of attitude’ (284). For Hulme, machinery is a good analogy for this character of fixity and permanence, but the ‘tendency to abstraction’ should not result in the reproduction of machinery in modern art.

Art and Nature

Worringer's theory of abstraction and empathy proposes that the relationship between man and the outside world determines the character of the art of an age. Similarly, Hulme argued that in the modern age, owing to the world's 'lack of order and seeming arbitrariness' much alike the world experienced by the primitive people, '[i]n art this state of mind results in a desire to create a certain abstract geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature' (273-274). Hulme had previously identified this strive for permanence in ancient poetry in 'A Lecture of Modern Poetry'; however, in contrast to his then advocacy for a new poetics appropriate for the modern age as distinguished from the past, here he implied a similar *weltanschauung* in the ancient and the modern age, resulting in a return to fixity and permanence in modern art, as '[t]he art of a people [...] run[s] parallel to its philosophy and general world outlook' (274). Gasiorek observes that although 'Hulme followed Worringer's emphasis on the separation of the anti-vital, geometric art from the world with which it engages, [...] he did not believe modern art was the product of anxiety in the face of a threatening environment or a world in flux'. Hulme argued that 'this condition of fear is in no sense a necessary presupposition of the tendency to abstraction', which instead is founded on 'the idea of disharmony or separation between man and nature' (274), which Gasiorek attributes as 'the key difference between the art Worringer had discussed and the art Hulme was trying to comprehend'.⁶⁴

Hulme illustrated Worringer's concept of the 'tendency towards abstraction' with the new sculpture: it is a means to 'get away from the flux of existence', 'an endeavour to create in contrast, an absolutely enclosed material individuality',

⁶⁴ Gasiorek, 'Modern Art in England Circa 1914: T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis', p. 53.

with the sculptor ‘expressing admiration for the hard clean surface of a piston rod’ (279). The absence of vitality in such works is a desire to take the object out of time and put it into eternity: geometrical art ‘turns the organic into something not organic, it tries to translate the changing and limited, into something unlimited and necessary’ (283). It segregates and protects the image of the mortal from the passage of time: ‘Any weakening of these abstract forms and approximation to reality would have let in change and life and so would have done what it was desired to avoid’, and ‘the abstract and inorganic’ serve to ‘make the organic seem durable and eternal’ (275). Vorticism also similarly displayed an anti-temporal urge in its ‘water-tight compartments’ which segregate past, present and future (*B1*, 147), a rejection of life and mimetic realism, as well as envisioning the creative impulse as spatial rather than temporal.

The emphasis on the transcendental quality of modern art led Hulme to argue against the depiction of inorganic matter: ‘However strong the desire for abstraction, it cannot be satisfied with the reproduction of merely inorganic forms’, just as one would not feel a ‘particular interest in the eternity of a cube’, which is absurd and irrelevant to human expression. Hulme regarded the veritable goal of abstraction as to ‘put man into some geometrical shape which lifts him out of the transience of the organic’ (283): despite the machinery-inclined aesthetics, such an art is human-oriented; it seeks to eternalise the human object, rather than abstract forms and shapes. Hulme opined that abstraction does not seek to repudiate the organic, but rather to endow it with a permanent quality that surpasses the flux of being. This is observed in his praise for the ‘abstract mechanical relations’ of Lewis’s human figures and more particularly Epstein’s sculptures of human figures, as exemplifying the ‘tendency to abstraction [and] the desire to turn the organic into

something hard and durable' at work, with a high level of complexity and sophistication. For example, Hulme commended Epstein's use of abstraction in depicting the subject matter of birth, turning 'the very essence of all the qualities' which are organic 'into something as hard and durable as a geometrical figure itself' (283-284). Hulme's conception of a modern art based on an appropriate *weltanschauung*, inspired by nature and expressed in geometrical style essentially provided a prototype for the Vorticist method of synthesising realist subject matter and abstraction as a means of representation.

D. Later Articles (February - July 1914)

Although Hulme rejected a sensual reproduction of reality, he also insisted that nature is important to art as its sole source of inspiration and influence, and his stance was reconciliatory between realist and abstract approaches. In 'Modern Art, II: Preface Note and Neo-Realism' (12 February 1914), Hulme postulated that '[t]here must be just as much contact with nature in an abstract art as in a realistic one', arguing that without the 'contact with, and continual research into nature' the artist 'could produce nothing' (292-293), as he later argued that 'the mind cannot *create* form, it can only *edit* it' (304, original emphases), contrary to the metaphysical methods of the Expressionists. Hulme contended that '[a]ll art may be said to be realism, then, in that it extracts from nature facts which have not been observed before'; however, this does not necessarily mean that 'the work of art itself must be an interpretation of nature' (292-293).

Hulme used the works of Cézanne and the Cubists to support his proposition, which he argued as similarly 'based on the research into nature', and their stylistic differences as a result of different applications of nature (281).

Hulme opined that Picasso's research into nature, in making observations and 'isolat[ing] and emphasis[ing] relations previously not emphasised', went much further than any realist 'as far as the relation of planes is concerned'. He also contended that the artist 'is not bound down by the accidental relations of the elements actually found in nature, but extracts, distorts, and utilises them as a means of expression, and not as a means of interpreting nature', a stance similar to both Imagism's use of juxtaposition and Vorticism's emphasis on the artist's exercise of intellect and control. Hulme concluded that 'an artist can only keep his work alive by research into nature, but that does not prove that realism is the only legitimate form of art' (293) – a stance which is essentially the same as the Vorticist view on representation and abstraction.

In 'Modern Art, III: The London Group' (26 March 1914), Hulme revised his previous arguments and suggested that modern art had done away with its archaic phase, and now resembles complicated geometrical forms in machinery. Hulme outlined that this 'new geometrical and modern art' makes use of 'mechanical forms' and is manoeuvred by 'the controlling sensibility, the feeling for mechanical structure'. Exemplified by Picasso's 'hard, structural work', it is a 'necessary use of abstraction of a particular kind for a particular purpose'. Hulme was keen to distinguish this branch of Cubist style from the tendency to '[use] abstractions for their own sake in a much more scattered way' as in Kandinsky's works, which are 'based simply on the idea that abstract form, i.e., form without any representative content, can be an adequate means of expression'. Such a style was apparent in the works of most painters in the exhibition (including the Rebel Art Centre artists), which Hulme criticised as 'a kind of romantic heresy' and 'rather dilettante' (295).

Arguing against total abstraction, Hulme agreed that in theory, with a careful balancing of relations, abstraction without representational elements ‘might make up an understandable kind of music’; however, he argued that in practice this approach falls short and cannot deliver the projected effect. Hulme illustrated this with the example of Lewis’s paintings, criticising Lewis’s forms as ‘not controlled enough’ and his ‘sense of form’ as ‘sequent rather than integral, [...] that one form probably springs out of the preceding one as he works, instead of being conceived as part of a whole’ (296), suggesting a Bergsonian preference for spatial rather than temporal development in art.⁶⁵ Hulme’s discussion of abstraction in more concrete and practical terms also indicates that he was consolidating his previous aesthetic ideas.

Hulme’s more extensive criticism of Bomberg’s abstraction revealed the latter’s fundamental difference with the Vorticists on form and intellectualism in the process of artistic creation. Hulme criticised the ‘real fanatics of form’ for their extremity in rejecting, in addition to representation, ‘the general emotions conveyed by abstract form, and to confine us to the appreciation of form in itself *tout pur*’. Hulme considered Bomberg’s painting ‘In the Hold’ as ‘the reductio ad absurdum of this heresy about form’, and argued that abstract paintings cannot deny the portrayal of all representational forms, as the subconscious process of recognising representational forms in the spectator would inevitably take over when viewing works of abstract art. Hulme suggested that abstract form requires a signification process complimented by representational forms, and thus he rejected ‘a purely intellectual interest in shape’. And while Hulme was clearly aware of these abstract works’ transitory, experimental nature, he saw ‘no

⁶⁵ Ethan Lewis comments that in Hulme’s poetry ‘temporal difference denotes sequence rather than simultaneity’ – perhaps the failure to evade temporality is another reason why Hulme gave up poetry. See Lewis, “This Hulme Business” Revisited or Of Sequence and Simultaneity’, p. 261.

development along such lines, though such work may be an excellent discipline' (297, original emphasis).

But the focus on 'relations' as a means of artistic construction seems to have developed with Hulme's aesthetic theories, and his writings across the several months between 'Modern Art, III' and 'IV' (March to July 1914) displayed an increasing acceptance of the use of abstraction without representational elements. In the series 'Contemporary Drawings' he edited from March to April 1914,⁶⁶ Hulme mentioned 'relations' as a significant factor in understanding the new art. Discussing Bomberg's drawing 'Chinnereth', Hulme suggested that 'the pleasure you are intended to take in such a drawing is a pleasure not in representation, but in the relations between certain abstract forms'. He also praised the Cubist emphasis on 'the relations between planes', which 'disintegrates the thing as representation' (301). The focus on and mechanism of formal construction in painting is similar to the juxtaposition of images in Imagist poetry, with both emphasising the relationship between things as more indicative of the real than the components themselves.

The last of Hulme's published art criticism 'Modern Art, IV: David Bomberg's Show' (9 July 1914) indicated a radical change in his attitude towards abstraction, where he 'justified the use of pure abstraction as a means of emotional expression and argued that Bomberg's use of color and form was "constructive".⁶⁷ Instead of repudiating pure forms, Hulme agreed that abstract forms can be an end in art, and argued this position by prioritising the intention of the artist, suggesting form as an indescribable phenomenon, and redefining the formation of abstract forms as based on external representational shapes. Firstly, Hulme declared 'the intention of the artist [as] clearly what he announces it to be'

⁶⁶ Although Hulme described his role as 'the editor', 'curator' might be a more appropriate term.

⁶⁷ Gasiorek, 'Modern Art in England Circa 1914: T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis', p. 60.

(303), and suggested that the artist can choose the ‘abstract element’ of the real scene which interests him and leave out other ‘alien elements’, details irrelevant to form (307, 309). Secondly, he argued that the ‘subtleties and intricacies of form’ are ‘indescribable in words’: it is futile to communicate forms with language, much as to enact it with bodily gestures. Hulme even jokingly suggested designing ‘a little brass instrument’ to enable the direct transmission of form (303-304), not unlike Lewis’s fantasy of the artist ‘imagining form’ and ‘transmit[ting] the substance and logic of his inventions to another man’ (*B1*, 135). Thirdly, Hulme suggested that ‘the mind cannot *create* form, it can only *edit* it’ (304, original emphases): any abstract form must be generated through modifying ‘existing outside shape’, although the ‘real objects’ are ‘only as a means of getting the mind going, as fertiliser of the design’ (304-305).

With the process of the formation of abstract form revised, Hulme also proposed a different mechanism for the appreciation of these forms. In contrast to Bergson’s insistence that ‘light is in things rather than projected onto them by the human observer’, which runs counter to philosophical traditions that privilege the eye,⁶⁸ Hulme rejected the ‘specific *aesthetic* emotion, a peculiar kind of emotion produced by *form* alone, only of interest to aesthetes’ which he subscribed to in ‘Bergson’s Theory of Art’. Instead, Hulme argued that forms inevitably require ‘dramatic or human interest’ in order to be comprehensible to the layman spectator. He suggested that form can be interesting for its own sake because it reflects emotions already present in the spectator, and therefore ‘there is nothing esoteric or mysterious about this interest in abstract forms’. Hulme hypothesised the subconscious projection of ‘ordinary *dramatic human*

⁶⁸ Garin Dowd, ‘Bergson on Image and Representation’, in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, ed. by Paul Ardoen, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 315-317 (p. 315).

emotions' in the spectator not specific to visual art – which is 'an interest in himself' – as the a priori condition for the 'obscure psychological process' through which the appreciation of abstract forms is possible (305-307, original emphases). In short, the perception of form is ultimately a self-referential process which is universal to all spectators (with individual variances), and the understanding of form depends on the spectator's projection / identification with forms which encode / echo human emotions, thereby conveying meaning, and thus resolving the need of a representational referent.

Such a reading of the engendering and perception of abstract form by the artist and spectator respectively was certainly creative if not radical. It is also remarkably ambivalent, as Cork queries Hulme's simultaneous insistence on the necessity of the human agency of the spectator and the autonomy of pure forms as 'willing abstraction to be two things at once'.⁶⁹ The ambivalence in Hulme's stance on abstraction resembles the Vorticists' contradictory views on representation and abstraction, which suggests commonalities between Hulme's theory and the Vorticists' experiments. But ultimately Hulme rejected the use of abstraction to 'satisf[y] a too purely sensuous or intellectual interest', such that instead of Bomberg's 'merely intellectual use of abstraction', he preferred Epstein's more naturally-begotten, gradual and intensifying abstraction (309). And this implies Hulme's significant disagreement with the Vorticists' rhetorical emphasis on the artist's intellect and control of forms, which might be a residual Bergsonian preference for the intuition over the intellect, combined with a Classical skepticism towards the individual.

Although Hulme's final stance was much changed from when he first began writing art criticism, nonetheless he held onto his preference for the construction

⁶⁹ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, pp. 212-213.

of Cubist works, and the principle of form as assistive to the process of representation. More importantly, Hulme's theorising of the processes of the creation and appreciation of form implicitly implies that the interpretations of form are individual and multiple, enabling a modernist or even a postmodernist reading of works of abstract art. Hulme might have developed and elaborated more on his aesthetic theories, but his short career as an art critic came to a close with the outbreak of war: his 'Plan for a Work on Modern Theories of Art' never materialised, and his manuscript of a book on Epstein was unfortunately lost with his death on the Western Front.

Conclusion

In discussing Hulme's works in three phases and in the respective contexts, this chapter offers a chronological review of Hulme's approaches to the philosophical quest to present the real, first in poetry and then in the visual arts, in view of the counter and arbitrary qualities of language. Throughout the process, Hulme absorbed many European avant-garde ideas in poetry, philosophy and the visual arts, including Bergsonian and Worringerian theories in shaping and refining his own aesthetics. Hulme's theories and experiments in poetry and the visual arts, notably his proposition of the juxtaposition of images and justification of geometrical forms, exerted significant impact on the foundation of the poetic experiments of Imagism and the visual innovations of Vorticism, with Pound taking a prominent role in shaping the aesthetics of both movements following the artist-critic model of Hulme. Despite officially belonging to neither movement, Hulme ought to be credited as an important theorist of the English avant-garde, whose contributions laid the foundation and made possible the aesthetic breakthroughs of Imagism and Vorticism.

Chapter 5: Imagism, Vorticism and Italian Futurism

Introduction

London in the 1910s was becoming an increasingly cosmopolitan locale in terms of European arts and culture: two Post-Impressionist exhibitions, showcasing mostly the works of French painters, were held in 1910 and 1912 respectively; the Allied Artists Association's annual salon also showcased works of progressive Continental and English artists. In this period of burgeoning interactions between the English and the Continental art scenes, one particularly notable movement was Italian Futurism. Since the beginning of the movement in 1909 with the publishing of 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' on the front page of the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro*, the Futurists had promoted their movement actively across Europe, and their various radical activities caught significant public attention. Its leader, the poet F. T. Marinetti, had lived in France for a number of years and was familiar with the artistic circle there. The Futurists quickly grew in number by recruiting artists and applying their principles (announced in the form of manifestos) to various artistic media. Their principal aim was to embrace modernity in their artistic output by condemning the past and liberating art from the institution, and in turn celebrating 'the beauty of speed' (*Futurism*, 51), a sensational experience in the metropolis made possible by modern machinery and technological advancements. In their works, the Futurists tried to depict this new sensation by radically transforming their artistic techniques, materials and subjects, inventing modes of representation such as dynamism in the visual arts and words-in-freedom in literature.

