

MAKING VORTICISM:

THE EMERGING ART OF WYNDHAM LEWIS, 1908-1915

PhD Thesis

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Andrew Charles Johnson hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: A. C. Johnson _____ Date: 15. 10. 2015 _____

ABSTRACT

Making Vorticism: The Emerging Art of Wyndham Lewis: 1908- 1915

My thesis approaches Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist oeuvre from first principles; how he made key drawings and paintings. The methodological principles that went into Lewis's Vorticism – for example the interactions of Cubism and Futurism - can be discerned through direct physical examination, structural form analysis, style progression, and use of colour. I avoid a chronological approach. Two works are chosen for in-depth research, the painting *The Crowd* (1914-15) and the drawing *Abstract Bird* (1914). Both works reveal strong art historical input not previously researched; the latter from Japanese prints, the former in its structural engagement with the painting *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* by the early fourteenth century Italian master, Duccio di Buoninsegna.

I argue that Wyndham Lewis reciprocates modernism's vogue for 'archaizing' Bronze Age Greece into a model that animates the myth of antiquity by layering historical material into the pressing sociological and political questions of contemporary Western society. I demonstrate this through a close reading of his Vorticist oeuvre with special attention to the painting, *The Crowd*. Lewis saw himself as a visionary in his art and literature striving to address these questions in pre-figuring modernist literature, most strikingly in Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. Within his circle, Pound and Hulme were similarly occupied in looking to the deep past to model the attitudinal changes affecting modern society. Outside the circle, Fry was similarly engaged in redefining art to meet the requirements for modern art, and contrary to the accepted view he was surprisingly close in his approach and conclusions to Lewis. Into this maelstrom of historical layering Nietzsche's prophesizing the age of tragedy and Bergson's radical recasting of time were never far from the surface.

Contents

Title Page and Declaration	1
Abstract	2
Contents	3
List of Illustrations	4 - 8
Chapter One. Introduction	9 - 39
Chapter Two. <i>The Crowd</i> (1914-15): The Anatomy of a Vorticist Painting.	40 - 111
Chapter Three. Vorticism: A Modernist Movement.	112 - 187
Chapter Four. Cultural Exchange.	188 - 245
Chapter Five. Conclusion.	246 - 255
Bibliography.	256 - 263
Illustrations.	264 - 282

List of Illustrations

1. The Dancers (Study for Kermesse) 1912, Wyndham Lewis,
Pen and ink, watercolour, 29.5 x 29 cm.
2. Dining Room, Wilton Place
3. The Beanfield, 1914, Spencer Gore, Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 40.6 cm
4. Vision of Ezekiel, 1912, David Bomberg, Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 137.2 cm
5. Study for Nativity, 1913, William Roberts, Charcoal and watercolour, 28 x 35.5 cm
6. Riot in the Calleria, 1910, Umberto Boccioni, Oil on canvas, 64 x 76 cm
7. The Crowd, 1914-15, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, 200.7 x 153.7 cm
8. Plan of War, 1913-14, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, 255 x 143 cm
9. Slow Attack, 1913-14, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown.
10. The Theatre Manager, 1909, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, watercolour, 29.5 x
31.5 cm
11. Workshop, 1914-15, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 61 cm
12. The Street enters the House, 1911, Umberto Boccioni, Oil on canvas, 100 x 100.5
cm
13. The Battle of San Romano, 1450 or thereabouts, Paolo Uccello, panel, 182 x 320
cm
14. Alcibiades, Timor of Athens, 1913, Wyndham Lewis, portfolio coloured
reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cm
15. Christ and the woman of Samaria, 1278 or thereabouts, Duccio di Buoninsegna,
panel with gold background, 43.5 x 46 cm
16. Abstract Bird, 1914, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and black ink, 33 x 23.5 cm

17. & 17A. Partridges, 1790s, Kitao Masayoshi, Coloured woodblock print
18. The Revolt. 1911, Luigi Russolo, Oil on canvas, 150 x 230 cm
19. The Surrender of Barcelona, 1937, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, 83.8 x 59.7 cm
20. Dante and Virgil entering the Inferno, Luca Signorelli, Fresco, Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.
21. A Battery Shelled, 1919, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, 182.8 x 274.7 cm
22. Christ and the Woman of Samaria, Duccio, detail (rocks)
23. The Crowd, Lewis, detail (cubist figures)
24. Christ and the Woman of Samaria, Duccio, detail (tower, inverted)
25. The Crowd, Lewis, detail (treadmill)
26. Danse, Henri Matisse, 1909, Oil on canvas, 259.7 x 390.1 cm
27. Les Eus, 1910, J D Fergusson, Oil on canvas, 216 x 277 cm
28. Timon of Athens, Composition, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, portfolio coloured reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cm
29. Timon of Athens, Act 1, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, portfolio coloured reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cm
30. The City and the River, 1913, Albert Gleizes, Oil on canvas, 70 x 90.3 cm
31. Female Figure in Flenite, 1913, Jacob Epstein, Serpentine stone. 45.7 x 9.5 x 12.1 cm
32. Two Nudes, 1903, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, ink wash, 24 x 29 cm
33. Les Damoiselles d' Avignon, 1907, Picasso, Oil on canvas, 243.9 x 233.7 cm
34. In the Hold, 1913-14, David Bomberg, Oil on canvas, 196.2 x 231.1 cm
35. Fruit Bowl and Bottle on a Pedestal Table, 1920. Picasso, Oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm
36. The Guitar, 1912-13, Picasso, Sheet metal and wire, 77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm
37. Enemy of the Stars, 1913, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, ink wash, 44 x 20 cm

38. Head of Ezra Pound, 1914, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Marble, 90.5 x 45.7 x 48.9 cm
39. Studies for Rock Drill, Venus and Doves, 1913, Epstein, Pencil and crayon, 45.5 x 58.5 cm
40. Rock Drill, 1913, (original) Epstein, White plaster figure, actual black metal drill. 205 x 141.5 cm (dimensions of the reconstructed version)
41. Study for Female Figure in Flenite, 1913, Epstein, Crayon, 68.5 x 42.5 cm
42. Lost Drawing reproduced in *Blast 1*, Epstein
43. Argol, 1914, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, watercolour, 33 x 20.5 cm
44. Indian Dance, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Black chalk and watercolour, 27 x 29 cm
45. War Engine, reproduced in *Blast 2*, 1915, Edward Wadsworth
46. Timon of Athens, The Creditors, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, , portfolio coloured reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cm
47. Bathers, 1900-1906, Cezanne, Oil on canvas, 127.2 x 196.1 cm
48. Dieppe Fishermen, 1910, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, 27.5 x 21.5 cm
49. Lot and his Suite (detail) Byzantine, 5th century, Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome
50. Courtship, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, chalk, 25.5 x 20.5 cm
51. The Courtesan, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, watercolour, 27.5 x 18.5 cm
52. The Tub, 1913, Duncan Grant, Watercolour and wax on paper on canvas, 76.2 x 55.9 cm
53. Head of Eve, 1913, Duncan Grant, Oil on board, 75.6 x 63.5 cm
54. Lovers, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, watercolour, 25.5 x 35.5 cm
55. Russian Madonna (also known as Russian Scene) 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, chalk, watercolour, 30.5 x 24 cm
56. Marguerite with Black Cat, 1910, Matisse, Oil, 94 x 64 cm
57. The Starry Sky (also known as The Starry Night) 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Pencil, pen and ink, wash, gouache, 46.5 x 62 cm

58. Man and Woman, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, chalk, pen and ink, wash, gouache, 36 x 26 cm
59. Figure Holding a Flower, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, pencil, pen and ink, gouache, 37 x 28.5 cm
60. Two Mechanics, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, ink and wash, 56 x 33.5 cm
61. Mother and Child, 1912, Wyndham Lewis, Oil on canvas, lost, dimensions not known
62. The Absinthe Drinker, 1901, Picasso, Oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm
63. Bathers, 1911, Duncan Grant, Oil on canvas, 228.6 x 306.1 cm
64. The Transporting of St. Mark's Reliquary, Mid- 13th century, Byzantine Mosaic, St. Mark's, Venice
65. The Lemon Gatherers, 1910, Duncan Grant, Oil on board, 56.5 x 81.3 cm
66. The Baptism of Christ, Mid-15th century, Piero della Francesca, Panel, 167 x 116 cm
67. Dancers, 1910, Duncan Grant, Oil on wood, 53.3 x 66 cm
68. Garden of Hesperides, 1870, Edward Burne-Jones, Watercolour and gouache on paper, 119 x 98 cm
69. Head of Sleeping Woman, 1907, Picasso, Oil on canvas, 61.4 x 47.6 cm
70. Study for Nude with Drapery, 1907, Picasso, Watercolour and gouache on brown paper, 31 x 24.5 cm
71. Woman examining her Feet, 1907, Picasso, Oil on wood, 18 x 15 cm
72. Composition, 1913, Wyndham Lewis, Pencil, pen and ink, watercolour, 34 x 26.5 cm
73. Smiling Woman ascending a Staircase, 1911, Wyndham Lewis, Charcoal and gouache, 95 x 65 cm

74. An Eagle, Mid- 15th century Japan, School of Sotan, ink and colour on paper
dimensions unknown
75. Reading Room, 1915, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink (book requisition slip from
the Reading Room of the British Museum) 9.5 x 22.5 cm
76. Composition, 1915, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, pencil, coloured chalks, 31 x 26
cm
77. New York, 1914, Wyndham Lewis, Pen and ink, watercolour, 31 x 26 cm
78. Vorticist Composition, Wyndham Lewis, Gouache and chalk, 37.5 x 17.3 cm
79. The Flagellation of Christ, Piero della Francesca, (around 1455-60), Tempora on
panel, 58.4 x 81.5 cm.

Chapter One: Introduction

In 1908 Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) following a protracted period studying art in Paris and travelling around Europe, returned to settle in London. He was twenty-six years old, had no visible means of supporting himself other than intermittent remittances from his mother, and no clear pathway to gainful employment. On the face of it, his art practice was unresolved, having little in terms of tangible output to show from his six years in Europe. Nevertheless, Lewis did have some social advantages. He was relatively well born; his absent father coming from an old established American family, his mother from Scottish/Anglo-Irish stock. His schooling at Rugby, while unpromising in academic achievement, had given the young Lewis a grounding in social networking that would prove beneficial, if at times fraught with confrontational situations. The three years studying art at the Slade from 1898 to 1901 were more promising, not that Lewis stood out amongst his fellow students as a rare talent, (unlike Augustus John before him), but his skills as a draughtsman were recognized. The image that Lewis wished to project of himself was literary, an early indication that literature would rank with his fine art. He was writing poetry and mixing with up-and-coming poets T. Sturge Moore and Lawrence Binyon. Lewis's ambitions in poetry didn't materialise, (he had just one poem published), but his friendship with Binyon had implications for Lewis the artist, due to Binyon's position in the Asia Department of the British Museum. Binyon went on to become a leading expert on Oriental art with a deep understanding of analogies between Japanese and early Italian art.

This thesis examines Lewis's most formative years as an artist from 1908, when he set out to make a name for himself in London art and literary circles, to 1915, one year into the Great War. By 1912 Lewis was making innovative art with the *Kermesse* series of paintings and drawings, followed on by the *Timon of Athens* portfolio of prints and drawings. These works led up to the most groundbreaking art movement originating in Britain in the early twentieth century, Vorticism. Vorticism was the product of a group of young up-and-coming artists led by Lewis. Often described as an

offshoot of Cubism and Futurism, Vorticism has become recognized as a fully-fledged art movement that reflected the mood of rapid social change in British urban life. It was primarily Lewis who formulated this vision of modern life, a place brimming with the energy of industrial development and overcrowded cities, a Northern trading nation, yet a place where the individual felt isolated. Lewis's vision reduced the individual to a component part of the machine where the very process of life was mechanical. Vorticist imagery reflected this conflict within Western society; its colour and form combining to create a fragmented repository of rapid cultural change. But Vorticism, as projected by Lewis, was more than a view of modern urban life. It reached back to incorporate an older view of history, yet the end result is essentially modernist. Lewis's Vorticism is essentially an experimental practice that has its place in early twentieth century avant-gardism. It stands alongside and interacts with contemporary progressive practices in literary circles. Its roots draw from both Left and Right wing political values in a mix of aggressive and often contradictory energy.

This is the crux of my thesis: an examination of how Lewis's modernism reaches back into deep history, and pre-history, to determine the place in world history where modern society finds itself. Indeed, one can extrapolate this proposition forward and examine to what extent Lewis saw the future as determined by the past. And by the past Lewis was not thinking of the Christian tradition. My primary approach is through Lewis's artwork; how he uses his art materials, and his draughtsmanship where, for example, the decisiveness of the line may cast light on his sources and his intent. Physical examination of the artwork is essential; reproductions cannot provide the information required to get into the mode of the artist. Materiality leads to intention that in turn reflects the written word. Questions arise about the theories of the existence and development of humankind in world history, and how the artist can take a non-chronological slice of history to make a vision of the present state of society, and indeed project the future. My course of enquiry is to use case studies where I suggest that Lewis has drawn material from history. In doing so, I use Lewis's artworks to interrogate those thinkers to whom modernists were drawn, most notably Nietzsche and Bergson, to establish a model of early modernism. The theories of both

philosophers were widely taken up by early twentieth century artists in making work that broke the mould of Romanticism, the prevalent force within late nineteenth century Western art.

This thesis examines the extent to which Lewis's Vorticism is underpinned by the art of the Byzantine and Early Renaissance masters. I maintain that they are of critical importance as a structural input reinforcing the concept of the philosophy of the eye and how the discriminating eye has socio-political relevance. I believe that commentators, focusing on Lewis's trade off between Cubism and Futurism, have underestimated the importance of his art history references. A recent example is Frederic Jameson's article 'Wyndham Lewis's *Timon*: The War of Forms'¹ His article provides a masterly exposition of how Cubism and Futurism structural forms were manipulated by Lewis to create a pure Vorticist aesthetic, but fails to mention any art history antecedents. Art commentators tend to take as given, references to Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano* (Fig. 13) in *Timor of Athens: Alcibaidēs* (Fig. 14) first mentioned by Ezra Pound, and to *A Battery Shelled* (Fig 21) with its structural arrangement taken from Piero della Francesca's *The Flagellation of Christ*, (figure 79), but fail to emphasize their importance to Lewis's aesthetical position. Yet Lewis reminds us throughout his literary output that Francesca, Uccello, Signorelli from the early Renaissance together with Oriental art were important to him in his art practice. David Wragg's article 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure' mentions how Lewis tries to overcome temporal problems by structuring *The Crowd* by using Renaissance techniques of ocular centralism combined with architectural enclosures, or 'room dividers'.² Vincent Sherry places great emphasis on the structural importance of proximate vision to Lewis, not only in his narrative representational form of Vorticism but also in his more abstract work.³

Sherry singles out Lewis's painting, *The Crowd* (Fig.11) from 1914-15 as an example of proximate vision where a hierarchical arrangement of cubist figures occupy shallow space enclosed within a

¹ F. Jameson, 'Wyndham Lewis's *Timon*: The War of Forms', in M. Antliff and S. W. Klein (eds.), *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, Oxford & New York, 2013, pp.15- 30.

² D. Wragg, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure' in Steve Giles, (ed.), *Theorizing Modernism, Essays in Critical Theory*, 1993, p. 120.

³ V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound Wyndham Lewis & Radical Modernism*, 1993.

schematic grid-like arrangement of form. However, he does not identify where Lewis might have derived this formal arrangement from, other than as a medieval device. I believe that I have found the painting that influenced Lewis in the making of *The Crowd*. It is *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* (1310-11) tempera on panel, by the Sieneese artist Duccio di Buoninsegna. My claim rests on several factors: the similarities in structure between the two paintings; the availability at that time for Lewis to have examined the Duccio painting; the championing of the ‘Italian Primitives’ by Roger Fry for their formal qualities as precursors to modern art. Fry reviewed this and other Early Italian paintings in the 1911 exhibition of Italian Masters at the Grafton Gallery in *The Burlington Magazine*.⁴ This leads to my second major finding that Lewis and Fry were closer in their respective aesthetics than is often given credit for.

Writers have tended to emphasize the differences rather than the similarities between Lewis and Fry. The catalyst has been the dispute over a commission for the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1913, which resulted in the permanent rift between Lewis and Fry. S. K. Tillyard’s note illustrates my point:

“The Ideal Home Rumpus” has been extensively discussed in, among others, Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (1976)...Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (1980)...and earlier in Quentin Bell and Stephen Chaplin, ‘The Ideal Home Rumpus’ *Apollo*, Jan. 1966...The result of the quarrel was to push into the shade a man who was already on the edge of a small world – a world so small, indeed, that the discussion of this quarrel can still polarise opinion today.⁵

To this list should be added William Mees’ *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, (1972) and Tom Normand’s *Wyndham Lewis the artist* (1992), but undoubtedly it is Cork’s account that that has been the most influential in tipping the balance towards the breakdown in their relationship as against what Lewis gained from Fry in developing an aesthetic that could be applied to Vorticism.⁶ An exception can be found in Paul Edwards’ account *Wyndham Lewis Painter and Writer* (2000). Edwards writes of ‘aesthetic differences’: ‘Apart from aesthetic differences (which both men were sufficiently

⁴ R. Fry, ‘Exhibition of Old Masters at the Grafton Galleries-I’, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 20, Nov. 1911, pp. 66-77.

⁵ S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1910-1920: early modernism and the arts and crafts movement in Edwardian England*, London, 1988, p. 79.

⁶ R. Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, London, 1976, pp. 92-98.

sensible to be able to set aside in their professional relationship), the real problem with Fry's patronage and critical support was his dual role of painter and patron'.⁷ But Edwards recognizes the importance to Lewis of Fry's theory of aesthetics: 'Fry and Bell were of real importance to the development of Lewis's ideas about painting'.⁸ Edwards couples Clive Bell's theory of 'significant form' with Fry's theory of aesthetics from *Vision and Design* (1923) to Lewis taking their formalist aesthetic to the point of abstraction. In making his point, Edwards refers to *Blast 1*, 'Life is the Important Thing' in stating 'Lewis in effect adopts Fry's analysis of "an equivalent for life" except Lewis terms it an ANOTHER life' ⁹:

There is only one thing better than "Life"- than using your eyes, nose, ears and muscles- and that is something very abstruse and splendid, in no way directly dependent on "Life". It is no EQUIVALENCE for Life, but ANOTHER Life, as NECESSARY to existence as the former'.¹⁰

Fry's catalogue introduction to the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1912 stated; 'They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life...in fact they aim not at illusion but at reality'¹¹ Fry applied his aesthetic analysis of Cézanne's Cubism to the Post-Impressionists in the show that included Picasso, Matisse and Derain.

While Edwards correctly sees through Lewis's attempt to distance his art from Fry's analysis, he does not analyse in detail the relationship between Lewis's and Fry's aesthetic theories. Chapter Three of this thesis looks in depth to find linkage between the two, starting with Bloomsbury's relationship with Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and Lewis's interest in the Eighteenth Century philosopher George Berkeley, and Idealism. In visual and philosophical language, I examine 'the table', that object and subject so important in Cézanne's art and to Fry's aesthetic vision, where I am indebted to Ann Banfield's account in *The Phantom Table* (2000). I believe that the art of Cézanne is a common factor between Fry and Lewis and in Chapter Four my close reading of

⁷ P. Edward, *Wyndham Lewis Painter and Writer*, 2000, pp. 95-6.

⁸ Ibid, p. 104.

⁹ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁰ Wyndham Lewis, 'Life is the Important Thing', *Blast 1*, p.130.

¹¹ R. Fry, reproduced as 'The French Post-Impressionists' in *Vision and Design*, London, 1923, p.157.

Lewis's 1912 drawing *Indian Dance* points to structural similarities. Tillyard argues that 'The last result of the dispute... (Ideal Home dispute)... was that it crystallised aesthetic differences between Lewis and Fry'.¹² She justifies this by stating, 'Lewis championed an art that proclaimed its use of machine forms and urban life, was nationalistic, energetic and violent. He was also at pains to establish a position towards nature that would set him apart from Bloomsbury'.¹³ Tillyard echoes Cork's reasoning: 'While Fry's aesthetic ideal was based on the legacy of Cézanne, resisting total abstraction as a practical ideal... Lewis and his friends were attracted by extremism... A sense of tradition was pitched against a need for iconoclasm'.¹⁴ This thesis argues against this line of reasoning: the fact that Fry in particular, and to some extent the Bloomsbury painters' ethos, resulted in a more 'domestic' tendency in subject matter does not detract from Fry's aesthetic theories of what made modern art different from Romantic art.

In this introductory chapter I begin to examine those elements in Lewis's emerging art that I consider of critical importance in making Vorticism; what he was doing and why they are important. I introduce into the thesis the two philosophers of most significance to Lewis's practice, Henri Bergson, (1859- 1941), and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, (1844- 1900), and show how he utilized both in his work in art and literature. In the context of his early work, the *Kermesse* series, what attracted Lewis to Nietzsche was his theory that artists had the intellectual qualities to override Dionysiac excess and pull society back from the brink. Lewis's attitude towards Bergson was more ambiguous. He derided his theories of time and space, of intuition and *élan vital*, yet incorporated them in his practice. This is a recurring theme in the thesis and is scrutinized in the thinking of the critic T.E.Hulme (1883- 1917) towards Bergson. Hulme became closely linked to Vorticism.

I devote a section of Chapter Three to Roger Fry, arguing that Lewis was more engaged with Fry's theories on aestheticism than he later cared to admit. Of pivotal importance to both men were the

¹² S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism, 1900-1920*, p. 70.

¹³ Ibid, p. 70.

¹⁴ Cork.R, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, 1975, p. 96.

lessons to be learned from non-Western and pre-Renaissance art whose geometrical lines and arrangements of form revealed a sense of purpose missing from Western art. Both Fry and Lewis recognized that the strength of geometrical form lay in its possibilities for abstraction that better related to modern life. In Chapter Two I examine the importance to Lewis of the work of two French writers: philosopher and theorist of revolutionary syndicalism Georges Sorel (1847-1922) and Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) the sociologist in formulating crowd psychology, where I research Lewis's mature Vorticist painting *The Crowd*. I introduce the Futurist leader and crowd manipulator, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) and in Chapter Two show how Lewis used him as a foil to distance Vorticism from Futurism. But Lewis needed Futurism as he did Cubism if only to achieve a position of closure, or 'stillness', at the centre of the vortex.

The *Kermesse* paintings and drawings of 1912, which were influenced by peasant fêtes in Brittany observed by Lewis, were closely related to the then prevailing vogue for archaeological reconstruction of the Ancient Greek myths of Dionysus but placed into a Modernist setting. An account of this vogue can be found in Cathy Gere's *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (2009). She traces the relationship between archaeological digs and reinterpretations of Ancient Greek mythology, starting in the mid-Nineteenth Century with the German businessman and amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90) excavated what he thought was the mythological treasure of the Trojan King Priam and the grave of the Homeric warlord Agamemnon. Myth became written and published as fact, giving credibility to Homer's account of Greek pre-history in *The Iliad*. Where the exercise in the representation of mythical characters became muddled was in the repackaging of fantasy and desire in the minds of Schliemann's readers. Quoting Gere, 'the pre-Hellenic Mycenaean age was considered, under the terms set by Victorian anthropology, to be the childhood of Western civilization'.¹⁵ In parallel with this new age of resurrecting pre-history from archaeological findings runs that other prophet of modernity, Nietzsche and his seminal work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).

¹⁵ C. Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, Chicago & London, 2009, p.27.

Lewis looking back to his *Wild Body* characters in his essay 'Inferior Religions' (1917); 'the Wild Body, the generic puppet of all', singled out Bestre the boarding house keeper. Here Lewis was more specific: Bestre, together with other named characters are puppets, 'these intricately moving bobbins are all subject to a set of objects, or one in particular'.¹⁶ Lewis linked Bestre's 'strange attributes' to an 'air of being privy to something of mystery and conspiracy'.¹⁷ Bestre is locked into this behaviour by what Lewis saw as a form of primitive worship; behaviour widely considered by contemporary anthropological and sociological studies, including works by Emile Durkhiem, J.G.Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*, Lévy-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality*, and Jane Harrison's studies of Greek religion, mythology and primitive ritual. Bestre's routine has the rhythm of a form of religious fanaticism. In rendering this behaviour comic, Lewis saw the 'thing' acting like a person. In attributing laughter to these 'things', he listed twelve attributes; the last seems most appropriate 'Laughter does not progress. It is primitive, hard and unchangeable'.¹⁸

Nietzsche singled out art as a model for humanity in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in discussing Hamlet's tragic despair:

Here, at the moment of supreme danger for the will, *art* approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the *comical*, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means.¹⁹

Here again, we might see Bestre, both comic and 'artist', who can overcome the absurd. He overcomes the absurdity of the body through his detachment. But in Lewis's description of Bestre, as with the other *Wild Body* characters such as innkeepers, travelling showmen, 'Poles', etc., there is a common detachment of mind from body which delivers them from the ridiculous to a state of reality where man can live. This is the essential message of Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*: the hope for mankind in making life bearable through the aesthetic of art, or the individual as a work of

¹⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Inferior Religions', *The Complete Wild Body*, B. Lafourcade (ed.), Santa Barbara, 1982, p. 315.

¹⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'Some Innkeepers and Bestre', *The Complete Wild Body*, p. 229.

¹⁸ 'Inferior Religions', *Ibid*, p. 317.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, F. W. *The Birth of Tragedy*, (eds.), R. Geuss & R. Speirs, Cambridge, 1999, p. 40.

art. Avant-garde artists of the early Twentieth-Century saw Nietzsche's prediction as both an indicator of society's ills and as elevating their standing as innovators. The message becomes an invitation to make art that breaks through from the conventions of post-Renaissance techniques and aesthetics. Nietzsche's message becomes a prediction for modernity in art. It works on a number of levels from the superiority of Homeric mythical characters as a model for a dangerous yet exhilarating society; the age of the gods Apollo and Dionysus, as against the 'turn the other cheek', 'reward in heaven' life offered by Christianity. The outlook for modernity was to be the reverse of the Ancient Greek classical progression, where the age of Dionysus was brought to an end through the rational thought of Socrates. Nietzsche's prediction for modern society was that the progress brought about by science could only produce a fragmented society where individuals can not see their lives as having meaning for the general good. *The Birth of Tragedy* was Nietzsche's answer to society's ills; a return to an age of Dionysiac tragedy. This highly romanticised vision of 'the ideal state' combined the pessimism of the Nineteenth-Century philosopher Schopenhauer with the exhilaration of the Dionysiac chorus as exemplified by Wagner. In modern society life is only worth living through the elevating qualities of art; by the 'representations of the sublime' through works of art and the 'healing' qualities of the artist.

Lewis became interested in Bergson and Nietzsche while on the Continent. He could not have read Nietzsche in English translation until 1909, with the publication of the Haussmann translation of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Edwards thought that he had read Nietzsche in Paris in French translation.²⁰ By 1908 Lewis was formulating within his *Wild Body* stories the Dionysiac myth, the crux of Nietzsche's ideas in *The Birth of Tragedy* on the true nature of life and culture. Lewis's knowledge of Bergson at that time is more certain: he is on record as having attended Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France in 1903.²¹ We know that Lewis read Bergson in the French edition at some point. There is an edition from the 1900s in Lewis's archives at the Harry Ransom Center in the University of Texas at

²⁰ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, New Haven, 2000, p. 10.

²¹ In a letter dated 19 April 1949 to Theodore Weiss, W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, London, 1963, p. 488.