Marinetti was keen to establish Futurism's presence internationally, including in England. As early as 1910, the first Futurist manifesto was read by

Marinetti in London, with an abridged version published in Douglas Goldring's little magazine *The Tramp* on 1 August 1910. But it was not until March 1912 that the Futurist artists as a group came to London on their first exhibition tour around Europe. Between 1912 and 1914, Marinetti and other Futurists visited London on various occasions to promote their art through readings, lectures, exhibitions and performances.¹ These caused much stirring in both the popular press and the artistic circles in London; for the latter, Futurism offered a radical alternative in promoting the arts in its adoption of the 'new institutions of mass culture' and the 'cultural marketplace', its linkage of art and commodity,² its reliance on publicity and polemics, as well as its collective nature. This chapter will focus on the impact of Futurism on two English artistic groups: Imagism and Vorticism.

Imagism stands for a school of direct, succinct poetry which embraces the best poetic traditions and exalts the craftsmanship of the poet as an artist. Despite the vast differences with interdisciplinary and boisterous Futurism, the engendering of Imagism possibly owed to the popularising impulse of an avant-garde movement as demonstrated by Futurism, as well as the poetic experiments of the contemporary French avant-garde.³ The movement and its foreign sounding name *Imagisme* were designed to function as marketing tactics, aiming for public awareness and success much as Futurism under ubiquitous promotions. Lawrence Rainey attributes the formation of Imagism to practical reasons, arguing that the substantial audience and media attention that Futurism attracted encouraged Pound to copy its commercially successful model, launching Imagism in face of his personal financial pressures.⁴

¹ For a chronology, see Perloff, *The Futurist Moment*, pp. 172-173.

² Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 38.

³ Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 207.

⁴ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, pp. 29-30.

Despite its interdisciplinary experiments, Futurism was chiefly known in England as a movement in visual art. But notwithstanding the popularity and notoriety of the movement, Matthew Gale suggests that there was ‘little evidence that the British were seeking anything more than the experience and reflected glory of Marinetti’s presence’.⁵ A group of radical English visual artists, later known as the Vorticists, was seeking to establish a unique identity for their new artistic experiments, and Futurism presented them with an attractive example of powerful legitimising force and promotional machinery of avant-garde art. Their leader Wyndham Lewis initially regarded Futurism as a convenient label for avant-garde art, writing in ‘The Melodrama of Modernity’ that: ‘As “Futurist,” in England, does not mean anything more than a painter, either a little, or very much, occupying himself with questions of a renovation of art, and showing a tendency to rebellion against the domination of the Past, it is not necessary to correct it. We may hope before long to find a new word.’ (*B1*, 143)

But a distinction was imminent when on 7 June 1914, Marinetti and Nevinson published the ‘VITAL ENGLISH ART: FUTURIST MANIFESTO’ in *The Observer*, launching an open attack on the softness and femininity of British culture and calling for ‘English daring, originality and invention’. A number of English artists, including Lewis, were presumptuously labelled as ‘great Futurist painters or pioneers and advance-forces of vital English art’. Furthermore, Nevinson had ‘given the Rebel Art Centre as the address beneath his signature in the Manifesto’, seemingly suggesting an affiliation and indicating the subjugation of the English artists to Futurism. The English artists immediately sought to rectify this impression by declaring themselves ‘Vorticists’, and organising an ‘anti-futurist’ mob to disrupt a Futurist evening at the Doré

⁵ Matthew Gale, ‘A Short Flight: Between Futurism and Vorticism’, in *Futurism*, ed. by Didier Ottinger (Paris; Milan: Éditions du Centre Pompidou; 5 Continents, 2009), pp. 66-75 (p. 70).

Galleries on 12 June.⁶ The physical violence was followed by an advertisement in *The Spectator* the next day for *BLAST*, an arts magazine in preparation before the open rift with Futurism, suggesting that it contains ‘The manifesto of the Vorticists’. In addition, Vorticism was announced as ‘the English parallel movement to Cubism and Expressionism’, and the ‘Death blow to Impressionism and Futurism’. The anti-Futurist impetus also radicalised the contents of *BLAST*: although the Blasts / Blesses and the ‘visual radicalism’ had been planned, most of the Vorticist ‘theory’, expressed in the manifestos and the ‘Vortex’ statements, were late additions.⁷ Because of the circumstances of its origin, Vorticism was overtly antagonistic towards Futurism, seeking to dissociate itself from the latter by explicating their differences in aesthetics, and attributing such differences to national characteristics and stereotypes.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which Imagism and Vorticism sought to emulate and react against a classic avant-garde movement like Futurism. Both Imagism and Vorticism were indebted to the avant-garde aesthetics and promotional tactics of Futurism, but they also demonstrated much antagonism towards it in both aspects. This combination makes their aesthetic redefinitions unique and fascinating cases in the English as well as the European avant-garde. I attempt to gauge the aesthetic and practical influence of Futurism on Imagism and Vorticism; where aesthetic influence denotes artistic conceptions and styles, matters such as the practicalities of organising an avant-garde art movement and promoting it in public constitute practical influence. Moreover, I attempt to tease out the many similarities and differences between Futurism, Imagism and

⁶ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, pp. 229-232.

⁷ Edwards, ‘Blast and the Revolutionary Mood of Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism’, p. 204; Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, pp. 292-293; Alan Munton, ‘Vorticism’, in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, ed. by David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 176-182 (p. 177).

Vorticism to argue that the relationships between these movements were far more complex than Rainey's flat evaluation of 'the rearguard restoration effort of Imagism or the imitative gesture of *Blast!* in response to Futurism, as well as Martin Puchner's description of Vorticism as 'rearguard action'.⁸ I will first address the aspects of promotion and polemics, and subsequently discuss the similarities and divergences in these movements' aesthetics and perspectives on modern art in depth. I also explore the group dynamics of Imagism and Vorticism to demonstrate how the artists involved mediated between their individual and collective aesthetics of an organised art movement, and how aesthetic and personal differences between individuals complicated the process of forming alliances for the common goal of advancing modern poetry and art in England.

1. Legitimising the Avant-Garde

A. Publishing and Popularising

Futurism's ventures demonstrated that avant-garde movements could achieve popular and financial success with the aid of publicity through print culture, by either directly engaging with publishing or indirectly through journalism and reportage.⁹ A remarkable instance was Marinetti's promotional tactics for *Poesia*, the review he founded in 1905 with an aim to 'shock senile, Carduccian Italy with this gesture of craziness' of publishing a magazine consisting exclusively of poetry. The venture was obviously intended for its shock value rather than its contents, and ironically it consisted mainly of contributions from traditional Italian and French Symbolist poets. *Poesia* achieved popular success and a print run of 40,000 copies by its final issue in

⁸ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39; Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, p. 107.

⁹ Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 59.

1909, and its success partially stemmed from the fact that Marinetti shrewdly 'made his strategy perfectly suited to the world of commodity culture' by charging 'the then astronomical price of ten lire' per copy, marketing poetry as an exotic and niche product by exploiting the curiosity of consumers for the new and the exciting. In 1913 Marinetti again employed the medium of the magazine in a publicity and commercial venture: the need for a regular publishing outlet for Futurist works was met with the collaboration with the Florentine journal *Lacerba*, which achieved a broad readership and an estimated press run of between 8,000 to 20,000 copies, a considerable success for avant-garde journals and a literary art like poetry (*Futurism*, 4, 17).¹⁰

Imagism sustained a long and variable relationship with print culture contrary to its short lifespan, which ranged from initial statements 'Imagisme' and 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' in *Poetry* in March 1913, to the commercially successful *Some Imagist Poets 1915-1917*, with a final anthology published in 1930. In view of such varieties in the publishing history of Imagism, I would like to expand Rainey's narrow reading of 'rearguard restoration effort of Imagism' against commodity culture by means of anti-manifestos and coterie, and argue that post-Poundian Imagism (circa mid-1914) subsequently achieved popular success by adopting marketing strategies akin to Futurism.¹¹ Initially, the mass culture medium of the magazine was seen by Pound as antithetical to serious letters, as he commented in 'Patria Mia': 'the system of magazine publication is at bottom opposed to the serious man in letters' (SP, 110). Under the direction of Pound, Imagism maintained a distanced relationship with the public, only publishing poems and statements in sympathetic little magazines and small

¹⁰ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, pp. 80, 85. *Poesia* resumed publication in 1920 in Milan with French contributors. See Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period*, pp. 63, 158.

¹¹ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39.

presses. Unlike the massive scale and reach of Futurist publications, public access to Imagism was deliberately limited, and Pound admitted ‘the public’ that his drive reached only numbered ‘a few hundred people and a few reviewers’ (SL, 38). This possibly resulted from a lack of funds and promotion venues, but might also suggest a deliberate intention to market Imagist poetry as a highbrow product by maintaining a distinction of aristocracy and expertise as Rainey and Luca Somigli assert.¹²

In contrast to Futurism which sought to destroy institutions, Poundian Imagism actively fostered an institution which distinguished poetry from the commodified popular avant-garde of Futurism. The Imagists’ emphasis on words can be seen as an attempt towards ‘the reification of language in modernism[,] a compensation strategy to the dominant commodification of early twentieth-century capitalist societies. One form this resistance takes is by emphasising the work of art as a linguistic *artefact* against its perceived degradation into a *commodity*.¹³ Although the Imagists were not as extreme with their use of words so that ‘materials become the meaning’,¹⁴ they endorsed language’s direct and immanent connection with the ‘thing’ and insisted on precise expression. Imagist poetry champions a ‘hard’ and ‘concrete’ language, almost endowing words with a physical (sculptural) presence and intrinsic value, making language a tangible, autonomous *substance* and poetry a valid and permanent presentation of the thing, rather than a volatile and dispensable *medium*.

But the institutionalising of Imagism was met with the opposition of the ‘demon saleswoman of poetry’ Amy Lowell, who demanded equal participation

¹² Ibid.; Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 206.

¹³ Thacker, ‘A Language of Concrete Things: Hulme, Imagism and Modernist Theories of Language’, pp. 47-48. Original emphases.

¹⁴ Bochner, ‘Architecture of the Cubist Poem’ p. 103.

of members in contrast to Pound's 'arbitrary inclusions and exclusions and a capricious censorship', and strove for a bigger audience and greater public acceptance of Imagist poetry.¹⁵ Such different attitudes to the propagation of the movement led to the split between Pound and Lowell, with the former's skepticism about a 'democratized committee' being able to maintain the standard of Imagist poetry (*SL*, 38). In contrast to the earlier, mystifying accounts of Imagism, Lowell elaborated on the principles of Imagism in the prefaces to *Some Imagist Poets 1915* and *1916*. Her extensive marketing efforts also paralleled Marinetti's varied range: combining commercial advertising, publishing of review articles and speaking engagements across the United States, Lowell established herself as 'a highly successful, indeed charismatic, public speaker and performance poet'.¹⁶ Lowell also published the subsequent Imagist anthologies with the commercial press Houghton Mifflin, which enjoyed popular success in the United States in terms of sales volume, indicating the successful marketing of poetry under a consumer culture. The later thriving of Imagism was also determined by geographical and socio-political factors: as wartime constraints in England resulted in a more conservative atmosphere as well as less capital for the arts, the centre of Imagist discourse and activities gradually shifted from London across the Atlantic to the more affluent United States at peacetime, not necessarily to a more understanding audience, but certainly a more burgeoning commodity culture, as F. S. Flint boasted to contemporary Georgian poet J. C. Squire in a letter on 29 January 1917 that printing Imagist poems in 'the American reviews are much more lucrative'.¹⁷

¹⁵ Clemens David Heymann, *American Aristocracy: The Lives and Times of James Russell, Amy, and Robert Lowell* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1980), p. 217; Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, p. 127.

¹⁶ Carr, 'Edwardian, Georgian, Imagist, Vorticist, and "Amyglist" Poetry', p. 178.

¹⁷ Quoted in *Imagist Poetry*, ed. by Peter Jones (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 143.

Wartime austerity and the change in Imagism's fortunes also drove Pound to seek 'fat[er] pastures' (SL, 54) in the United States, for patronage and popular support for the works of his colleagues and his own. In 1915 Pound began a voluminous series of correspondence with John Quinn, which, while primarily benefitting the Vorticist artists, also concerned the wellbeing of Pound's literary colleagues such as Joyce and Eliot. Pound had also more acutely realised the commercial potential of poetry and the little magazine: in a letter dated 9-11 October 1917, he tried to persuade Margaret Anderson, the editor of the *Little Review* that the commercial value of the February 1918 issue of the magazine containing his lengthy article 'A Study in French Poets' would offset the printer's bill:

BUTTT you must consider that the number will be a definite property, Like a book and there should be a steady demand for it. . It should be sold first at 25 cents. Then at 50 and probably at 75[.] It has more in it than Amy's \$2.50 volume [*Six French Poets: Studies in Contemporary Literature*], and there is no other French anthology in English to compete with it. VanBever and Leataud costs \$1.25, (probably more in America). (P/LR, 134, original emphasis)

It is interesting to note that Pound's evaluation of these volumes relied solely on the quantity of material and price, without any consideration of aesthetic merit. He further attempted to convince Anderson with the example of Flint's lengthy study 'Contemporary French Poetry' in the August 1912 issue of *Poetry Review*, which 'printed a treble number' and 'sold over all other [numbers]' (P/LR, 134).¹⁸ This suggests a change in Pound's approach to promoting and

¹⁸ Interestingly, back copies of the August 1912 issue of *Poetry Review* were advertised at a five-fold price (2s. 6d.) in the July 1920 issue of the *Chapbook* (also published by Monro), compared to other copies at 6d., which was the original price for all issues.

publishing poetry: by stressing the ‘investment value’ of works of art in the form of magazines and books and speculating the inflation of their prices like collectable items under the prevalent commodity culture, despite the ‘immaterial’ nature of words on the page compared to works of visual art and other commodities. Pound subsequently adopted a similar strategy in the publishing of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in limited editions and multiple formats as Rainey demonstrates, indicating his ‘reconstruct[ion] of an aristocracy [...] within the world of commodity’, bridging the highbrow work of art to the popular marketplace.¹⁹ Whereas Imagism initially resisted Futurism’s marketing strategies for mass appeal, various Imagists subsequently adopted such methods to promote their own branch of Imagism as a result of internal rivalries.

In contrast to Imagism, Vorticism was aggressive in generating publicity from its beginnings: after falling out spectacularly with Futurism in June 1914, the Vorticists launched extensive attacks on Futurism in their own journal *BLAST*, an incidental weapon originally intended as a platform to showcase English avant-garde art and aesthetics as well as to discuss Continental currents, rather than to champion this art as ‘Vorticism’ in opposition to Futurism. Wees describes *BLAST* as ‘perhaps the most successful of all Vorticist works of art’: containing Vorticist polemics and reproductions of artworks, *BLAST* was an artistic statement which circulated on the market and could be purchased as a commodity, just like the Imagist poems printed in the little magazines and anthologies. *BLAST*’s physical appearance was determinedly avant-garde, as Wees suggests, ‘[s]carlet, magenta, and purple were particularly popular in Futurist colour schemes. The bright puce cover of *Blast* was definitely Futurist.’²⁰ Its typography was equally provocative: besides the huge, diagonal title in block

¹⁹ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39 and passim.

²⁰ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 192, 108.

capitals, its manifestos also employed fonts and layouts similar to newspaper headlines, ‘turning each page into a geometrically designed space’ with its ‘discordantly heterogeneous array of typefaces’. *BLAST*’s typography and forms in many ways found their prototypes in Futurist publications such as *Lacerba*, which was notorious for its ‘dynamic typographical layout’, as well as its ‘declamatory’, ‘polemical and aggressive style’.²¹

Commenting on Imagism and Vorticism’s mechanisms of resistance to Futurism, Paul Peppis remarks that ‘[i]f Imagism opposes Futurism by refusing its invitation to cross divides between art and life, high art and mass culture, Vorticism resists Futurism by turning Futurist tools against it.’²² It is true that Vorticism’s gestures often simulated those of Futurism, but there were in fact significant aesthetic and ideological differences in ‘the imitative gesture of *Blast*'.²³ For example, though claiming ‘to appeal to all individuals and [seek] a wide public’ much as Futurism,²⁴ paradoxically the Vorticists redefined the ‘popular’ in art – not as mass culture or low-brow tastes, but a common artistic sensibility in emancipated individuals, thereby redefining the popular as elite. As ‘Long Live the Vortex!’ declared:

Blast will be popular, essentially. It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL. The moment a man feels or realizes himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time. Blast is created for this timeless fundamental Artist that exists in everybody. [...] Popular art does not

²¹ Roberto Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 112; Charles Ferrall, “Melodramas of Modernity”: The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War’, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 63 (1993/4), pp. 347-68 (p. 348); Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” As Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, pp. 297, 292.

²² Peppis, ‘Schools, Movements, Manifestoes’, p. 34.

²³ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39.

²⁴ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, p. 294.

mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals. (*B1*, 7, original emphasis)

Here the Vorticists redefined the ‘popular’ in contradistinction to Futurism, denoting not mass acceptance, but rather a universal collection of enlightened individuals set apart as *BLAST*’s intended readership. But Lewis’s criticism of Futurism’s ‘identification with the crowd’ as ‘a huge hypocrisy’ which constituted them as ‘POPULAR ARTISTS’ (*B2*, 40, 42, original emphasis) renders the Vorticist definition of the ‘popular’ ambivalent and unstable, reflecting their dilemma of disapproving of mass culture on one hand, yet on the other hand having to rely on popular support to sustain the movement. Much of Vorticism’s puzzling redefinitions and polemics stemmed from a ‘desire to fortify the boundaries between artist and audience, self and other, the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic’,²⁵ while the movement simultaneously demanded public attention.

Lisa Tickner observes that manifestos and magazines such as *BLAST* and *Lacerba* ‘projected a group-image often passionately and scornfully opposed to traditional art forms and bourgeois society’, partly a reflection of ‘the impact of commercial publicity on the artistic field’.²⁶ Paradoxically, the magazine as a publication medium is also dependent on readers acting as consumers: purchasing these magazines is an act of showing solidarity with the avant-garde, but simultaneously recognises the magazine as a commodity where the reader inevitably engages with the network of consumption. An avant-garde magazine like *BLAST* could also be deemed as cultural capital suggestive of artistic elitism,

²⁵ Ferrall, “Melodramas of Modernity”: The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War’, p. 351.

²⁶ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 187.

where Gasiorek suggests that readers of *BLAST* might ‘simply have been advertising their bohemian credentials’.²⁷

Furthermore, Vorticism’s anti-Futurist and anti-popular stances were ironically slammed by an advertisement in *BLAST* 2 for the first issue of the magazine, where one of the press opinions quoted actually suggests *BLAST* as a Futurist publication: ‘The first futurist quarterly is a vast folio in pink paper covers, full of irrepressible imbecility which is not easily distinguished from the words and works of Marinetti’s disciples.’ The advertisement also ends with the announcement that ‘The Publisher will be pleased either to purchase or to sell a few undamaged copies of the First Edition of the First Number of this unique Publication at 5/- net.’ Compared to the original price of *BLAST* at two shillings and six pence, the exchange value of the magazine had doubled within the year, where the hyperinflation of its price (unjustifiable by the wartime context) implied that the publisher was marketing the magazine upon its ‘investment value’²⁸ rather than artistic merit. As a movement explicitly against Futurism, Vorticism simultaneously emulated and rejected Futurism’s approaches of self-promotion.

A look into the history of Imagist and Vorticist publications and their relationship with ‘the new institutions of mass culture’ demonstrates that the marketplace could not be totally overlooked in the propagation of these movements.²⁹ My analysis argues against Charles Ferrall’s assessment of Imagism and Vorticism as adopting a ‘conscious strategy of exclusion’ in view of an ‘anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture’.³⁰ It is true that the little magazine is a genre designed to

²⁷ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, pp. 312-313.

²⁸ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁰ Quoted in Ferrall, “Melodramas of Modernity”: The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War’, p. 352.

stand apart from mass culture, a venue ‘situated in a profoundly ambiguous social space, simultaneously sequestered and semi-withdrawn from the larger institution of publishing even while firmly embedded within the market economy’,³¹ claiming as the *Little Review* so notoriously did to ‘Mak[e] No Compromise with the Public Taste’. But the little magazines were indeed situated in the same circulation network and marketplace as mainstream and lowbrow periodicals, in which they competed for the attention of readers, subscribers and consumers.

Yet patronage enabled the little magazines to survive without meeting the demands of the market. Although Marinetti did act as patron to fellow artists and writers, and his publicity tactics include circulating works to a selected audience and limiting public access to create the illusion that these works were exclusive and rare (often ‘sold out’ in public) (*Futurism*, 11), popular support remained a crucial component in Futurism’s publicity strategies. In contrast, Pound repositioned patronage not as an act of commodification or investment, but rather an honourable privilege and a humanitarian duty, persuading in his first letter to Quinn: ‘My whole drive is that if a patron buys from an artist who needs money [...] the patron then makes himself equal to the artist: he is building art into the world; he creates. If he buys even of living artists who are already famous or already making £12,000 a year, he ceases to create. He sinks back to the rank of a consumer.’ (SL, 53-54) Instead of viewing the monetary exchange between the artist and the patron as one between producer and consumer, Pound attempted to elevate it to a more altruistic level, entailing also artistic and social significance beyond the two individuals. This suggests that Pound’s strategies of promotion and financing of the avant-garde were fundamentally

³¹ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 39.

founded in a utopian vision to ‘reconstruct an aristocracy’ *outside* rather than within ‘the world of the commodity’, as a defiant alternative to Futurism’s modes of public circulation and commodification of art.³²

B. Rhetoric and Polemics

Raymond Williams suggests that avant-garde movements were ‘the products, at the first historical level, of changes in public media’: indeed, the popular press was an effective and extensive distribution channel which enabled Futurism’s claim to fame via their manifestos and polemical writings.³³ The Futurist manifestos were not only abundant in number, but also covered a variety of artistic media, including ‘literature, music, the visual arts, architecture, drama, photography, film, dance, fashion, advertising – even cooking’ (*Futurism*, 1). Some English intellectuals were skeptical of such publicity programmes, as for example the painter Walter Sickert who criticised Futurism’s ‘dependency on exposition and special pleading’: ‘The Futurist movement confesses to a literary origin; and the alliance of pen and brush has its dangers for both.’³⁴ In reaction to Futurism’s public announcements, Imagist and Vorticist artists also made similar assertions and repudiations in print, in attempt to define their aesthetics and intentions. Despite the fact that these polemical statements were often exaggerated for desired effects, their contents and rhetoric are revealing of fundamental characteristics of the movements.

Although Imagism was initially a reaction against amateurism and sloppiness in contemporary English poetry, a more anti-Futurist programme soon emerged in two articles concerning Imagist aesthetics: ‘Imagisme’, signed

³² Ibid.

³³ Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London; New York: Verso, 1989), p. 33.

³⁴ Quoted in Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 94.

by Flint though drafted by Pound, and ‘A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste’ by Pound, both published in *Poetry* in March 1913. In the first article, the Imagists were described as:

[C]ontemporaries of the Post Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto. They were not a revolutionary school. [...] They had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only, and they had not published them. [...] They held also a certain “Doctrine of the Image”, which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and would provoke useless discussion. (199)

Here is explicit denial of affiliation to Futurism and its boisterous publicity of manifestos and revolution; and in contrast to Futurist publications, the Imagist aesthetic programme was written in clear prose and adopted a tone of understatement and evasiveness, emphasising the ‘private’ nature of Imagism. Rainey sees this as the Imagists’ rejection of the Futurists’ ‘programmatic ambitions’ of ‘writ[ing] poetry to a theory’, and the very title of the Imagist statement, ‘A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste’, seems to be an implicit repudiation of the manifesto genre.³⁵ Yet the very act of stating the group’s preference to be away from the public eye in a poetry magazine could only have further added to Imagism’s mysterious nature, provoked the curiosity of the readers and escalated the ‘many requests for information regarding Imagism and the Imagistes’ as the editor’s note to ‘Imagisme’ professed.

In contrast to Imagism’s rather feeble protests against Futurism, Vorticism imitated the Futurists’ ‘artistic warfare’ and ‘techniques of publicity-making and self-advertisement’ to counter Futurism’s advance in England.³⁶ *BLAST* was an

³⁵ Rainey, ‘The Cultural Economy of Modernism’, p. 39 and *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 30.

³⁶ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, p. 301.

ambitious project and a significant breakthrough in the rhetoric of English art: showcasing two bold manifestos, a provocative series of ‘Blasts’ and ‘Blesses’, several ‘Vortex’ statements and a variety of interdisciplinary works, it proclaimed the birth of Vorticism in the public eye. Yet *BLAST* presents artistic similarities in addition to differences with Futurism: Roberto Baronti Marchiò suggests that the boisterous style of Futurism is evident in *BLAST*’s ‘dense, violent language’, ‘declamatory, grotesque tone’, ‘use of montage, juxtaposition and linguistic collage’, ‘taste for scandal’, ‘call to the instinct’, and ‘the exaltation of the northern spirit as the enemy of *romance*'.³⁷ The format of the Blasts and Blesses is also similar to the ‘Merde aux... Rose aux’ in ‘L’Antitradition futuriste’ by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, published in French in late July 1913 and in Italian in *Lacerba* on 15 September 1913 (*Futurism*, 541).

But despite the similarly aggressive gesture and style, much of *BLAST*’s contents and attitude differ from that of Futurism. The rhetoric of *BLAST* is steeped in paradoxes and no definite statement of position such as the Futurists’ can be found, as the Vorticist manifesto declares: ‘We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours.’ (B1, 30, original emphasis)³⁸ Vorticism also differs from Futurism on various topics, for example instead of heeding the call for ‘[s]port to be considered an essential element in Art’ as the ‘VITAL ENGLISH ART: FUTURIST MANIFESTO’ championed, the Vorticist manifesto blasts sport as ‘HUMOUR’S FIRST COUSIN AND ACCOMPLICE’: ‘Arch enemy of REAL’, ‘conventionalizing’ and ‘freezing’. The Vorticists regarded ‘sport’ as a tame bourgeois leisure, judging that it leads to ‘the most intense snobbery in the World’

³⁷ Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, pp. 109, 112. Original emphasis.

³⁸ Munton, ‘Vorticism’, p. 178.

and ‘give[s] England a peculiar distinction in the wrong sense, among the nations’ (*B1*, 17, 32, original emphases). On the other hand, the Vorticists’ blessing of boxers suggests their preference for violent and primitive exertions of physical strength, instead of the physical activities institutionalised and accepted by mainstream English society.³⁹ The Vorticists’ protest against Futurism was strengthened by the multiple signatories of the manifesto, in which five out of eleven artists were mentioned in the Futurist manifesto; and with Epstein and Frederick Etchells’ works reproduced in *BLAST*, this suggests that the Futurist manifesto was actually rejected by most of the ‘great Futurist painters or pioneers and advance forces of the vital English Art’ it mentioned, with the exception of Futurist disciple Nevinson.

The polemics of *BLAST* were intended to distinguish Vorticism from Futurism, but such a distinction was not entirely apparent to the public, given the ubiquity of Futurism and the drastic qualities of Vorticist polemics and gestures. After Vorticism had been established, many contemporary critics still referred to the Vorticists as ‘Futurists’, or ‘Cubist-Futurist-Vorticist Artists’.⁴⁰ In light of this situation, the Vorticists were clearly aware of the need to contest with Futurism and the European avant-garde at large not only aesthetically but also polemically, a means which became increasingly significant during the war as the production of new Vorticist works stalled. Lewis’s significant contributions can be found in the pages of *BLAST*, particularly in ‘A Review of Contemporary Art’ in which he discussed Vorticism in relation to Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism at length.⁴¹

³⁹ For a list of the recipients of blesses, see Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 222-227.

⁴⁰ Ottinger, ‘Cubism + Futurism = Cubofuturism’, pp. 39-40.

⁴¹ See Chapters 1 and 3 for analysis of Lewis’s discussions of Cubism and Expressionism.

Pound's polemical writings served this propagandistic aim, and he diligently disseminated his distinctions between Futurism and Vorticism both in print and in personal correspondence, notably with much more vigour than his promotion of Imagism, suggesting the influence of the rampant polemics of Futurism. Pound's September 1914 article 'Vorticism' sought to redefine the aesthetic identities of Imagism and Vorticism by denying affiliation with Futurism, as he declared: 'as I am wholly opposed to [Marinetti's] aesthetic principles I see no reason why I, and various men who agree with me, should be expected to call ourselves futurists' ('Vorticism', 206). He also saw their differences as founded on artistic merit, deriding that: 'A new vorticist music would come from a new computation of the mathematics of harmony, not from a mimetic representation of dead cats in a fog-horn, alias noise-tuners.' ('Vorticism', 208)

Pound's remarks on the relationship between Vorticism and Futurism ranged from outright denial to more refined distinctions. In a letter to the editor of the *New Age* titled 'Synchromatism' (4 February 1915), Pound was adamant about the distinctive identity of Vorticism as antagonistic to Futurism: 'As for the principles of Vorticism and Futurism they are in direct or almost direct opposition.' (390) Writing to H. L. Mencken on 17 March 1915 Pound insisted, 'Vorticism is not Futurism, most emphatically NOT. We like Cubism and some Expressionism, but the schools are not our school.' (SL, 57, original emphasis) More comprehensive explications can be found in Pound's correspondence with influential individuals. In a letter dated 10 April 1915, Pound vented exasperatedly to Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*: 'Please don't call me a futurist in private. The pictures proposed in the verse ['Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess'] are pure vorticism. [...] The two movements are not synonymous. Admitted there is a shade of dynamism in the proposition, to treat

the pieces as light-potentialities. – Still the concept of arrangement is vorticist.’ (*EPVA*, 290) This assessment is significant as it demonstrates Pound’s evaluation of his poetry according to his understanding of Vorticist and Futurist aesthetics.

Writing to Quinn on 10 July 1916 Pound suggested, ‘Lewis is all motion and vitality, but I can’t see that it is ever the simple painting of the same object in two places at once on the canvas, as some of the poorer futurists do. On the other hand, I must grant that Balla (who might just as well call himself an expressionist) isn’t very unlike [Lewis]. And the “Revolt” also is not very different. Perhaps it is only the Marinetti part of futurism that one need very greatly object to. Still the whole creed IS diametrically opposed.’ (*EPVA*, 238, original emphasis) Here it is apparent that Pound subscribed to Lewis’s evaluation of Futurism in *BLAST*: ‘Balla is not a “Futurist” in the Automobilist sense. He is a rather violent and geometric sort of Expressionist. [...] Cannot Marinetti, sensible and energetic man that he is, be induced to throw over this sentimental rubbish about Automobiles and Aeroplanes, and follow his friend Balla in to a purer region of art?’ (*B1*, 144)

In fact, despite Pound’s insistence on affiliating Imagism to Vorticism, he did support Lewis’s Vorticist theories and opinion on modern art. In his interview with the Russian Futurist publication *Strelets* in 1915 (ironically titled ‘Angliiskie futuristy’ [‘English Futurists’]), Pound mostly paraphrased ideas expressed in ‘Our Vortex’ in *BLAST*:

Everything that has been created by nature and culture is for us a general chaos which we pierce with our vortex. We do not deny the past – we don’t remember it. ... The past and the futures are two brothels created by nature. Art is periods of flight from these brothels, period of sanctity. We are not

futurists: the past and the future merge for us in their sentimental remoteness, in their projections onto an obscured and impotent perception. Art lives only by means of the present – but only that present which is not subject to nature, which does not suck up life.⁴²

Despite not being the principal aesthetician of Vorticism, nonetheless credit must be given to Pound for tirelessly promoting Vorticism through his polemics in many avenues.