Austin where he annotated the margins. Bergson's theory of time was taken up and adopted by artists, poets and writers, as Mark Antliff and others have shown.²²

Bergson located time as a non-measurable component of the human spirit, that component which allows us to incorporate a flow or flux of time from past memories, present and indeed the future into our consciousness. Bergson singled out artists, and stated that the process of capturing how they perceive what they see in front of them, or what they have previously experienced, comes from their 'inner experience of consciousness' and not just from what they see at a point in time. The aesthetic experience that emanates from the pictorial image derives from both form and content. Bergson questioned our understanding of nature's beauty, 'whether nature is beautiful otherwise than through meeting by chance certain processes of our art, and whether, in a certain sense, art is not prior to nature'.²³ Bergson suggested that 'the object of art to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality'.²⁴ Whereas nature expresses feelings, art aims at impressing feelings on our consciousness. According to Bergson art, unlike nature, induces rhythm into our consciousness that lulls us into self-forgetfulness, through which we experience the artist's aesthetic merged and enhanced in our own consciousness. (This idea of rhythm, particularly in its relationship to nature through art, had important implications for all the arts, particularly in poetry and the plastic arts). But Bergson's later work, *L'Évolution Créatrice* (1907) (*Creative Evolution*) his treatise on the evolution of life, made a more radical claim in linking the artist's methodology with that of philosophy.

But we can conceive an inquiry turned in the same direction as art, which would take life in *general* for its object, just as physical science, in following to the end the direction pointed out by external perception, prolongs the individual facts into general laws.²⁵

Intelligence draws from life while instinct, which relies on our intuition or 'sympathy', takes on an altogether different approach to life. This approach does not depend on automatism as science

²² M. Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural politics and the Parisian avant-garde*, Princeton, 1993.

²³ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1910, (1950 edn.), p. 14.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 14.

²⁵ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1911, p. 187.

does, but on recognizing the inwardness of life ‘just as the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy’.²⁶ Bergson’s metaphysical analogies with the role of the artist explain the real interest that artists had in interpreting Bergson’s philosophy into their work. The art critic and poet T. E. Hulme, later to become closely associated with Vorticism, thought so too:

But we can assert that throughout the ages philosophy, like fighting and painting, has remained a purely personal activity. The only effect the advance of science has on these three activities is to elaborate and refine the weapons that they use ... the ultimate point I want to get at here is that philosophy is an art and not a science.²⁷

Bergson’s theory of time was attractive to politically driven artists such as the Italian Futurists. New and revolutionary ideas might be promulgated through this association of mind and imagery by ‘lines of force’. Force lines represented dynamic movement over time, particularly attractive to Futurist painters for conveying intuitive sensations experienced in time. Other artists looked to Nature as the driving force. In this category were the Rhythmists, the Anglo-French movement that associated nature and the birth cycle with a ‘Mother Earth’ figure. ‘Nature’ in a Bergsonian sense means ‘natural’ signs, that is, signs which signpost creative evolutionary forces. They cannot be measured, having temporal rather than spatial qualities. Rhythmists interpreted these ‘natural’ signs as having qualities deemed to be ‘qualitative, rhythmic and organic, as opposed to quantitative, non-rhythmic, and mechanical’.²⁸ But in general terms Bergson was more analytical in his approach to distinguishing between ‘life’ and ‘knowledge’. Both are necessary to the evolutionary process but life, or growth and change, takes precedence over knowledge or intelligence. What describes this process of growth and change is *élan vital*. ‘The *élan vital* is an image for the process of time as duration. That is for time as force, the force that ‘pushes life along the road of time’.²⁹ The public

²⁶ Ibid, p. 186.

²⁷ T. E. Hulme, ‘Searchers after Reality; Jules de Gautier’, *The New Age*, Vol.6, No.5, 1909-12-02, p. 108. (While nominally devoting the article to the French philosopher de Gautier, Hulme was in effect supporting Bergson’s *durée*).

²⁸ M. Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural politics and the Parisian avant-garde*, p. 11.

²⁹ S. Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: an introduction to Henri Bergson*, Ithaca, N. Y., 2006, p. 7.

found Bergson's idea of a 'vital spirit' a kind of elixir for life, subscribing to the myth that the manifestation of one's consciousness was far more attractive to life than science-based knowledge on which dreary modern day living was seen to depend. This was borne out by the crowds who attended Bergson's 1910 lectures in London. By 1912 Bergson was becoming well known in Britain, not only to artists, but the general public, through a series of articles in *The Times* titled 'Professor Bergson on the Soul'.³⁰ These articles resulted from Bergson's visit to England in 1911 where he delivered a series of lectures at London University. Public interest centred on a simplistic, but deceptive, view of Bergson's theories: 'a champion of the spirit in a world where the spirit was sacrificed to a perpetual pursuit of material success and progress'.³¹ Hulme criticized this popularized conception or, as he called it, 'flood reputation' of Bergson; 'he penetrates the drawing rooms', and commented that few of those who attended his popular lectures understood his disciplines. He considered that in reality the pure Bergson 'lies in his method', yet most people think in a Kantian mind-set of the dualism of soul and body. While Hulme only described Bergson's methodology in the vaguest of terms, it is how Bergson singles out the individual from what Hulme calls the 'intensive manifold' located within the extensiveness of real objects in space that counts: 'Only then can we move on to the application to reality'.³²

Nietzsche unlike Bergson did not find a place in the public's consciousness, although it has to be said that one should distinguish between 'influence' and 'reputation'. *The Birth of Tragedy*, first published in 1872, was not comprehensibly translated into English until 1909 as part of the new set of translations of Nietzsche's works under the direction of Oscar Levy. Havelock Ellis had much earlier written a series of influential articles on Nietzsche in the *Savoy* (1896), where he had expressed much admiration for *The Birth of Tragedy*.³³ It is worth noting that the full title at first publication was *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* and it is in the 'spirit of music' that one can find a relationship with Bergson. But whereas Bergson offered hope for modern society, Nietzsche predicted turbulence leading to tragic consequences, largely based on his experiences in

³⁰ *The Times*, 1911, Oct. 21, 23, 28, 30.

³¹ M.A. Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, Montreal, 1996, p. 25.

³² T.E. Hulme, 'Bax on Bergson', *The New Age*, Vol.9, No.14, 1911-08-03, p. 330.

³³ See D. Thatcher's *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation*, Toronto, 1970.

the Franco-Prussian war. In the ‘The Spirit of Music’, Nietzsche relates to the myth of the Greek God, Dionysus, the bringer of dance, communal excess, and ultimately, death, yet capable of producing a higher culture through ‘Apollonian’ alliance. The idea of the Dionysiac appealed to Western artists around the time that Lewis was formulating his practice in 1911. Lewis would have some familiarity with Nietzsche’s view of world history from his six years on the Continent. He first mentioned Nietzsche in a letter dated 1907 to his mother, but only in a disparaging way, describing the scene in Augustus John’s Paris home following the death in childbirth of his wife, referring to the ‘disagreeable set of people round him (John) just now, and the average morality, taste, sensibility or whatever one calls it of the average English medical student who has read Nietzsche prevails amongst these people’.³⁴ What must have attracted Lewis to Nietzsche was his theory that artists had the intellectual qualities to override Dionysiac excess and pull society back from the brink. While it is known that Lewis attended Bergson’s lectures in Paris, and Sue Ellen Campbell and others make convincing arguments that Lewis uses Bergsonian-inspired imagery in his art, although in my view the stronger pull is from Nietzsche.

The problem in researching the early years when Lewis was putting together ideas to develop his art practice is the paucity of material. Many of his early artworks are missing, probably destroyed. Some of these were reproduced, often as a backdrop to group photographs. A large number of Vorticist drawings, and the large oil painting *Kermesse* (1912), either bought by Lewis’s main collector the American lawyer John Quinn or sold in the Vorticist Show in New York in 1917, subsequently disappeared from public record and are most probably lost.³⁵ There are significant gaps in tracing Lewis’s development in achieving his fully-fledged Vorticist style, the most important being the painting *Kermesse* where the only image is a much-simplified drypoint print by Horace Brodzky.³⁶ The innovative arrangement of form in *Kermesse* was much admired by Roger Fry and Clive Bell and was a major factor in bringing Lewis to Fry’s attention.

³⁴ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, No. 36, pp. 36-7.

³⁵ Penguin Club, New York, Jan, 1917, the exhibition venue organised by John Quinn of Vorticist art.

³⁶ *Horace Brodzky Viewing Kermesse*, 1917, V&A Collection, Prints and Drawings Study Room.

Lewis does not describe in detail his individual artworks. We are left to relate their rationale to his critical writings made years later when he was waging literary war against many of his former contemporaries and Western society in general. His books reveal his own political and philosophical leanings, his intense dislike of Bergsonian flux, stressing that temporal perception emanating from the auditory senses contaminate not only literature but also the politics of the masses. *Time and Western Man* (1927) forms a detailed engagement with the theories of Bergson, yet reveals a critical insight into early British Modernism. Nevertheless, there are strong indicators from Lewis's writing in 1914-15 that can be linked to individual artworks from that period. The most obvious is the Vorticist journal *Blast*. However, we need to be cautious about this overly polemical journal, which only survived for two issues, where the principal 'blast' was designed by Lewis to establish distance between Vorticism and Marinetti's Futurism. An exception is his Vorticist play, *Enemy of the Stars*, in *Blast 1*, and the unfinished short story, 'The Crowd Master', in *Blast 2*, both early experimental examples of Modernist prose. More fundamental to what underpins Lewis's art practice can be found in his early short stories from *The Wild Body*, based on his travels in Brittany in 1907 and his novel *Tarr*, first published in 1916 in serial form. In deep discussion with his mistress, Anastasia, the protagonist Tarr, loosely based on Lewis's post art school years in Paris, responds to the question

"Art is merely the *dead*, then?"

"No, but deadness is the first condition of art. A hippopotamus' armoured hide, a turtle's shell, feathers or machinery on the one hand; that opposed to naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life... The second is absence of soul, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of the statue are its soul. No restless quick flame-like ego is imagined for the inside of it. It has no inside."³⁷

Here Lewis is proclaiming the philosophy of the eye. Furthermore, he is highlighting a basic tenet of early Modernist art, the use of shallow space. Lewis's art is all about surface; art below the surface is rhythmic, relates to the ear and subjective, categorized as Bergsonian flux. This technique of shallow space not only created a break away from the Western tradition of Post-Renaissance art, but also illustrated the importance to Modernists of going back into history to appropriate non-

³⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr, the 1918 version*, P. O'Keefe (ed.), Santa Rosa, 1990, pp. 299-300.

Western art in their imagery. Lewis made shallow art a key Vorticist concept. It provided the mechanism to express a Vorticist view of the world where all is surface defined; where people are reduced to geometrical 'objects'; where 'activity' is expressed as 'objectified' shapes.

Between 1912 and 1915, Lewis and his circle set out to make art that reflected their vision of a modern industrial Britain. The artists who joined, or were associated with the Vorticist Movement, were drawn from a number of groups practising in London. Of these, two stand out; the Camden Town Group led by Walter Sickert (1860-1942) and Spencer Gore (1878-1914), and a group of artists associated with Roger Fry. Of the two groupings, Fry's was the more influential through his role as 'art facilitator' in organizing exhibitions that attracted avant-garde artists from Europe. The seminally important show was the 1910 First Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, London, which included work by Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Matisse. Its impact on London's intellectual circles was summed up by Virginia Woolf's famous comment; 'on or about December 1910 human character changed'.³⁸ The impact of modernism in relation to Lewis, Fry and Bloomsbury is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Artists associated with Fry who went on to form the Vorticists were Frederick Etchells, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Cuthbert Hamilton, Edward Wadsworth, William Roberts and Wyndham Lewis. More loosely connected with the Vorticist movement were David Bomberg and C.R.W. Nevinson who belonged to the Friday Club, founded by the painter Vanessa Bell, a close associate of Fry. Bell and Fry went on to found the Omega Workshops (with Duncan Grant) in 1913. The Workshops also included Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, Hamilton, Wadsworth, Roberts, Gore and Etchells. Lewis's association with the Omega Workshops was short-lived, the breakup prompted by an argument over a commission to decorate a room at the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913. Lewis was adamant that Fry had stolen the commission from him. The subsequent round-robin letter sent to the Omega's shareholders and the press, signed by Lewis, Etchells, Hamilton and Wadsworth

³⁸ Written much later in 1924 essay, V. Woolf, *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*.

caused a rift between Lewis and Fry which never healed throughout their respective careers.³⁹ The outcome was the formation of the Rebel Art Centre by Lewis and his fellow signatories in March 1914.⁴⁰

Vorticism as a movement embraced quite disparate practices: Bomberg, although not a named Vorticist, was closely associated with the movement and yet his paintings expressed vitality quite at odds with the architectural 'deadness' of Lewis and Wadsworth. Roberts's cubist style was closely related to Lewis's figures but the overall feel was different. By late 1913, Lewis, the American born sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), Etchells and Nevinson were exhibiting work in the aptly named Cubist Room at the Brighton Exhibition (Dec-Jan. 1913/14); work that diverged radically from the Impressionist-style Camden Town painters. The organizer, Sickert, wrote in a private letter, 'the.... room made me sick and I publicly disengaged my responsibility'. Lewis, having now made the break with Fry, together with painter Kate Lechmere who funded the project, set up the Rebel Art Centre in Great Ormond Street. The Centre was to show the work of Lewis and his associated artists, hold lectures, teach and produce applied arts. Lewis was over-ambitious and only the first two aims were achieved before the centre closed in July 1914. In addition to the four 'Round Robin' artists, Jessica Dismorr (previously part of the quasi-Fauvist group associated with the magazine *Rhythm*), the young French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915), Helen Saunders, William Roberts (1895-1980) and Lechmere became active members. Spencer Gore who, with his friend Lewis, was directly involved in the argument over the *Daily Mail* commission, also joined but was never active within the movement.

Despite its short life the centre's membership created a modernist movement, which while having some common ground with Cubism, should not be judged as a variant of cubist art. The Vorticists

³⁹ W. K. Rose, (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, No. 47, 'The 'Round Robin'', pp. 47- 50; Nos. 48 and 50, to Clive Bell, pp. 50- 51 and 53; No. 49, to P. G. Konody, p. 52.

⁴⁰ Barbara Wadsworth's account of her father's relationship with Lewis in moving from Fry's Omega Workshops to setting up the Rebel Art Club casts light on the dominance of Lewis over his fellow artists. During this period Wadsworth moved from almost a blind trust in Lewis to a wariness of getting involved in Lewis's quarrels. Barbara Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth: A Painter's Life*, chapter 4, 'Wyndham Lewis and Blast', Salisbury, 1989, pp. 40- 61.

had a vision of a modern society that was literally ‘a machine age’. How did they arrive at this concept? Jeffrey Meyers provides a useful survey of these characteristics:

(Vorticism) combined primitivism and technology, was fascinated with machinery, the city, energy and violence, was characterized by dissonance and asymmetry, iron control and underlying explosiveness, classical detachment and strident energy; reflected “steel and stone in the spirit of the artist”, and expressed dynamic emotion in abstract design. The Vorticist stood at the heart of the whirlpool, at once calm and violent, magnetic and incandescent: at the great silent place where energy and ideas are concentrated, where (like a waterfall) form is created and maintained by force.⁴¹

This definition suggests a coming together of a number of disparate strands to form a united whole bound by the energy of the vortex. The concept creates a unity which is essentially ‘modern’: an image for a century reflecting the coming of age of a society in which technology is the driving force for progress, and where ‘life’ is increasingly equated to the inanimate condition of a machine. The concept is mm by a lack humanity; that spirit of the soul.

The Vorticist world represented by the plastic arts is one of near abstract imagery, (loosely described as ‘abstract’); a coalescing of form and colour to create a view of society as machine-like as the environment into which it was placed. This was a dead society, a world where people were represented as puppets totally without human spirit. Lewis saw himself as the visionary looking out at the world around him, his critical intelligence creating through his detached view an alien world marked by an angular, hard geometric imagery. Vorticism was much more than a form of visual representation. The paintings were underpinned by political and philosophical leanings. While Lewis’s political beliefs are hard to pin down, there were political currents influencing his work as a writer and artist during these years. Foremost was anarchism, then as now a much-maligned political and philosophical creed in Britain. But anarchism has a history ranging from the propagandising of violent revolution – “Anarchism by the deed” - to a rather more individualistic lifestyle form of British anarchism, for example, as propagated by the fortnightly journal *The Egoist*. In interpreting Lewis’s practice, anarchism is important not least because of its connection to contemporary art and political movements on the Continent.

⁴¹J. Meyers, *The Enemy: A biography of Wyndham Lewis*, Boston, Mass. & London, 1980, p. 63.

Readers of *The New Age*, the weekly journal that debated progressive art, literature and politics, would have become familiar from 1909 with Bergson through Hulme's articles, in which he set out the connections between Bergson and imagist poetry. But by February 1914 Hulme's interest had moved from Imagism with its connection to Bergson's theory of time, to art. The 'new art' that Hulme championed as 'superior' art was different from 'vital' art: 'There are two kinds of art, geometrical, or abstract, and vital and realistic art, which differ absolutely in kind from the other'.⁴² Should this be seen as an outright rejection of Bergson's theory, which in any case was distorted by artists to suit their outlook on life, or a move to a form of art that, while not supporting the relationship between humanity and nature, nevertheless could not entirely exclude nature? Kimball suggests that Hulme supported Bergson for so long 'because he hoped that Bergson's notion of "intuition" could provide a convincing response to the dehumanizing, mechanistic world view... around him'.⁴³ This was despite the evidence from the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer's theory of the superiority of abstract art over romanticism, with the latter's reliance on humanism indicating that vital art and empathy must be linked. The notes Hulme left behind after his death, setting out a plan for a book on modern theories of art, asks the question; does Bergson's theory 'describe the indescribable process of artistic creation' or was Bergson too close to Symbolism to give universal truth?⁴⁴

Hulme was perceptive in linking Lewis's hard-edged geometrical imagery to Primitive art. From this premise he made the jump to a superior art, which represented the true nature of life devoid of humanity. Ezra Pound (1885-1972) the expatriate American poet and critic, came to visual imagery through poetry and as a literary critic: he was appointed literary editor of *The Egoist* in 1914. Pound recognized the importance of Hulme's theories, initially to poetry, and then to fine art. But Pound was late in understanding how artists made the jump from Impressionism to Vorticism. He was first and foremost a propagandist (he claimed to have been the first to apply the name Vorticist) and a forceful ally to Lewis's cause. Pound was a major contributor to *Blast*, *Review of the Great*

⁴² T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art- II. A Preface Note and Non-Realism', *The New Age*, 12th Feb. 1914, p. 467.

⁴³ R. Kimball, 'The importance of T. E. Hulme; on the collected writings of T. E. Hulme', K. Csengeri (ed.), *The New Criterion*, Feb. 1997.

⁴⁴ H. Read (ed.), *Speculations: essays on humanism and the philosophy of art*, London & New York, 1924. Appendix.B, pp. 261- 264.

English Vortex (henceforth *Blast 1*) the first issue of what was intended to be a quarterly magazine. Together, Pound and Lewis, its editor, assembled a collection of manifestos and assertions designed to show that Vorticists were artists who rose above the ‘mediocrity’ surrounding art in Britain. They were in the vanguard. They were ‘men of war’! *Blast 1* is immensely important in our understanding of Vorticism and where Lewis and his fellow Vorticists stood in relation to the art world of 1914. Just as important is its value in addressing the social and political questions of that period, given the polemical style of its content. The innovative print style was also of lasting importance; its visual impact of the manifesto’s layout a breakthrough of modernism in its own right. There were only two issues of *Blast*, the first in June 1914, the second (the war number) in July 1915. *Blast 1* marked the high point in Vorticism, *Blast 2*, the beginning of the end as an organized movement. There was an acceptance that the Great War (1914-1918) was to have a major impact on the belligerent individualism of the Vorticists. The war effort demanded a coming together of the population, including artists, under the banner of nationalism.⁴⁵

The foundation of the Rebel Art Centre marks the point where Lewis and the group had assimilated certain characteristics of contemporary European art and then formulated an art movement they regarded as transcending the European avant-garde. From November 1910, when Fry organized the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition, there had been a succession of shows of Continental avant-gardists in London which included works by Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, Gauguin, Matisse and Kandinsky. On show were examples of Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism and Expressionism. An important characteristic distinguishing many of these works from the traditions of British art was that form became the dominant factor over content. As Fry explained in the catalogue; the adventurous artist ‘begins to try to unload, to simplify the drawing and painting by which natural objects are evoked, in order to recover the lost expressiveness and life’.⁴⁶ London exhibitions of Continental art followed including the highly influential Italian Futurist Exhibition at

⁴⁵ Not universally accepted by artists. Fry was strongly opposed to the war. Grant sought work on the land. Lewis held back in the hope of obtaining a commission, finally volunteering as a gunner in 1916 to avoid conscription.

⁴⁶ Quote taken from R. Cork, ‘From “Art Quake” to Pure Visual Music, Roger Fry and Modern British Art, 1910-1916’, in C. Green (ed.), *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry’s vision of art*, Courtauld gallery, London, 1999.

the Sackville Gallery in March 1912. Up to 1910 a British version of French Impressionism, practised by Sickert and his followers in the New English Art Club (1886-1918) was seen as rather daring art. Sickert formed the Fitzroy Street Group in 1907 together with Gore and Gilman, who had travelled and worked on the Continent. Charles Ginner (1878-1952) joined the Fitzroy Street Group in 1910 having worked and studied in Paris. He returned to England in 1908. Ginner later became involved in a heated exchange of articles in the *New Age* with Hulme over ‘revealing the truth to nature’, a theory first propagated by Fry. The argument revolved around Hulme’s view that for modernists, abstraction represents the truest form of art where any connection with nature has been severed.⁴⁷ This interchange of views is extended in Chapter Four within the context of Lewis and Bloomsbury. For young Slade-trained artists such as Bomberg and Roberts, both from working class homes, Continental visits were out of the question. Students at London’s leading art school, the Slade, were grounded in Graeco-Roman Classicism with the emphasis on drawing skills from the Renaissance masters. Slade students found the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition to be a revelation. The more progressive students insisted there should be no turning back.

Lewis, together with other British artists, notably Frederick Etchells (1886-1949) Cuthbert Hamilton (1885-1959) and Edward Wadsworth (1889-1949) exhibited alongside French and Russian artists in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Again organized by Fry at the Grafton Galleries, the show ran from October 1912 to January 1913. These exhibitions had both philosophical and technical impacts on emerging British artists in developing their practices. By 1912 Gore was incorporating a stylised vigour to his Letchworth landscape painting *The Beanfield* (1912) (figure 3). Bomberg used strong Cubist imagery in his paintings *The Mud Bath* (1914) and *Vision of Ezekiel* (1912) (figure 4) with their geometric figures. The configuration of Bomberg and Roberts’s figures may have influenced Lewis’s *The Crowd* (1914-15) (figure 7). Roberts’s 1913 drawing and painting *Study for Nativity* (figure 5) and *The Return of Ulysses* depict figures in a similar manner. There is an element of vitality in these paintings by Roberts and Bomberg that suggests both the influence of Bergson, the crowd psychology of Le Bon, and the Italian Futurists. Umberto

⁴⁷ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art- II’, *The New Age*, 12th Feb. 1914, pp. 467- 469, critique of C. Ginner, ‘Neo-Realism’, *The New Age*, 1st Jan. 1914, pp. 271- 2.

Boccioni's painting *Riot in the Galleria* (1910) (figure 6) shows similar characteristics. Although this painting is not mentioned as being included in the 1912 Futurist Exhibition, other paintings by Boccioni were included. The show was reported, including an interview with Boccioni.⁴⁸ British artists with 'advanced' views considered that Bergson's ideas were the philosophical 'glue' which bonded the new art. For example, Edward Wadsworth's *L'Omnibus* is clearly influenced by Severini's *Travel Memories* (1910-11) in its Bergsonian intuitive approach to memory.

The name Vorticism was conceived to describe the concept of energy flowing into the centre of a vortex. London was the Vortex. Vorticism represented modern life, but its underlying structure often drew on the past to accentuate the present. By doing so it sought to transcend the historical limitations of chronology and thus encompass all time. Here we find the structure of early Modernism, a structure that fellow Vorticist, Pound, would apply to his epic poem, the *Cantos*. Pound's *modus operandi* is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Pound became associated with Lewis, Hulme, Epstein and Gaudier over the period 1913-15. He gradually realised that the way that Vorticism was visually structured in art could be adapted to create a new form of poetry. In achieving this breakthrough, the most important Vorticist element for Pound was a sense of dynamics in seeing the world around him; the idea of the vortex where ideas burst out in a myriad of activity. As already emphasized, the basic element of Vorticism is form. The aim was to conceptualize the modern world as Vorticists saw it as a multitude of forces or energies. Although one might also describe the Futurists' aims in the same terms of energized forms, Vorticists rejected Futurism as 'nihilistic', a label designed to establish distance between them. To this end, *Blast* proclaimed that Futurists reject the traditions from the past for that of a 'vitalised' machine-obsessed future, which was not strictly true other than on a Marinetti propaganda level. Lewis drew from the past but was cautious of sentimentalizing the past. Lewis's art must not lose touch with the physicality of the past; quoting Lewis, 'I am for the physical world'.⁴⁹ Describing what made him a painter Lewis wrote, 'some propensity for the exactly-defined and also, fantastically it may be,

⁴⁸ E. A. Brown, 'Fine Art', *The Freewoman*, 14th Mar. 1914, p. 330.

⁴⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, P. Edwards (ed.), Santa Rosa, 1993, p. 110.

the physical or the concrete'.⁵⁰ This emphasis on the physical remained throughout Lewis's painting life and although some of his Vorticist work has been described as abstract, his arrangement of forms never lost touch with the 'concrete', and with it, reality. As Wragg points out: 'Essentially, Lewis considered that Bergson's philosophy had given up on objectivism, or a situation in which the distinction between mind and matter is fundamental to a grip on concrete reality'.⁵¹ The enemy for Lewis was the ephemeral, 'the surging ecstatic featureless chaos' that he saw as Bergsonian flux.⁵² Pound's equivalence of Lewis's forms is 'concrete' and created through Vorticist energy. He called his forms 'pattern-units'; ideas, images, are drawn from life over the ages, coming together in prose to create what he described as a force field. Pound used the analogy of the pattern formed by magnetised iron filings. The concept of the vortex contains and maintains these forms, or ideas, that come rushing in from Pound's chosen world. These forms express a confluence of forces. Lewis's lost paintings *Plan of War* and *Slow Attack* (1914-15) (figures 8 & 9), both reproduced in *Blast 1*, come together in the same way. The eye singles out the confluence of forces where the arrangement of wedge-like shapes indicates pure aggression and a crumbling of compacted energy. The concept of the vortex in these works is plain to see, the metaphor for the form-creating force, a self-contained constant force, dynamic yet static. This is Pound's model transposed to poetry.

Lewis's Vorticist art cannot be divorced from Futurism despite his avowed hostility to Marinetti. They follow parallel ways that frequently converge visually and ideologically. Despite Lewis's disparaging harangues in *Blast 1* on the movement and its leader, Marinetti, the aesthetic of Vorticism needed Futurism and Cubism to achieve a position of closure. Vorticists related Art to a condition of 'deadness', a term not to be confused with 'dead'. There is no living 'inside' to what they depict, 'it lives soul-lessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses'. Cubism and Futurism, particularly the latter, rely on the subjective to achieve their aesthetic positions, whereas Lewis goes for the visually structured object to achieve his. The heart of the whirlpool is where Lewis positions

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 109.