C. Materials and Media

Both Imagism and Vorticism were characteristic of avant-garde movements in that they actively sought to experiment with their artistic materials and media. Similar to the Futurist manifestos of the various artistic media, the Imagists called for new treatments of the components of poetry in ‘Imagisme’: the direct treatment of the subject, concision of word use and musical flow of rhythm. The first principle aims to render the object or emotion depicted with immediacy by revising the means of representation, similar to Futurism’s goal to ‘put the spectator in the centre of the picture’ (*Futurism*, 65). Baronti Marchiò argues that the Imagists’ call to ‘use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something’ is comparable albeit less radical than ‘Marinetti’s concept of “essential words”, which saw the abolition of adjectives, adverbs, and punctuation’ as stated in the ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ published in May 1912;⁴³ both Imagist and Futurist poetry strove to economise and compress the use of words to produce more vivid and intense sensations for the readers. And arguably, the Imagists’ stress on natural rhythm is paralleled by the deliberate audio quality of Futurist onomatopoeic poetry, intended for

⁴² Quoted in Gibson, *Epic Reinvented*, p. 187.

⁴³ Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 109.

recitations to recreate the sights and sounds of the city, despite the fact that Imagist and Futurist manifestations of such aim are indeed very drastically different.

Imagism and Futurism also shared a concern with the poetic image. In the ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ Marinetti championed the ‘image’: ‘[images] constitute the very lifeblood of poetry. Poetry should be an uninterrupted flow of new images [...] The vaster their affinities, the more images will retain their power to astound.’ This is a similar concept to juxtaposition, the compositional technique central to Imagist poetry. Marinetti also argued against stale images: ‘It is imperative [...] to abolish whatever in language has become a stereotyped image, a faded metaphor, and that means nearly everything.’ (*Futurism*, 120, 121) T. E. Hulme, the English poet who initiated the ‘image’ of Imagism, similarly urged poets to continually create new images to counter the use of dead images in prose and journalists’ English (CW, 55).

But Marinetti’s image, mentioned in conjunction with sounds (‘Futurist free verse, a perpetual dynamism of thought, an uninterrupted flow of images and sounds’),⁴⁴ seems to indicate a visual sensorial presence which the Imagists’ image does not imply; the Futurists also did not develop the concept of the image as theoretically and extensively as the Imagists and Pound (notably in his Vorticist phase) did. Based on these differences, I disagree with Baronti Marchiò’s opinion that Pound’s poem ‘In a Station of the Metro’ employed ‘the Futurist concept of simultaneity [...] as a compositional mode’: Pound in 1912 had not yet ‘attempted to apply to poetry the non-representational pictorial techniques of the avant-garde’, nor sought to destabilise the genre of poetry or

⁴⁴ ‘We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, The Last Lovers of the Moon’ (*Le Futurisme*, 1911; *Futurism*, 95).

semantic coherence.⁴⁵ Rather than celebrating the sensations of the city via dynamism or ‘the interpenetration of objects’ as in Futurism,⁴⁶ Pound paralleled his perception of a quick succession of faces to the natural process of the blossoming of flowers, thereby conveying the ‘sudden emotion’ (*Vorticism*, 203) vividly by juxtaposing two otherwise ordinary and rather static lines of words conveying still images.

The Imagists also reacted against Futurism’s fetishisation of modern technology in the preface to *Some Imagist Poems 1915*, which stated one of the principles of Imagist poetry as:

To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aero-plane of the year 1911. (vii)

This remark does not suggest that the Imagists were against modern subject matter, but that they responded differently to the sensations of modernity: their depictions of modern life are various and ranged from the sordid, suffocating township in Richard Aldington’s ‘Childhood’, to the hectic cityscape full of motion in Fletcher’s ‘London Excursion’, to the description of a city being shelled in Lowell’s ‘The Bombardment’, which features constant repetitions of the onomatopoeic word ‘Boom!’ not unlike that in Futurist poetry.⁴⁷ Yet despite certain similarities in subject matter and technique to Futurist aesthetics,

⁴⁵ Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁶ Munton, ‘Vorticism’, p. 177.

⁴⁷ According to Ellen Ginzburg Migliorino, Aldington’s ‘Les Cloches de Rome’ also ‘graphically speak[s] the sound of the cannon “Boom” [which] emphasizes the intensity of this sound with respect to others’. See Migliorino, ‘Aspects of Simultaneity in England and the United States’, p. 307.

technology is presented only as a facet of modern life, rather than the focus of the Imagist poem.

Interestingly, the Imagists' depiction of modernity is juxtaposed with references to ancient poetry in the same volume, for example in Aldington's 'Lemures' and H.D.'s 'Orion Dead', evoking a sense of tradition which the Futurists sought to obliterate, as Marinetti declared in the founding manifesto: 'we intend to know [...] nothing of the past' (*Futurism*, 52). The combination of the modern and the antique thus marks Imagism apart from Futurism and other contemporary groups, and the 'temporally outdated' details '[i]ncluded at the centre of Imagist "newness"' cause some to classify the movement as 'rearguard' and 'anti-avant-garde'.⁴⁸ However, despite employing certain traditional and even antique elements, the innovative literary experiments of Imagism in combining the ancient and the modern, and in conveying emotion with sparseness and directness rather than interminable rhetoric, presented a strong modernising force in Anglo-American poetry.

Given the primarily visual connotation of Futurism in England, it is remarkable that Marinetti's poetic innovations were on the Flint's radar, who came to Marinetti and Futurism via contemporary French poetry. Flint frequently referred to Marinetti in his writings on French poetry, and justified the affiliation because Marinetti had a French upbringing, 'writes in French and his books are published by French publishers', and therefore 'has made of futurism a European problem'. This is a curious relocation: despite Flint's justification, Marinetti's reception and influence in France was very limited in contrast to his notoriety in Italy and England, and Flint himself admitted that 'I do not think that

⁴⁸ Andrew Thacker, '"Mad after Foreign Notions": Ezra Pound, Imagism and the Geography of the Orient', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 31-42 (p. 42); Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, p. 107; Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 30.

Marinetti has any following in France'. One explanation might be that Flint was fascinated by Futurism's experiments enough to venture the seeming cultural displacement: he was up-to-date and almost certainly better informed than Pound on the topic, before the latter became interested in Futurism largely via the visual arts and Vorticism. In 'Contemporary French Poetry', Flint included a subsection titled 'F. T. Marinetti and "Le Futurisme"' at the end of the article, reprinting excerpts from 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' and arguing that Marinetti's theories were worthwhile of critical attention for their vigorous attempt to destroy rhetoric: 'Read the futuristic programme again, and then ask yourself whether English poetry, too, has not need of the greater part of it?'⁴⁹

A year later in the 'Futurist Number' of *Poetry and Drama* (September 1913), Flint discussed Marinetti and Futurism extensively in his article 'French Chronicle', demonstrating his considerable knowledge of the subject. Firstly, he acknowledged Apollinaire's 'L'Antitradition Futuriste', of which he probably read the French version published in late July, instead of the Italian translation published the same month as his article appeared. Secondly, he summed up critical features of Marinetti's 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' and reproduced six points from it. Thirdly, he included an excerpt from Marinetti's poem 'Bataille' and discussed at length Marinetti's syntactic, grammatical and 'typographical revolution'. Flint expressed appreciation of Marinetti's vitality but also reservations about certain parts of his theories, suggesting that 'M. Marinetti's later manifestoes on the technics of futurist literature are likely to ruin futurism', and that the radical approaches such as the destruction of syntax 'are things which can too easily be flung back at M. Marinetti'.⁵⁰ But Flint also believed that it was important to review with impartiality, and ended his

⁴⁹ Quoted in Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, pp. 223, 142.

⁵⁰ Quoted in ibid., pp. 223-225.

discussion of Marinetti somewhat affirmatively, arguing that innovations are necessary for poetry in the modern age:

Without going so far as M. Marinetti, we may ask ourselves what is the use, for instance, of logical syntax in poetry? Why we should have so absolute a respect for the integrity of words? Whether poetry will not finally develop into a series of emotional ejaculations, cunningly modulated, and coloured by a swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies? Are we not really spellbound by the past, and is the *Georgian Anthology* really an expression of this age? I doubt it. I doubt whether English poets are really alive to what is around them. And, to betray myself completely, whether, perhaps, it is worth while being so alive. It is a question to consider and thresh out. There are so many old emotions to which we cling that it is legitimate to pause before we set out to transform ourselves into the fiends M. Marinetti would have us be, although it may be admirable to be a fiend.⁵¹

Flint's attitude is representative of Imagism in the commendation of radical experiments with materials and techniques of poetry, combined with a reluctance to reject entirely past traditions and conventions. While discerning Futurism's merits, the Imagists sought to modernise poetry in more moderate ways.

Besides poetry, the principles of Futurism were applied to a range of artistic media. Although most manifestos were intended for a particular genre, they strove to achieve similar aesthetic effects despite differences in artistic media. There were also frequent interdisciplinary experiments, for example visual poetry and the notorious *serata*, Futurist evenings in which different art forms such as music, poetry and painting came together on the theatrical stage. Such

⁵¹ Quoted in Ibid., p. 226.

unprecedented interdisciplinarity encouraged Pound's affiliation of Imagism to Vorticism, in attempt to maximise the impact of the Imagist poetic experiments in an interdisciplinary context. The association was justified by his theory of the 'primary pigment', suggesting that each media has its essential expression unique to its form, which Futurism (or indeed Cubism and Expressionism or other movements of the European avant-garde) as a collective name for new works in different artistic media did not imply.

However, the practical results of Pound's interdisciplinary theories have often been challenged as I have discussed in Chapter 2. For example, as Pound's main contribution to the two issues of *BLAST*, most of his 'Vorticist' poems have commonly been regarded as curious anomalies in his early poetic career. Often crude and explicitly aggressive, they are a far cry in terms of both subject matter and poetic technique from his earlier Provençal and Imagist poems, or the sensitively-captured lyricism of a distanced culture in *Cathay* which followed. The main reason behind the disappointing shortcomings of Pound's Vorticist poems is that instead of supporting his interdisciplinary theories, they are rather 'poems of diagnosis':⁵² poems like 'Salutation the Third', 'Pastoral', 'The Social Order' and 'Et Faim Sallir Le Loup Des Boys' are satires aimed at criticising particular social sectors such as literary editors and critics, as well as 'the soul-less propriety of the bourgeoisie'.⁵³

These poems are not radical in terms of form (except for words in all upper case letters reminiscent of Futurist typography), but their shocking arrogance and hostility towards the established classes border on vulgarity and bad taste. For example, in 'Salutation the Third' Pound resolutely defies his prosecutors,

⁵² Carr, 'Edwardian, Georgian, Imagist, Vorticist, and "Amygist" Poetry', p. 175.

⁵³ Christine Froula, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 46.

'the gagged reviewers' of *The Times*, and concludes contemptuously: 'HERE is the taste of my BOOT, CARESS it, lick off the BLACKING.' (B1, 45, original emphases) He again faces a similarly hostile scenario in 'Et Faim Sallir Le Loup Des Boys' where 'Cowardly editors threaten' repeatedly, reproaching him for daring to 'Say this or that, or speak my open mind'. Pound spells out the consequences of his nonconformity in explicit terms: 'Then they will have my guts; / They will cut down my wage, force me to sing their cant, / Uphold the press, and be before all a model of literary decorum. / Merde!' (B2, 22) The overtly radical intention of these poems is underlined by the publication context of *BLAST*.

Another poem 'Ancient Music' also displays a bold anti-traditionalism and profanity, as Pound parodied the Medieval hymn 'Sumer Is Icumen In' and replaced the call for birdsong into 'Sing godd[a]mm, sing goddamm, DAMM' (B2, 20). This drastic rewriting of a traditional text does bear a greater resemblance to Futurism's radical rejection of cultural heritage and 'Art with a capital A' (*Futurism*, 149) than the Imagist poems, but ironically the corporeality of the poem is mainly based on the older version, and the satirical effect also relies on the reader's knowledge of the traditional reference. Despite the crudity of Pound's Vorticist poems, they were his first attempts at expressing his social concerns in his poetic output, an initiative he continued throughout his poetic career, particularly in *The Cantos*.

In comparison, Lewis's interdisciplinary experiments in *BLAST* were much more ambitious and integral. *BLAST* showcased his multiple talents as a visual artist in his drawings, paintings and designs, an essayist in his polemics and art criticism, a literary writer in *Enemy of the Stars* and *The Crowd Master*, and an editor of an innovative interdisciplinary magazine. Versatile in both the visual and

verbal media, Lewis however emphasised their independence from each other, as he reflected on his artistic practice in 1935: ‘the two arts, with me, have co-existed in peculiar harmony. There has been no mixing of the genres. The waste project of every painting, when it is a painter’s painting, makes the most highly selective and ideal material for the pure writer.’ (*WLA*, 295, original emphasis) Although Lewis was aware of the material differences in different artistic media, he apparently believed that the merits of works in different media could be compared. For example, he claimed in hindsight that he wrote the play *Enemy of the Stars* to parallel ‘the stark radicalism’ of ‘the visual revolution’ (*Letters*, 491; *RA*, 139).

However, unlike Futurist words-in-freedom which disrupt semantic coherence to create the impressions of simultaneity and dynamism, Lewis’s experiments with the verbal medium aimed to transform ‘words and syntax [...] into abstract terms’ as in visual abstraction, which he realised was not feasible for longer narratives like novels, much as Pound’s struggle to write a ‘long imagiste or vorticist poem’ (*Vorticism*, 209). In Lewis’s opinion, abstraction in literature was a failed experiment and a ‘cul-de-sac’, from which he claimed to escape by writing ‘literature’, his first full-length novel *Tarr* (*RA*, 139), although attempts at verbal abstraction remains in the work. After the war, Lewis adopted less abstract styles in all his creative works, including a more realistic visual language in his paintings and drawings, rewriting *Tarr* and *Enemy of the Stars* in more comprehensible prose, coupled with a shifted emphasis towards polemical writing. Yet Lewis’s experimental literature was and remained highly commended by Pound, who in hindsight suggested in ‘D’Artagnan Twenty Years After’ (*Criterion*, July 1937) that ‘any verbal renovation of our time [...] was already in full vigour in Mr. Lewis’ writings in *Blast* 1914’ (*SP*, 455).

2. Futurist and Vorticist Aesthetic Discourses

Given the similarities between Futurism and Vorticism in their inclination to modernise art, their interdisciplinary aspirations as well as boisterous rhetorical and public gestures, Futurist influence was more prevalent in Vorticism than Imagism, which focuses solely on poetry. Futurism and Vorticism were both concerned with modernity, but differed in their aesthetic mentality and methods in response to it. In particular, Vorticism's rethinking of art in relation to the modern age entailed much ambivalence, being essentially a developing epistemological response to the new phenomena, in contrast to Futurism's depiction of surface qualities and sensations of modernity such as speed and movement. The aesthetic programme of Vorticism was also unfortunately cut short by the war and did not reach full development. Altogether, Vorticist art and theories are thus rife with contradictions. In the following, I attempt to disentangle Vorticism's responses to modernity and Futurism by analysing the inherent complexities of Vorticist works and statements, and their aesthetic similarities and differences with Futurism. I consider this in relation to three broad aspects manifested in their art and theories, namely dynamism and time, technology and nature, and the North / South geographical divide. I also discuss how the notion of the 'vortex' was interpreted differently by Futurist and Vorticist artists, which for the latter was central to their aesthetic programme.

A. Dynamism and Time

The Vorticists had a complex relationship with the Futurist concepts of dynamism and time. As a central principle of Futurism concerning the depiction of speed, movements, sensations and interpenetrating objects, dynamism is emblematic of the Futurists' representation of modernity. The Futurists aimed to

reproduce not ‘a *moment* in the universal dynamism which has been stopped, but the *dynamic sensation* itself’, to evoke in static and two-dimensional media (such as painting and poetry) actual and immediately-felt movements, emotive states and thoughts, and to ‘put the spectator in the centre of the picture’, attempting to convey simultaneity in all these objectives.⁵⁴ The *dynamic sensation* is further defined as the ‘interior force’ of objects which radiates outwards, manifested as ‘sheaves of lines corresponding with all the conflicting forces’ which ‘encircle and involve the spectator’.⁵⁵ The ‘Futurist Sculpture’ manifesto (September 1912) also declared that sculptures should similarly ‘develop and extend into space in order to model the atmosphere which surrounds [them]’ (*Futurism*, 119).

Futurism’s aim to depict movement and sensation was criticised by the Vorticists as misguided, as Lewis argued in ‘Futurism, Magic and Life’: ‘The Futurist statue will move: then it will live a little: but any idiot can do better than that with his good wife, round the corner. Nature’s definitely ahead of us in contrivances of that sort.’ (B1, 135) Yet interpenetration as a modernist phenomenon was acknowledged by Lewis in ‘The New Egos’ with the analogy of boxing: ‘two men burrow into each other, and after an infinitude of little intimate pommels, one collapses. [...] We all to-day [...] are in each other’s vitals – overlap, intersect, and are Siamese to any extent.’ But instead of presenting this observation as dynamism as the Futurists did, the Vorticists chose to interpret this as a manifestation of duality, a principle intrinsic to their aesthetics, as Lewis argued about the increasing blurring and ambiguity of the individual: ‘the isolated human figure of most ancient Art is an anachronism. THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY. It now, literally,

⁵⁴ ‘Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto’ (11 April 1910; *Futurism*, 64-65, original emphases).

⁵⁵ ‘The Exhibitors to the Public’ (February 1912; *Futurism*, 107).

EXISTS much less. [...] Dehumanization is the chief diagnostic of the Modern World.' (*B1*, 141, original emphases)

Declaring that '[p]romiscuity is normal', the Vorticists rejected polar opposites and endorsed the deliberate blurring of identities and perspectives, apparent in the treatment of human subjects in their works. In Vorticist paintings, human forms were deconstructed and infused with other figures or the technological surroundings, leading to a camouflage-like canvas in which the reduced significance of the ego renders it dramatically overwhelmed. For example, the tiny stickman figures in Lewis's painting *The Crowd* appear trapped and fossilised in the massive grid-like cityscape; and in Lewis's play *Enemy of the Stars*, Arghol and Hanp cannot survive as independent egos, but are fatefully bounded to each other and society at large. Ultimately, Lewis suggested that '[o]ne feels the immanence of some REALITY more than any former human beings can have felt it' (*B1*, 141, original emphasis): the recognition that in the modern age such reality exists *outside* the ego, complemented with a dualist perspective, formed the basis of the metaphysical explorations of Vorticist art and theories.

Instead of depicting the simultaneous sensations and vitalism of the city with Futurist dynamism and interpenetration, Vorticism's approach to representation can be described as 'arrested dynamism', where movements are seemingly paused by an interaction of rigid lines and geometrical shapes. The direction of force also does not radiate outwards, but compresses inwards and retains the tension within. These qualities are demonstrated in Lewis's painting *Workshop*, where movements are restrained by discordant, competing abstract shapes of disparate colours which paradoxically suggest stasis when viewed as a whole. The paradoxical static quality of Vorticist representation of movement opposes

the flux in Futurist works, and the elimination of indication of movement and time points towards a desire for permanent fixity. Ferrall argues that in an attempt to counteract ‘the Futurists’ cult of motion, speed, and action’, the Vorticists tried ‘to fix and control the dangerous flux through the use of spatial forms’, implying ‘a more fundamental ambivalence’ towards ‘the temporality of modernity’ and ‘space-time compression’ which underscored Vorticism’s ambivalence towards Futurism.⁵⁶

Alan Munton suggests that the ‘[c]haracteristic Vorticist work has a stasis that is barely controlled, a sense of strain as forms struggle to be free, and an incomplete abstraction that leaves behind recognizable forms’.⁵⁷ These programmatic goals are manifested in many Vorticist works. For example, Lewis’s painting *Slow Attack* in *BLAST* appears static contrary to its title as well as the dynamic pictorial composition, presenting a frozen moment of a hectic process, and creating a paradox akin to the notion of the ‘vortex’, which ‘desires the immobile rythm [sic] of its swiftness’ (*B1*, 149). Similarly, *Before Antwerp* (cover of *BLAST* 2) presents a snapshot of men ‘in action’ with clear, rigid lines, creating a dramatic image of the seemingly moving troops and their surroundings, which is tense but at the same time motionless. William Roberts’s woodcut *Drawing* in *BLAST* 2 also features a similar style: despite the abstract title,⁵⁸ human forms and firing artillery are recognisable and appear to be in motion; however, the figures are represented by a series of interlocking, convoluted shapes, rendering them paralysed yet simultaneously creating a stroboscopic and dizzying visual effect not unlike that in *Before Antwerp*.

⁵⁶ Ferrall, “Melodramas of Modernity”: The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War’, pp. 359, 361-362.

⁵⁷ Munton, ‘Vorticism’, p. 177.

⁵⁸ An alternative and more appropriate title *Machine Gunners* is given in William Roberts, *William Roberts: Abstract and Cubist Paintings and Drawings* (London: Canale, 1957), print No. 7. The title might have been mistaken in *BLAST* 2 or was a post-*BLAST* modification.

Such an approach stands in direct contradiction with the Futurists' intention to reproduce not 'a *moment* in the universal dynamism *which has been stopped*', but the *dynamic sensation itself*' (*Futurism*, 64, original emphases). The rationale behind the Vorticists' approach might be glimpsed in Lewis's declaration in his 'Vortex' statement '[y]ou must catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions' (B2, 91): Objecting to realist art which 'uncritically reflects the contemporary world',⁵⁹ the Vorticists reacted against dynamism and critiqued the time-cult of Futurist art by devising a dualist pictorial language between movement and stasis, and representation and abstraction, in an attempt to impose control on the flux of modern life.

The Vorticists also differed from the Futurists in their views of historical time and temporality in art. In 'A Man of the Week: Marinetti' (*New Weekly*, 30 May 1914), written shortly before the break with Futurism and the formation of Vorticism, Lewis praised Marinetti for calling public attention to 'the importance of the Present, the immense importance of Life'. But Lewis also disagreed with Futurism's radical rejection of the artistic heritage of the past; instead of destroying traditional institutions of art, he argued that 'Museums and Galleries should be very strictly kept for students and Artists only. In fact, it would be a cowardly and foolish thing for the Futurists to destroy the Museums. It is only women and canaille that destroy beautiful things. The true Futurist will not destroy fine paintings in the Museums, because they will belong to him exclusively some day.' (CHC, 31)

Unlike the Futurists, Lewis aligned the artistic institution to a new vision of the elevated social status of artists, preserving the 'Museums and Galleries' as well as 'Artists', contrary to the Futurists' insistence in destroying 'Art with a

⁵⁹ Ferrall, "'Melodramas of Modernity": The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War', p. 357. Original emphasis.

capital A' (*Futurism*, 149). Pound also argued against Futurism's 'curious tic for destroying past glories', but founded his argument on a different reason than Lewis's: 'We do not desire to evade comparison with the past. We prefer that the comparison be made by some intelligent person whose idea of "the tradition" is not limited by the conventional taste of four or five centuries and one continent.' ('Vorticism', 206) For these apparently rearguard stances on 'institutionalising' art in the modern age, Ferrall regards Vorticism as 'partly an attempt to preserve a tradition of autonomous "high" art from the kinds of mass culture produced by a rapidly modernizing society', and thus exemplary of modernist rather than avant-garde aesthetics in their reliance of an elitist rather than popularising culture.⁶⁰

Lewis's admiration for Futurism's presentism soon turned into objection with the founding of Vorticism, which declared Futurism a passéist movement by redefining artistic and temporal labels. Lewis argued in 'Automobilism' (*New Weekly*, 20 June 1914) that: 'We want today the Realism and not the Romance of our peculiar personal life. Marinetti is a Romantic and not a Realist.' (CHC, 34) Similarly, *BLAST* argued that 'the futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870' (B1, 7), whose belated fetishisation of machinery and speed was out of touch with modern times. Besides attacking Futurism with terms indicating specific historical time references, the Vorticists also instigated an alternative interpretation of temporality in relation to art in *BLAST*'s polemics, a trope most pronounced in 'Our Vortex'. The anti-Futurist stance is established paradoxically by aligning the concepts of 'future' with that of 'past' and 'life' in their sentimentality, creating a curious compound of temporal compression of all the qualities rejected by

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 350, 352.

Vorticism. Standing against this is the ‘present’ – itself a malleable space which the Vorticists sought to transform into ‘Art’ as ‘a New Living Abstraction’ via the vortex, in contrast to its manifestation in Futurism as ‘reactive Action’ and ‘numbing displays of vitality’ (*B1*, 147).

Lewis described such transformation as ‘something very abstruse and splendid, in no way directly dependent on “Life.” It is no EQUIVALENT for Life, but ANOTHER Life, as NECESSARY to existence as the former.’ (*B1*, 130, original emphases) This indicates that the Vorticists regarded the intellectual organisation of the artist as metaphysical and not bounded by reality and humdrum life. Although they did not question or reject objective reality, admitting that ‘[w]e must have the Past and the Future, Life simple, that is, to discharge ourselves in, and keep us pure for non-life that is Art’, they considered this composite an ‘impure Present’, and sought to steer clear of the imitative ‘life’ of realism and attain authentic ‘Art’ in their works (*B1*, 148). Albeit seemingly arbitrary, such redefinitions of temporal dimensions suggest that Vorticist theories were influenced by contemporary scientific and philosophical notions, such as relativity and Bergson’s works on temporality, which offered the Vorticists ideological tools to engage with and respond to epistemological questions arising with modernity through their aesthetics and theories.

B. Technology and Nature

The Futurists’ fetishisation of technology was also subjected to Vorticist criticism. *BLAST*’s manifesto declared the Vorticists ‘Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World’ (*B1*, 30) and rejected Futurism’s alignment of technology and the artist:

The artist of the modern movement is a savage (in no sense an ‘advanced,’ perfected, democratic Futurist individual of Mr. Marinetti’s limited imagination): this enormous, jangling, journalistic, fairy desert of modern life serves him as Nature did more technically primitive man. (*B1*, 33)

By emphasising the primitive and savage nature of modern artists, the Vorticists suggested that they were primarily fighting against their surrounding environment dominated by technology, just as primitive men in the past fought against nature for their survival.⁶¹ Therefore they were against the Futurists’ fetishisation of modern notions such as machinery and speed, which they considered as merely outward sensations. Instead, the Vorticists opted to parallel the structure and organising principles of machinery, and attempted to impose control on the technological environment in their works; Gasiorek describes the Vorticists’ aim as to protect ‘the creative mind and the autonomous agen[cy]’ of the artist, in an age where ‘the subject was being diminished as an autonomous agent’.⁶² However, the implicit dualism of the term ‘mercenaries’ which the Vorticists chose to identify themselves with suggests that their relationships with technology and nature were indeed ambivalent, much as their stance on many other polar opposites.

Under Vorticism’s redefinition of aesthetic concepts, ‘realism’ stands for the verisimilar portrayal of a vast range of subject matter including both technology and nature, which are seemingly irreconcilable and situated at the two ends of the spectrum. This paradox is similar to the Vorticists’ combination of past and future against Futurism in their characteristically dualist perspective: they

⁶¹ Louise Blakeney Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics, and the Past* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 152.

⁶² Andrzej Gasiorek, ‘Lewis and Technology’, in *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Andrzej Gasiorek and Nathan Waddell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 159-172 (pp. 161-162).

simultaneously rejected the ‘realism’ of the depiction of natural subjects by the Impressionists and Post-impressionists, as well as Futurism’s focus on machinery and metropolis life. In the following, I will analyse the Vorticist conception of ‘realism’ in relation to technology, nature and Futurism: firstly their mechanical vision in relation to Futurism, then their aesthetic views on nature as manifested in the two issues of *BLAST*.

The Vorticists’ objection to fetishising modern technology did not result in a total elimination of machine forms and cityscapes in their works. Lewis had already taken up the ‘urban and technological imagery’ of the Futurists prior to Vorticism,⁶³ and other Vorticists like Edward Wadsworth also depicted the industrial North and images of machinery in abstract woodcuts and paintings. But unlike the Futurists’ celebration of modern subject matter, Vorticism focused on the formal principles of visual arrangement in depicting the subject, which is scrutinised and transformed by the use of abstraction. Furthermore, the Vorticists’ complex response to modern technology was not limited to a reconsideration of the means of representation, but also the psychological effects it brought about, leading to the ‘dual sense of the predominance of the mechanised man and his profound sense of anguish’ in face of modern technology in their works.⁶⁴ Lewis’s drawing *Enemy of the Stars* (1913) reproduced in *BLAST* is an apt example of this mentality: an abstract, mechanical upright form suggests simultaneously the human and the machine, which in classic Vorticist dualism is recognisable as either, thereby remaining a dubious chimera entity. According to Kate Lechmere, Lewis executed the drawing ‘in direct emulation of Epstein’s *Female Figure in Flenite*’, and initially

⁶³ Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, pp. 60-61, 77.

⁶⁴ Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 114n44.

named it ‘a “drawing for sculpture”’.⁶⁵ The attempt for hardness and sculptural qualities seemingly makes the figure less human and more mechanical.

Lewis’s play bearing the same name which follows the reproduction of the drawing presents a complementary verbal ‘image’ of this figure: ‘Throats iron eternities, drinking heavy radiance, limbs towers of blatant light, the stars poised, immensely distant, with their metal sides, pantheistic machines.’ (*B1*, 64) Images of modern industrial society are juxtaposed with human physiological terms and gestures, creating an ambiguous human-machine hybrid utopia. Lewis also employed technological references as a structural component in the narrative to convey actions, for example in the terse descriptions of Arghol and Hanp’s fight: ‘Soul perched like aviator in basin of skull, more alert and smaller than on any other occasion. Mask stoic with energy: thought cleaned off slick-pure and clean with action. Bodies grown brain, black octopi.’ (*B1*, 75) These mechanical, scientific and very visual images in fact do not describe outward appearances, but convey the inner psychologies of the characters, in a mechanised vision similar to Vorticist paintings, suggesting the Vorticists’ interest in transposing mechanical construction into art rather than in representing technology *per se*.

The importance of technology to Vorticism is exaggerated by Ferrall in his argument that ‘the Vorticist artists’ insistence that art should reflect and celebrate the conditions of contemporary industrial society [was] largely inspired by Futurist idolatry of modern machinery’, and that the tendency to reify and aestheticise technology and machinery can be observed in both movements.⁶⁶ The Vorticists in fact strongly disagreed with Futurism’s fetishisation of technology, and regarded Futurism as ‘a romantic “Automobilism” based in an

⁶⁵ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*. Vol. 1, p. 306n25.

⁶⁶ Ferrall, “Melodramas of Modernity”: The Interaction of Vorticism and Futurism before the Great War’, pp. 348, 364.