⁵¹ D. Wragg, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure', in S. Giles (ed.), *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in critical theory*, 1993, p. 87.

⁵² Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 109.

his art, 'a great silent place where the energy is concentrated'.⁵³ Quoting Wragg, 'As far as the production of artwork is concerned, this implies that painting's spatial form is used to represent the mind's command over the sensations bombarding it'.⁵⁴ Lewis failed to resolve his command in *The Crowd* but I argue in Chapter Two that the methodology that Lewis applied is of major significance in assessing his contribution to Modernism. It is here that Lewis converges with Hulme's radical ideas on art and modern society. Hulme invested the bulk of his philosophical inquiries into interpreting Bergson's theories and was reluctant to totally reject them. The problem for Hulme was equating Bergson's implicit Romanticism with abstract geometrical art. In art, Hulme's aim was to inquire into the psychology of artistic creation and of primary interest was how Bergson's theory of time penetrated the artist's mind. Did, for example, the intuitive still form an important part of artistic process, even though the outcome veered towards the geometrical? In a sense Hulme admitted to this Bergsonian process in his article *Modern Art 11* where he challenged Ginner's defence of Neo-Realism. In dissecting the process employed by Cézanne he stated:

Though the simplification of planes may appear passive and prosaic, entirely dictated by a desire to reproduce a certain solidity, and from the point of view of almost fumbling, yet at the same time one may say that in this treatment of detail, there is an energy at work which, though perhaps unconscious, is none the less an energy which is working towards abstraction and towards a feeling of structure. If one thinks of the details, rather than the picture as a whole, one need not even say this energy is unconscious.⁵⁵

Further into his defence of abstraction, Hulme dealt with the artist's relationship with Nature:

I admit that the artist cannot work without contact with nature, but one must make a distinction between this and the conclusion drawn from it that the work of art itself must be an interpretation of nature.⁵⁶

I argue that Hulme applied his principle that Bergson's theory of time should be seen as a progression, not a departure, from that which he applied to Imagist poetry. In Chapter Three I show how Hulme reinterpreted Bergson's intuitive imagery to the point of rejecting his humanism. Hulme concluded the article by stating that the artist who made geometrical or abstract art made

⁵³ R.Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, Vol.1, p. 254. (an indirect quote of Lewis).

⁵⁴ D. Wragg, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure', p. 90.

⁵⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art-II', *New Age*, 12th Feb. 1914, p. 468.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 469.

contact with nature, but while it would be impossible to work without employing ‘sensual stimulus’, his reasoning activity ‘is quite different in character from any succession of images drawn from the senses’.⁵⁷ Like Lewis, Hulme implicitly acknowledged the primacy of the eye in breaking down Bergson’s musical empathy of the ear.

Pound wrote in February 1914: ‘Some nights ago Mr T. E. Hulme delivered to the Quest Society an almost wholly unintelligible lecture on cubism and new art at large’. He went on to state, ‘Mr Hulme told us that there was *vital* art and *geometric* art’.⁵⁸ While at that time Pound’s understanding of ‘the new art’ was receptive but confused, he had grasped a fundamental aspect of Hulme’s delivery: ‘We turn back, we artists, to the powers of the air, to the djinns who were our allies aforetime, to the spirits of our ancestors’.⁵⁹ The new art had its roots in pre-history, and in Hulme’s admiration of the drawings and sculptural work of Epstein seen at the 21 Gallery in London and the Cubist Room, Brighton, he recognized their geometrical form as a reinterpretation of primitive art. Both Hulme and Pound, having formerly applied the philosophy of Bergson to poetry, persisted in applying the methodology of Bergson, but not the conclusions, to the new art. Hulme did not use the term ‘vital’ in a derogatory sense: all good art, whether realist or abstract, should have vitality. By vitality, Hulme meant an essential energy in art. Vitality is part of being creative, to be distinguished from ‘vitalist’ art, which relates to what he described as ‘bad art’; the formulistic art derived from the Greek and Renaissance tradition of expressing humanity through nature. To quote Hulme on abstraction and its relationship with what he called ‘this other art’, namely Ancient Greek art, or art from pre-history:

Their almost geometrical and non-vital characters are not the result of weakness and lack of vitality in the art. They are not dead conventions but the product of a creative process just as active as that in any vitalist art.⁶⁰

Pound’s ideas on the new art differed greatly from Lewis and Hulme. Lewis had not only dismissed humanism in art as inferior and formulistic, but also positioned himself as outside nature and by

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 469.

⁵⁸ E. Pound, ‘The New Sculpture’, *The Egoist*, Feb. 16th 1914, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

⁶⁰ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art- II’, p. 467.

extension, life. Pound merely used the new art as a means of dismissing a society locked into the familiar tradition of Romantic art. He had not grasped how Lewis's art implies a society locked into a new set of visual signs. These signs signified through their geometric construction an absence of life. Pound dismissed realist art because he could only equate it with Romantic art. Lewis's art is realist art expressed in a new way.

In his lecture on 22 January 1914 to the Quest Society entitled *The New Art and its Philosophy* Hulme related art to society. His theme relied heavily on the German art historian and theoretician, Wilhelm Worringer who identified Renaissance art as indicative of a change in attitude to religion. From 1911 Hulme began to write extensively about Worringer, drawing from his art theories in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908). Worringer's ideas were incorporated into Hulme's lecture in which he brought together what constituted 'the new attitude' in contemporary art. Hulme's attention had been drawn to the formalized geometry of Byzantine mosaics, and it was but a short step to associate the geometric art of ancient cultures with Worringer's views on empathy. According to Worringer, the tradition, since the Renaissance, of valuing art on its capacity to generate realism through soft organic lines, was inferior to representation by hard-lined, self-contained, anti-spatial, inorganic forms. The outcome, for Hulme was to denigrate the 'empathy' he saw in Italian Renaissance painting; its application by artists thereafter was organic, imitative and humanist. This change reflected the way that humanity had now reconciled 'life' with 'nature'. In philosophical terms mankind instead of fearing nature embraced it, linking nature's sublime with empathically generated feelings of goodness. Instead of God being an absolute inbuilt dogma required to control mankind through the doctrine of Original Sin, in humanism God was to be found and expressed through nature and therefore in life. Hulme contrasted the lack of comprehension of Indian religion and philosophy with that of Western society: 'It may seem paradoxical in view of the extraordinary emphasis laid on life by philosophy at the present day'.⁶¹ Here Hulme was implicitly criticizing Bergson's emphasis on nature and life.

⁶¹ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and its Philosophy', in K. Csengeri (ed.), *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, Oxford & New York, 1994, p. 271.

As early as 1911 Hulme had been politically active on behalf of the Conservative Party in pursuing a new authoritarianism through the columns of the *Commentator*, the newly launched weekly Conservative newspaper. The 1910 election resulted in the Liberal Party retaining control of Parliament, but only with Irish Nationalist support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, (I.P.P), and the All-for-Ireland League, (IFIL). The strong showing of the Labour Party, who held the balance of power with forty-two seats, and a perceived lack of political direction of the Conservatives spurred Hulme, together with the poet and critic Edward Storer (1880-1944) to give the party a philosophical stamp. Storer as art critic was sympathetic towards young progressive artists if not totally understanding their methodology and driving force. Both Hulme and Storer used almost identical arguments in associating the Liberals with Romanticism and the Conservatives with the Classical tradition. But Hulme went further in saying that the Conservatives must take note of the non-rational use of touchwords such as *free*, *national*, *liberty*, and *equality*, words that generated images. Quoting Hulme dismissing the supremacy of ‘reason’

Gradually during the last 50 years in philosophy, instinct and emotion have asserted their rightful place, until at the present time the reaction has gone so far that the intellect is regarded merely as a subtle and useful servant of the will, and of man’s generally irrational vital instincts.⁶²

These words reflected the ideology of the revolutionary Syndicalist Georges Sorel. Indeed, bearing in mind the increasing successes of the Socialists in France, Sorel’s pathway to revolution mapped out in *Reflections on Violence*, and the right wing *L’Action française* which, Hulme reflected ‘has made it rather *bête démodée* to be a Socialist’, while also duping their followers into becoming Neo-Royalists by serving ‘their victim the right kind of sauce’. The Conservatives should model their rhetoric in a similar way. The outcome, unlike the illusion of progress, the goal of the Socialists and the age-old ‘heaven on earth’ of the Liberals, needed to be a return to the constant stability of the past, a past that could be presented in a non-challenging way, where traditional beliefs could be allied to our prejudices without contradiction.

⁶² T. E. Hulme, ‘A Note on the Art of Political Conversation’, *The Commentator*, 22nd Feb., 1st Mar., 8th Mar., 1911.

Sherry questions that Sorel's mechanism for revolution is purely based on Bergson's theories of temporality.⁶³ Sorel's attack levelled at French Parliamentary Socialists suggested that acoustic sensation is not so much the property of the masses but rather the tool of socialist democracy. By using words such as justice, truth, equality, democracy and liberty as slogans, parliamentary democracy merely perpetuated the dominance of the bourgeoisie. The sentimental receptiveness of the masses to the 'musical flux' of such language perpetuated the system of inequality. Sorel's answer was to shut out this musical empathy by using visual distinctions to break down the rhythm of images generated by the flux. In suppressing the ear, Sorel was attacking democratic humanism, a position that was in keeping with Worringer's ideas on the inferiority of empathic art and its direct connection with 'musical flux'. The eye distinguishes these successive images, which have revolutionary meaning so that the sentimentality generated by language is stripped out by what Sorel called the 'intuitive image', the stimulant to proletarian revolt. Sorel, in privileging the eye over the ear, was adopting the mechanism of the French radical right, *L'Action française*, led by Charles Maurras (1868-1952). The Syndicalists briefly joined forces with *L'Action française* in 1911, under the banner 'Cercle Proudhon'. It is questionable whether Hulme's *Commentator* articles could activate the succession of visual images for people to support traditional values in the way that Sorel set about using the myth of the General Strike. Hulme was addressing a limited electoral franchise that excluded a large proportion of the male working classes and all women, who were disenfranchised. Ideology pertaining to the superiority of the eye rested largely in appreciating art, which was reserved for the intellectually gifted minority. Lewis interpreted the superiority of the eye in his detachment from the masses.

Hulme's connection with crowd psychology can be traced through his admiration for the French revolutionary syndicalist Sorel whose book, *Reflections on Violence* (1908) he translated for its London edition in 1916. Hulme supported Sorel because Sorel was at heart a believer in traditional values; ethical, heroic, or political. Sorel thought man by nature was bad although his condition might be improved through discipline. These values, for Hulme, implied some form of authoritarianism. In

⁶³ V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound Wyndham Lewis & Radical Modernism*, New York & Oxford, 1993, pp. 30-31.

France, the theories of mass psychology of Sorel and Le Bon followed parallel courses. Both Sorel and Le Bon laid the groundwork for a theory of mass action leading to political change, although from opposite ends of the political spectrum: Sorel for syndicalist/working class unrest leading to class war; Le Bon's objectives were less clear-cut, but lay in the direction of nationalistic revival. A third factor should also be included, *L'Action française*. Hulme had connections with Maurras, the charismatic leader of *L'Action française*. Maurras, whose talent as a propagandist spearheaded the political action of the organization and like Sorel and Le Bon, recognized the potential for political action through control of the masses.

The mechanical actions of Lewis's crowd, both in 'The Crowd Master' and as depicted in *The Crowd*, suggests an absence of humanist values. The masses are far removed from those Romantic principles of optimism for the advancement of society. Rather, they suggest a regression to a pre-civilized state of evolution. This loss of individual responsibility empowers the lower, or quoting Le Bon, the 'bad sentiments': 'These sentiments are the atavistic residuum of the instincts of primitive man'.⁶⁴ Hulme and Sorel thought advancement could only be achieved through discipline and a return to traditional values. Sorel's route was through class action; Hulme's through some form of authoritarianism. Lewis's views were less clear-cut; there was no clear pathway and this is reflected in his painting *The Crowd*. He was clearly influenced in his art practice by Hulme's theory that true modern art reflected a changed sensibility towards society. Depicting the human form in hard geometrical lines to evoke the mechanical nature of modern society was not enough. This new sensibility must stem from a change in attitude; as Hulme said: 'I believe it to be the precursor of a much wider change in philosophy and general outlook on the world'.⁶⁵ These views were given by Hulme in the Quest Society lecture, and would have been fresh in the mind of Lewis when he began painting *The Crowd*. The painting reflects the pessimism that Hulme placed on humankind's limited progress. On a political level, Lewis by including the symbols of revolutionary change, the red flag, once the banner of the Paris Commune of 1871, and the French tricolour, in the painting has led art commentators to view the image as Lewis's political belief in some form of anarchic

⁶⁴ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd: a study of the popular mind*, London, 1897, p. 22.

⁶⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'Art and its Philosophy' in *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, p. 285.

upsurge to cleanse modern society. I think this is no more than a half-truth. The flags represent a 'nod' to Sorel; in that they are meant to signify the superiority of the eye in breaking down the rhythm, or flux, generated by the Futurists towards the masses. Lewis, by nature, is setting himself up as a critic of social progress towards any form of democracy that involves people power. For Lewis, Hulme and Sorel, control of the masses can only be achieved through a strong authoritarian process. Hulme looked to a central authoritarian Conservative government to revive the traditional Tory values of control of society through discipline. (Notwithstanding that the traditional Tory believed that the working man should be allowed his beer and skittles!). Sorel looked to true Socialist values to achieve authoritarianism through the mechanism of union-based communes.

In the following chapters I set out to show how Lewis's intellectual approach to art develops an aesthetic that draws from history. Unlike the convention of 'history painting' in art, Lewis's approach to history is structural. He layers his history archeologically into the picture plane. There is no sense of chronology. The past enters into the present and indeed the future. Vorticist art takes on a different approach to encapsulate the state of Western society. The vortex is a place of frantic cultural activity, of chaos and creativity, with the threat of violence always looming. Chapter Two, 'An analysis of *The Crowd*', presents and develops the crux of my research. The painting raises questions about Lewis's hitherto unremitting belief in his powers to impose his own individuality as expressed through Vorticism to form a view of the world. The detached Lewis plays off Cubism against Futurism to achieve a position of closure, yet issues remain unresolved. The underlying medieval structure of the work, I believe, comes from a Duccio painting *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* (circa 1311) (figure 15) but *The Crowd* holds none of the certainty of belief and authority expressed by Duccio. Yet as an outstanding Modernist painting *The Crowd* raises important questions about the past influencing the future of the Western world, given the reality of the Great War.

In Chapter Three, 'Vorticism: A Modernist Movement', I set out to relate Lewis's Vorticist aesthetic to his play *Enemy of the Stars*, from *Blast 1*, how it relates to his art practice, and how Pound

comes up with a blueprint for Vorticism in his epic poem *The Cantos*. While Pound was initially slow to understand Lewis's approach to art, he overcomes the difficulties that Lewis had found in the transition from canvas to page, largely through his literary model of drawing from layers of history to produce a view of the world that transcends language. Just as the medieval painter's practice of proximate vision, shallow space, breaking up temporal perception for the viewer to create a hierarchical relationship between objects across the picture plane, modernist literature seeks to educate the reader into perceiving the written word in a different way from the conventional unrolling of narrative in time. Lewis, applying the medieval painter's technique of juxtaposing objects in space to *The Crowd*, creates a conflict for the viewer in reading the painting. Something similar is happening to the modernist poetry of Pound and Eliot in *The Cantos* and *The Waste Land*. In both poems word-groups, or phrases, take the place of the sentence, are juxtaposed with each other and must be perceived simultaneously for the reader to extract meaning.

Chapter Four focuses on 'Cultural "exchange"', surveys how Western art came to appropriate the past, ranging from Ancient non-Christian mythology, primitive tribal society, Byzantine art and its traditions, and Oriental art. In analysing Lewis's 1912 drawings *Russian Scene* and *Madonna and Child* I ask what these images might tell us about his religious beliefs, drawing on Marie-José Monzain's extensive work *Image, Icon, Economy: the Byzantine Origins of the contemporary imagery* (2005) on the power generated through colour and structure of Byzantine icon painting. Prominent in the early twentieth century was the 'discovery' of Ancient Greek mythical sites, and how these archaeological 'finds' were presented as having cultural and racial connections. Gere's book *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (2009) tells the story; myth becomes a false memory to fashion a heroic Bronze Age for modern Western nations. Are modernist artists equally guilty of reaching back into pre-history to perpetuate similar 'false memories'? Were Dionysian images in painting primarily made to stimulate the fashion, (a charge made by Hulme against Fry's Omega output), or did they have a serious purpose to remind viewers of a Nietzschean tragedy? In analysing in depth a Lewis 1914 drawing *Abstract Bird* (figure 16) and making connections with a late eighteenth-century Japanese wood block print *Partridges* by Kitao Masayoshi (1764-1824) (figure 17), I find Lewis's approach to art has

something in common with the Oriental mind and method. Like Chinese and Japanese artists, Lewis was an excellent draftsman. The power of line is paramount in the East, applying equally to both painting and writing.

My concluding chapter draws together historical links; structural, mythical and cultural that fashion Lewis's Vorticist practice.

Chapter Two.

The Crowd, (1914-15): An Anatomy of a Vorticist Painting

Political Unrest, the War, and Vorticism. 40-42

The Seeds of Doubt. 42-50

Antecedents from Art History. 50-59

The Crowd and Politics. 59-66

The 'Little' Magazines: Continental Anarchism and Art. 67-85

Lewis's Analysis of Crowd Behaviour. 85-106

The Crowd as an indicator of British Modernism. 106-111

Political Unrest, the War, and Vorticism.

No sooner had Vorticism achieved a status as an art movement in its own right than it lost its impetus. The self-centred rationale of the Vorticist, the explosive impact of *Blast 1*, the excitement of the vortex, had been overtaken by the destructive reality of the war. The swagger of Lewis's manifestos had dissipated. No more-

Our Vortex desires the immobile rhythm of its swiftness.

Our Vortex rushes out like an angry dog at your Impressionistic fuss.

Our Vortex is white and abstract with red-hot swiftness.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Our Vortex', *Blast 1*, 1914 p. 149.

The reality of war, together with social pressure to conform, had left its mark on the world of fine art. The First World War changed everything: as Lewis wrote, ‘as it was- more than a war. It put up a partition in one’s mind: it blocked off the past literally as if a huge wall had been set up there’.⁶⁷ Lewis in this passage was focusing on intellectual life before and after the war, its ‘lost generation’, and for Lewis the deaths of T. E. Hulme and Gaudier-Brzeska, both killed in action. The Vorticist Movement was a casualty of war. Writing in the *English Review* (April 1919) about British art under the heading ‘What Art Now?’, Lewis wrote of ‘a new term of creative work corresponding with the changed aspects of ideas of our time’. However, little remained of the Vorticist ideal. The exhibition entitled *Group X* at Heal’s Mansard Gallery in March 1920 brought together Wadsworth, Etchells, Roberts, Dismorr, Hamilton and Lewis, but the work on show no longer conformed to Vorticism in style, or in retaining its original creative aesthetic. Lewis wrote in the ‘Group X’ manifesto, ‘each member sails his own boat’.

The year 1910 had marked a change in Britain’s ‘state of mind’ from the old Liberal complacency; an outward complacency yet hardly masking strong undercurrents of the need to implement changes to the political franchise, limited labour reform, and to the constitution of Ireland. In art, Fry’s Post-Impressionist Exhibition marked an awakening in the way artists reflect the the world as they saw it, rather than pursuing the repetitive outworn categories of ‘high art’. Dating from 1910, the Georgian era up to 1914 and the outbreak of war was much more unsettled; a period marked by a general malaise of tension, disquiet and anxiety throughout the population. Political and social pressures for reform became more pressing with suffragette agitation, trades union militancy, the demand for Irish home rule, and in Parliament the fight to curtail the power of the House of Lords. Discontent with the increasing power of capital to dictate how the vast majority of the population lived their lives began to work its way among the more thoughtful members of the bourgeoisie who recognised the need for change. The journalist and historian, George Dangerfield wrote, in *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, that the trade unions were ready to take direct action during this period along anarcho-syndicalist lines; action almost brought to a head by a General Strike in

⁶⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: a narrative of my career up-to-date*, London, 1950, pp. 137-8.

September 1914, but for the declaration of War. London's bohemians drawn from high society, literary people, and young avant-gardists met at various venues to discuss politics and the arts. The mix of politics and the arts were seen as complementary. Prominent were Pound's 'evenings' at 10 Church Walk, Kensington, Ford Madox Huefler's home at South Lodge, Kensington, Lewis's studio The Rebel Art Centre in Great Ormond Street and Hulme's venue at Mrs Kibblewhite's Tuesday evening salon at 67 Frith Street. Discussion was not limited to the arts and letters. Wees describes Mrs Kibblewhite's 'evenings' as attended by 'Imagists, Georgian poets, avant-garde painters and sculptors, editors and critics mixed freely with, to quote C. R. W. Nevinson, 'politicians of all sorts, from Conservatives to *New Age* Socialists, Fabians, Irish yaps, American bums, and labour leaders such as Cook and Larkin'.⁶⁸ It was in this environment, where the overriding factor was disdain for Liberalism, that Lewis, Hulme and Pound developed their politics. However, Lewis was always consumed by his overpowering ego judging from a letter questioning Beatrice Hastings' remarks about young artists: 'Seriously, get rid of this hauteur of the Hulme (?) - Kibblewhite (?) combination. They are pretty boring folk: Epstein is the only individual in that little set who does anything or has any personality'.⁶⁹

The Seeds of Doubt

This chapter examines in detail Lewis's painting *The Crowd*. I approach my research from a number of different aspects. Visually, the painting depicts a semi-abstract schematic arrangement of city architecture enclosing groups of cubist-inspired figures that appear to be in some form of combat. *The Crowd* has all the indicators of modernism - complicated arrangements of form, a relationship with the modern world, chaos, a narrative that does not add up, and reality as something to be interpreted through different ways of looking. This last aspect is for me the most important; the painting's structure itself narrates or imparts meaning to the viewer. The chapter is largely devoted to discussing how this painting imparts meaning, a position that Lewis was unable to replicate fully in his Vorticist play, *Enemy of the Stars*.

⁶⁸ W. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, Manchester, 1972, p. 44.

⁶⁹ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, No 58, to Beatrice Hastings, ca. 1914, p. 63. (Hastings was a sub-editor on *The New Age*, and a friend of the editor A R Orage).

The Crowd marks a change in Lewis's Vorticist aesthetic. His sense of certainty in representing modern life and, from Lewis's perspective, the supremacy of (his) 'Art over Life' is questionable here. The seeds of doubt creep into the narrative and place a marker against Lewis's egoistic belief in his critical intelligence as a counter to the collective patriotism aroused by the declaration of war with Germany. There is a strong political message implied, albeit an indeterminate one, where Liberal rationality, Socialism, Continental Anarchism and the traditional values of the Right vie for supremacy. Lewis demonstrates his familiarity with crowd psychology with their vulnerability to manipulation by the Right and the Left. In this context I examine the views of Sorel and Le Bon, Hulme and Marinetti, the romanticism of Pound's politics, and the impact on artists of the 'Little Magazines'; namely Marsden's *The Egoist*, Orage's *The New Age* and Murry's *Rhythm*. These magazines reflected a heady mix of politics: Marsden following the anarchist Stirner; Orage supporting Marxist Socialism, Guild values, Syndicalism, and Ruskin; and Murry linking *vital art* with modernity in contrast to the passivity of Liberal thinking towards the arts.

The Crowd (Fig. 7) is one of only two oil paintings that have survived from Lewis's Vorticist period. The other is *Workshop* (Fig. 11) and both are held in the Tate Britain collection. *The Crowd*, although clearly part of Lewis's Vorticist output, incorporates a narrative that is more pronounced than found in much of his Vorticist work, where the emphasis veers towards abstract arrangements of pure form. Compositionally, the painting incorporates an arrangement of cubist-style figures, the crowd, enclosed within a semi-abstract schematic cityscape. There is an element of uncertainty that is at odds with Lewis's egoistical controlling position towards his art. The Futurism of Marinetti could no longer be relied upon as a butt to ridicule his militaristic aspirations. Germany's imperial ambitions could not be ignored. The seeds of doubt were beginning to be sown. Unlike Hulme, who immediately after the outbreak of war joined up, Lewis held back. While deploring German aggression, Lewis attempted to cling on to the Vorticist tendency towards artistic and political dissent.

Blast 2, the War Number, reflects Lewis's changed outlook, both social and political, and in compositional terms. These changes can be detected in his long and detailed essay *A Review of Contemporary Art*, where Lewis sets out to analyse European art movements; Impressionism and its relationship with the Cubists, Futurists and Expressionists. Within this review he seeks to place Vorticism as a separate and distinct genre from its European cousins, while at the same time slipping in some subtle changes from the Vorticism that went before. Abstraction was no longer the purest representation of modern life. This change of heart can be deduced from Lewis's criticism of Kandinsky, an artist whom Lewis had praised in *Blast 1*. The criticism revolves around Kandinsky's retreat from Life. Quoting Lewis: 'Kandinsky's spiritual values and musical analogies seem to be undesirable, even if feasible: just as, although believing in the existence of the supernatural, you may regard it as redundant and nothing to do with life'.⁷⁰

The Crowd spells the beginning of the end of an active Vorticist Movement. The painting marks a change from the pure geometrical architectural abstraction of Lewis's Vorticist output, a change that may be explained by the new reality of Britain at war.⁷¹ A wave of patriotic fervour swept the country. Men were fired up to enlist. There was a new sense of nationalism enveloping society. This was reflected in the editorial content of *Blast 2*. In *Blast 1*, Vorticists were portrayed as individuals: 'There is one Truth, ourselves, and everything is permitted'.⁷² In *Blast 2*, published July 1915, the tone has changed: Lewis attempted to cling on to the 'British as individuals' theme, yet at the same time coming together to stand for a Lewis-inspired type of Britishness, but it was a losing battle. By 1915, the press and their readers were channelled into the 'war machine' of mobilization and had no time even to ridicule Vorticist avant-gardists. The question is to what extent Lewis went along with this upsurge of nationalist fervour? Paul Peppis makes the case for a change in Lewis's attitude towards individualism, which he relates to Lewis's critique in his novel *Tarr*, completed in November 1915, as follows

⁷⁰ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast 2*, 1915, p. 44.

⁷¹ W. Michel's Catalogue, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings*, Berkeley, 1971, details a number of drawings after 1915 with Vorticist characteristics but with the exception of *Bird* (1917) and the book cover of *The Ideal Giant*, 1917, they are moving away from abstraction towards the figurative.

⁷² Wyndham Lewis, 'Our Vortex', *Blast 1*, 1914, p. 147.

To the Individualist view that persons are autonomous beings capable of independent action and personal liberation, Lewis opposed a picture of persons as over-determined beings incapable of controlling the maelstrom of competing forces that constitute human identity.⁷³

In the concluding chapter of *Tarr*, Lewis's 'Self', the artist Tarr, compromises his identity by marrying his bourgeois mistress, Bertha. Peppis links Lewis's final treatment of Tarr to a change in his attitude towards *The Egoist*, and its editor Dora Marsden. Marsden had just published Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in serial form. She was about to follow the Joyce novel, a novel about an individual, Stephen Dedalus, breaking his close bonds with family, church and country, with a serialised version of *Tarr*. Lewis, according to Peppis, was critical of Joyce and, questioning the ability or willingness of the British to break from their stultifying Edwardian culture, turned against the ideology of *The Egoist* and Marsden. Quoting Peppis,

Once Lewis's novel is viewed in its original context, however, many of the qualities that have often troubled critics and readers of the text- its two heroes, double plot, and apparently anti-German politics- become comprehensible as strategies in a corrosive critique of the 'Individualist' literary, philosophical, and political positions that were articulated in the *Egoist* by some of Lewis's closest allies and contemporaries, including Marsden, Pound and Joyce.⁷⁴

But other than by inference, there is no direct evidence that by 1915-16 Lewis was at odds with Joyce or Marsden.

Blast 2 is often seen as marking a change in Vorticist ideology, from being fiercely individualistic to a position marked by indecisiveness between the need for collective patriotism and asserting one's individuality to criticize Government-led propaganda. In Lewis's opinion the Government's attitude placed the emphasis on artistic conformity. State conformity towards the arts presented an attack on modernism. In turn the Vorticists accused the Germans of *passéism* in their artistic culture. The Futurists no longer presented a target now that the Italians had entered the war on the allied side. Government propaganda, in turn, labelled German art as decadent modernism. The various

⁷³ P. Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the fiction of National Character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', in *Twentieth century Literature*, vol. 40, (2), 1994, p. 234.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 228.

positions became hopelessly confused and contradictory. Lewis, in pursuing his own agenda in his critique of James Joyce, compromised his own literary individuality, although his doubts about his personal infallibility had previously been aired in his Vorticist play *The Enemy of the Stars* and was now being questioned in his novel *Tarr*.

The Crowd has been known as *Revolution*, but we know that Frank Rutter, the art critic, writing in *The Sunday Times*, used the name *The Crowd* in his review of the Second London Group Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in March 1915. Rutter described the painting as ‘a wondrous pattern of imaginative parquetry’.⁷⁵ The title, *The Crowd*, used in an objective sense, reflects Lewis’s Vorticist aesthetic much more fundamentally than does the subjective title *Revolution*, which is suggested by the painting’s superficial likeness to Russolo’s *The Revolt* (1911) (fig.18). Lewis would have seen *The Revolt* at the Futurist Exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in March 1912. Both paintings are large-scale works, but whereas *The Revolt* has all the characteristics of a Futurist painting in which militaristic cubist figures of the crowd surge leftward and upward creating a wedge along ‘lines of force’, Lewis’s crowd are much more uncertain of their direction, visually and politically. The way that Lewis constructs his painting is more complex than *The Revolt* where aesthetic impact depends purely upon its audial flux. Pound was the first to describe Lewis’s art as ‘conceptual’ in a letter to John Quinn: ‘By *conception* I mean *conception in form and colour*. I don’t mean a desire to paint something expressive of faith hope and charity...which IS what I shall call in the bad sense “literary” painting, ...’⁷⁶ Unlike the Futurist painting where force lines express a revolutionary purpose, *The Crowd* expresses uncertainty, and this is to a large extent due to its structure, or form, together with its colour arrangement. Its formal grid-like composition of brick-coloured blocks suggests confinement, yet the crowd against a background of a slightly more vibrant creamy yellow suggests action. Such ‘action’ involving crowds can be compared to Boccioni’s Futurist painting from 1910 *Riot in the Galleria* (Fig. 6) and its connections with late nineteenth century psychological theories of hysteria, light and electromagnetism.

⁷⁵ *The Sunday Times*, 21 Mar. 1915

⁷⁶ E. Pound, Letter dated 19 July 1916, in Harriet Zinnes, ed., *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, 1980, p. 240.

A marked characteristic of the Futurist's crowd is its label 'feminine', meaning its malleability and incapacity to reason. An example of the 'feminine' in crowd behaviour is found in *Riot in the Galleria*. At the centre are two women locked together in combat. They are probably prostitutes, as in front of them are two men with arms raised in a similarly combative stance, possibly arguing over the women. The surrounding crowd are drawn in towards the women, arms raised as if one with the protagonists. This image has all the characteristics of a Le Bon crowd while expressing the action in pure Futurist imagery. The scene is typically 'modern', a fashionable arcade in Milan lit by very bright electric lamps. The illuminated space plays a pivotal part in the image. In terms of crowd psychology the brightness suggests the transmission of energy, an electro-magnetic space drawing in the crowd in a hypnotic togetherness. Through Le Bon, the early psychological theories of Gabriel Tarde in linking involuntary acts (hysteria and hypnotism) with the science of electromagnetism, are translated by Boccioni into the flux of the crowd.⁷⁷ This is enhanced by Boccioni's painting technique of using complementary dots of colour to extenuate the shimmering light. He also applies this dot treatment to break up the outlines of the people to merge with their surroundings. The effect is to create a flux of movement and togetherness. The crowd can be imagined as coming into the painting from beyond the bounds of the canvas edge. The viewer is invited to participate in the *melée*; the action is contagious. Marinetti stresses the feminine gender attributed to the crowd by Le Bon. Quoting Christine Poggi:

As in the literature of that period, the futurists understood the crowd to be 'feminine' in its malleability, its incapacity to reason. Its susceptibility to flattery and hysteria, and its secret desire to be seduced and dominated.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Gabriel Tarde, (1843-1904): French sociologist, criminologist and social psychologist. Christine Poggi links Tarde's theory of collective behaviour with her analysis of Boccioni's *Riot in the Galleria*. To quote Poggi, 'When writing about the somnambulist, however, Tarde emphasized that the torpor that appears to envelop the affected individual is in reality quite superficial and masks an intense excitement, (Tarde, *Les Lois de l'imitation*, 1903, 'The Laws of Imitation,' pp.79-80). Recall too that Boccioni had referred to exemplars of the new psychology of the night (the bon viveurs and others) as "feverish," implying both a pathological condition and a corresponding state of mental agitation. It is not surprising, then, that his crowds frequently erupt into violence at night, when their somnambulant character is most evident'. C. Poggi, 'Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no.3, 2002, p.728.

⁷⁸ C. Poggi, 'Futurism and the Crowd', p.712.

Le Bon makes the point; 'a throng knows neither doubt nor uncertainty. Like women, it goes at once to extremes'.⁷⁹

Lewis and Marinetti held similar attitudes towards the masses. The crowd occupies a central place in both men's thinking. Marinetti the Italian poet, editor, and founder of the Futurist movement, recognised the potential of the crowd for achieving his political aims. *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909) sets out Marinetti's approach to revolution; 'we will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot...' The Futurists wanted to be part of the crowd to experience the exhilaration of tumult but like Lewis saw themselves standing outside or above the masses as a directing force. Marinetti saw the crowd as a means of achieving a fully industrialised militant nation in a united Italy. Like Lewis, Hulme and Sorel, the Futurists' aim was to change bourgeois society. The 1909 manifesto marks a change in Marinetti's understanding of crowd behaviour. Rather than the crowd as a harbinger of brutish collective action, he is now describing the crowd as being vital and forceful, although still mindful that crowd mentality moves in the same direction and that conscious personality vanishes. All these crowd attributes emanate from Le Bon's work on crowd psychology; the regression to the unconscious implies a return to a pre-civilized world, an earlier stage in the evolutionary process.

The Crowd differs fundamentally from *Riot in the Galleria* in its reading. Whereas Boccioni is depicting in the on-going flux, a form of modernity designed to stimulate the viewer to participate, at least in the mind, Lewis excludes the viewer from participation, leaving no room other than to reflect. Nevertheless, Lewis employs similar Futurist techniques. For example, Lewis's 'matchstick men' figures have their arms raised to interlock with their neighbours to form a coherent whole. The flags suggest a vital and forceful crowd; they and the crowd are set against a cream background; the red/brown-enclosing grid gives energy to the crowd not dissimilar to the electromagnetic force field of *Riot in the Galleria*. A closer analogy can be made with Lewis's *Workshop* (1914-15) (figure 11). Wragg compares *Workshop* with Boccioni's *The Street Enters the House* (1911) (figure 12) in that both paintings relate to the Futurist city, perhaps connected to Lewis's drawing

⁷⁹ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 22.

New York (1914) which can be seen as ‘looking up’ to the sky. Boccioni physically placed his spectator in the centre of the image. Lewis relied on his structurally enclosing shapes to centre one of two viewpoints. The second is outside the painting ‘looking across’ the space, which by its flatness and lack of movement indicates a ‘dead’ space. Wragg makes the point that Lewis achieved a double form of closure; the ‘dead’ space looking across, and at the centre, Lewis the Vorticist drawing in the dynamic energy of the Futurist city to the still centre of the image.⁸⁰ Here Lewis’s directing mind channelled the energy into a still and silent object for contemplation. While he aimed for closure, we can still recognize his methodology in images such as *Workshop* and *The Crowd*; the double viewpoints of the former, and the broken up narrative of the latter indicating the importance to Lewis of temporality in his approach. One can apply the same reasoning to Hulme’s attitude to temporality. As Andrzej Gasiorek points out: ‘Hulme... went through a Bergsonian phase, and his writing on art and politics after he dissociated himself from Bergson is marked by the latter’s influence, if only that it defines the parameters of the view Hulme is now reacting against’.⁸¹ The change in sensibility diagnosed by Hulme as a result of a change in attitude towards the political and social environment of Western society was not compatible with the subjective nature of temporality. To quote Hulme: ‘the re-emergence of geometrical art may be the precursor of the corresponding attitude towards the world, and so, of the break up of the Renaissance humanistic attitude’.⁸² Art was to take the lead in revealing the change of sensibility.

Lewis is using form and colour as a means of disrupting the spatial content of *The Crowd*, an early modernist technique. The novel *Tarr* gives an oblique reference to Lewis’s methodology:

By the end of the afternoon he had got a witty pastiche on the way. Two colours principally had been used, mixed in piles on two palettes: a smoky, bilious saffron, and a pale transparent lead. The significance of the thing depended first on the psychology of the pulpy limbs, strained dancers’ attitudes and empty faces; secondly, the two colours, and the simple yet contorted curves.⁸³

⁸⁰ D.Wragg, ‘Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure’, p. 107.

⁸¹ A.Gasiorek, ‘Towards a ‘Right Theory of Society?: Politics, Machine Aesthetics, and Religion’, in E. P. Comentale and A. Gasiorek (eds.), *T E Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, Farnham, 2006, p. 150.

⁸² T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art and its Philosophy’ in *Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, p. 269.

⁸³ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, (1918 version), Black Sparrow Press, 1990, p. 207.

Antecedents from Art History

Vincent Sherry seeks out *The Crowd's* medieval scheme of proximate vision as an indicator of Lewis's methodology by referring to the Spanish art essayist and philosopher Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955):

Ortega's appeal to the vertical structures of medieval painting, to the aesthetics of the frontal plane and the politics of visual privilege, represented more than nostalgia. It was a timely and pointed reaction to intellectual and social forces in the most likely field of convergence: space.⁸⁴

Ortega's 1924 essay defines modern art as art that scorns the 'art-loving' public.⁸⁵ He maintains that his approach is that of the neutral social scientist, but his emphasis on the privileged intelligentsia being the only ones capable of appreciating modern art implies an élitist attitude that could also be applied to Lewis. His essay, following on from the works of the influential French writers and critics Rémy de Gourmont, (1858-1915), and Julien Benda (1867-1956), privileged vision, and furthermore privileged near sight over long sight, hence the importance to the medieval painter, and to his patron, of two distinct ways of looking. There was no notion of long sight in the Byzantine/late Gothic Italian school of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: the picture plane consisted entirely of frontal space. Objects in the foreground were painted in exactly the same way as those in the background. In reality there was no background; objects were smaller but equally visually distinct to the viewer. Linear perspective was determined purely by size. In applying this system to *The Crowd*, Lewis painted the masses forming the crowd just as distinctly as the black-capped individuals in the foreground. All are pared down in the Cubist style. In treating the picture plane in this manner, Lewis was not allowing the viewer to read the painting as a single entity. This was further enhanced by the grid-like arrangement of blocks that act to enclose the figures. The schematic arrangement shows signs of strain where the small figures find their way, either going into, or out of the visually most privileged and important (in the medieval scheme) section of the painting; the bottom left section. Here the figures suggest authority, by their location and their size.

⁸⁴ V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism*, p. 24.

⁸⁵ Ortega y Gasset, 'On the Artist's Viewpoint', in *Valazquez, Goya and the Dehumanization of Art*, London, 1972, pp. 24-26.

Medieval art was based on patronage by the Church and the powerful, and was designed to express authority, political or clerical, and command; an authority to be externalized by the act of visual perception through the picture plane. Lewis reached back to practitioners of early Italian art to apply similar principles to his art.

We know that Lewis appropriated formal information in his organization of the picture plane of *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades* (Fig. 14) from Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* (Fig. 13) (painted sometime between 1435 and 1460). Whilst Uccello sought to achieve linear perspective, the painting remains sectional in construction, the frontal strip of decorative stylised action being perspectively divorced from the 'backdrop' landscape. Lewis replicated the visual authority that Uccello gave to his patron, Nicholas of Tolentino, in his aristocratic presence in the pictorial scheme, to Alcibiades, the victorious Athenian general in the *Timon* drawing. Sherry makes the case for Lewis using proximate vision in the way he structures *The Crowd* but does not offer a motivating example of a medieval painting. The narrative of the *Timon* series is well known and recognizable, but *The Crowd* is much more ambiguous in how it might be read. The visual tropes are there in the painting but interpretation is conflicting. The old hierarchical order implied by the medieval system of proximate vision is breaking down but in effect adapting itself to modern conditions, conditions that Sherry describes as 'various, psychological, historical, social- also testifies to its modern prepotency'.⁸⁶ Whereas *Alcibiades* is recognizably modelled on Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*, such direct transposition from medieval painters is not so clear in *The Crowd*. Its portrait framing suggests the medieval schematic with the strong vertical structure typical of an Early Italian artist. It is allied in its emphasis on verticals to Lewis's later painting the *Surrender of Barcelona* (1937) (fig.19) exhibited in the English Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. In describing this painting, Lewis wrote 'I set out to paint a Fourteenth Century scene as I should do it could I be transported there, without too much change in the time adjustment involved'.⁸⁷ *The Crowd's* schematic arrangements of rectangular and grid-like blocks suggest a form of enclosure, more typical of later Italian artists such as Piero della Francesca, or his pupil, Signorelli. There are two paintings from the Italian School, which I

⁸⁶V. Sherry, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, 1950, p. 130.

believe Lewis knew, and which, between them offered structural and possibly aesthetic input to *The Crowd*. They are *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well*, by the Siennese painter Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255/60-1318/19) (Fig. 15) and the frescoes painted by Luca Signorelli (1445-1523) in the cathedral at Orvieto depicting the Apocalypse. From the latter, the medallion showing Dante and Virgil entering Purgatory (fig.20) is the most relevant to Lewis's schematic; the geometric portal arrangement at the bottom left of *The Crowd* through which Cubist figures appear to be entering.

The panel, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, painted around 1311 as part of the *Maestà* adorning the high altar in the cathedral at Siena, was removed from the Duomo in 1505, and some of the individual panels detached in 1771, including *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*. By 1900, the painting was in the collection of Robert Henry Benson (1850-1929), merchant banker, trustee of the National Gallery, member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, and collector of early Italian paintings and early Chinese porcelain. Benson was generous in giving public access to his collection, and in 1911 lent four panels from the *Maestà* including this one to an exhibition of early Italian paintings at the Grafton Galleries, where Lewis most likely saw it, given his lifelong interest in early Italian painters.⁸⁸ This was an important exhibition showing rarely seen paintings from private collections, and was widely publicised through Fry's report in the *Burlington Magazine*.⁸⁹ Quoting Fry; 'Doubtless the four exquisite pre-della pieces by Duccio di Buoninsegna have something of the same qualities... (as the previously described tondo 'Salvator Mundi', attributed to Giotto)... but the mood they evoke is slighter, their aim is narrative rather than dramatic'.⁹⁰ The Grafton Galleries was the venue for the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition organized by Fry from October 1912 to January 1913, in which Lewis and colleagues, Etchells, Hamilton and Wadsworth exhibited work. Benson's collection of paintings were sold to the American dealer Duveen after his death in 1926,

⁸⁸ The four panels depicted were *The Temptation of Christ, The Calling of Peter and James, The Raising of Lazarus, and Christ and the Woman of Samaria*. Robert Benson's *Catalogue of Italian Pictures at 16, South Street, Park Lane, London, and Buckhurst in Sussex*, printed by the Chiswick Press (1914) is reproduced in eBooksRead.com. The panels were exhibited at the New Gallery, 1893-4, the Burlington Club, 1904, and the Grafton Galleries, 1911.

⁸⁹ R. Fry, 'Exhibition of Old Masters at the Grafton Galleries-I', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.20, No.104, Nov.1911.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 71.

and subsequently *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* was acquired by the Rockefeller collection and in 1971 entered the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza collection in Madrid where it remains.

The panel shows Christ at Jacob's well outside the city walls of Sychar in conversation with a Samaritan woman with a prominent red pitcher balanced on her head. Christ's disciples, emerging through the city gate, watch them. Christ is instructing the woman to spread the word of God amongst the townspeople, using the analogy 'water of life' as the message. The comparison of this early fourteenth century painting to *The Crowd* can be seen on several levels. Structurally, the two paintings are similar: their emphasis on vertical structures, a feature of medieval painting, and the frontal plane, here the bottom left section, reserved for the most visually privileged and important parts of each painting: Christ in the Duccio painting, the black-capped authoritative figures in *The Crowd*. Both are visually enclosed, Christ within the structure of the well surrounds, the black-capped figures by a grid square. In the latter, the enclosure may have been breached by a section of the crowd, noting the Cubist device of lettering, ENCLOS, suggesting uncompleted 'enclosure', or 'eclose'. Whilst it is tempting to see Lewis's use of lettering as a Renaissance device to point the way that the narrative is going as an indicator of crowd movement, I am more inclined to place the emphasis on its structural effect. *The Crowd* works both on the traditional vertical plane as a narrative, that is as a framed window looking in, and on its horizontal plane as a material object. In its latter role, the painting represents a street grid or plan. In Cubist terms the two planes represent a multiple view of the actions of the crowd both pictorially and structurally. Looking down on the horizontal plane, the grid structure acts as individual frames enclosing various actions, whereas in the traditional vertical plane, the edges of the canvas act to enclose all in a single entity from what is outside the frame. The lettering works in both planes, but in the horizontal plane it takes on the disruptive qualities of the Cubist image. The lettering itself disrupts the framing of the enclosure, perhaps not so dramatically as the collaged newspaper clippings appropriated by Picasso, but this technique would have been in Lewis's mind when he made *The Crowd*.⁹¹

⁹¹ C. Poggi's article 'Frames of Reference: "Table" and "Tableau" in Picasso's Collages and Constructions', *Art Journal*, 1988, pp. 311-322. (Examines these concepts with particular reference to the painting *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912).

The 'breach' in the Duccio painting may be through the medium of the woman spreading 'the water of life'. A well has connections with Lewis, which Edwards comments on, attributing the treadmill-like image in the top right hand corner of *The Crowd* to the wheel at Carisbrooke, a water drawing treadmill operated by a donkey: 'They (the crowd) are attempting to storm the red, circular treadmills at the top right of the picture, where their fellows toil in an unchanging routine'.⁹² Lewis mentions 'the wheel at Carisbrooke' in describing the puppet-like quality of life of the innkeeper, Bestre, and that his routine has the rhythm of a form of religious fanaticism. Quoting Lewis: 'The wheel at Carisbrooke imposes a set of movements on the donkey inside it, in drawing water from the well, that is easy to grasp'.⁹³

Christ and the Woman of Samaria marks a transition from the rigid schematic arrangements of the Byzantine Gothic of early Italian painting to a greater use of narrative discourse and a more realist presentation of space by the early Renaissance painters. There is a move from flatness to depth in space. Nature becomes an important element at the expense of religious dogma in portraying faith. The emphasis is geared towards salvation rather than the message of Original Sin. With naturalism comes humanity. Here, Christ in his gestures becomes part of a dialogue and not as previously depicted as an icon. The architecture of the city walls suggests depth, and the traditional gold background prevalent in early Italian painting is treated in a more painterly fashion suggesting nature and movement. The whole image is released from the static tradition of the Byzantine.

The Signorelli medallion is representative of the Italian High Renaissance. There are two aspects of this painting that relate to the way Lewis structured *The Crowd*. Signorelli uses the device of a portal through which Dante and Virgil enter Purgatory and again depicts them on the other side. The second aspect is of a grid structure to divide purgatory from paradise. Lewis takes up the portal device with the black-capped authoritative figures, which might be one-and-the same, on either side of what could be a portal at the bottom left corner of *The Crowd*. The placing of the French

⁹² P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, p. 134.

⁹³ Wyndham Lewis, 'Inferior Religions', (1917 version), in *The Complete Wild Body*, p. 315.

tricolour suggests that they are separate bodies, but I am here considering the arrangement from a structural point-of-view.

Peter Caracciolo's essay makes the case for Signorelli in Lewis's art but he makes the attribution to his 1919 war painting *A Battery Shelled* (fig.21).⁹⁴ He compares these Renaissance depictions of the Apocalypse with Lewis's depiction of carnage in the Great War. He also attributes a second fresco at Orvieto, *The Sermon and Deeds of the Anti-Christ*, to Lewis's structural arrangement of the three prominent detached figures in *A Battery Shelled*. Signorelli depicts the creators of the Orvieto murals, Fra Angelico and himself, turned towards the viewer, against a background of the Anti-Christ, posed in a similarly detached way: To quote Caracciolo 'this Modernist... (Lewis)... has subtly appropriated and fused the iconography and techniques of surely what are the greatest Renaissance depictions of the Apocalypse and, in the best of the illustrations of *The Divine Comedy*, works comparable with those of Blake'.⁹⁵ I find the medallion fresco the most relevant to *The Crowd*. The structural arrangement showing Dante and Virgil entering through the portal (fig. 21), closely resembles the black-capped figures in *The Crowd* at the bottom left of the picture, in that they may depict the same people having passed through the portal. They clearly carry the same weight of authority in visual terms as in a Renaissance painting. *A Battery Shelled* is structurally divided into two separate sections in the tradition of the early Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca; a group of three detached, but visually important, figures in the left foreground, and the narrative action of bombardment on the right. *The Crowd* is similarly divided, the tiny stick-like and fused-together cubist figures contained within the grid, undergoing some form of violent action on a par with the hapless soldiers being blown up in *A Battery Shelled*. In terms of technique, *The Crowd* can be seen as a direct precursor to *A Battery Shelled*.

In contrast to Caracciolo's reading of *A Battery Shelled*, *The Crowd* should not be read as a direct transposition of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Lewis's narrative suggests conflict and the movement of

⁹⁴ P. Caracciolo, 'From Signorelli to Caligari: Allusions to Painting and Film in The Human Age and its Visual Precursors', in C. C. Jaime, (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis the Radical: Essays on Literature and Modernity*, Bern & New York, 2007, pp. 137- 157.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 139.

opposing forces but the underlying message is one of pain, danger and uncertainty. The stick-like figures are depicted as fused-together clusters confined within the walls of the grid that dominates the picture plane. This form of confinement echoes Signorelli's depiction of Purgatory. The medallion illustrates the torment of people, tightly packed together by the grid-like structure pressing in on them. These people take on an automated appearance that suggests the absence of humanity, much as do Lewis's figures.

Caraccioli believes that Lewis probably first encountered the Orvieto images in the publication in John Bell's 'Great Masters in Painting and Sculpture' series of the study by Maud Crutwell, *Luca Signorelli* (1899), which included reproductions of the two frescoes. Lewis certainly modelled his drawings at the Slade on Renaissance masters including Signorelli. In his description of a virtuoso drawing performance given by Augustus John in the Slade drawing room, Lewis writes: 'I tried my hand at it...(Rembrandt school)...but found they did not come out very well, so I went back to a version of my own of Signorelli'.⁹⁶ Signorelli was widely collected and examples of his paintings were held in private collections including Benson's. Both Duccio and Signorelli were included in the 1911 exhibition of Old Masters at the Grafton Gallery and enthused over by Fry in the November issue of *The Burlington Magazine*. Two panels by Signorelli were shown in the exhibition; Fry describe them as either fragments from a larger painting *Baptism of Christ*, or independent studies. What attracted Fry to these two works was their emphasis on line and form; 'What strikes us here is the modernity of his feelings and even his methods; for in his desire to assert the rhythmic unity of his design he employs the most brusque and unexpected simplification'.⁹⁷

One must ask the question: did Lewis have any real affinity with Dante or indeed with the Early Renaissance? As a subject for artists since the Renaissance, depictions of Dante's the *Commedia* and the *Inferno* appeared regularly, from Signorelli to Blake to Dante Gabriel Rossetti. For Pound, Dante was the master, the supreme model and born 'great poet'. Lewis respected Dante but for the 'outsider' he represented; 'how necessary it is to an understanding of the work of Dante to know he

⁹⁶ Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, p.120.

⁹⁷ R. Fry, 'Exhibition of Old Masters at the Grafton Galleries', 1911, p.71.

was a refugee politician, that the Popes were his great enemies –to go into the party-feuds of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, check Dante’s part in them: why he was sentenced to be burnt alive’.⁹⁸ Dasenbrock sees an analogy between Dante’s *Inferno* and Lewis’s novel *The Apes of God* (1930) in depicting a hell on earth, albeit that ‘Dante possesses imaginative sympathy with the damned that is utterly foreign to Lewis’.⁹⁹ Lewis may have seen something of Dante’s spiritual wholeness in his own consciousness, in which case he was in reality using Dante as rather more than mere analogy. But Dante cannot be seen as the detached observer of humanity, the position that Lewis sought to occupy. Lewis returned to the Apocalypse theme with his painting *Inferno* (1937) depicting images of the damned very similar in puppet-like structure to those depicted by Signorelli. Normand relates the image back to *The Crowd*: ‘people desired an irresponsible herd-life, and *Inferno* was that special hell which Lewis saw the whole of contemporary humanity being condemned to, the hell of life without consciousness and robbed of creativity’.¹⁰⁰ This seems a more extreme position towards humanity than that taken by Lewis in ‘The Crowd Master’, but the Nietzschean nihilism and the question of herd mentality are appropriate to both paintings.

Teresa Papanikolas condenses Nietzsche’s definition of nihilism as ‘a three-part descent into total disillusionment that began with the realization that events were meaningless, continued with the awareness that the systems governing these events were constructs, and ended with the realization that no “true world” would emerge once this earthly abstraction was eliminated’.¹⁰¹ These three stages are found in this abbreviated version of Nietzsche’s notes *The Will to Power* (1902):

Nihilism as a Psychological State, Stage 1: moral value judgements are ways of passing sentence, negotiations: morality is a way of turning one’s back on the will to existence. Stage 2: man has lost his faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him. Stage 3: disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in

⁹⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, p. 9.

⁹⁹ R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, Baltimore & London, 1985, p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ T. Normand, *Wyndham Lewis the Artist: holding the mirror up to politics*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 139.

¹⁰¹ T. Papanikolas, *Anarchism and the Advent of Paris Dada: art and criticism, 1914-1924*, Farnham, 2009, p. 102.

a true world.¹⁰²

Nietzsche's essentially deconstructive critique of traditional western assumptions about the nature of the cosmos had meaning to Lewis's analysis of the crowd. Like the majority of pre-war avant-gardists, anarchists, and socialists, he recognized, albeit with reluctance, the absorption of individuality by the national appeal to patriotism. Hulme countered Nietzsche's critique of moral values with their Judaeo-Christian tradition, which were imposed through the 'rule of the herd'. He immediately volunteered to join up at the outbreak of war and served in the ranks. Hulme had already recognized that modern life excluded the pseudo-evangelism of the humanist approach to religion and called for the imposition of moral values through some unspecified form of authoritarian governance. Like Nietzsche, Hulme saw the cosmos as an unconnected world of 'grit and cinders', but unlike him he looked for a way out for human understanding. In terms of modern art reflecting the state of western society, Lewis and Hulme followed the Worringer analysis of art moving towards abstraction.