Impressionistic recording of sensations'.⁶⁷ The Vorticists' interest in technology 'did not disclose a belief in its utopian potential so much as a desire to register its social significance', and for them 'the machine suggested hardness, precision, and functionality which could be explicated by a more abstract language' than Futurist dynamism.⁶⁸

Ultimately, in Vorticism machinery underwrites an aesthetic of anti-Realism: the Vorticist visual language is one that is controlled by the artist's imaginative conception of technology which parallels its structural organisation, rather than dominated by the technologically-enabled modern environment and sensations as in Futurist works. The Vorticists' emphasis on machinery signals their acceptance of the industrialised world and 'the need for a new art to interpret it'; but they saw 'this art as an analytical/conceptual tool that abstracts what is most essential from contemporary reality',⁶⁹ instead of a faithful rendering of reality, which they deemed belittling for the artist, no matter whether the subject matter is technology or nature. The Vorticists were inspired by machinery, 'the greatest Earth-medium' which 'sweeps away the doctrines of a narrow and pedantic Realism at one stroke' (*B1*, 39): the machine is a significant and powerful form to signify and inspire the modern artist's creative process, which depends not on imitation but intellectual design. In face of technology, the Vorticists believed that it was necessary for modern artists to negotiate mechanical and abstract notions with traditional human and natural subject matters in modernising and renewing their artistic practices, in order to offer a fitting representation of this new reality and mentality.

⁶⁷ Gale, 'A Short Flight: Between Futurism and Vorticism', p. 70.

⁶⁸ Gasiorek, 'Lewis and Technology', pp. 161-162; Baronti Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', p. 113.

⁶⁹ Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)', p. 299.

The Vorticists' objection to mimetic realism also extended to the depiction of nature in art. They were explicitly antagonistic towards nature and the conventional depiction of natural scenery, as 'Long Live the Vortex!' declared: 'We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism), and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.' (B1, 7) The Vorticists regarded "Nature" and natural art [as] synonymous with "Life" (B1, 129) – by extension 'reality' and imitative representation which they had declared war on. Lewis derided that it was only 'those artists whose imagination is mean and feeble, whose vocation and instinct are unrobust' (B1, 130) who rely on nature as a source of inspiration and creativity, and argued that nature could not be surpassed by artistic reproduction. The only way for the artist to gain credit for their work is to exercise intellectual control over the subject matter, by re-presenting it with abstraction instead of *representing* it in verisimilitude, which the Vorticists considered mere copying and reproduction that do not require intellectual efforts from the artist.

Lewis persisted in rejecting realist painting in 'A Review of Contemporary Art', but unlike his stance in *BLAST*, he recognised the merits of nature in artistic creation and endorsed natural forms. Nature, he contended, 'with it's [sic] glosses, tinting and logical structures, is as efficient as any machine and more wonderful'. In order to successfully contend with nature's creation, the finest artists 'who are so trained and sensitized that they have a perpetually renewed power of DOING WHAT NATURE DOES' (B2, 46, original emphasis) avoid direct representation, strive to create his own 'reality' with his intellectual conception, and present his vision in pictorial abstraction. However, despite suggesting abstraction as offering 'a greater imaginative freedom of work, and

with renewed conception of aesthetics in sympathy with our time', Lewis also simultaneously critiqued non-representational abstraction, judging skeptically that 'a great deal of effort will automatically flow back into more natural forms from the barriers of the Abstract' (*B2*, 46).

Reacting against the conventional representation of painters such as 'Mr. Brangwyn, Mr. Nicholson and Sir Edward Poynter' and probably also the taste of art critics, Lewis argued against the 'whole standard of art in our commercial, cheap, musical-comedy civilization', urging for public intervention to destroy 'these false and filthy standards' of representation and for 'a Bill [to be] passed in Parliament at once FORBIDDING ANY IMAGE OR RECOGNIZABLE SHAPE TO BE STUCK UP IN ANY PUBLIC PLACE' (*B2*, 47, original emphasis). The Vorticists paradoxically rejected both the representational image and non-representational abstraction simultaneously, suggesting that only they have the authority to judge good 'representation' from bad, where 'ABSTRACT' as defined by them is preferable to bad representation, indicating the social intention and implication of the rigorous standards of Vorticism.

In summary, the Vorticists justified their rejection of verisimilar representation as a response to modernity, which demanded new aesthetics and visual ideals similar to mechanical construction. But instead of being driven by a fascination with technology as the Futurists, the Vorticists saw themselves in contest simultaneously with machinery and engineers as well as nature, in their attempt to create an art which surpasses both technology and nature in terms of intellectual conception and artistic execution. In reacting against Futurism and conventional 'realism', the Vorticists pulled the two extremes of technology and nature together, and sought to establish their unique aesthetics independent of everyday life and reality in the middle ground between representation and

abstraction. They also aimed for a position in between the Cubists' 'natures-mortes', the Expressionists' spiritual emphasis and the Futurists' vitalism, as Lewis commented, '[t]o synthesize [the Futurists'] quality of LIFE with the significance or spiritual weight that is the mark of all the greatest art, should be, from one angle, the work of the Vorticists' (*B2*, 77, original emphasis).

C. North / South Divide

The Futurists had aimed at pan-European impact from the start of their movement: their founding manifesto was published in Paris, and Marinetti was quickly dubbed 'the caffeine of Europe' for his provocative gestures in modernising the arts. One of the ways in which the Vorticists attempted to challenge the pan-European domination of Futurism was by emphasising their geographical difference, delineating England as a Nordic country (alongside Germany, Scandinavia and Russia) (*B1*, 132) from the Southern nations (including France and Italy). Moreover, the Vorticists attributed aesthetic differences to these evident geographical demarcations, suggesting 'barenness' and 'hardness' as characters of the art of the North, and 'romantic and sentimental' as that of the South (*B1*, 41), thereby claiming superiority of their art over that of Futurism. This geographical strategy is evident even before the Vorticists' rejection of Futurism as a label for progressive artists, as Lewis elaborated on the importance of distinguishing English art from Futurism in 'A Man of the Week: Marinetti':

Climate plays the same *rôle* as Time. [...] A Futurism of Place is as important as to a temporal one. Artists in this country should attempt to find a more exact expression of the Northern character. Much of Marinetti's vitality is untranslatable; and there are many advantages in not hailing from the South.

'Futurism' is largely Anglo-Saxon civilisation. It should not rest with others to be the Artists of this revolution and new possibilities in life. As modern life is the invention of the English, they should have something profounder to say on it than anybody else. But England has needed these foreign auxiliaries to put her energies to rights and restore order. Marinetti's services, in this home of aestheticism, crass snobbery and languors of distinguished phlegm, are great.

(CHC, 32, original emphasis)

This illustrates Lewis's mixed feelings about Futurism: although he regarded the English as the 'true' Futurists in their inventive genius, he admitted that Marinetti was instrumental in triggering the awakening to modern art in England. Paul Edwards remarks that not only did Lewis accept 'Futurism' 'as a vague catchall journalistic term for the avant-garde; but, more specifically, in insisting on the role of "Anglo-Saxon civilisation" in modernity', Lewis 'locat[ed] the English effort not just within a vague journalistic concept of Futurism, but proposing it as a particular geographical branch of the movement itself, with the necessary differences that Northern geography and culture exact'.⁷⁰ However, with the beginning of their own movement, the Vorticists consolidated this North / South divide as a weapon against Futurism by 'differentiating their work' according to 'their own cultural identity [...] based on a "nordic" spirit of nationalism, bent on defending itself from the "meridionalism" of the Futurists'.⁷¹ *BLAST* accordingly 'distinguished between "Northern" and "Southern" approaches to art in order to offer an account of a nascent English art opposed to a sentimental exaltation of the machine-age modernity', where the distinction was employed with the intention to '[cross] national boundaries and [refer] to general cultural tendencies', and thus broadening the impact of Vorticism by

⁷⁰ Edwards, 'Blast and the Revolutionary Mood of Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism', pp. 206-207.

⁷¹ Baronti Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', p. 106.

subsuming '[t]he idea of "England" [...] under a wider concept of "Northern" culture'.⁷²

Examples of such distinction abound in *BLAST*'s polemical and creative writings. The Second Manifesto declared: 'we insist that what is actual and vital for the South, is ineffectual and unactual in the North. [...] rebels of the North and the South are diametrically opposed species' (*B1*, 34, 42). In this manifesto there are eight mentions of 'North', whereas 'South' is only credited with the two mentions quoted above, seemingly subjugated to the North. Lewis also emphasised the Nordic context of his play *Enemy of the Stars* by setting the stage as: 'Eyes grown venturesome in native temperatures of Pole – indulgent and familiar, blessing with white nights. Type of characters takens [sic] from broad faces where Europe grows arctic, intense, human and universal.' Other references to the geographical North include costumes 'CUT SOMEWHERE, NOWADAYS, ON THE UPPER BALTIC' and '[t]wo texts in Finnish' in Arghol's room in the city (*B1*, 59, 55, 76, original emphasis).

Dasenbrock regards that such a distinction is invalidated by 'the international background of the Vorticists':⁷³ yet despite the fact that Pound and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska were expatriates, their actions in creating an avant-garde art in England indicate that they conceded to the distinguishing Northern character of their art proposed by Lewis, perhaps even the aspect of Englishness, which, even as they did not openly accede to, they also did not explicitly reject. Much as the contemporary 'Anglo-Saxon civilisation' pervaded the world through British imperialist pursuits, the Vorticists similarly aspired to create an internationally accepted art, paradoxically by subscribing to nationalist ideals and emphasising English characteristics and spirit in their art. By

⁷² Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)', pp. 308, 298.

⁷³ Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, p. 44.

proclaiming that ‘The English Character [...] based on the Sea’ resulted in an ‘unexpected universality [...] found in the completest English artists’ (*B1*, 35), the Vorticists leveraged Britain’s geopolitical identity to claim superiority for their art over that of other nations.

However, the simultaneous stress on the North / South divide and the English national identity as the foundations of Vorticism was self-contradictory, as ‘[n]ation as traditionally understood comes to grind rhetorically against region’.⁷⁴ The concepts of the universality of the English national character and art, as well as the North / South divide proposed in *BLAST* were also complicated when Britain entered war with Germany, where a Nordic alliance became politically incorrect.⁷⁵ In *BLAST* 2 aesthetic criticism of Futurism remained, but the North / South divide was no longer emphasised; and instead of Italy, Germany was targeted ‘as “romantic” in the artistic realm and jingoistic in the political sphere’,⁷⁶ and the geographical rhetoric shifted to accommodate the new political realities while maintaining relatively sharp artistic and cultural distinctions. This change in stance suggests that the Vorticists’ North / South divide was an imaginary geographical justification for English art, created with national stereotypes to politically package the different aesthetic and intellectual dispositions of Vorticism and Futurism, an arbitrary distinction inevitably prone to changes in the nation’s political situation.

⁷⁴ Klein, ‘How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition’, p. 77.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 188.

⁷⁶ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, p. 308. An in-depth discussion of the portrayal of Germany in *BLAST* 2 can be found in Chapter 3.

D. Vortex

The Vorticists named their movement after ‘vortex’, a concept which was imbued with multiple meanings and intended to imply a distinction from Futurism. Paradoxically, the term’s use in modern aesthetics had a Futurist origin: it appeared in ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ in a descriptive capacity,⁷⁷ and was gradually given aesthetic significance ‘in the works and manifestos of Boccioni, Carrà and Balla’, as illustrated in Carlo Carrà’s manifesto ‘The Painting of Sounds, Noises, And Smells’ published in March 1913:⁷⁸

Such bubbling and whirling of forms and light, both infused with and composed of sounds, noises, and smells, [...] requires a great emotive effort, almost a delirium, on the part of the artist, who in order to render a vortex, must be a vortex of sensation himself, a pictorial force and not a cold, logical intellect. (*Futurism*, 158)

The Futurist ‘vortex’ implies simultaneity, interpenetration, flux – the opposite to the Vorticist emphasis on ‘cold, logical intellect’ in the creative process.

Among the Vorticists, Pound was the first to employ the idea of ‘vortex’ aesthetically, although the term to him signifies a broadening of aesthetic standards across national and temporal borders, different from the Futurists’ presentist and individualist interpretations. Pound first made use of the term in his article ‘Through Alien Eyes. III.’ (*New Age*, 30 January 1913), where he described London as ‘a main and vortex drawing strength from the peripheries. Thus the finest authors, in my judgment – Yeats, James, Hudson, and Conrad – are all foreigners’ (300), suggesting artistic excellence should be considered

⁷⁷ ‘Suddenly, there appeared the immense herd of wild beasts ridden by the madmen, straining their countless snouts over the waves, beneath the vortex of manes that were calling out to the Ocean to join in a reconquest.’ (*Futurism*, 59)

⁷⁸ Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 107n23; Perloff, *The Dance of the Intellect*, p. 42.

without regard to nationality. And in a letter to Dorothy Shakespear on 5 September 1913 he asserted, '[a]nything that demands only partial attention is useless, for developing a vortex [...] it would incapacitate one for serious creation of any sort'.⁷⁹ This suggests that he was at the time already envisioning the 'vortex' as a system of artistic production across different artistic media.

Shortly afterwards, Pound used the term in 'The Approach to Paris. IV' to denote the moment of epiphany 'when the poet-narrator experiences an intensity that enables him, in some kind of fusion of the consciousness of the poet and the being of the crowd, to voice his own vision as the thought of the crowd',⁸⁰ indicating a Futurist-like mechanism in art production in the modern city. But the most well-known instance of Pound's use of the term is in a letter to William Carlos Williams on 13 December 1913, where 'The Vortex' denotes a meaning close to Pound's first usage indicating the geographical locale of London, but also refers more specifically to the avant-garde circle. With this implication in mind, Pound subsequently christened the movement founded by the Rebel Art Centre group and in which he participated with the name 'Vorticism'.

The Vorticist vortex can be read in multiple ways, and it acted as an emblem of distinction from the Futurists' version by combining aesthetic and national identities. The nature of the vortex is discussed in 'Our Vortex', suggesting a realm of pure art, the 'maximum point of energy' uninfected by 'reality' and 'life', as 'Our Vortex insists on water-tight compartments'. The static centre of the vortex is coupled with a moving periphery, 'abstract with its red-hot swiftness', with its 'polished sides' moving in a 'disastrous polished dance' (*B1*, 147-149), where the energy was 'controlled and directed rather than random',⁸¹ in contrast

⁷⁹ Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters, 1909-1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984), p. 251.

⁸⁰ Pondrom, *The Road from Paris*, p. 173.

⁸¹ Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History*, p. 160.

to Futurism which Pound derided as ‘the disgorging spray of a vortex with no drive behind it’ (*B1*, 153). Aesthetically, the Vorticist ‘vortex’ stands for controlled, organised artistic construction in response to modernity, generated by a ‘cold, logical intellect’ rather than Futurist flux.

The national connotation of the vortex is implied by its visual representation in *BLAST*, ‘a conical form of sharp, geometric lines, cut through by a tight, immobile cord around which it rotates’.⁸² The icon is in fact a nautical symbol, signalling ‘storm from the North’;⁸³ the inclusion of this symbol in *BLAST* indicates Vorticism’s intended positioning as a powerful artistic revolution from the North, independent from and antagonistic towards Futurist ventures from the South. The fact that it is a nautical symbol corresponds to the Vorticists’ proud distinction of ‘The English Character [...] based on the Sea’ (*B1*, 35), paralleling the success of British imperial pursuits to the excellence of its ‘national’ art. But indeed the Vorticists’ definitions of the vortex were as ambivalent as their geographical positioning, as seen from the radically different ‘Vortex’ statements by Lewis, Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska. In fact, definitions of the ‘vortex’ were dominated by these artists and unmentioned in the works of other Vorticists, and the term was also used much less frequently in *BLAST 2*. These suggest that the vague and elusive notion of ‘vortex’, much like the North / South divide, was a rhetorical device to symbolise the creative process and standards of Vorticism, as well as the Vorticists’ particular visual language and aesthetic identity, without a visible referent in their works as the manifestation of dynamism in Futurist art.