The Vorticists positioned themselves as 'outsiders'. Although, with the exception of Roberts and Bomberg, predominantly from the middle class, they were in opposition to bourgeois society, a society which during the nineteenth century had appropriated Dante and fashioned him in their own ideological image. Cooksey's essay 'The Victorian myth of Dante' spells out the popular Romantic image of Dante: 'He was either the sublime poet of suffering, or the sentimental poet of unrequited love' but qualifies this by the Victorians' incorporating into Dante's image a residue as 'the last unified sensibility'.¹⁰³ Even Yeats, while recognizing this myth as a delusion, nevertheless 'saw in Dante a *mythos* of unity and spiritual wholeness that cast an aura of hope over the gloom of misery of the everyday'.¹⁰⁴ This vision of unity underlined the nature of morality; 'wholeness' thought by the likes of Thomas Carlyle to buttress society against the moral uncertainties arising out of empirical science. From a political perspective, Gladstone perpetuated the myth both as a

¹⁰² The full translation in Nietzsche, *Will to Power, The complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche: The first complete and authorized English translation*, Levy, O. (ed.), London 1923, (12. The Collapse of Cosmological Values), pp. 12-14.

¹⁰³ T. L. Cooksey, 'The Central Man of the World: The Victorian Myth of Dante', in L. J. Workman (ed.), *Studies in Medievalism*, Vol. IV, Cambridge, Mass. 1992, p. 187.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 199.

personal philosophy and as an agent for unity, conveniently ignoring the problematic reality of unity in modern life. This popular and self-seeking image of unity remained to the fore in the Edwardian and Georgian era being, reflected in religion, sociology, the arts and politics; the myth only being shattered by the First World War.

I read *The Crowd* as structurally close to *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well*. There are three distinct sections to both paintings; the privileged bottom left depicting Christ in the latter, the black-capped figures in the former. The right hand sections in both pictures depict architecture. Predominantly the central sections of both paintings express movement; abstract vertical brush strokes in the Duccio as against Lewis's vertical crowd activity. The traditional golden background used by Duccio is reflected in the bright 'electric' yellow of *The Crowd*. The naturalistic arrangement of rocks on the edge of the picture plane to the left of the seated Christ (fig.22) can be compared with the cubist arrangement of limbs at the bottom right edge of *The Crowd*. (fig.23). The curved timbers supporting the top of the tower, inverted (fig. 24) become the treadmill (fig. 25). The prominent red ball-shaped pitcher that seems to be almost detached in space might be reappearing as the red flag in the middle of *The Crowd*. Philosophically, Duccio is moving towards the humanism of the Renaissance, while Lewis is taking the opposite direction towards the inhumanity of the First World War.

The Crowd and Politics

The painting, *The Crowd*, as the name suggests, depicts crowd movement within a city, moving across the picture plane from bottom left to top right. Like Lewis's figures in *The Dancers* (1912) this crowd has become frozen in space. Jameson describes the figures as 'teeming with activity' but 'utterly devoid of life', their 'zig-zag' forms secured by the rectangular grid-like architecture of the city.¹⁰⁵ The figures are painted in a cubist style, the grid-like architecture enclosing them in temporal isolation. The architecture of the city is arranged in the horizontal plane as in a schematic drawing. In selecting his colours, Lewis employs orangey reds, yellow, cream and brown laid on flat and neutral. There is no hint of nature or humanity. Perspective relies solely on the size of the

¹⁰⁵ F. Jameson, 'Wyndham Lewis's *Timon: The War of Forms*', p.22.

figures, the grid-work suggesting an architectural plan or drawing, but the positioning and size of the figures suggests 'looking at' the image on a vertical plane. There is clearly a narrative here but its interpretation is complex and contradictory. It is not overtly a wartime narrative, but the painting's name links it with the psychology of the crowd, which in turn suggests a connection with Lewis's 'The Crowd Master' in *Blast 2*. Is Lewis depicting a patriotic crowd, an anarchist and revolutionary crowd, or perhaps a crowd dogged by reactionary forces? The symbolism of the French tricolour dating from the French Revolution and the red flag from the 1871 Paris Commune suggests either anarchy or patriotism. One might ask why a red flag and not black, the symbol of the anarchists? Lewis may have been thinking of the relationship between Proudhon and the French realist painter Courbet, both convinced anarchists, the latter directly involved in the defence of the Paris Commune against the army of Napoleon III. The Communards had implemented much of Proudhon's anarchist programme, including devolving central control to self-organizing local federations. Courbet implemented the Federation of Artists whose agenda was, to quote Allan Antliff, 'complete freedom of expression, an end to government interference in the arts, and equality amongst the membership'.¹⁰⁶ The positioning and attitude of the large (foreground) figures behind the desk or dais (bottom left) and the symbolism of the treadmill, top right, suggests that reactionary forces are at work.

Lewis appeared to be making a political statement in painting *The Crowd* but it is not clear whether he was standing aloof from political direction or whether he was actively participating. Taking into account his Vorticist stance in positioning himself at the centre of the vortex looking out, I would suggest the former. But in one sense, Lewis was united with both anarchists and reactionaries in their opposition to the ruling parliamentary systems in Britain and France at that time. While he showed disdain for the masses, Lewis understood crowd psychology as a political tool from his reading of Sorel and Le Bon. Their theme, while approaching politics from the left and the right respectively, was to speculate that whoever controlled the crowd could destroy society as they saw it. Lewis allied himself to the considerable opposition from intellectuals and political commentators

¹⁰⁶ A. Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, Vancouver, 2007, p. 33.

in Britain, and even more so in France, who saw the Liberal government in Britain and the Third Republic in France as morally bankrupt systems whose only aim was to divide the least. Supporting these regimes were the bourgeoisie whose main characteristic was a lack of energy for change.

Lewis painted *The Crowd* in the latter part of 1914, after Britain had declared war on Germany, and completed it in 1915. While the impetus of hostilities had stimulated popular support for war, hostility towards Liberalism from the Socialist left representing militant labour, and from those intellectual circles who valued their individuality to progress modernism were not prepared to conform to Government dictates. Intellectual groups adopted many of the principles of anarchism, although they would not have described themselves as anarchists. Brockington describes one such grouping, Bloomsbury, and their close Cambridge associates, Jane Harrison, G. M. Trevelyan, G. Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell, J. M. Keynes, and E. M. Forster: ‘The resulting instability...(arising from British socialism and Continental anarchism)... exacerbated fears of degeneration, disintegration, even civil war, yet it also inspired hope, breaking ground for the germination of new ideas and aspirations’.¹⁰⁷ While Lewis in his rhetoric dismisses Bloomsbury, one can readily read into *The Crowd* these fears and aspirations.

A close reading of Fry’s 1912 essay ‘The Artist in the Great State’ sets out a template for the Omega Workshops.¹⁰⁸ The essay opens with the declaration ‘I am not a Socialist’, a statement that could also have substituted the word ‘Anarchist’.¹⁰⁹ The Bloomsbury Group saw themselves as ‘self-contained’, owing allegiance to a narrow circle of Cambridge intellectuals, but essentially individualists who equated Liberal ideology with compromise, particularly in respect of the arts. The State went for the lowest common denominator: ‘In Great Britain, at least, we cannot get a postage stamp or a penny even respectably designed, much less a public monument’.¹¹⁰ Whilst ‘Bureaucratic Socialism’ might find a place for artists to make a living, Fry feared the State would completely suppress original creative power. Instead, Fry proposed that the creative artist, ‘the artist

¹⁰⁷ G. Brockington, *Above the Battlefield: modernism and the peace movement in Britain, 1900-1918*, New Haven & London, 2010, p. 44.

¹⁰⁸ R. Fry, ‘The Artist in the Great State’, in *The Great State, Essays in construction*, 1912, London.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 251

¹¹⁰ R. Fry, ‘The Artist in the Great State’, p. 259.

as prophet and priest...the artist who is the articulate soul of mankind' to make a living should engage in practising the applied arts, in making bespoke, aesthetically pleasing, objects of daily life. His model, clearly influenced by William Morris, had its roots in the guilds: 'Guilds might, indeed, regain something of the influence that gave us the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages'.¹¹¹ Rather than retreating inwards into a separate world, Fry rather tentatively saw the Great State learning to place less value on economic growth, 'live, not hoard', and that by pursuing such an artist-led policy, the model would go some way to levelling social conditions. He may well have read the American anarchist Emma Goldman's 1900 essay setting out the tenets of 'social' anarchy from his time as curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum, New York in 1906: 'Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth'¹¹² Closer to home, the Russian political exile Peter Kropotkin's anarchist writings were known through his book *Mutual Aid* (1908) and with his entry in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910) on 'Anarchism'. Kropotkin's form of anarchy is described as anarcho-communism favouring the collective where each member would be granted the right to subsist, an anathema to the Bloomsbury aesthetes, but nevertheless there are points of contact. Quoting Papanikolas: 'And in 1902, when Peter Kropotkin called on "poets, painters, sculptors, musicians...to...show the people how hideous is their actual life," he marshalled intellectuals as a revolutionary force'.¹¹³ He envisaged a working, productive, half-day with the rest of the day in a 'free association' involving the arts and sciences. The Omega Workshops system went some way to following this course albeit directed primarily to the middle classes. As Brockington argues; 'Fry's formalist response to modern art was not otherworldly. Rather, it reversed the relationship between art and life, making art the prime mover in the process of political reform'.¹¹⁴

Lewis joined the Omega Workshop in 1913 and, although his association with Fry's model artists' community was brief and fractious, there were points of contact in both men's thinking about the place of the art in society. While the war made State intervention into the lives of those groupings

¹¹¹ Ibid. pp. 267-268.

¹¹² Goldman, E., 'Anarchism: What it Really Stands For', 1900, in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, p. 62, New York, Dover Press, 1969.

¹¹³ T. Papanikolas, *Anarchism and the Advent of Paris Dada*, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ G. Brockington, *Above the Battlefield*, p. 33.

with radical ideas about self and community almost inevitable, Bloomsbury moved to passivism and self-containment. Lewis prevaricated, the Vorticists as a group broke up, and went their own ways according to their nationality, patriotism, and ability to be gainfully employed within their milieu. Of the two groups, Bloomsbury proved to be the more resilient maintaining their individualist stance as a society of friends.

I believe the main point of contact between Continental anarchy and the progressive elements in British art and literature from 1912 to 1914 was *The Freewoman*, later becoming *The New Freewoman*, and finally *The Egoist*, all edited by Dora Marsden. Anarchist literature dominated their advertising space. In the first edition of *The Egoist* dated January 1, 1914, half the advertising space was taken up by copies for sale of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, *Anarchism* by Dr Paul Eltbacher, and *State Socialism and Anarchism* by Benj. R Tucker. Editorials and Views and Comments were largely taken up with anarchist-orientated politics. Marsden portrayed Government as a body outside Parliament, a body that rested on force, through 'armies, police, law courts, prisons, in order to protect the Powers as Established'.¹¹⁵ She argued that Government could not be reformed through achieving 'rights': 'In a free community no man has any "rights"; he has what he can make out of his freedom'.¹¹⁶ Government held power through monopoly of land, machine and money. The State's role was to safeguard these monopolies by force. The machine represented the division of labour, the antithesis of individual freedom. Marsden accused Socialism of being anti-individual and following a political philosophy of Marxism of harnessing State control to the means of production. She argued that 'The individualist, relying on the morality of the human soul, takes leave of the machine'.¹¹⁷ Fry used a similar argument in respect of the relationship between the artist and the State in producing art, placing morality as the driving force for all forms of productivity, a levelling process not dependent on economic growth. Marsden make a similar claim; 'there should be no production of unnecessary things. Beauty is as great a necessity as bread...Beauty is the morality of production'.¹¹⁸ This was where Marsden parted company with Sorel. She championed the mutual-

¹¹⁵ 'The Slave', leading article in *The Freewoman*, Sept. 12th, 1912, p. 322.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 321.

¹¹⁷ 'Topics of the Week', *The Freewoman*, 12th Sept. 1912, p. 324.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 324.

led federations of Proudhon where it mattered, in its Insurrectionism, but deplored Sorel's syndicalist emphasis on a Marxist machine-led economy.

There are clear similarities between the thinking of Le Bon and Sorel, both active in the same generation (1895-1914), and by 1908-1910 the two came very close in their thinking. Nye, writing in *The Journal of Modern History* (1973) describes their similarities.¹¹⁹ The major factor uniting them, and here one can include *L'Action française*, was their dislike of the Third Republic. R. A. Nye argues that the ruling Republican élite stood for positivism, anticlericalism, and a national unification policy to counter the lasting social and political divisions arising from the Dreyfus Affair. The disastrous 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war had inflicted a huge blow to French morale. Government policies, driven by the democratic legacy of the French Revolution, were designed to divide the least, but their effect was to alienate the intellectual classes from the left and the right. While Le Bon and Sorel were politically apart, they came together in critiques of French society, most notably in the critical part that the intervention of the masses could play to bring about change. Le Bon, better known at that time than Sorel, trained as a medical doctor, and was a prolific writer and commentator on ethnological subjects. He strove to join the academic establishment where the pinnacle of success was judged by acceptance by the Sorbonne and the Academy, but was continually frustrated in this ambition. Sorel trained as an engineer with the engineering corps and did not publish anything until after 1889. Both men's careers followed parallel courses in moving from positivist positions, where science was seen to fit into a complete philosophical view of the world, to an increasingly pragmatic position where science did not universally explain natural phenomena. Sorel's path of philosophical enquiry found that empiricism, which he respected and continued to practice, could only explain natural laws so far, and that no scientific process could bridge the gap between the 'artificial nature' of the scientific world and 'natural nature' of the real world. Le Bon, also an empiricist, like Sorel clung on to scientific methodology to investigate nature and society. His disillusionment arose rather more negatively than Sorel's, out of the political and educational establishments' use of positivism to pursue their aims of political democracy and

¹¹⁹ R. A. Nye, 'Two Paths to a Psychology of Social Action: Gustave Le Bon and Georges Sorel', in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.45, No.3, 1973, pp. 411- 438.

anticlericalism. Sorel's anti-government, anti-bourgeois stance was Marxian inspired. He was one of the first in France seriously to take up Marxism as the way forward for 'true' socialism. Sorel's thinking required that capitalism be given unfettered operation in order that the workers rise up at the injustice towards them. This did not happen because the ruling government and bourgeois owners of capital were prepared to make concessions and the workers themselves were not prepared to achieve emancipation. Sorel and Le Bon came to accept Bergson's vitalism as superior to scientific rationalist philosophy for understanding human behaviour. Their main source of understanding came through Theodule Ribot's work on physiological psychology. Ribot's 1884 clinical study of abnormal behavioural characteristics analysed the non-rational actions of mental patients. The location of 'volition', an automatic, non-voluntaristic condition can be explained: 'it drives its roots into the depths of the subconscious and beyond and the individual into the species and the race'.¹²⁰ Le Bon knew Ribot well and began to apply his theories of the automatic and unconscious nature of emotional states, and earlier studies on hypnotic demonstrations on mental patients, to collective psychology.

The leading political movement for change in France was *L'Action française*. This extreme right-wing group began life in 1898 as a counter-revolutionary movement to restore the Orleanist monarchy and, following the separation of Church from State in 1905, their aims widened to restore the Roman Catholic Church as the official state religion. The Dreyfus Affair played a large part in the founding of *L'Action française* as a reactionary movement. It was the writer and champion of intellectuals Zola who in 1898 had published his famous letter, *J'accuse*, accusing the French Government and the army of anti-Semitism. Although its aims were absolutist, its core values being Royalism, Catholicism and anti-Semitism, its members were often attracted to *L'Action française* because they saw it as a centre of critical attraction. In particular, the group attracted historians who found enduring values in what they saw as golden ages: ages not necessarily associated with past royalty, but for example from Graeco-Roman tradition. People moved in and out of the group adding their particular intellectual leanings to the mix and in effect widening its sphere of influence.

¹²⁰ T. Ribot, *Maladies de La Volanté*, Paris, 1942, p. 150.

A dissemination of ideas emanated through the *Institut d' Action française* (1906), the daily newspaper, *L'Action française* (1908) and *the Revue Critique des Idées et des livres* (1908). Maurras dominated *L'Action française*; admired as a serious writer on historical and political subjects, and as an outrageous commentator. There was never any serious attempt to restore the monarchy or the Roman Catholic Church. Rather, Maurras was seen as the defender of civilization and of order, but he never saw his role in Catholicism as other than a political and cultural one. It was his championing of traditional values and of order against Republicanism that attracted Sorel and Hulme. There could be no civilization without rigid discipline, a factor that could only be achieved through political violence. But above all else, *L'Action française* were violently opposed to the state monopoly of education and the Sorbonne's stultifying effects thereon. This was the main concern of the writer Pierre Lasserre, a one-time editor of the *Revue d'Action française*, and author of *La Doctrine officielle de l'Université* (1912). Another subject that Lasserre shared with Maurras was their attack on Romanticism, which tied in with *Hulme's* thinking.

Hulme's political views at first sight *seem* to be paradoxical to his revolutionary stance on art. He was by inclination an old-fashioned Tory believing in order, discipline, hierarchy, and tradition. The Tory tradition stemmed from his ancestral roots: he came from a family of landowners; two neighbouring villages to the family home, Gratton Hall, in the village of Endon, Staffordshire, were named after the Hulme family. The family fortune was made through quite the opposite of land ownership; through his pawnbroker grandfather. His father was wealthy, having invested in the pottery industry, but continued to live the life of a country squire, although by the early 1900s when Hulme first went up to St. Johns College Cambridge, he was looked upon as 'from trade', and not belonging to 'gentry'. By 1914 both Lewis and Pound held similar views to Hulme's in practising this duality between reactionary politics and revolutionary change in poetics and visual art. All three were reacting against the confines of Liberal Britain in the face of the crises leading up to the First World War. In their style, each was a propagandist. Hulme found his platform in *The New Age*, Pound and to a lesser extent Lewis, in *The Egoist*.

The 'Little' Magazines: Politics, Philosophy and Art.

In the literary and arts world, the *Egoist* was supportive of the developing modernist movement, publishing the emerging work of Pound, Eliot, Lawrence, Lewis and Joyce. In 1913, Pound was writing articles on art for *The New Age* and submitting articles on Imagist poetry for *The New Freewoman*. The two journals were, socially and politically, in opposite camps. Under the editorship of Dora Marsden (1895-1960) *The New Freewoman* followed by *The Egoist* stood for the individual, Alfred Richard Orage's *The New Age* for Socialism and the collective. *The New Age* equated Imagism with Modernism, yet that journal, in the spirit of the Guilds movement, favoured the Romantic. In art, Pound was supporting the French Impressionists and those groups linked to them such as the Rhythmists. As Beasley points out, *The New Age* published but criticized Pound's articles *The Approach to Paris* begun on 4th Sept. 1913. Quoting Beasley, 'closer inspection... (of the editorial *Readers and Writers*, *New Age* 14(1913) pp.50-52)... shows how Pound's criticism had positioned him as "the enemy of *The New Age*"¹²¹ Pound was seen as an 'individualist', an admirer of the Parisian milieu of avant-garde poets and artists overtly influenced by Bergsonian individuality. The tenor of Pound's article can be ascertained in the following quote:

I saw Paris conscious of being Paris, indifferent to everything beyond Paris, knowing for a truth that if any prophet should arise in the wilderness, Paris would know his message before his neighbours had heard it.¹²²

The New Age reviewed literary figures that they deemed to be egoistically 'individual', but the magazine's editorial favoured the Guild-inspired coming together of the group, political and social, together with a loosely defined feeling of 'Englishness'. At the same time, Pound was writing *The Serious Artist*, published in *The New Freewoman*, 15th Oct. 1913 and in the two following issues; but in Bruce Clarke's view, 'It represents a relatively appealing early attempt to come to terms with some fundamental aesthetic and critical issues'.¹²³ *The Serious Artist* is a first attempt at grasping the tenets of Lewis's Vorticism, but Pound remained muddled in his analysis. I return to his critical thinking

¹²¹ R. Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the culture of modernism*, (2007), p.90.

¹²² P. Selver, 'Readers and Writers', *The New Age*, 4th Sept. 1913, p. 51.

¹²³ B. Clarke, *Dora Marsden and Ezra Pound: The New Freewoman and the Serious Artist*, (1992), p. 103.

in this chapter, and Chapters Three and Four where Pound still has his feet in both camps; arts and crafts and early modernism. Paradoxically, Orage while criticising Pound as promoting the individual through Bergson, published Hulme's articles setting out Bergson's influence on Imagist poetry.

It was in Hulme's circle that Pound met Epstein and became better acquainted with Lewis. Under the editorship of Marsden *The New Freewoman*, which became *The Egoist*, moved its policy away from purely feminist issues: Marsden's form of egoism 'meant a rejection of the women-centred campaigns of suffrage...in favour of "the empowerment of individuals, men and women" and "to set free life impulses"' ¹²⁴ Life impulses relate to the Self: 'their only fitting description is that of Individual, Ends-in-themselves. They are Egoists (they) are Autocrats, the government in their autocracy is vested in the Self which holds the reins in the kingdom of varying wants and desires'¹²⁵ This quotation from *The New Freewoman* marked the change in policy away from political activism of the 'cause' to taking up a political stance based on 'a reflective attitude that included the issues of language, culture and history'.¹²⁶ Typical of the new policy was the article *The Philosophy of Ideas*, taken largely verbatim from Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (p.327 *et seq*), positing the limitations of intellect as language in defining evolution; and in contrast, a report titled *Marinetti's Lectures* by Richard Aldington describing the language of Futurist poetry. The form of anarchism favoured by *The Egoist* was based on Stirner's anarcho-individualism. The collectivist form of anarchism of the Syndicalists fell more into the province of *The New Age*. Anarchist individualism dated back to the German philosopher Max Stirner (1806-1856) from his work '*Der Einzige und sein Eigastum*' (1845), (*The Ego and Its Own*). Stirner favoured the absolute freedom of the individual against the State, the law, and private property. He proposed 'an association of egoists' whose members were free to pursue their own interests even to the point of violent insurrection. Stirner was against institutions,

¹²⁴P. Brooker and A. Thacker (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol.1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, Interventions- Introduction, Oxford, 2009, p. 266.

¹²⁵ 'Views and Comments', *The New Freewoman*, 1st July, 1913, p. 5. (This editorial in the first copy of *The New Freewoman* marked the break with the Suffragette Movement led by Mrs Pankhurst. To quote Marsden 'causes' are the diversion of the feeble...of those who have lost the power of acting strongly from their own nature').

¹²⁶ Jean-Michel Rabaté, '“The Freewoman” (1911-12) “The New Freewoman” (1913) and “The Egoist” (1914-19)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, p. 272.

including religion, and even the family as a unit might be deemed an institution. However, members of an association of egoists, could, in the spirit of individualism, enter or leave collectives in accord with their specific objectives. There was clearly an element of self-interest, but not at the expense of other individuals. This last point suggested an affinity with early liberalism and the economic doctrine of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Modern anarchism in Britain, dating from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, came to place more emphasis on individual liberty and social justice, and this was at the centre of *The Egoist* agenda.

Allan Antliff writes about the relationship between anarchism and power with regard to the short-lived Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups, set up in 1917 and purged by Lenin two years later as a threat to the central power base of Marxism.¹²⁷ The Federation are termed 'classical' anarchists by Antliff, being in the tradition of Stirner, Proudhon and the Russian political exile, Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). The Frenchman, Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) laid out the basic principles of anarchism, to bring about social change through revolution against central control: Government from the centre, or from monarchy, led to the servitude of the masses. His premise was based on a critique of metaphysical idealism, those beliefs emanating from the metaphysical ethics of religion and philosophy. Instead of laid down morality, individuals should be able to ascertain what they believe to be moral through their own consciousness. Such a course required a complete reappraisal of society where moral 'facts' change as society changes. What is morally appropriate should be determined through the free exercise of human reason as against the imposition of moral coercion, i.e. the Law.

Alan Antliff develops the argument that anti-statism does not negate the exercise of power by proffering Stirner's treatise *The Eye and its Ego* as the model for the Moscow Federation. The important point to assimilate is that anarchism did not represent a transfer of power from the State to the egoistic individual. Antliff quotes from Stirner's manifesto *The Ego and its Own*: 'It does not mean my liberty is free; not my liberty, but the liberty of a power that rules and subjugates me; it

¹²⁷ A. Antliff, 'Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism', 2007, *SubStance*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 'The Future of Anarchism', pp 56- 66.

means that one of my despots, like state, religion, conscience, is free'.¹²⁸ Power for the individual was achieved by acquiring knowledge through experience, not through metaphysical thinking, the preserve of the cultured few, or through absolute truth, the driving force of Christianity. The anarchist's ego embraced a continuity of ideas. In the eyes of the State, anarchist libertarianism may be deemed to be criminal, but in exercising social power, its participants achieve a freedom of choice.

A survey of the 'little magazines' influence on early modernism would be incomplete without mention of the quarterly, later, monthly journal *Rhythm* (1911-13), which later became *The Blue Review* (1913), and finally *The Signature* (1915). The writer, John Middleton Murry (1889-1957) edited all three magazines, assisted by Katherine Mansfield whom he married in 1918. The short lifespan of each reflected their vulnerability due to inadequate financial backing. For Murry, 'modernism means Bergsonian philosophy'.¹²⁹ *Rhythm* was largely devoted to Bergson-inspired art from the very beginning: 'We attain to the truth not by the reason which must deny the fact of continuity and creative evolution, but by pure intuition, by the immediate vision of the artist in form'.¹³⁰ Murry posited Bergson's, *élan vital* to a group of artists who developed their style from the Fauvists. The magazine's title page incorporated a simplified version of the painting *Rhythm* (1911) by the Scottish, Paris-based artist, J. D. Fergusson who quickly became *Rhythm's* art editor. Contributors included the American artist Anne Estelle Rice, Jessica Dismorr, later to join Lewis and the Vorticists, and Samuel Peploe, the Scottish colourist; all having practised in Paris. The group were familiar with Post-Impressionism from their Parisian background but were selective as to how they interpreted the movement. Coming from the Fauvist tradition, they favoured Matisse as their exemplar and took as their model his painting *Danse* (1909) (fig.26). Fergusson closely associated the intuitive harmony of *Danse* with Bergson; its rhythm invoking the procreation of life through the generative force of nature. Whether having its roots in Primitivism or the Classical Greek chorus, the group interpreted the dance as a vitalist rhythm of life. Quoting Murry:

¹²⁸ A. Antliff, p 60.

¹²⁹ P. Brooker, 'Harmony, Discord, and Difference', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol.1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, p. 325.

¹³⁰ J. M. Murry, 'Art and Philosophy', in *Rhythm*, 1:1, Summer 1911, p. 9.

Modernism is not the capricious outburst of intellectual dipsomania. It penetrates beneath the outward surface of the world, and disengages the rhythms that lie at the heart of things, rhythms strange to the eye, unaccustomed to the ear, primitive harmonies of the world that is and lives.¹³¹

Murry championed vitalist art in its association with nature as a reaction to what he called 'Aestheticism'. This he labeled as having essentially a narrow outlook, which failed to see below the surface of life. By 'aestheticism' he was pointing towards Symbolism in France and Aestheticism in Britain. These late nineteenth century art movements broadly pursued an awareness of a new sensibility relevant to the conditions of industrial urban life. This sensibility emanated from the poems of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), their message being that the Romanticist view of life does not relate to the modern condition of life. Its essence was that nature is inferior; it produces evil spontaneously while beauty has to be created. Murry took a contrary path to explain modern life. The above quote from the first edition of *Rhythm* showed the way; to evoke the myths of antiquity through an intuitive approach to modernism. If we think of the work of the classicist Jane Harrison, a contemporary of Murry, her theory of ritual and art followed a similar path, resting on the archaeological approach to history. She drew from the pre-historical archeological findings of the day to fashion the building blocks of modernism. In contrast, the conventional approach by her fellow classicists was an empirical one where theories were determined chronologically. The latter approach mirrored the passivity of Liberal thinking. Art had to escape from a society dominated by Liberal romanticism to one in keeping with modern living. Her association of archeological findings with Greek mythology would have appealed to Murry, as positing the idea of passionate, non-rational structures, beneath the rational pretensions of empirical scholarship, to address the concerns of early twentieth century artists and writers. Murry's views on Primitivism in art are set out in the first number of *Rhythm*: 'Before art can be human it must be brutal...Both in its pity and its brutality it shall be real'.¹³²

¹³¹ J. M. Murry, p.12.

¹³² 'Aims and Ideals', *Rhythm*, 1:1, Summer 1911, p. 36.

Primitivism, brutality, the chorus, Dionysian dance, pre-history, the Greek bronze age, all became inputs of choice for avant-gardists in art and literature. Comparing Fergusson's *Les Eus* (1913) (fig. 27) with Lewis's *The Dancers* (1912) both paintings depict dancers performing in a 'primitive', Dionysian manner. For Fergusson, the painting depicted the biological rhythm of nature experienced by the dancers. Bergson singled out 'the dancer' in his first major work *Time and Free Will* (1889). He used the dance to illustrate his theory that humans do not act like machines. Bergson stated that we anticipate future movements in the dance and that this use of our perceptions or 'intuition', cannot be measured because we draw upon memory from the past to 'hold the future in the present', cause us to experience feelings of joy.¹³³ Such feelings change to new varieties of feelings of joy as the dance progresses, Bergson called this 'qualitative progress' through time or 'real duration'. This escalation of the aesthetic was termed 'difference in kind'. For Lewis *The Dancers* depicted abandoned frenzy brought to a standstill by the actions of the artist. Fergusson's dancers took on the continuity of creative evolution, their temporal qualities generated through 'natural' signs. This simplistic interpretation of Bergson's theory is described in Chapter One. In contrast, Lewis's drawing transformed his dancers by transfixing the image into geometrical rigidity, and by doing so rejected 'nature' and 'life'. He saw himself standing detached on the Nietzschean high ground, exerting his own creative energies. And yet Bergson is there in both artists' work. The difference is that Lewis used Bergson's methodology to reject it whilst Fergusson aimed to record and transfer his 'critical' feelings on procreation through Bergson's theory of creative evolution. De Mille makes the point that Hulme maintained that, whereas the popular interpretation attributed Bergson's dualism to 'body and soul', (that was Fergusson's approach), it is Bergson's methodology that really counts¹³⁴. Methodology meaning 'movement and change' was how Lewis used Bergson, as early as the 'Kermesse' series, according to Charlotte de Mille.

¹³³ S. Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson*, 2006, p.49.

¹³⁴ C. de Mille, PhD thesis, *Bergson in Britain*, Courtaulds Institute, London, 2010, pp. 39- 40.

The Rhythmists were closely connected to the Fauves, particularly Fergusson; the two groups, French and British, had exhibited together at the London Stafford Galleries in 1912. Where the Rhythmists went beyond the Fauves was in their exclusive commitment to female reproduction with Bergsonian emphasis on nature through ‘natural’ signs. Their act of making art, particularly as applied by Fergusson, was one of creativity through perception, a process reserved for the male. (This begs the question of the role of female artists in the group and gender politics). Murry and Huntly Carter, the magazine’s most prominent art commentator who also wrote extensively for *The New Age*, described the progression from Fergusson’s intuition of the individual sitter to applying Fergusson’s creative perception to women in general. To quote Mark Antliff: ‘Rhythm for Carter was proof that Fergusson not only employed intuition to perceive individual character, but also to capture a more fundamental durational impulse native to all living species’.¹³⁵ Here, Fergusson was widening his interpretation of Bergson to what Antliff terms ‘a more general notion of a cosmic *élan vital*’.¹³⁶ Duration becomes a universal concept: ‘The duration of the universe must therefore be one with the latitude of creation which can find place in it’.¹³⁷ While this interpretation of Bergson could be applied to the Fauves, Matisse, Fergusson, Isadora Duncan, and the Ballets Russes, it was far off the mark as regards Lewis’s, Epstein’s and Gaudier-Breszka’s thinking. De Mille makes the point that we need to distinguish within the art world how different factions saw vitalism. ‘Was Bergson himself loose in his terminology? Hulme thought so’¹³⁸. She quotes an example where Bergson described the same process in a way which could take on slightly, but significantly, different interpretations: ‘a dualism between a spatial, material duration and the “pure” temporal duration’ (*élan vital*) and ‘succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another’.¹³⁹ The second interpretation described more clearly the process of ‘becoming’.

Hulme and Murry would have agreed that art runs parallel with philosophy and the general world outlook. But although Hulme might have agreed with the Rhythmists’ negative attitude towards the mechanistic view of the real world, on every other front, excepting the Liberal attitude towards

¹³⁵ M. Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural politics and the Parisian avant-garde*, 1993, p. 84.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 84.

¹³⁷ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, (1954 edn.), p. 359.

¹³⁸ C. de Mille, p. 25.

¹³⁹ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1910, (1950 edn.), p. 104.

society that all avant-garde groups condemned, he would have profoundly disagreed. Their approach to reality through intuition was a philosophy of the ear; whereas Hulme believed that intuitive imagery should be separated out into concrete form as a philosophy of the eye. Rhythmists rejected western religion and morality. In Murry's opinion: 'Art is beyond creeds, for it is the creed itself'.¹⁴⁰ This placed the Rhythmists as Romanticists in Hulme's eyes, followers of 'spilt-religion', in their rejection of religious dogma for that of humanity.¹⁴¹ Hulme defined Romantic man, 'that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities'.¹⁴² Yet Hulme with his belief in Classicism clung on to what he saw as Bergson's underlying humanity until 1915, when his philosophical model of the world separated the inorganic physical sciences from the organic biological sciences, or Nature; and that religion and ethics were separated from both. By separating religion from life and with it humanity, Hulme finally refuted Bergson.

Hulme's interest in anarchy, contrary to the idea of individual liberty, was more in keeping with Sorel and their shared belief in absolutism in ethics. The popular view of Sorel's essay *Reflections on Violence* was one of the pursuit of democracy through the collective impetus of syndicalism. Hulme defined 'democracy' in Britain as 'Liberal democracy'; democracy just as appropriate to the Liberal Party as to the Socialists. Sorel described the French parliamentary Republican Party as 'bourgeois democracy'. Hulme placed the blame on eighteenth century libertarianism; the false hopes associated with revolutionary change amongst all classes.

They had been taught by Rousseau that man was by nature good, and it was only bad laws and customs that suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what created the religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities, and if you can rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress. ¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ J. M. Murry, 'Art and Philosophy', *Rhythm*, No.1, Summer, 1911, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ Hulme described Romanticism: 'It is like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give it, is spilt religion.' ('Romanticism and Classicism' in H. Read, (ed.), *Speculations*, 1924, p.118.

¹⁴² Hulme described 'Classical' man: 'an extraordinary 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' ('Romanticism and Classicism').

¹⁴³ T. E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism' in H. Read, (ed), *Speculations*, 1924, p.116.

Like Hulme, Sorel believed that man could not be transformed by the rational; man is by nature bad; fallen and imperfectible. Hulme spelled out where he believed the heart of Sorel's ideology lay in the critical introduction to his 1916 English translation of *Reflections on Violence*. Hulme believed that man springs from classical pessimism. The notion of Original Sin permeates classical man: (he) 'can consequently only accomplish anything of value by disciplines, ethical, heroic, or political'.¹⁴⁴ Sorel's route was through class struggle, yet both men's thought was closer to that of the *L'Action française*. The gradual transition from workers' mass action against bourgeois democracy to support for the anti-parliamentary Right after 1908, following Sorel's disillusionment with the Syndicalists, reflected this underlying thought. This did not mean that Sorel became a supporter of the restoration of the monarchy but that *L'Action française* was an effective force against the Republicans and the parliamentary Socialists. An added attraction for Sorel was Maurras's loathing of the Jews.

Andrzej Gasiorek identifies the essential connection between Hulme and Sorel is in their underlying ideologies on class struggle in bringing together the historical role of myth with the absolutism of early classical theological and political thought. Quoting Gasiorek, 'Hulme from the outset of his career combined reactionary and radical traditions in his work'.¹⁴⁵ It is this aspect of combining the emotional and non-rational revolutionary use of myth with the absolutism derived from historical tradition that attracted Hulme to Sorel's ideology. The reworking of historical myths, focusing their impact on the consciousness of certain associations with 'liberty' 'freedom' etc., could be used to ferment political and social change, but the outcome needed to be tempered with the imposition of traditional values derived from a non-democratic past. It is this analysis that makes understandable the appeal of *L'Action française's* ideological thought to Sorel, and why Hulme lent his support to the Conservatives in writing the article 'A Tory Philosophy'. The Sorelian effect was to challenge the premise that democracy was essentially humanist in nature; an evolutionary pathway towards perfection of the human condition.

¹⁴⁴ T. E. Hulme, 'Reflections on Violence', *Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, p. 250.

¹⁴⁵ A. Gasiorek, 'Towards a Right Theory of Society', in E. Comentale and A. Gasiorek (eds.), *T E Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, 2006, p. 154.

By 1914 a heady mix of French politics ranging from Sorel's anarchist-inspired class struggle to *L'Action française's* nationalist ambitions figured in Hulme's, Pound's and Lewis's polemics. Pound's article on Lewis's *Timon of Athens* portfolio in *The Egoist* berated the public's lack of understanding: 'The rabble and the bureaucracy have built a god in their own image and that god is Mediocrity'.¹⁴⁶ Pound anticipated the reactionary anti-democratic views propagated a decade later by Benda and his younger contemporary Ortega. Ortega, like Hulme, was familiar with the critical views of Worringer on the inferiority of empathic art, an argument he developed in his major essay 'The Dehumanization of Art' (1925). In the essay, Ortega developed the reactionary ideology of a small discriminating class who through their superior powers of vision could understand the new art: 'It is not an art for men in general, but for a very particular class of men, who may not be more worth than the others, but who are apparently distinct'.¹⁴⁷ Preceding this, Ortega wrote: 'The time is approaching when society, from politics to art, will once more organize itself into two orders: that of the distinguished and that of the vulgar'.¹⁴⁸ Pound's article on Lewis anticipated these views: Lewis's use of the Classical medieval artist's device, the privileging of the eye, or proximate vision, in distinguishing that section of the picture which impacts most profoundly on the viewer. Lewis uses proximate vision in the four principal *Timon* drawings in the portfolio by privileging a section of each drawing through the pictorial device of swirling motifs and impacting wedges. The result is that the viewer (for Pound, the intelligent viewer) engages in sympathetic unity with, and responds to, the tragic lot of *Timon*, shut in by the forces of stupidity:

If a man have gathered the force of his generation or his clan, if he has in his "Timon" expressed the sullen fury of intelligence baffled, shut in by the entrenched forces of stupidity, if he have made "Timon" a type emotion and delivered it in lines and masses and planes, it is proper that we should respect him in a way that we do not respect men blaring out truisms or doing an endless embroidery of sentiment.¹⁴⁹

In a sense, Lewis and *Timon* are one. Pound saw both as being 'shut in'; Lewis by a public that failed to understand his art. Pound believed that Lewis should be respected as an artist who draws

¹⁴⁶ E. Pound, 'Wyndham Lewis', *The Egoist*, 15th June 1914, p. 233

¹⁴⁷ Ortega y Gasset, 'The Dehumanization of Art', in *Velazquez, Goya, The Dehumanization of Art and other essays*, 1972, p. 67.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹ E. Pound, 'Wyndham Lewis', p. 233.

from the art of the Middle Ages, a society grounded on the ethical values of order and discipline: quoting Sherry, ‘detachment is the rank and privilege of an aristocratic class, holding the high ground of the eye’.¹⁵⁰ Lewis, the detached artist, saw himself in this aristocratic role, and like Hulme, believed in absolute ethical values. Like the Syndicalist anarchist Sorel, Lewis showed through his art that the moral high ground could only be achieved by shutting out the perfidious language of democracy, be it Athenian or Liberal. Seen in the context of modern society, the older model of authoritarian governance which Lewis signposted through the use of proximate vision is less achievable. Hence, the place of the medieval aristocrat can no longer be reserved exclusively in the foreground of the painting. Timon, the aristocrat, is in free fall. This is the visual message in the drawing, *Timon of Athens: Composition* (1912) (fig.28). There are similarities in *Timon of Athens, Act 1* (1912) (fig. 29). This painting, also known as ‘A Masque of Timon’ and ‘Feast of Overmen’, shows Timon entertaining his company of hangers-on, parasites, and false friends. The image is crowded with detail: tables, a chandelier, servants, guests, and a trumpet player. What is interesting about the image is that it represents different points in time. It is an amalgam of the visual and of memory, a Cubist mode of representation influenced by Bergson’s *Critical Evolution* (1907), but unlike Bergson’s theory the visual impact of the scene rests on Lewis’s intellectual method resulting in a static image. These points of time each represent a separate image, or snapshot, of Timon’s acts of largesse and excessive generosity. There is some visual linkage through Lewis’s employment of candelabra, and the avaricious cubist figures on the left side of the drawing crowding in on the banqueting scenes. Structurally, the eye is led to the centre of the drawing through Lewis’s use of wedge shapes impacting on the banqueting. By separating out and arresting the activity at different points of time, Lewis is substituting an amalgam of visually concrete forms for audible Bergsonian flux. The viewer is made to feel ‘an intuitive act’ for Timon. He is employing the techniques of the political right that are shared by the revolutionary left. One is left to wonder whether Lewis was using visual perception, as seen by royalist groups such as *L’Action française* preaching the ethical values of monarchy, or as Sorelian revolt against bourgeois false values in depicting the fall of the

¹⁵⁰ V. Sherry, *Esra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Radical Modernism*, p.19.

worthy Timon. In this sense, Timon was a precursor of *The Crowd*. The probability is that Lewis employs both *L'action française* and Sorel in combination.

The Serious Artist (1913) was Pound's attempt to define what makes 'good art'. 'Bad art' is inaccurate art, art that conforms to the taste of the times, basically art that imitates. What makes good art is much more difficult to define; 'something within (them) differing from the contents of apes or of other swinelike men'.¹⁵¹ On the fine arts, Pound was even more vague; a 'good' painter 'to tell you what he is trying to do...he will very probably wave his hands helplessly and murmur that "He- eh- eh- he cannot talk about it" '.¹⁵² Pound was more specific when defining a 'good poet'. Perhaps thinking of himself as a 'good poet' who might become a 'great poet', Pound might have been modelling himself on Dante, who having been born with the 'gift' of 'great poets':

it has been given to them to heap together and arrange and harmonize the results of many men's labour. This very facility for amalgamation is a part of their genius...If Dante had not done a great deal more than borrow the rhymes of Arnaut Daniel and theology from Aquitas, he would not be published by Dent in the year of grace 1913.¹⁵³

Pound too, in his work prior to 1914, drew from the work of earlier poets. As Dasenbroke points out: 'He wanted to capture the complex sonority of Provençal poetry, the clarity of Cavalcanti, and the sparseness of Chinese poetry, but he did not extract these elements. He merely rendered their atmosphere'.¹⁵⁴ Above all, Pound attributed good poetry, and by inference, all good art, to 'energy': 'the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radio-activity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying... A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in swift motion'.¹⁵⁵ Pound's description of energy in art being like 'electricity or radio-activity' echoes the psychological theories of Gabriel Tarde and Le Bon. 'A force like water' is almost verbally linking such an energizing force to Bergson's explanation of *durée* in the evolutionary process of humanity:

¹⁵¹ E. Pound, 'The Serious Artist- I and II', *The New Freewoman*, 15th Oct. 1913, Vol 1, No 9, p 162.

¹⁵² E. Pound, 'The Serious Artist- III', *The New Freewoman*, 1st Nov. 1913, Vol 1, No 10, p. 194.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 194.

¹⁵⁴ R. W. Desenbrock, *The literary vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis*, p. 99.

¹⁵⁵ E. Pound, 'The Serious Artist- III', p. 195.

Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter...At one point alone it passes freely...at this point is humanity; it is our privileged situation¹⁵⁶

In November 1913, Pound was still analysing art as a Bergsonian process. Levenson considers *The Serious Artist* a departing expression of humanist sentiment: 'his attitude finds a place within the humanist tradition'...by February 1914 (*The New Sculpture*) he comes to a position as anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian as that of Stirner, Nietzsche or Upward'.¹⁵⁷

David Kadlec argues that during the period 1908 -1913, Pound attempted to reconcile politics, or to be more precise, political terminology, with the ethical power of art, drawing together his ideology from such diverse sources as Marinetti's Futurism, the medievalism of Ruskin, French syndicalism, and the political stance of Orage's *The New Age*.¹⁵⁸ But in attempting to locate ethics in Vorticism, Pound tried to ally the movement to the class war being waged by the more radical trade unionists against the Liberal Government's utilitarian principles of governance. Kadlec highlights the Liberals' 1911 National Insurance Plan, seen by libertarians such as Orage as the Parliamentary Labour Group, the Independent Labour Party (I. L.P), sacrificing the aspirations of the common wage-earner. Orage laid the blame on Sidney Webb and the Fabians: 'Their vitality exhausted, their vision destroyed, the Fabian group finds itself embedded in a gelatinous negation neither alive nor dead, neither blind nor seeing, not active, not passive, incapable even of suicide'.¹⁵⁹ His vision of a Guild-led organisation where the ordinary wage earner, or 'wage slave' no longer reliant on the owners of capital, was being subsumed by what Orage saw as 'State-Socialism'. The article concluded with prophetic words, 'the will to abolish wavery is primarily an act of faith, a religious sacrament'.¹⁶⁰ There is a strong element in this statement of Nietzschean evolutionary forecasting combined with Sorel's myth of the General Strike.

¹⁵⁶ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 284.

¹⁵⁷ M. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: a study of English literary doctrine, 1908-1922*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 74-76.

¹⁵⁸ D. Kadlec, 'Pound, Blast and Syndicalism', in *ELH*, Vol.60, No. 4, (Winter 1993).

¹⁵⁹ 'The Death of an Idea', *The New Age*, 10th July, 1913, p. 286.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 288.

The policy of Orage's *The New Age* was to encourage contemporary art and literature, but to be seen in company with his Socialist position, leaving open the editor's right to criticise their content. 'While Orage opened the pages of *The New Age* to Hulme, or Lewis, or Pound, or to Futurist provocateur Marinetti, he, and fellow contributors to the journal, also felt free to expose and satirize modernist pretensions and aesthetic detachment'.¹⁶¹ Pound sought to associate his literary input with Orage's Socialism but failed to understand that his identification with the working class in their struggle against capitalism did not lie easily with Lewis, whose critical intelligence while singling out the bourgeois class for their apathy towards the arts, had little sympathy with working class political aspirations. By 1914 Pound and Lewis realized that the machinery of class conflict was outside their theoretical constructs in art, but nevertheless through their *Blast* manifestos 'attempted to locate its "mass and opposition" by recasting the division between artists and "establishment" in terms of class'.¹⁶² Orage, who was born into a Northern working-class family, realised that Pound's and Lewis's use of class conflict was pretentious, but nevertheless encouraged *Blast* as a literary contribution to 'encourage discussion' amongst *New Age* readers. These debates were not confined to polite academic arguments. The most vociferous exchange was Hulme's reply to the art critic, A. M. Ludovici, a regular contributor to *The New Age*. Ludovici wrote disparagingly of Epstein's *Carvings in Flenite*, and the drawings *Rock Drill* and *Creation*, on show at the 21 Gallery, December 1913 exhibition:

'Where the plastic arts can no longer interpret the external world in the terms of great order or scheme of life, owing to the fact that all great schemes or orders are dead, they exalt the idiosyncrasy or individual angle of the isolated ego... a minor and non-value-creating ego'.¹⁶³

Hulme replying to Ludovici at some length, includes the following extracts:

'It would probably occur to anyone who read Mr Ludovici's article that he was a charlatan... But when a little bantam of this kind has the impertinence to refer to Mr Epstein as a "minor personality- of no interest to him," then the matter becomes so

¹⁶¹ P. Brooker and A. Thacker, eds., *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol.1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, Part 4, 'Transitions, Introduction', p. 202.

¹⁶² D. Kadlec, 'Pound, Blast, and Syndicalism', p. 1022.

¹⁶³ A. M. Ludovici, 'Art', *The New Age*, 18th Dec. 1913, pp. 214- 215.

disgusting that it has to be dealt with. The most appropriate means... would be a little personal violence... That a critic of this calibre should attempt to patronise Mr Epstein is disgusting'.¹⁶⁴

Hulme's analysis of Epstein's contribution to British modernism is described in Chapter Three, 'Hulme's Relationship with Vorticism'. Using Hulme's increasing scepticism of Bergson as a template, I position Lewis, Pound, Epstein, Gaudier and Fry in their respective ideas on modern art. Hulme singled out Lewis's work as promising but not quite coming together; 'his sense of form seems to me to be sequent rather than integral'.¹⁶⁵

Kadlee traces Pound's connection with the language of politics between 1908 and 1914 to John Ruskin (1819-1900) and his influence on the Pre-Raphaelites and the verse of Swinburne and Rossetti. He suggests that Pound was attracted to Ruskin's model of the medieval artisan as a vital cog in equating the art of the craftsman to an ethical 'organic' society that identified the worth of the producer. The problem was that the Pre-Raphaelite era was a period of high Romanticism that was totally at odds with Lewis's Vorticism. By early 1914, Pound came to realize that this new art was in line with Hulme's anti-humanist ideas. But the idea of class struggle remained in Pound's critique, most noticeably in his polemical contributions to *Blast 1*.

William Morris had attempted to equate the Arts and Crafts/Ruskin model with Marxist socialism in trying to find a place for the craftsmen/artist in the Marxian centralized production model. The gains were to be accrued by the worker. However, Marx saw the worker as 'the means of production': not as an individual. The Marxian vision of an egalitarian society had no connection with a Ruskinian society based on decentralization. By 1913, Pound was making more promising links to Ruskin through *The New Age* and Syndicalism. Like Ruskin, the Syndicalists traced their history to the medieval guilds. Their nineteenth-century origins were union based, but more to do with trade associations than with wage labour. By 1900, the Syndicalists, particularly in France, had embraced the anarchy of Stirner and were often described as anarcho-syndicalists. Orage, by 1913,

¹⁶⁴ T. E. Hulme, 'Mr Epstein and the Critics', *The New Age*, 25th Dec. 1913. pp. 253- 254.

¹⁶⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art-III: The London Group', *The New Age* 26th Mar. 1914, p. 661.

disillusioned with the moralistic Fabian socialists in their collaboration with the Liberal government on the issue of state interference in controlling workers' rights, sided with British union leader Tom Mann who had left the Labour Party to join the Syndicalists. Meanwhile, Sorel had taken up the Syndicalist cause in France and Orage was leaning towards the myth of the General Strike as a revolutionary means of correcting decadent bourgeois society. Pound, while continuing to have sympathy with Ruskin's elevation of the craftsman as artist in the context of the economic and social ethical force of this idealised medieval guilds model, favoured the Sorelian pathway to political change without perhaps realising that Sorel's solution rested upon a Marxian outcome: not state control, but control of the means of production. However, while Sorel's links with the Syndicalists were seen by Orage and Pound as the way forward, the reality was that after 1908 Sorel had become disillusioned with them and their lack for revolutionary fervour, instead beginning to forge links with the right-wing group *L'Action française*.

Although there were similarities between the political systems of Britain and France in terms of the rational values of the bourgeois class, Britain had no tradition of political or unionized opposition on the scale of the French anarchist tradition from which Sorel emerged.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Sorel highlighted the connections: 'The cowardice of the bourgeoisie strongly resembles that of the English Liberal Party, which constantly proclaims its total confidence in arbitration between nations: arbitration nearly always produces disastrous results for England'.¹⁶⁷ Sorel's Socialist/Marxian agenda was for the overthrow of the parliamentary system through violence. This was to be achieved through organized labour undertaking what Sorel termed the 'myth of general strike'. The term 'myth' applied here in the sense of the apocalyptic imagination. The myth is deeply implanted in the imagination of the struggling underclass; it defies all rational analysis and therefore cannot be incorporated into any intellectual process of thought. There can be no discussion about reform; it can only mean catastrophe to those confronted by it. Its effect is absolute revolution. Sorel offered examples in history to support the 'myth', the most striking being the myth of

¹⁶⁶ Britain did have links with the French Syndicalism but its impact was politically slight. There was an anarchic labour movement in 1913 associated with the South Wales miners under the direction of A J Cook which briefly threatened the government through strike action, but the First World War 1914-18 spelt the demise of visionary political movements. (See David Kadlec, 'Pound, Blast and Synicalism', 1993).

¹⁶⁷G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, (ed.), J. Jennings, Cambridge, 1999, p. 64.