⁸² Baronti Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 116.

⁸³ Quoted in Edwards, ‘Blast and the Revolutionary Mood of Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism’, p. 202.

3. Futurism, Imagism and Vorticism as Collective Movements

For the three movements discussed in this chapter, the group context was significant for their propagation as aesthetic collectives and public entities. For example, although Marinetti was recognised as the leader of Futurism, he depended on fellow artists to contribute manifestos and works in their respective artistic media to maximise the impact of the interdisciplinary movement. Yet the notion of the group also stood in contrast to that of the individual artist, and created tensions between personal and collective aesthetics. This issue pervaded the less programmatically organised Imagism and Vorticism, where members contested for leadership and definition of the movements' aesthetics. Differences in members' conception of aesthetics and how the movement should be run resulted in a group split in Imagism; the rushed development of Vorticism, compounded by its many members working on different artistic media and styles, gave rise to a generally ambivalent and multi-faceted aesthetics. The mosaic nature of Imagism and Vorticism is fundamental to their aesthetic development, and in the following I discuss the impact of group dynamics on the movements, and the role of the many significant but often overlooked female members and affiliates.

A. Collective of Individuals

The European tour of Futurist paintings in 1912 brought much publicity for the movement, but it also led to divergent views within the group on how the movement should be promoted. For instance, Marinetti's plans to strengthen Futurism's presence in France were met with the opposition of other members concerning potential 'negative publicity' and dilution of aesthetics.⁸⁴ Anne

⁸⁴ Gale, 'A Short Flight: Between Futurism and Vorticism', p. 70.

d'Harnoncourt also remarks on the ‘signs of the imminent disintegration’ of the movement alongside ‘its vigorous expansion’, such as the ‘deepening rift between Boccioni and Carrà’ in 1914, owing to ‘Boccioni’s tendency to claim all Futurist innovations as his own’.⁸⁵ And despite belonging to the same movement, nonetheless the Futurist painters all exhibited unique personal styles which entail significant aesthetic differences, as Lewis analysed in ‘Melodrama of Modernity’.

Marinetti’s intention to expand the Futurist collective across national and artistic boundaries was similar to Pound’s linking of Imagism to Vorticism, in an attempt to achieve a more universal artistic language and following, and to maximise the aesthetic impact of the principles of *Imagisme*. Such a radical proposal was met with disagreement from fellow Imagists, but Pound was undeterred, proprietorially insisting to a dissident Lowell that the ‘machinery’ of Imagism was ‘largely or wholly my making’ (*SL*, 38). He also objected to her poetry being marketed as Imagist, writing to her in a letter on 19 October 1914 that, ‘I was quite right in refusing to join you in any scheme for turning Les Imagistes into an uncritical democracy with you as intermediary between it and the printers’, and insisted that ‘I think you had better cease referring to yourself as an Imagiste’ (*SL*, 44). Despite the many differences between Futurism and Imagism, internal rivalry about the direction of the movement and individual aesthetics were common challenges that both movements had to face.

It is evident that Pound’s vision of *Imagisme* was different from that of fellow Imagists: Pound was concerned about the aesthetic quality and exclusiveness of the brand, and he considered the uncritical acceptance of all works by all members affiliated with the movement as a dilution of aesthetics; other Imagists

⁸⁵ Anne D'Harnoncourt, *Futurism and the International Avant-Garde* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1980), p. 30.

in contrast regarded his ‘charlatany of Vorticism’ as a violation of their shared focus on the poetic medium.⁸⁶ Moreover, Pound’s ‘arbitrary inclusions and exclusions and a capricious censorship’⁸⁷ were disagreeable to fellow Imagists, who were keen to respect individual aesthetics and promote a democratic and amicable spirit amongst contributing poets, and to ensure the practical success of the group venture of publishing anthologies. All these differences soon drove the Imagists’ initial solidarity to the permanent rupture between Pound and ‘Amygism’.

In the absence of an editorial authority like Pound, the Imagists no longer had to compromise their individuality in their concerted efforts to publish their poetry, in contrast to other organised movements where individual freedom comes second to collective benefit. For instance, Severini’s solo exhibition in London in April 1913 was planned ‘in defiance of central Futurist preference for group activity’.⁸⁸ The sense of a ‘collective of individuals’ was arguably built into Imagism since its beginning, an aspect which was further pronounced after the Pound-Lowell split. The preface to *Some Imagist Poets 1915* states that it is a ‘co-operative volume’, and that the Imagists ‘do not represent an exclusive artistic sect’, but were ‘united by certain common principles’ and ‘mutual artistic sympathy’ (vi, viii). The preface to the next volume similarly describes the Imagists as ‘Individualists’, and proclaims that ‘we should admit as many aesthetics as there are original minds’ (vi). It is evident that as a result of the Pound-Lowell rift, the emphasis of Imagism shifted from a common poetics of excellence to a shared belief in the artistic freedom of the individual poet.

⁸⁶ Copp, *Imagist Dialogues*, p. 62.

⁸⁷ Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, p. 127.

⁸⁸ Gale, ‘A Short Flight: Between Futurism and Vorticism’, p. 69.

As for Vorticism, *BLAST* provided the battle ground for the same tug of war between individuals and the collective. Puchner remarks that Pound and Lewis were worried that ‘the manifesto’s collective authorship would undermine the autonomy of the individual artist’.⁸⁹ As such, Lewis, Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska composed their respective ‘Vortex’ statements in addition to the collective Vorticist manifestoes, similar to Futurism’s various manifestos on the different arts. However, these statements were named after their writers rather than the art they refer to (as in the Futurist manifestos), and their radically different contents suggest a heightened importance of individuality in Vorticism which possibly overrides the collective. In an undated note Pound emphasised individual differences among Vorticist members: ‘No one was expected to recede from his own personal position in favour of a formula. Three of us wrote Vortices, they do not very exactly coincide.’ (*EPVA*, 150)

Pound’s staunch support of artistic individuality in Vorticism is surprising given his monopoly in running *Imagisme*, which might be due to the interdisciplinary nature of the movement and Pound’s appreciation of his artistic peers. In Vorticism, Pound did not find the notion of collective movement contradictory to the individual genius, and he repeatedly defended the individuality of the Vorticist artist, for example declaring in ‘Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist’ (*Egoist*, 15 August 1914) that: ‘The vorticist movement is a movement of individuals, for the protection of individuality’ (306). A fortnight later he suggested the Vorticists as coming together under the principle that ‘[w]e worked separately, we found an underlying agreement, we decided to stand together.’ ('Vorticism', 209) Such a view of the collective is in fact similar to Pound’s envisioning of *Imagisme* at its beginning, pronounced in the loose and evasive

⁸⁹ Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, p. 113.

collective suggested by ‘Imagisme’. Edwards suggests that Pound’s naming of Vorticism ‘functioned as a kind of heuristic tool, a way of discovering commonalities and differences’ in works across different artistic media, and that Pound did not regard it as ‘a style, aesthetics, or cultural theory to which signatories of the manifesto were expected to conform’.⁹⁰

B. Avant-Garde Gender Politics

The issue of female members is another paradoxical aspect of Futurism and Vorticism, both overtly misogynist in their polemics in attempt to establish a virile impression for their art.⁹¹ Futurism was notorious for its outspoken contempt for women and femininity, which began in its founding manifesto (‘our nerves demand war and disdain women’ (*Futurism*, 54)) and perpetuated in articles such as ‘Contempt for Woman’ (*Le Futurisme*, 1911). In the ‘VITAL ENGLISH ART: FUTURIST MANIFESTO’, Marinetti and Nevinson challenged the English stereotype of art as effeminate, protesting against ‘[t]he English notion that Art is a useless pastime, only fit for women and schoolgirls, that artists are poor deluded fools to be pitied and protected, and Art a ridiculous complaint, a mere topic for table-talk.’ (*Futurism*, 196) This attack might have provoked the emphasis on masculinity and virility in Vorticism.

Yet both movements paradoxically also welcomed female artists into their ranks: Rainey remarks that ‘[a]s an institution, Futurism provided more opportunities for women to publish than were available in the society at large’, and during the war years female contributors to the Futurist journal *L’Italia*

⁹⁰ Edwards, ‘Blast and the Revolutionary Mood of Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism’, pp. 210-211.

⁹¹ My discussion focuses on the female members of Vorticism as an aspect of group dynamics, rather than being a comprehensive discussion of their aesthetics, which have been discussed in Beckett and Cherry, ‘Reconceptualizing Vorticism: Women, Modernity, Modernism’, pp. 59-72, and Miranda Hickman, ‘The Gender of Vorticism: Jessie Dismorr, Helen Saunders, and Vorticist Feminism’, in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 119-136.

futurista increased both in numbers and prominence (*Futurism*, 22-23), replacing many male Futurists away at war. A similar tendency is found in *BLAST* 2 which showcased literary and artistic works by female Vorticists, whose works were excluded from the first pre-war issue.⁹² As with Imagism, female members were integral to Vorticism both in terms of aesthetic and practical aspects, and putting their contribution into perspective would result in a more nuanced understanding of the movements' group dynamics and gender politics, contrary to conventional male-dominated accounts.

A brief review of the female members of Imagism and Vorticism serves to demonstrate their crucial positions in the movements and their vital contributions in both aesthetic and practical ways. Imagism would not have begun without the important Imagist H.D., whose unique poetics Pound labelled 'Imagist', and her poem 'Oread' considered by him as exemplary of Imagist / Vorticist poetry. Despite the fact that it was Pound who facilitated the start of her poetic career, H.D. sided with the 'Amygists' out of closer sympathies and contributed to the *Some Imagist Poets* anthologies. And although not as significant an Imagist poet as H.D., Lowell played no minor role in changing the course of the movement as an outcome of her row with Pound over the way the poetic collective was run; she also successfully launched the movement into the mainstream media in the United States and enabled Imagism and poetry at large to gain a much wider audience and achieve popular success. Other notable female associates of Imagism include editors and patrons: *Poetry* was Harriet Monroe's initiative, which enabled the launch of Imagism within its pages; the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist*, which provided publishing and discussion grounds for Imagism, were edited by Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver, and financially backed by

⁹² Rebecca West, the only female contributor to *BLAST*, was not a Vorticist member.

the latter.

As for Vorticism, Kate Lechmere sponsored the setup of the Rebel Art Centre and the publishing of *BLAST*, both foundational to the movement.⁹³ Members included female artists Jessie Dismorr and Helen Saunders, both contributing visual and literary creative works to *BLAST* 2, in addition to contributors Rebecca West and Dorothy Shakespear.⁹⁴ The *Little Review*, an important publishing outlet of literary works by Anglo-American avant-garde writers including Joyce, Lewis and Eliot during the war, was founded by Margaret Anderson and co-edited by Jane Heap. *BLAST*'s apparently virile stance seems to stand in contradiction with such a background. Lisa Tickner also suggests that the Vorticists adopted abstraction based on the virile character of its concentration and intensity, and notes the curious contradiction in that, '*Blast* blasted effeminacy, in women or men. It damned the Britannic aesthete, but it blessed the suffragette [...] depart[ing] from Futurism on the question of women'.⁹⁵

However, it should be noted that despite blessing certain suffragettes and praising the energy and vitality of these 'BRAVE COMRADES', the Vorticists' message to the suffragettes was not without irony and condescension; the advice 'IN DESTRUCTION, AS IN OTHER THINGS stick to what you understand' (*B1*, 151-52, original emphases) implicitly suggests a misogynist rebuke against their artistic ignorance.⁹⁶ But contrary to the Futurist contempt for women, Vorticism's emphasis on 'virility' was seemingly more against effeminacy in attitude and aesthetics, rather than physical gender and social

⁹³ Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)', pp. 291-292.

⁹⁴ Ironically, both Saunders and Shakespear's names were misspelt in both issues of *BLAST*.

⁹⁵ Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, pp. 204, 209.

⁹⁶ Janet Lyon argues that the suffragettes put into action Marinetti's rhetorical exhortation of destruction of symbols of tradition such as libraries and museums. Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 122.

positions. Puchner argues that ‘the vorticists’ dependence on women patrons, on magazines run by women, and on the tradition of women’s suffrage writing made Marinetti-style machine machismo impossible’, and that ‘the aggression visible in the defence of the artwork against suffragist politics’ was more of a protest against politics than suffragettes: ‘what the suffragists represent is the intrusion of politics, manifesto-driven politics, into art’.⁹⁷ The Vorticists also praised certain female qualities, evident in their blessings ‘vouchsafed to ports, the “RESTLESS MACHINES” of a “womanly town”, to the “hysterical WALL built round the EGO”, to France’s “FEMALE QUALITIES”’;⁹⁸ the combined attitude of resistance and praise towards femininity, although puzzling, falls in line with a long list of Vorticist contradictions and paradoxes.

In hindsight Lewis expressed his disagreement with most Vorticists save the female members: ‘It was essential that people should believe that there was a kind of army beneath the banner of the Vortex. In fact there were only a couple of women and one or two not very reliable men.’⁹⁹ While the statement could be taken to suggest Lewis’s appreciation of the (artistic) capability of the female members of the movement, it is far more likely that he regarded them only in numbers and to fulfil subservient roles, such as serving tea at the Rebel Art Centre gatherings, with his opinion that ‘the organising of tea parties was a job for women, not artists’,¹⁰⁰ and therefore considered them as posing no threat to his position as the leader of the movement. Similarly, their inclusion in *BLAST* 2 might also not be related to their artistic merits, but to fill out the issue with sufficient work during wartime to perpetuate the myth of ‘a kind of army beneath

⁹⁷ Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, pp. 115-116.

⁹⁸ Gasiorek, ‘The “Little Magazine” as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)’, p. 300. Original emphases.

⁹⁹ ‘The Vorticists’ (*Vogue*, September 1956; reprinted in CHC, pp. 381-382).

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Beckett and Cherry, ‘Reconceptualizing Vorticism: Women, Modernity, Modernism’, p. 63.

the banner of the Vortex'. But remarkably, Lewis incorporated an abstract design by Dorothy Shakespear at the end of his article 'A Review of Contemporary Art' – if this did not imply endorsement or artistic equality, at least Lewis was willing to display Shakespear's work adjacent to his. In hindsight, one might note that it was only his literary contemporaries that Lewis criticised for not being radical enough, suggesting that he endorsed the visual revolution in the works of the Vorticists, including the female members.

Jane Beckett and Deborah Cherry suggest that for the female artists, the abstraction of Vorticism in which 'bodily forms were not necessarily coded for sexual difference' provided them with a visual language that went beyond gender stereotypes, and allowed them aesthetic equality with fellow male members.¹⁰¹ Artistic collectives were also rare vehicles which provided opportunities for them to showcase their work in public on an equal platform with male counterparts, much as in the case of later Futurism and other Continental avant-garde movements. Therefore despite the unequal treatment of female Vorticists compared to the male members, the movement nonetheless offered a tangible social space in which their talents can be displayed and recognised.

Conclusion

It is evident that the Futurist invasion of England played a very significant role in the engendering and self-definitions of both Imagism and Vorticism. Certain artists working in England responded to this crisis by organising their own movements which assert their aesthetic distinctions from Futurism. Yet being collective avant-garde movements, there were certain similarities between Futurism, Imagism and Vorticism; in particular, Vorticism attempted to

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 72.

systemmatically develop and promote a unique interdisciplinary aesthetics in a like manner to Futurism. As Dasenbrock shows, ‘Lewis borrowed virtually the entire arsenal of techniques developed by Futurism: the manifestoes, the typography, the aggressiveness, and the cultivation of antagonists’. However, Futurism ‘became its own *raison d'être*’ and for Lewis ‘Vorticism was always only a means’;¹⁰² the same assessment is applicable to Imagism, in the sense that the movements’ aesthetics could theoretically be separated from their rhetoric and publicity gestures, in contrast to the greater aesthetic affinity and interdependency between the polemics, works and actions of the Futurists.