Christian renovation through the inauguration of the kingdom of saints to the world, the dream of Luther and Calvin. It didn't happen, but the Protestant revolution did. All that was required of the proletariat for a General Strike, citing Sorel; 'to know is, whether the general strike contains everything that the Socialist doctrine expects of the revolutionary proletariat'. These ingrained ideas may be without rationality or hope of implementation; that did not matter, provided that the proletariat were as one in the unity of these ideas. Sorel's mechanism for comprising these socialist ideals was by temporality or 'flux':

a body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by Socialism against modern society.....We thus obtain the intuition of Socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness- and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously.....¹⁶⁸

This is where Sorel used Bergson's theory of time. His thesis appropriated Bergson's theory of the duality between intellect and intuition to make the connection between intellectualism as bourgeois politics and intuition as the myth of violent working-class protest. But while rejecting the moral values of the present régime, the revolution would impose high ethical values on the workers. This was where Hulme and Lewis supported Sorel, in the imposition of values on society through discipline. Pound was sympathetic towards the revolutionary aims of syndicalism and met Labour leaders such as Jim Larkin, leader of the 1913 Dublin dock strike, and A. J. Cook, the South Wales miners' leader, at Hulme's Frith Street evenings; but he was slow to drop his belief in Ruskin's ethical values. In enthusiastically pursuing Ruskin's ideology of the craftsman/artisan as the true model for an ethical society where consumer and maker are in communion, Pound and his ally Orage were hopelessly out of touch with modern times with new production methods, for example pioneered by Henry Ford, in their idealizing of this medieval guild ethos. Sorel's links with history were embedded within the myth and not seen as a model for direct implementation. By February 1914, Pound had dismissed Romantic humanism but still had an eye towards the Ruskin ideology. He described the modern artist as 'born to rule but he has no intention of trying to rule by general franchise. He at least is born to the purple', and 'He (the modern artist) must live by craft and

¹⁶⁸ G. Sorel, p. 118

violence'.¹⁶⁹ Pound was mixing up modern technology with medieval craft economies and trying to include ethical significance in the mix. Furthermore, he then associated the artist with royalty. He drew half-truths from syndicalism, Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement, Sorel's anarchism, and *L'Action française*, and attributed them to Hulme's Quest lecture. But in a political sense, Pound's remarks can be seen as a harbinger of the direction that right-wing politics were to take after the war. The revolutionary tone can be attributed to Pound's imitation of Marinetti's rhetoric on Futurism, but the 'born to rule' quote has a close analogy with Benda's 'aristocracy of the mind' and the superiority of the eye discussed earlier. He is also anticipating the ideology of Ortega from an article written by Ortega in 1925: 'The new art (avant-garde) obviously addresses itself...to a specially gifted minority. Hence, the indignation it arouses in the masses...'¹⁷⁰

Sorel's political philosophy appealed to the avant-garde, particularly because of its grounding in Bergson; to the Synthetic Cubists in a modified 'collective' form of nationalism which favoured Celtic tradition, and to the Futurists, as a myth of militant nationalism where violence would create strength. The Synthetic Cubists' Celtic cultural affiliation was grounded in the guilds and it is here that one can link their activities to anarcho-syndicalism. The newly-founded Celtic League was seen as a prime example of a race imbued with the intuitive spirit of Bergson's *élan vital*. *The City and the River* (1913), by the cubist Albert Gleizes (1881-1953) (fig.30), echoes the theme of cultural continuity linking the spirit of Gothic art as indicative force to the evolution of the 'truly' French nation. The anarcho-syndicalists were similar to trade unionism and were particularly strong in France from 1895 (Congress of Limoges) when the *Confédération Generale du Travail* (CGT) was formed; a merging of trade and labour federations. By 1902, the CGT had become a militant organization of revolutionary syndicalism. They favoured direct action using violence if necessary through the general strike. The Syndicalists distrusted politics; especially the Socialist Party whom they considered had a divisive record within the movement. Their aims were economic, but in the tradition of Proudhon, probably the first man to call himself an anarchist, their underlying aim was

¹⁶⁹ E. Pound, 'The New Sculpture', *The Egoist*, 16th Feb. 1914, p. 68.

¹⁷⁰ Ortega y Gasset, 'The Dehumanization of Art', 1925, in *Velázquez, Goya, The Dehumanization of Art and other essays*, 1972, p. 66.

to abolish the State and to carry on those activities deemed beneficial to society through the *syndicales*. It is through the general strike as a mechanism for class revolution that the anarcho-syndicalists made common cause with Sorel.

Lewis's Analysis of Crowd Behaviour

Lewis's early years in France drew his attention towards the writings of both Sorel and Le Bon. Sorel was known for his revolutionary anarchism, Le Bon for his traditional values. Despite this disparity in political philosophy, both men displayed similar individualist attitudes in facing up to the dynamics of the masses. Both men appropriated mythical interpretations of history to energize the future. Sorel and Le Bon also recognized the importance of religious sentiment; the emphasis on the 'mystique'; seeing a parallel with the psychological explanation for non-secular emotional behaviour. This led both Sorel and Le Bon to study the similarities between Christian and Socialist bodies in their emotional behaviour throughout history. Essentially pessimistic, any progress could only be achieved through collective action. Sorel based this premise on the seventeenth century writings of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) whose religious ideology encompassed 'the march towards deliverance' where the natural weakness of the individual requires mass involvement in 'heroic acts'. Quoting Pascal: 'It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason' *Pensées* (1670). By 1906 Sorel had come to differentiate between 'true' and 'false' socialists. With the former, their ethical principles were located 'in their hearts', whereas parliamentary socialists were pragmatic and self-seeking. Sorel's next step was to attribute to the French Syndicalist Movement 'true' socialism, and thence to the ideology of the non-rational but 'real' myth of the General Strike. The Syndicalist Movement had developed from the craft guilds and local organizations of small traders, but was now closer to trade unions. Their aims varied from localized co-operatives to a movement for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and central government. Sorel defines 'myths' as 'not descriptions of things but expressions of a determination to act'.¹⁷¹ He warns us against seeing expressions of will as a route towards utopia. Utopias are conjured up by politicians and intellectuals and invariably involve compromise. Heroic myths have their roots in history and can only work in the collective through the same set of images in the mind of the masses. This is where

¹⁷¹ G. Sorel. *Reflections on Violence*, London, 1925, p. 32.

Sorel drew on Bergson's theory of intuition: 'Bergson... asks us, on the contrary to consider the inner depths of the mind and what happens there during a creative moment', but most of the time we live outside our innermost self.¹⁷² Sorel uses the term 'General Strike' to describe the implementation of the revolutionary myth. Such a myth in the minds of the collective cannot be broken down and analysed by politicians; 'false' socialists offering a utopian outcome. The outcome, as Sorel saw it, would be a pure form of Marxist socialism where the proletariat would be employed in progressive modern industries devoid of State and private ownership. To achieve this aim required, if not the total elimination of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat may, 'by their use of violence, manage to re-establish the division into classes and so restore to the bourgeoisie something of its energy'.¹⁷³ The violence that Sorel advocated fell into the category of 'heroic gesture' of the Ancient Greeks, or along the lines of the Christian martyrs seeking to prove absolute truth, and should not to be confused with 'State violence'. The latter Sorel attributed to bourgeois politicians and intellectual ideologues whose origins derived from the Jacobin clubs of the French Revolution.¹⁷⁴

Sorel's revolutionary anarchism fits in well with Lewis's concept of the intellectual visionary where, thinking of Sorel's reasoning, the energy generated by the myth of the General Strike flows to the still, yet dynamic, centre of the vortex to enter the aesthetic of the Vorticist. I find this concept in the painting *The Crowd*, a key painting in demonstrating Lewis's intellectual individuality in conflict with the coming together of the people in time of war. The painting suggests conflict where reactionary forces contain the revolutionary Sorelian figures. While the image displays a temporal sequence of activity of the cubist machine-like figures, their containment within the picture plane is through the Futurist schematic grid-like arrangement around them of the city, and what the city stands for in its de-humanising of the masses. What should be borne in mind is that the painting is

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 89.

¹⁷⁴ In J. Jennings introduction to *Reflections on Violence*, Cambridge, (1999), p. xx, 'Sorel could not rally to the union sacrée that brought France's political forces together in 1914'. Quoting from a letter to Mario Missiroli, writer and journalist, in August 1914: 'All Socialist thought has become Jacobin... the old Jacobin tradition remains alive, a tradition formed of frenzied envy, pride and puerile imaginings.' (Lettro á Marrio Missiroli in Sorel.G. *Da Proudhon a Lenine L'Europa tutto la tormenta*, ed. Gabriele de Rosa, Rome, 1974, pp. 500-514.

controlled by Lewis using the medieval painter's practice of proximate vision in privileging to the eye the most (politically) important parts of the work. This technique plus the use of shallow space, and the break-up of temporal perception for the viewer, creates a hierarchical relationship between objects across the picture plane. Lewis, applies the medieval painter's technique of juxtaposing objects in space to *The Crowd*, but in so doing creates a conflict for the viewer in reading the painting. Unlike the medieval painter's certainty in placing the most privileged within the picture space, Lewis is struggling to assert his individuality given the pressures imposed by the outbreak of the First World War to conform. Lewis finds that realism or truth of Life, in Art, cannot be fully resolved in this case by playing off the detached 'dead' objects of analytical Cubism against the subjective elements of both Cubism and Futurism.

Sorel's analysis of class struggle can be detected in Lewis's painting *The Crowd*. Edwards considers the painting as not totally pessimistic, ascribing an 'anarchist effort' to the surge of the crowd; a 'cleaning' agent for sweeping away the present system for something else.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, Normand sees the painting as highlighting Lewis's reading of the crowd as 'an alien and dangerous mechanism' that either cannot or hasn't the will to purge the bourgeoisie of its stultified culture.¹⁷⁶ This reading is in line with Le Bon's analysis of crowd behaviour as anti-democratic; the unconscious action of the crowd as against the conscious activity of individuals. *The Crowd*, according to Normand, expressed Lewis's scepticism of humanity, a position much influenced by the speculations of Hulme. But as Normand points out, 'Hulme had asserted that humankind was incapable of any "perfectibility" and this implied, in political terms, a demand for some form of authoritarianism, although Hulme never registered any statement concerning his ideal polity'.¹⁷⁷ Quoting Hulme: 'The fundamental error (of Romanticism) is that of placing Perfection in humanity, thus giving rise to that bastard thing Personality, and all the bunkum that follows it'.¹⁷⁸ Hulme was defining humanism as a kinetic approach towards the utopia of Rousseau, Darwin and Wells. Quoting Comentale and Gasiorek; 'His critique of modernity focuses on the reification of

¹⁷⁵ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, p. 134.

¹⁷⁶ T. Normand, *Wyndham Lewis the Artist*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 80.

¹⁷⁸ T. E. Hulme, 'A Notebook', in *The Collected Writings*, p. 437.

romantic ideology and traces its corrupt effects in all areas of thought: liberalism in politics, relativism in philosophy, positivism in science, dynamism in the arts'.¹⁷⁹ Hulme's stance takes the religious attitude that man is a limited being requiring external authority. Yet Hulme was not an overtly religious man. He merely used religion as a way of seeing the limitations of humankind. My view is that Lewis positioned himself as a dispassionate observer of the political direction of *The Crowd*, incorporating into the painting the ideological framework of Sorel's anarchist approach in combining the emotional value of myth to achieve insurrection, with the counter-revolutionary imposition of rational values once the struggle has brought about democratic change. This was essentially Hulme's interpretation; a position that Lewis would have supported.¹⁸⁰ Hulme was attracted to Sorel, not because he supported class struggle, but, to quote Gasiorek, 'Sorel's method is valuable in that it offers a technique for dismantling what Hulme sees as an unexamined prejudice'.¹⁸¹ This 'unexamined prejudice' is that (Liberal) Socialism and Democracy are complementary, when in the face of historical evidence this position has never been achieved. In order to dismantle this myth, Hulme's methodology was to bring to the surface in concrete form those indeterminate but powerful ideas that 'depend on certain fundamental attitudes of the mind', where they can be seen for what they are. Quoting Hulme, 'All effective propaganda depends on getting these ideas away from their position "behind the eye" and putting them facing one as *objects* which we can then consciously accept or reject'.¹⁸² 'Behind the eye' describes the technique employed from the time of Rousseau and, as with the Social Contract, lies behind the concept that democracy brings freedom, that people are essentially good. While this is essentially a middle-class rationalist concept, Sorel sought to apply it to the working-class through Syndicalism but, unlike its romantic association with social progress, true progress could only be achieved through classical pessimism. The hallmark of classical pessimism was the limitations of humankind, the very opposite of Romanticism, yet Sorel argued that the Classical 'spirit' with its emphasis on discipline

¹⁷⁹ E. Comentale and A. Gasiorek, 'Introduction: On the significance of Hulmean Modernism', in *T E Hulme and a Question of Modernism*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁰ G. Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1908) was translated into English by Hulme and published in 1916. Lewis most likely had read the French text and his close relationship with Hulme after 1913 suggests that he was familiar with Hulme's thoughts on Sorel's ideology before the 1916 English edition was published.

¹⁸¹ A. Gasiorek, 'Towards a "Right Social Theory"? Politics, Machine Aesthetics and Religion', in E. P. Comentale & A. Gasiorek (eds.), *T. E. Hulme and a Question of Modernism* Farnham, 2006, p. 155.

¹⁸² T. E. Hulme, 'Preface to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*', in *The Collected Writings*, p. 248.

and traditional values could regenerate a society that had undergone violent insurrection. In describing *The Crowd* as ‘not totally pessimistic’, Edwards seems to be taking a more optimistic view of the proceedings, but as Gasiorek points out, Sorel’s work, influenced by Proudhon, drew his interpretation of ‘pessimism’ from classical thought, and quotes Sorel; ‘Pessimism is quite a different thing from the caricatures that are usually presented of it; it is a metaphysics of morals rather than a theory of the world’.¹⁸³ Normand’s interpretation places his emphasis on authoritarian repression. I believe Lewis applies to *The Crowd* Sorelian ideology as interpreted by Hulme, but in a format that illustrated his detachment and critical intelligence. He used shallow space and structural enclosure to ensure that any feelings of empathy were suppressed, turning the imagery from subjective temporality to complete standstill. By turning the figures into puppets they became merely objects for contemplation.

Both Sorel and Le Bon play a part in the configuration of the masses, yet Lewis’s later view of Sorel as a ‘crowd-master’ writing in 1926 states:

He is the arch exponent of extreme action and revolutionary violence *à outrance*; but he expounds this sanguinary doctrine in manuals that often, by changing a few words, would equally serve the forces of traditional authority, and provide them with a twin evangel of demented and intolerant class-war.¹⁸⁴

This chimes with Normand’s view that *The Crowd* can be read as ‘as a subtle metaphor for the idea of social control’¹⁸⁵ Lewis was not looking back to a golden age. He is accepting modern urban life as he sees it, and to quote Normand: ‘The rigid geometries and imprisoning modules... (of, for example, *The Crowd*)...schematically describe a world where action is delimited by the objective fact of its intrinsic absurdity and common purposelessness’.¹⁸⁶ There does appear to me here an element of extrapolation in this analysis; a view with the benefit of hindsight taken from Lewis’s enthusiasm for National Socialism in the early 1930s. What evidence one can gather of Lewis’s political views at the time are based on the polemical *Blast* 1&2 in which one finds a mixture of contradictory satirical

¹⁸³G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, J. Jennings, 1999, p. 20.

¹⁸⁴Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. R. W. Dasenbrock, 1989, p. 119.

¹⁸⁵T. Normand, *Wyndham Lewis: the artist*, p. 82.

¹⁸⁶Ibid, p. 82.

statements in *Blast* 1, and a rather unsatisfactory attempt to square the circle of the ‘individualist’ Lewis with the ‘patriotic’ Lewis in *Blast* 2.

Le Bon wrote his seminal work on crowd psychology, *La psychologie des foules* in 1895 and by 1908 when Sorel published *Réflexions sur la violence*, he agreed with almost all of La Bon’s conclusions about crowd psychology: the unconscious nature of the crowd, the absence of intellectual rationality, repetition by crowd leaders causing exhaustion, and the amplification of the leader’s mind into the subconscious collective mentality of the crowd. Where they differed was in crowd motivation. Le Bon’s crowd, while susceptible to manipulation and hysteria, were essentially conservative and, at heart, favouring tradition and lacking the conception of class war. Sorel’s crowd were at heart close to an ideal ‘natural’ man untainted by ‘false rhetoric’. Both agreed that France’s political system was corroding the moral fabric of the country.

By 1910, Sorel was drifting away from syndicalism and looking towards *L’Action française* and royalism, because he thought Syndicate leaders were entering into compromising agreements with the parliamentary socialists. Le Bon, whose focus had been on the military as a moral force to counter the politicians, had by 1912 achieved almost universal support in pursuing patriotism and national defence. Sorel’s myth remained no more than an empirical analysis derived from history, its importance lying in its transposition into an explanation of social psychology. He fashioned its Bergsonian intuitive content into a collective psyche to pursue his revolutionary myth. Le Bon’s theory of the crowd was equally Bergsonian in his identification of receptive ‘images’ in explaining crowd behaviour and, more pointedly, how these ‘images’ might be manipulated by politicians. Le Bon places great emphasis on the transitory state of a society in which crowds congregate. The process of change has still to be completed but there is no going back. Hulme, with his emphasis on reintroducing religious values to cure society’s ills, would have disagreed with Le Bon’s emphasis on military-led nationalism, but he would have agreed with Le Bon’s analysis of crowd behaviour, as did Lewis. Most notably, Le Bon maintained that individuals determine the actions of the crowd. This is where Lewis introduces the idea of ‘the crowd master’.

Lewis must surely have had Le Bon in mind when he wrote ‘The Crowd Master’ for *Blast 2*, the war issue of 1915. Lewis had set out to establish his Vorticist credentials in art and literature on his own uncompromising individuality. The onset of war, with its pressures to conform by the coming together of the population to face the threat of German aggression, sent mixed messages to his perception of artistic integrity. Lewis’s approach to grappling with the problem can be seen in *Blast 2*, one example being his unfinished article ‘The Crowd Master’ (1915). This modernist piece of writing describes the nightly crowds thronging the West End of London during August 1914 in response to the Government’s General Mobilization Order against the German threat of war. The work is significant for its Vorticist structure; a comparison with the version of ‘The Crowd Master’, which Lewis included in his autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) reveals the superiority of the original. Whereas the *Blasting and Bombardiering* version is a straight narrative of unfolding events, lacking in modernist structure, Lewis structured the original in a discordant arrangement of prose much like the *Blast 1* manifestos. Like all his Vorticist work, Lewis employed his maxim, number 16, from *The Code of the Herdsman* (1917): ‘Contradict yourself. In order to live, you must remain broken up’.¹⁸⁷ Unlike the polemics in *Blast 1*, ‘The Crowd Master’ found Lewis divided, struggling to equate his individuality in his art with his newfound patriotism. Similarly, Lewis expressed doubts as to his infallibility to fully elevate his Art above Life in the novel *Tarr*. In both works Lewis used the same terminology: ‘the Crowd in Life spells death ... The Crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death’.¹⁸⁸ In *Tarr*, Lewis explained death when Anastasya asks him

What is art? ...

Death is the one attribute that is peculiar to life. It is something that is impossible to imagine in connection with art = Reality is entirely founded on this fact, that of Death.¹⁸⁹

In the character Tarr, Lewis incorporated his individualism, his personal ego, in elevating Art as circumventing Death (Art lives on); that sex and marriage were incompatible with the creative

¹⁸⁷ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Code of the Herdsman, Imaginary Letters’, *The Little Review*, Vol.4, no.3, July 1917, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Crowd Master’, in *Blast 2*, p. 94.

¹⁸⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 298.

artist. Lewis applied his personal ideology to ‘The Crowd Master’: ‘The Bachelor and the Husband-Crowd. The Married Man is the Symbol of the Crowd. It is similar to surrender’.¹⁹⁰

While the tenor of crowd philosophy suggested the influence of Nietzsche, the psychology of the crowd clearly reflected Le Bon’s *The Crowd. A study of the popular mind*. Quoting Le Bon, ‘The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age’.¹⁹¹ Le Bon’s analysis of crowd behaviour linked their power with the state of modern society in an age where the traditional religious, political and social beliefs were being challenged by modern science and industrial discoveries. He regarded this era as a transitional one marked by anarchy and general unrest. Contemporary social commentators from the left and the right subscribed to Le Bon’s analysis. Le Bon’s crowd flux had elements of Bergson and Nietzsche in its analysis of social behaviour, and Lewis would have known the opportunities for crowd manipulation revealed by Le Bon’s analysis.

Meyers, in his biography of Lewis, writes that in Paris (Lewis) ‘was familiar with the work of contemporary French thinkers: Georges Sorel, Julien Benda, Charles Péguy and Rémy de Gourmont’.¹⁹² He does not support this statement with any direct evidence, but it is reasonable to accept given the links that can be made to Lewis’s two formative works conceived and started at that time, *The Wild Body* short stories and the novel *Tarr*. Vincent Sherry argues the case for de Gourmont’s influence in the short story *Le Père François (A Full-length Portrait of a Tramp)* 1909.¹⁹³ Here the influence is a negative one where only sentimentality and repetition results from the perception of the tramp’s senses. This exercise in sensory perception is allied to the comic theme of the stories rather than having any direct political bearing. It is more likely that Lewis by 1909 was reacting against the musical empathy, or vitalism, of Bergson. In the story, Lewis explained that the

¹⁹⁰ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Crowd Master’, p. 94.

¹⁹¹ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, preface, p.iii.

¹⁹² J. Meyers, *The Enemy*, p. 16.

¹⁹³ V. Sherry writes that it is unlikely that Lewis came into direct contact with de Gourmont during his stay in Paris but ‘he expresses an understanding, like de Gourmont’s, of the susceptibilities of human hearing, and he moves these insights towards anti-democratic conclusions similar to those drawn by Benda a full decade later, in 1918, in *Belpégor*’. V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 92.

tramp, Père Francois, attributed the sensory qualities of 'his throat' to his rendering of patriotic songs.

After having been shown his throat, and having vainly attempted to seize between my thumb and forefinger, an imaginary vessel that he insisted, with considerable violence, that I should find, our relations nearly came to an abrupt termination on my failing.....¹⁹⁴.

Lewis used the non-existent 'vessel' as metaphor for musical vitalism but at the same time implied that the singing of patriotic songs that empathized through sound is the populist way of feeling.

Lewis, casting around for something to say after being unable to find the vocal organ replies:

I said irrelevantly that his hair was very long. He slowed down abruptly in his speech, but some sentences still followed. Then, after a silence, taking suddenly a most profound serious expression, he said, with a conviction of tone that admitted no argument and paralysed all doubt, "I will tell you! It's too long! My hair is too long!"¹⁹⁵

Bergson's theory of time links in with Le Bon's ideas on crowd intuition: 'A crowd thinks in images, and the image itself immediately calls up a series of other images, having no logical connection with the first'.¹⁹⁶ Of particular interest to Lewis would have been Le Bon's suggestion that in a crowd people become one mental unity: 'Thousands of isolated individuals may acquire at certain moments under the influence of certain violent emotions- such, for example, as a great national event- the characteristics of a psychological crowd'.¹⁹⁷ Sherry cites *Le Père François* as an example of Lewis applying the French Symbolist poet and critic Remy de Gourmont's theory of 'vocal energy' to the tramp, a theory closely allied to that of Le Bon: 'In a rote, determinate reaction, the Franciscan merely repeats the ("irrelevant") phases imprinted in him'.¹⁹⁸ In revolutionary song, de Gourmont found a connection between musical sensation and populist collectivism. Of more relevance to Lewis's aesthetic and future political direction was de Gourmont's theory, his ideology of the eye.

¹⁹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body*, p. 278.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 278.

¹⁹⁶ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Radical Modernism*, p.93.

‘Whereas the democratic ear merge, the aristocratic eye divides’.¹⁹⁹ The inference, a theme later fashioned politically by Julien Benda (1867-1956) in *Belphegor* (1918), was that musical empathy played on the passions of the ‘lower social orders’. Only those with conceptual intelligence could appropriate the ‘eye’ route. It becomes increasingly clear that with *The Wild Body* stories, Lewis was positioning himself as a man of critical intelligence who used his visual discrimination to judge humanity. Although de Gourmont’s theory of language has much in common with Bergson’s ideas on intuition, he emphasized the importance of the visual of all the senses, and this would have appealed to Lewis. What de Gourmont warned against was where emotions led to abstract ideas that do not originate from the senses. Ideas that become emotions must relate to the concrete ‘thing’ first conceived by the visuals or senses. Pound and Hulme based their ideas on the use of language through imagist poetry on de Gourmont.

Le Bon was critical of the masses; they may gather together, either heroic or criminal, depending on the suggestions to which the crowd is exposed, but in whatever guise, collectively ‘a man descends several rungs of the ladder of civilization’.²⁰⁰ Crowds were governed by unconscious motives, often ‘closely akin to quite primitive beings’.²⁰¹ This equated to Lewis’s analysis of the audience behaviour in the *Wild Body* short story *Les Saltimbanques*, which first appeared in Ford Madox Hueffer’s *English Review* in 1909. Lewis critiqued the primitive collective mind of the Breton audience in the circus tent: ‘It would be a revolt against Fate to criticise the amusements that Fate has provided for them, and it would be a sign of imminent anarchy in all things if they looked solemn while the clown was cracking joke’.²⁰²

The painting *The Crowd* represents a marked departure from the severe geometrical abstraction of earlier Vorticist work. Here Lewis used a schematic arrangement of muted colour and grid-like blocks of vertical and horizontal form in which Cubist figures are placed. These figures form vertical pillars of movement but are closed in and isolated by the grid formation. They are depicted

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

²⁰⁰ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 8.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 11.

²⁰² Wyndham Lewis, ‘Les Saltimbanques’ in *The Wild Body*, p. 246.

as trapped within their city environment as mechanical puppets besieged by reactionary forces, or as an heroic crowd generated into revolutionary action by Sorelian intuitive imagery, which Edwards calls ‘the anarchist effect’. Edwards suggests that Lewis had previously made direct reference to ‘The Crowd Master’ in his drawing *The Theatre Manager* (1909) (figure 10). Referring to Le Bon’s essay *Le Psychologie des foules*, Edwards suggests Lewis was drawing directly from the Le Bon proposal that the theatre manager needs to get inside the psychology of the crowd to gauge the future success of a production. Citing Edwards:

This drawing emerged from an engagement with Le Bon’s study of crowd psychology and in returning to consider these questions in 1914-15, after witnessing London’s war crowds, it seems likely that Lewis once again looked at this remarkable book.²⁰³

On the other hand, Wragg reads the drawing as dealing with the theme of mediation, but with an implication of primitive origins that relate to the *Wild Body* stories.²⁰⁴ My reading of the image leans towards Lewis’s study of the behaviour of his Breton circus audiences whose ‘primitive’ roots chime with Le Bon’s crowd philosophy.

Lewis used the character Blenner in ‘The Crowd Master’ to reflect his thoughts. Blenner, a recently retired Lieutenant in the Indian Army, is an egoist but the threat of war with Germany brings out feelings of excitement and patriotism. He finds that he cannot resolve the two. Blenner’s train journey to London to join the crowd is used to distinguish between Lewis’s conflicting views on individualism as an artist and patriotism as a citizen. The night train from Scotland to London is packed with reservists answering the call for mobilization. Through Blenner, Lewis voices his own prejudices and uncertainties: the ‘puppy schoolboy merriment’ of a group of officers; his thoughts ‘Stupid fat snob! Too poor a chemistry to produce anything else’, and, ‘I prefer the Prussian. He does at least read Clausewitz’.²⁰⁵ Other travellers are individualists: the Scottish sailor; ‘His eyes are polite; his being civilized, active and competent’, and Blenner, including the York reservist,

²⁰³ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: painter and writer*, 2000, p. 175.

²⁰⁴ D.Wragg, ‘Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism and the Aesthetics of Closure’, in S. Giles (ed.), *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*, 1993, p. 116.

²⁰⁵ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Crowd Master’, *Blast* 2, p. 96.

describes them as ‘Crowd-proof sailors’. Blenner looks for ‘the joy of protest... His beard was his naivest emblem of superiority’.²⁰⁶

In London Blenner joins the crowd where ‘Men drift in thrilling masses past the Admiralty, cold night tide...It serpentines every night, in thick well-nourished coils, all over the town’.²⁰⁷ Blenner immerses himself in this ‘blind’ crowd; a crowd in a state of perpetual flux:

Every acquaintance Blenner met was a new person. The only possibility of renewal for the individual is into this temporary Death and Resurrection of the Crowd.

Blenner was not too critical a man to penetrate their disguises or ferret out their Ego. He was glad to see so little of it for once.²⁰⁸

This above passage suggests that Lewis still clung to Nietzsche’s ideology from *The Birth of Tragedy* that the individualist artist could survive the Dionysian flux by Death and Resurrection, as the aristocrat of the spirit, who has the potential for true freedom.