Both Imagism and Vorticism were also intended as reactions against the boisterous rhetoric of Futurism: the Imagist poets felt their concept of and the intrinsic value of art challenged by Futurism’s radical anti-traditionalism and mass appeal, whereas the Vorticist artists protested against what they saw as the Futurists’ malicious attempt to usurp the authentic creative force of English art. Both movements resisted Futurism and attempted to assert their exclusivity and superiority with their own polemical and practical approach: Imagism first with the opposite of Futurist spectacle, then turning to its model of commodification; Vorticism with the same enthusiastic intensity and drastic invective. And despite sharing common interests in the phenomena of the modern metropolis such as movement, temporality and technology, the Vorticists were concerned with new possibilities in the artist’s representation of these novel subject matters, rather than merely depicting their surface qualities as in Futurist works. Vorticism thus redefined their subject matters and approaches to representation in defiance of Futurist conceptions, developing their aesthetics as one that is reactionary and antithetical to Futurism. The

¹⁰² Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, p. 23. Original emphasis.

element of competition was heightened by the Vorticists' interdisciplinary aspirations, and their framing of aesthetic differences under the guises of nationhood and geography.

Imagism and Vorticism's relationship with Futurism was a curious mixture of influence and antagonism; this was particularly obvious in the case of Vorticism with its dualist attitude. But what the Vorticists did not realise was that, in so closely following and challenging Futurist aesthetics, it also became inextricably linked to their art and often drew unfavourable comparisons from commentators. Yet despite the fact that the development of Imagism and Vorticism was coupled with the objective to differentiate their art from Futurism (paradoxically by adopting certain Futurist practical approaches), both movements had many original aesthetic innovations and merit which did not arise from the competition with Futurism, and which deserve to be considered in their own rights, as I have discussed throughout this chapter. The evolution of Imagism and Vorticism's aesthetics through this complex web of influence, interaction, circulation and group dynamics remains a stimulating field for further research in the history of the English avant-garde and the beginnings of Modernism.

Conclusion

Through a combination of historical, biographical and contextual investigation and aesthetic analysis, my thesis aims to attain a more grounded and practical understanding of Imagism and Vorticism with regard to two aspects, namely the movements' relationship with the European avant-garde, and the negotiations between the individual and collective in directing the aesthetic and pragmatic outcomes of the movements.

The European avant-garde impacted on both the practical and aesthetic aspects of Imagism and Vorticism through a complex process of interaction, a 'paradox of aesthetic self-definition'¹ in which Continental influences were simultaneously acknowledged and denied, and their aesthetic experiments and approaches absorbed and critiqued by the English artists, as the latter strove to develop and legitimise their own brands of avant-garde art in England. This process of assimilation and reaction can be read in a framework of national competition between England and the Continent, evident in Pound's reflection on Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska's Vorticist aesthetics in hindsight: 'Two men then working in England could just as well have worked on the continent. They wd. not have been overshadowed but given greater acclaim.' (*EPVA*, 304) The issue of nationality, although positioned as a distinguishing factor for their art particularly by the Vorticists, simultaneously formed barriers for artistic recognition for the English artists in their attempt to create new artistic movements aspiring towards the European avant-garde, particularly in the wartime context. Nonetheless, the experiments of Imagism and Vorticism developed many aesthetic innovations in their attempt to breakthrough traditional modes of artistic creation, and established interdisciplinary 'critical

¹ Klein, 'How German Is It: Vorticism, Nationalism, and the Paradox of Aesthetic Self-Definition'.

demarcation[s]’ (*SL*, 213) in their embrace of and reaction against the stimulation of the European avant-garde.

Imagism and Vorticism also faced the question of individual and collective aesthetics of artistic groups. The collective ‘we’ enabled the English artists to promote their aesthetics with increased power, but individual aesthetic differences also impacted on the group identity, resulting in multiple aesthetic practices and rivalries. As Pound acknowledged in hindsight, manifestos can only express ‘the points of agreement’ between the members but not their ‘individualities’;² both movements were indeed sites of collaboration, self-construction and antagonism between members as they collectively developed their own art and defined new aesthetic standards. My analysis of the close interrelation between individuals and the collective affirms that both Imagism and Vorticism cannot be viewed as homogeneous movements or the achievement of any particular individual, but must be regarded as a joint outcome of individual aesthetics working in tandem.

Further questions include the aesthetic contribution of other members of the movements beside Pound, Hulme and Lewis, the movements’ impact on the transition of the English arts to Modernism, and the social and political ambitions and implications of the avant-garde aesthetics put forward by Imagism and Vorticism. Moreover, the processes of appropriation of and resistance to the European avant-garde which I have identified throughout my thesis can provide the basis for a re-assessment of the much-discussed and fraught relationship between modernism-at-large and the avant-garde in relation to the English context.

² Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists*, p. 29.

Appendix: Selected Mentions of the English Avant-Garde in French Periodicals, 1913-1914

Poème et Drame: Vol. VI (September-October 1913)

Original Text	English Translation
<p><i>L'Art Poétique Simultané</i> (extrait de la Chronique française de <i>Poetry and Drama</i>, rédigée par le poète F. S. Flint, Londres, septembre 1913, vol. III, traduit par H.-M. Barzun) (pp. 83-84)</p>	<p>The Art of Simultaneous Poetry (from the 'French Chronicle' in <i>Poetry and Drama</i>, written by the poet F. S. Flint, London, September 1913, Vol. III, translated by H.-M. Barzun) (pp. 83-84)</p>

Poème et Drame: Vol. VII (January-March 1914)

Original Text	English Translation
<p>Parmi les Poètes de notre génération qui, méditant sur la rénovation poétique, examinent avec impartialité l'esthétique polymorphe au lieu de s'en moquer ou d'en médire, RICHARD ALDINGTON, jeune poète de Londres, mérite une mention particulière.</p> <p>Dès le 7 décembre dernier, après avoir étudié les exemples publiés dans <i>Poème et Drame</i> de septembre-octobre, il nous adressait, en effet, accompagné d'une lettre qui l'honore, un essai hardiment intitulé: <i>Premier Poème simultané anglais</i>, que nous publierons prochainement si son auteur veut bien nous y autoriser [sic]. ('LA PHALANGE HÉROIQUE S'ACCROIT', pp. 71-72)</p>	<p>Among the poets of our generation, meditating on the renovation of poetry, impartially examining the polymorphous aesthetics instead of mocking or denigrating it, RICHARD ALDINGTON, a young poet from London, deserves special mention.</p> <p>On 7 December, after studying the examples published in the September-October issue of <i>Poème et Drame</i>, he wrote us a letter with a bold essay titled: First Simultaneous Poem in English. We will publish it soon if the author would allow us. ('THE HEROIC PHALANX IS GROWING', pp. 71-72)</p>

<p>MM. Ghéon et Vielé-Griffin essayèrent l'autre soir de lire en chœur des poèmes écrits en “rythmes simultanés” selon la formule de M. Barzun.</p> <p>L'invention a passé le détroit et <i>Poème et Drame</i> publiera un poème simultané anglais, de M. Richard Aldington.</p> <p>On sait que les poètes simultanés écrivent pour plusieurs voix parlant en même temps.</p> <p>Ainsi s'expriment <i>Les Treize</i> (3 janvier 1914), dont la vigilance et la sympathie intransigeantes arrachent aux poètes tous leurs secrets.</p> <p>Leur apprendrons-nous qu'après MM. Ghéon et Vielé-Griffin, Rachilde et Willy ont fait des tentatives analogues tout récemment?</p> <p>Et qu'enfin, le Maître Paul Adam a discuté passionnément l'esthétique nouvelle avec... avec une Sommité d'un art étranger à la Poésie?</p> <p>Ces exemples nous révèlent le vif intérêt que la Simultanéité poétique provoque dans tous les milieux: elle n'en laisse aucun indifférent. ('LES TENTATIONS DANGEREUSES', p. 75)</p>	<p>Messrs. Ghéon and Viele-Griffin tried the other night to read poems in chorus written in “simultaneous rhythms” in the words of Mr. Barzun.</p> <p>The invention has passed the Channel and <i>Poème et Drame</i> will publish a simultaneous poem in English by Richard Aldington.</p> <p>It is known that poets write for several simultaneous voices speaking at the same time.</p> <p><i>So Speak Thirteen</i> (3 January 1914), whose vigilance and uncompromising sympathy tear poets of all their secrets.</p> <p>Should we teach them that after Messrs. Ghéon and Viele-Griffin, Rachilde and Willy have recently made similar attempts?</p> <p>And finally, the Master Paul Adam passionately discussed the new aesthetic with a Luminary... with an art foreign to Poetry?</p> <p>These examples reveal the strong interest Simultanist poetry causes in all environments: it does not leave anyone indifferent. ('DANGEROUS TEMPTATIONS', p. 75)</p>
<p>[Annonces]</p> <p>POETRY and DRAMA</p> <p>Anciennement “The Poetry Review”</p> <p>FONDÉE EN 1912</p>	<p>[Advertisements]</p> <p>POETRY and DRAMA</p> <p>Formerly “The Poetry Review”</p> <p>FOUNDED IN 1912</p>

<p>Anthologie trimestrielle du POÈME et du DRAME modernes. Le volume: 2/6; l'abonnement: 10/6. – Edition: 35, Devonshire Street, Theobalds Road. W. C. LONDRES. – VOLUME I: Mars 1913.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POETRY BY F. S. FLINT</p> <p>London, "The Poetry Review", 1912</p>	<p>Quarterly anthology of modern POETRY and DRAMA. Volume: 2/6; Subscription: 10/6. – Published at: 35 Devonshire Street, Theobalds Road. W. C. LONDON. - VOLUME I: March 1913.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POETRY BY F. S. FLINT</p> <p>London, "The Poetry Review", 1912</p>
<p><i>Extrait du Sommaire. – La génération de 1900. – Henri Ghéon, Jean Royère, André Spire. – L'Abbaye: Henri-Martin Barzun, Alexandre Mercereau, Théo Variet, Paul Castiaux, Georges Périn, Jules Romains, René Arcos, Georges Duhamel, Charles Vildrac. – Lucien Rolmer, Nicolas Beauduin, Jean Thogorma, Florian-Parmentier. – Tancréde du Visan, Henri Hertz. – F. T. Marinetti, etc. etc. (p. 82)</i></p>	<p><i>Extract from Summary. The generation of 1900 – Henri Ghéon, Jean Royère, André Spire. – The Abbey: Henri-Martin Barzun, Alexandre Mercereau, Théo Variet, Paul Castiaux, Georges Périn, Jules Romains, René Arcos, Georges Duhamel, Charles Vildrac. – Lucien Rolmer, Nicolas Beauduin, Jean Thogorma, Florian-Parmentier. – Tancréde du Visan, Henri Hertz. – F. T. Marinetti, etc. etc. (p. 82)</i></p>
<p>LA JEUNE POÉSIE ANGLAISE La Conférence de H.-M. Barzun sur <i>la Jeune Poésie anglaise</i> et la <Libre Abbaye> de <i>Poetry and Drama</i>, faite au X^e Dîner des Artistes de Passy, le 30 septembre 1913, sera ultérieurement publiée dans <i>Poème & Drame</i>.</p> <p>Des poèmes de Lascelles Abercrombie, G. K. Chesterton, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater,</p>	<p>NEW ENGLISH POETRY The Lecture of H.-M. Barzun on new English poetry and the 'Free Abbey' of <i>Poetry and Drama</i>, made at the tenth Dinner of Artists at Passy, September 30, 1913, will be published later in <i>Poème & Drame</i>.</p> <p>The poems of Lascelles Abercrombie, G. K. Chesterton, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, J. E. Flecker, W. W.</p>

<p>J. E. Flecker, W. W. Gibson, D. H. Lawrence, F. S. Flint, John Masefield, Harold Monro, Sturge Moore, Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, etc., traduits par l'auteur, accompagneront cette enquête.</p> <p>Un chapitre spécial y sera consacré à la tentative de coopération poétique (<i>Club des Poetes, libre habitation; conferences, lectures, auditions; editions et librairie commerciale</i>, etc.) organisée au coeur de Londres par la revue <i>Poetry and Drama</i> sur le plan de l'ancienne <i>Abbaye de Creteil</i>. (p. 84)</p>	<p>Gibson, D. H. Lawrence, F. S. Flint, John Masefield, Harold Monro, Sturge Moore, Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, etc., translated by the author, will accompany this survey.</p> <p>A special chapter will be allocated to the attempted poetic cooperation (The Poets' Club, free accommodation, lectures, readings, auditions; publishing and commercial bookstore, etc.) organised in central London by the magazine <i>Poetry and Drama</i> similar to the plans of the former L'Abbaye de Créteil group. (p. 84)</p>
<p>M. Harold Monro, directeur de notre confrère anglais: Poetry and Drama, fondé le 1er mars 1913, à l'exemple de Poème et Drame, a demandé à Barzun, lors de son dernier séjour à Londres, une conférence sur l'art poétique simultané...</p>	<p>Mr. Harold Monro, Director of our English colleagues: <i>Poetry and Drama</i>, founded on 1 March 1913, following the example of <i>Poème et Drame</i>, asked Barzun, during his last stay in London, to give a lecture on the art of simultaneous poetry...</p>

Guillaume Apollinaire, ‘BLAST’, in ‘Les Arts’ (*Paris-Journal*, 15 July 1914), reprinted in Guillaume Apollinaire, *Oeuvres en Prose Complètes*, 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp. 827-828

Original Text	English Translation
<p>Ce mot en caractères d'affiches sur une couverture violette est le titre d'une nouvelle revue anglaise consacrée à l'art rebelle qui semble procéder avant tout de Picabia.</p> <p>Beaucoup de reproductions d'Edward Wadsworth, Windham Lewis, etc.</p>	<p>This word in large bold print on a purple cover is the title of a new English magazine devoted to rebellious art that seems to come primarily from Picabia.</p> <p>It contains many reproductions of Edward Wadsworth, Windham [sic]</p>

<p>Il y a des vers, un article sur Picasso, des bénédicitions à la France et un appel à l'exploitation de la vulgarité en art.</p> <p>Les Anglais commencent donc à entrer tout de go dans le mouvement moderne d'art et de littérature.</p>	<p>Lewis, etc.</p> <p>There is poetry, an article on Picasso, blessings of France and an appeal to use vulgarity in art.</p> <p>The English are beginning to enter into the modern movement in art and literature.</p>
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Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Adrien Blandignère', in 'La Vie anecdotique' (*Mercure de France*, 1 August 1914), reprinted in Guillaume Apollinaire, *Oeuvres en Prose Complètes*, 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), pp. 218

Original Text	English Translation
<p>Tout à coup, la femme de ménage, irritée par les cris injurieux des gamins, se retourna avec un geste qui fit reculer la troupe et leur cria le mot de Cambronne. Aussitôt un choeur répondit: <<Merda-rosa, merd'a ti ros'a mi.>> C'est de cette scène inoubliable que j'ai tire plus tard quelques éléments de mon manifeste milanais, <i>L'Antitradition futuriste</i>, qui vient d'être imité avec Bonheur par les nouveaux artistes et poètes anglais, dans le premier numéro de leur revue trimestrielle: <i>Blast</i>.</p>	<p>Suddenly, the cleaning lady, irritated by the kids shouting insults, turned with a gesture that drove back the troops and shouted the word of Cambronne. Immediately a chorus replied: 'Merda-rosa, merd'a ti ros'a mi.' That is the unforgettable scene which I later on drew on some elements in my Milanese manifesto <i>L'Antitradition futuriste</i>, which has been gladly imitated by new English artists and poets in the first issue of their quarterly review: <i>Blast</i>.</p>

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