Lewis’s crowd master is called Brown Bryan Multum, an American writer whose book on crowd behaviour Blenner had bought at a Charing Cross bookshop called ‘The Bomb Shop’.²⁰⁹ Blenner buys controversial books to satisfy his newfound egoism, having left army discipline behind, although he rarely reads them! Blenner meets Multum in the crowd and describes him as ‘Crowd-proof as a Scotch reservist’ and ‘a professional Crowd-officer’.²¹⁰ Multum appears to be a social commentator rather than the Le Bon stereotype of a crowd manipulator, who, while directing them, remains as one with the crowd where all reasoning is lost. Multum remains an individualist; ‘He appears the only conscious atom in the Crowd. A special privilege with him: to be of the Crowd and individually conscious’.²¹¹ Lewis goes on to say of Multum; ‘Did it really mean Master of the Crowd in the sense of a possessive domination by an individual? It meant something else, it

²⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 96- 97.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 94.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 98.

²⁰⁹ This is likely to be Henderson’s ‘Bomb Shop’, 66 Charing Cross Road. The shop had links to avant-garde artists, publishing a set of Vorticist lithographs in 1918 by Bomberg, *Russian Ballet* (1914) now in the Tate Britain collection.

²¹⁰ Wyndham Lewis, p. 98.

²¹¹ Wyndham Lewis, p. 99.

seemed evident'.²¹² But Lewis does not go on to say what that something else was. Did Lewis see this as a form of creative liberation, and for whom? Normand suggests that Lewis was thinking of Nietzsche's notion of personal renewal through encounter with the tragic drama.²¹³ In an artistic sense, Lewis may have been referring back to *Blast 1* where he exhorts the position of the Vorticist artist in society:

The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.

WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY- their stupidity, animalism and dreams.²¹⁴

This points the way to Lewis's narrative on crowd behaviour in *Blast 2*: 'The only possibility of renewal for the individual is into this temporary Death and Resurrection of the Crowd'. Blenner, as Lewis's mouthpiece, analyses Multum's book. Multum is critical of British life:

This American book spoke of "the soft conservatism" of England as the really barbarous things, "the anarchy and confusion of Past-Living." It opposed the English tory, a sort of Red Indian machine, with a soul like Walt Whitman, but none of the hirsute mistakes of that personage, and invention instead of sensibility'.²¹⁵

While Blenner is mildly scandalized by this criticism from an American he comes round to accepting his views.

'The Crowd Master', of which further parts were promised in the following numbers of *Blast*, but never materialized due to *Blast's* demise, is a typical example of Lewis's experimental Vorticist writing. The inclusion of a version of 'The Crowd Master' under the heading 'The Crowd' in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), Lewis's autobiography from 1914-1926, excludes any mention of Multum. Yet Multum is in effect Lewis's conscience in his effort to equate his artistic ego with his collective instinct towards patriotism. Blenner provides the prompts towards squaring this dialogue of opposites; the excitement of being part of a collective will with the need to maintain

²¹² Ibid, p. 100.

²¹³ T. Normand, *Wyndham Lewis the artist*, p. 81.

²¹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', *Blast 1*.

²¹⁵ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Crowd Master', *Blast 2*, p. 100.

philosophical distance, while at the same time praising the Prussian officer's reading of Clausewitz, but condemning the stupid public school mentality of young English officers. Encompassed are the hypnotic crowds 'which in life spells death'; the 'theatrical instinct' of newspaper proprietors; the 'joy of protest' of Blenner in joining in. But Multum expresses Lewis's doubts in saying about America:

I am so huge and I have no Past. I am like your Past and the Present dumped into one age together. Just so; what is the matter with you is the matter with me, only more so. But shall I absorb my elements because I am all living, whereas you are 80 per cent dead.²¹⁶

Compare the above quote made in 1915 to Lewis's optimism in 1914; 'We stand for the Reality of the Present-not the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past', from *Long Live the Vortex*, to the pessimism of the Present 'whereas you are '80 per cent dead', only those individuals who can detach themselves from the crowd can resist the 'immense anaesthetic towards death. Duty flings the selfish will into this relaxed vortex'.²¹⁷ Even those individuals distinguished by 'the selfish will' find themselves anaesthetised within the crowd by the call of duty. While trying to maintain his Vorticist critique of society, Lewis in the face of mass patriotism tried to balance the conflicting claims by Government, intellectual élitists, modernist avant-gardists, and the press, against Germany. Peppis in his essay 'Surrounded by a Multitude of Other Blasts: Vorticism and the Great War' (1997) suggests that Lewis tries to be even handed:

Viewed in the light of the government's rapid conquest of the public sphere during the war's opening months, and the attendant spread of propaganda and suppression of dissent, Lewis's effort to analyse rather than exploit the crowd psychology seemed an expression less of retrograde politics than of suspicion of expanding government control.²¹⁸

Lewis's 'The Crowd Master' strives to place an avant-garde critique beside an attempt to assimilate collective patriotism and although I believe the two to be largely incompatible, viewed as Vorticist

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 100.

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 94.

²¹⁸ P. Peppis, 'Surrounded by a Multitude of Other Blasts: Vorticism and the Great War'. in *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 4, no. 2, April, 1997.

experimental writing ‘The Crowd Master’ is both stimulating and instructive. Lewis, writing about this period twenty-two years later sardonically summed up his feelings: ‘I began my lesson then... (on the death in action of Gaudier-Breszka in 1915)... a lesson of hatred for this soul-less machine, of big-wig money-government, and these masses of half-dead people, for whom personal extinction is such a tiny step, out of half-living into no-living, so what does it matter?’²¹⁹ Lewis’s painting, *The Crowd*, depicts similar masses engaged in conflict that Edwards calls ‘the anarchist effect’. The ‘anarchist effect’ indicates that Lewis was employing Futurist techniques, for example, interlocking matchstick men, and the placing of flags to create an energised crowd surging forward. To counter this effect the structural forms of enclosure work to create a still and silent object for the viewer to contemplate; Lewis is using the visual tropes of Cubism and the Futurists. He is also sharing the attitude towards the masses of his old adversary Marinetti. Both regard the crowd as central to their thinking. Both men’s analysis of crowd behaviour echoes Le Bon’s psychology.

Lewis dismissed Marinetti in *Blast 2* with the quote: ‘The war will take Marinetti’s occupation of platform boomer away....He will still be here with us. Only there will be a little something not quite the same about him’²²⁰. Lewis allowed himself some qualifications now as to the standing of Futurism: ‘It has always been plain that as artists two or three of the Futurist Painters were of more importance than their post-impresario’²²¹. However, Lewis was indebted to Marinetti for paving the way for *Blast 1* through Marinetti’s innovative manifesto style of polemic, *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, published on the front page of *Le Figaro*, in February 1909. Not only did Lewis employ similar outrageous declarations, such as this from ‘Long Live the Vortex’: ‘The “Poor” are detestable animals’; as against Marinetti’s manifesto, Number 10, ‘We want to demolish all libraries and museums’. But on a more serious level both men used their manifestos to provoke and seek cultural and political recognition. Of the two men, Lewis was much more reticent as to his political aspirations.

²¹⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, London, 1967, p. 108.

²²⁰ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Marinetti’s Occupation’, *Blast 2*, p. 26.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p. 26.

Like Lewis, Pound had been much influenced by Marinetti. Even by July 1914, when *Blast 1* featured his manifesto 'Vortex', Pound's dismissal of Futurism cannot take away the essential aesthetic influence of Marinetti. Kadlec cites Marinetti as the key to the layout in *Blast 1*, not only in its forceful language, but also in the way that Marinetti organized the text to be 'neither verse nor prose'.²²² 'Vortex', Pound's 'blast' in *Blast 1* has a way of 'destroying' syntax, which derives from Marinetti's links with the Neo-Symbolist poets whose *vers libre* style allows the reader to perceive meaning that goes beyond words. But instead of the intuitive rhythmic pictorial representation of, for example, imagism, the eye is directed to the whole page. Similarly, Pound, like Marinetti, fashions his manifesto, 'Vortex' so that, metaphorically, the page becomes a symbol for militancy. Certain words stand out: 'PLACID', and 'NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE'. These words represented the state of affairs which Vorticism was set to assault. It was Pound's attempt to draw on the anarchic spirit of the Syndicalists, but through the medium of powerful art.

Prior to 1908, Marinetti as an idealistic poet had anarchist aspirations for Italy to counter the ruling class drawn from an aristocracy, who clung to a privileged but waning hold on power. Yet at the same time, Marinetti regarded himself as being part of the aristocratic ascendancy opposed to the levelling of egalitarian ideals, and was repelled by the rising power of the masses. His play, *Le Roi bombance* (King Revelry), written in 1904 but first performed in Paris in 1909 alongside his Futurist Manifesto, caused outrage. The plot revolved around a famished crowd, a Marinetti tragic-comic character called the Poet-Idiot who proposed a government of artist-revolutionaries, and the inability of the crowd in its collective trance to distinguish truth from illusion. The powerful but ignorant masses fail to understand truth because their motivation lies in their stomachs. Through suicide the Poet-Idiot affirms his freedom to determine his idealist individualism in the face of an ignorant mob. In 1909, Marinetti's crowd in *Le Roi bombance* was totally at odds with his Manifesto crowd: 'We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt' (No.11). The crowd had now become a heroic force for change.

²²² D. Kadlec, 'Pound, Blast and Syndicalism', 1993 p. 1018.

Lewis had in mind ‘the crowd master’ as the individual who could get ‘inside’ the crowd and control it. Edwards suggests that Lewis had previously made direct reference to the crowd master in his drawing *The Theatre Manager* (1909) (Fig. 10) after Le Bon. Le Bon’s essay *Le Psychologie des foules* suggested that the manager gets inside the psychology of the crowd to gauge the future success of a production.²²³ Citing Edwards: ‘This drawing emerged from an engagement with Le Bon’s study of crowd psychology and in returning to consider these questions in 1914-15, after witnessing London’s war crowds, it seems likely that Lewis once again looked at this remarkable book’.²²⁴ Le Bon’s theme was to speculate that whoever controlled the crowd could change society. Durman and Munton see the black-capped figure in *The Crowd* as having the role of the crowd master either to exhort the masses or to dehumanize them.²²⁵ Whether signposting the way forward through ‘the anarchist effect’ on the crowd or the opposite, subjugation, Lewis stands detached; the aristocrat of the spirit stands on the Nietzschean high ground to ‘Mock the herd perpetually with the grimace of its own garrulity or deadness’.²²⁶ Nietzsche ascribes to the artist a role model for humanity:

Only the aristocrat of the spirit who was free from the self-torture of the herd morality, and who, consequently, combined great instinctual energies with great creative energies, has the potential for true freedom²²⁷

Lewis, while attracted to the idea of the artist as liberator in 1917 in *The Code of the Herdsman*, became less enamoured to the idea by the time he wrote *The Art of Being Ruled* in 1926. By this time, Lewis labelled Nietzsche as ‘the archetype of the vulgarizer’.²²⁸ Lewis objected to the idea that anyone could aspire to ‘aristocracy’, by turning Nietzsche around from the great Anti-Christ to setting himself up as a model for Christ through advocating an ideology not unlike that of Christian redemption.

²²³ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, Book 1, Chptr. 2 (35). ‘Managers of theatres when accepting pieces are themselves, as a rule, uncertain of success, because to judge the matter it would be necessary that they should be able to transform themselves into a crowd.’

²²⁴ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, p. 175.

²²⁵ M. Durman and A. Munton, ‘The Nature of Vorticism’, in *Letteratura/Pittura*, p. 114.

²²⁶ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Code of the Herdsman’, *The Little Review*, July, 1917, rule no. 3, p.3.

²²⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1974 translation, Walter Kaufman, pp. 191- 192.

²²⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, Chapter 5, ‘Nietzsche as a Vulgarizer’, pp. 113- 118.

In 1914-15, when Lewis painted *The Crowd*, his ideological stance was derived from Nietzsche's 'artist as saviour' in *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'Here, at the moment of supreme danger for the will, *art* approaches, as a saving sorceress with the power to heal'.²²⁹ The 'herd morality' represented the traditions of the Graeco-Christian West based on the repression of free thought. Nietzsche's 'aristocrat of the spirit' was outside the herd, untouched by the bourgeois sentimentality of Christian love and pity whose virtues disguised the true reality of Nature. Such a person was strong, vital and creative. Lewis saw himself as that person; he could become a 'Self' (himself) creating his own identity, not part of the herd. Lewis makes this Nietzschean identity perfectly clear in his satirical 'letters', *The Code of the Herdsman*. The code is set out as eighteen numbered pointers, of which the following are most relevant to Lewis's *modus operandi*:

'(1) Never maltreat your own intelligence with parables. It is a method of herd hypnotism...German literature is so virulently allegorized that the German really never knows whether he is a Kangaroo, a Scythian, or his own sweet self. = You, however are a Herdsman'.²³⁰

While pointing to German literature, there is an element of nationalism here, it being 1917, and Lewis was writing from the Western Front where he served as an artillery officer.

'(3) ...Mock the herd perpetually with the grimace of its own garrulity or deadness'.²³¹

The grimace, or mocking grin was a characteristic of Lewis in his drawings and paintings, and was an important part of his armoury against 'bourgeois temperament'. Nietzsche denounced exalted laughter in *The Gay Science* (1882).

In his novel, *Tarr*, Lewis sought to identify the Herdsman with his protagonist Tarr, whereas the constricting and uncreative forces of bourgeois morality destroy the tragic Otto Kreisler. Kreisler is weak, being a mixture of conventional bourgeois conformist and bohemian rebel, a mix designed to counter self-mastery, and a Nietzschean character doomed by destructive forces. His actions become those of a puppet and finally he commits suicide having broken the law of that bourgeois society. There is a reference in *Rude Assignment*, Lewis's autobiography, first published in

²²⁹ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, (eds.), R. Geuss & R. Speirs, p. 40.

²³⁰ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Code of the Herdsman', p. 3.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

1950, to Nietzsche: ‘that side of his genius which expressed itself in *La Gaye Scienza*... (was)... among my favourite reading in those early years’.²³² Lewis had spent several months studying in Munich in 1906 where he might have become familiar with Nietzsche’s theories, although it is doubtful if he had read his theories from the German text.²³³

A close reading of the drawing *The Dancers* (1912) has something in common with post-modernist criteria. The work is an early example of Lewis’s technique whereby he transfixes the dancers to a discontinuity of arrested mechanical puppets. The image becomes a simulacrum. There is something of the Debordian Spectacle about it in its dehumanization.²³⁴ One could apply Jacques Rancière’s view of spectacle ‘as an externality’: ‘The Spectacle is the reign of vision. Vision means externality’.²³⁵ Lewis’s Vorticist output of paintings and drawings are marked by their lack of depth; depth equating to ‘telling from the inside’, a position Lewis ascribed to his modernist contemporary writers in *Time and Western Man*. Similarly, quoting Tarr: ‘There is another condition of [good] art; to have no inside, nothing you cannot see’.²³⁶ Lewis understood that his externalist aesthetic ‘depthless surface’ had its roots in Nietzsche’s call for a revaluation of all values. This represented what Lewis found to be a Nietzschean ‘truth’. Such a ‘truth’ can be seen in Lewis’s measure of humanity that ‘the common man’ is without depth:

The life of the crowd, of the common or garden man is exterior. He can only live through others, outside himself. He, in a sense, is the houses, the railings, the bunting or absence of bunting. His beauty and justification is in a superficial exterior state. His health is there.²³⁷

One can equate the life of the crowd, of the ‘exteriority’ of the common man, as a nod towards Nietzsche’s critique of the Christian moral system as oppressive, with its emphasis on death, or ‘afterlife’, prevailing over life. The above quote from 1919 gives us an insight into *The Crowd* where

²³² Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, p. 120.

²³³ W. K. Rose (ed), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, Letter to his mother dated Feb.1906, ‘I’ve not been very assiduous with my German, but can talk a bit...’, p. 27.

²³⁴ G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, London, 1977.

²³⁵ J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectacle*, 2009, p. 274.

²³⁶ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 300.

²³⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph’s Design: architects! Where is your vortex?*, P. Edwards, (ed.), Santa Barbara, 1986, p. 30.

Lewis took on the role of the crowd-master manipulating his puppets, ascribing visually what he saw as a universal truth.

Gasiorek argues that after the 1914-18 war Lewis reformulated Nietzsche's will to power to a search for truth based on the 'truth of the intellect', not the 'truth of the will'. The power of the Intellect runs throughout Lewis's ideology of the self. His emphasis on intellectual qualities explains why Lewis was so opposed to 'time philosophers'. Gasiorek characterizes Lewis as a 'not self', which he explains as the 'artist's self that is detached but active'. The device is designed to empty the self of subjectivity, as with an individual's egoistic desires, and as a universal truth to dismiss what Lewis regards as the myth of Western Man. The whole tenor of Lewis's writing after the First World War was to seek universal truth by following Nietzsche's ideology of transformative creativity to reinvent the present; not through Dionysian transformation that leads to abandonment of intellect and brings about *élan vital*, but maybe as an Apollo or, perhaps more in line with Lewis's intellect or as an illustration of his 'consistent perversity', a Socrates. Gasiorek argues rightly that the concept of Vorticism was based on the classicism of the Eastern aesthetic that Lewis regarded as superior to the romanticism of Western culture. Vorticism, having been seen as a protagonist for Nietzschean violence in its polemic, fell out of favour as an art form after 1918. But Lewis continued to apply, and to refine its framework, in his bid to transcend life, a life which he saw as 'the dead hand of the cultural past was to be "blasted" away so that a conceptual space could be cleared for the creation of an original artistic lexicon'.²³⁸ Gasiorek is right to emphasize that Lewis clung on to a Nietzschean framework as a counter to those writers he labelled 'time philosophers', but in my view the concept of the intellect and self, as against the device of 'not self' to separate out subjectivity, was much the same in his art throughout the Vorticist period.

David Ayers's 1991 essay, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man*, deals with Lewis and the concept of the 'self' probing Lewis's critique of 'Western man' (*Time and Western Man*) and society's attack on

²³⁸ A. Gasiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism*, 2004, p. 120.

his selfhood. Lewis argued that western industrialized society had fragmented and enslaved the self and, in doing so, virtually destroyed the traditions of European culture. Lewis wrote in philosophical terms but was by then heavily influenced by the radical right-wing politics of the post-war period. Lewis opposed the spread of communism, blamed the Jews, saw Modernism as an unwitting tool against selfhood, and included, by inference, Bergson's philosophy of time for inspiring left-wing thought. Lewis followed the lead of Benda, whose 1918 work *Belphégor: Essai sur l'esthétique de la présente société française* had a profound influence on the politics of the Right in 1920s Europe. Benda, following in the footsteps of de Gourmont, claimed the superiority of the eye over the ear. In this dualism, the eye represents the spatial senses through sight and touch, whereas the ear represents smell and taste. In coupling 'smell' and 'taste' under the heading, 'musical sensibility', Benda described 'a sensation without outline, more emotionally affected by far', whereas 'plastic sensibility' represented the spatial senses 'using as its armature the idea of form', had 'a peculiar clarity of firmness and outline'.²³⁹ Here we have 'clear sensibility' and, quoting Benda, the eye enjoys 'sensations mixed with an intellectual condition'²⁴⁰. While 'musical sensibility' finds a kinship with common-man fellowship but with it dangerous political delusions, 'plastic sensibility' is reserved for superior beings, for example the aristocracy, who have the intellectual perception to discriminate aurally and to achieve mastery by their capacity to select the 'true' state of things. To Lewis, whose aesthetic was based on notions of the detached and critically intelligent self, the ideas of de Gourmont and Benda were attractive.

These ideas are developed in *Time and Western Man*. Lewis blamed the ills of "Western Man" firmly on the influence of the 'time philosophers', most notably, Bergson. These 'ills' ranged from the concept of democracy, to contemporary avant-garde 'time-cult' writers such as Joyce, Proust, and even Pound although still his friend and supporter. On democracy, Lewis raged against the manipulation of the 'democratic masses', 'hypnotized into a sort of hysterical imbecility by the mesmeric methods of Advertisement'.²⁴¹ 'Hypnotized', is a word favoured by Lewis to describe

²³⁹ J. Benda, *Belphégor*, London, 1929, p. 30.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 143.

²⁴¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 25.

Bergsonian 'flux' and reflected his interest in Le Bon's crowd psychology described above. Politics are compared to 'rhythm for life'; '*Musical-politics*...are, without any disguise, the politics of hypnotism, en-regimentation, the sleep of the dance'.²⁴² But as Ayers points out, Lewis's argument remains centred on Bergson and thus dependent on Bergson, bearing in mind that *Time and Free Will* singles out 'musical sensibility' as a key to experiencing pure duration; 'the truth of Bergson is at once acknowledged and denied'.²⁴³ It is also difficult to separate out Lewis's politics from his philosophy. By 1927 Lewis was increasingly anti-Semitic and hostile towards Left-wing politics. Benda's distinctions made between 'eye' and 'ear' were taken up by the Right to associate the latter with 'the crowd' and revolutionary fervour. In this way Bergson found his theory of *durée* allied to groups such as the anarchists and syndicalists on the left and radical political groups of the right.

***The Crowd* as an indicator of British Modernism.**

A close reading of *The Crowd* reveals a visual template for the development of Modernism in literature. Pound was the first modernist to see the possibilities offered by Lewis's Vorticism to change the face of British literature: Joyce and Eliot followed on from Pound. Lewis drew from medievalism to construct the visual framework of *The Crowd*. Pound too looked to history; to the Orient, medieval Italy and France, the Renaissance and to Ancient Greek mythology for his framework and the possibilities for innovative poetry. Lewis drew from medievalism on a number of different but related levels. Technically, he used the schematic layout of the medieval painter to achieve visual severance. On a philosophical level he equated hard-edged geometrical forms with the Woringer/Hulme investigations into the relationship between time and style in art. In his appropriation of, for example Duccio, we may ascertain that Lewis equates geometrical form with the other worldliness of Byzantine religious belief; the retreat from organic nature towards stability, harmony and order. In the Gothic tradition, Duccio painted religious forms where art became an indicator of spiritualisation, although in the case of the painting *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, this other worldliness begins to break down. A relationship with the natural world emerges. In 1914-

²⁴² Ibid, p.26.

²⁴³ D. Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man*, Basingstoke, 1991, p. 18.

1915, when Lewis painted *The Crowd*, he was experiencing a conflict between expressing his individuality as a discriminating creative artist and the pressure to conform to the prevalent collective patriotism of the time. Lewis tried not to lose sight of his Vorticist aesthetic; an aesthetic highlighting the conflict arising from the modern sensibility of society seeking to retreat from the supposed 'freedom' offered by Romanticism to humankind. Society found itself unable to cope with the complexities of existence in a megalopolis based on the machine age. *The Crowd* seems to suggest an image of extreme pessimism in which authoritarianism meets anarchist revolution. I contend that by 1914 Lewis had no real affinity with anarchic revolution. Lewis positioned himself at the still centre of the vortex as the truth-seeking critical artist who values his individuality. He uses his eye to discriminate against what he sees as the flux around him. Flux, for Lewis, spelt the mindless mechanized posturing of the Futurists. With the mobilization of the masses for war, Lewis has to accept that the claims of patriotism had thoroughly infiltrated British society, a merging flux that Lewis could not so readily dismiss as he dismissed the Futurists. Lewis's Vorticist aesthetic is at risk of breaking down in *The Crowd*. Visually, this is overcome by the shallowness of the picture plane; to quote Worringer:

Space filled with atmospheric light which binds objects together and cancels out their individual self-containedness, imparts a temporal value to things, drawing them into the cosmic merry-go-round of appearances (*Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, Abstraction and Empathy)

The greater the feeling of depth across the picture plane, the higher the time-value. Abstract art allied to flatness in space reduces time-value. Applying visual severance to objects across the picture plane pulls the image towards an enhanced space-value. Modernist literature works in the same way. Form takes precedence over time. A striking example of Lewis's employment of visual severance is the positioning of the flags in *The Crowd*. Here he is using a visual trope for Le Bon's delusionary acoustic charge to the crowd to signal democracy. Lewis by his use of shallow space and by structural enclosure tried to ensure that any feeling of empathy was overridden. A subjective form of imagery becomes an object. And yet, in the eyes of the viewer, the flags may still conjure up a feeling of democratic activity.

Lewis's first experimental exercise in a full-scale piece of Modernist writing was *Enemy of the Stars*, in *Blast 1*. Bearing in mind that his Vorticist art was based on a structural model of visual severance, you find the same technique in *Enemy of the Stars*. Here visual severance is applied to syntax. Lewis breaks up the narrative through the technique of grammatically misplaced punctuation; passages which by their structure disrupt meaning. The reader, as with the viewer, is left to fill in, or reassemble the gaps. Dasenbrock describes the style as changing the basic unit from the sentence to the phrase. For example, a sentence from *Enemy of the Stars* reads; 'Fungi of sullen violent thoughts, investing primitive vegetation', Dasenbrock writes, 'The sentence is therefore a verbless assemblage of two ambiguously related phrases'.²⁴⁴ Lewis used these assemblages of unrelated phrases as Vorticist prose to break up the play's dialogue, the result being that they are interspersed within the play's narrative plot, so that the story does progress to its conclusion. There are problems arising from this transition from canvas to page. Whereas the visual severance disrupts the narrative in both mediums, the visual activity, which remains dominant within the painting or drawing, tends to be lost in the prose. The effect of inserting Vorticist prose into standard grammatical English is to create a static literary style. In painting, Lewis is privileging certain parts of the picture plane for 'the intelligent viewer', which in turn relates back to the critical intelligence of Lewis the artist. Graphic design is taking the place of syntax to explain. Lewis's Vorticist art has a framework that is capable of transition to literature, which Pound later developed. *The Crowd* has all of the indicators of Modernism: complicating arrangement of form, a relationship to the modern world, chaos, a narrative that does not add up, and reality as something to be interpreted through different ways of looking. And yet the structure of the painting *itself* narrates, or imparts meaning to the viewer, a position that Lewis was unable to replicate with *Enemy of the Stars*.

Dasenbrock argues that Lewis's Vorticist ideas do not transfer readily to *Enemy of the Stars* and that Lewis is in effect 'showcasing' his Vorticism rather than treating it as a single literary entity. The treatment is conceived as a gesture to other writers to do to literature what Lewis has done to modern art. Lewis rewrote the play, *Enemy of the Stars*, in 1932 excluding the Vorticist passages. The

²⁴⁴ R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, p. 130.

unfinished Modernist essay ‘The Crowd Master’ in *Blast 2* received similar revision in a later version included in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937). Lewis’s use of the phrase, a word, or capital letters to disrupt the narrative worked much more successfully with his Vorticist polemics in *Blast 1* (1914). Here he directly applied the ‘discriminating’ eye to the text, to achieve visual severance, just as the eye breaks up the narrative in *The Crowd*. For example:

BLAST SPORT

HUMOUR’S FIRST COUSIN AND ACCOMPLICE.

Impossibility for Englishman to be
 grave and keep his end up,
 psychologically.
 Impossible for him to use Humour
 As well and be persistently
 grave.
 Alas! Necessary for big doll’s show
 in front of mouth.
 Visitation of Heaven on
 English Miss
 gums, canines of **FIXED GRIN**
 Death’s Head symbol of Anti-Life.²⁴⁵

Here the title ‘BLAST SPORT’ is linked to ‘HUMOUR’, to ‘FIXED GRIN’, to ‘Visitation of Heaven on English Miss’ to ‘Death’s Head symbol of Anti-Life’. There is no linearity; these key words and phrases form visual landmarks in the same way as Lewis used the medieval system of proximate vision in Vorticist art. These disjointed visual clues are for the initiated to put together as a ‘Blast’ against the conventional public school educated Englishman. With the polemic style that Lewis employed in writing the *Blast* manifestos, he succeeded in creating a narrative out of structure, a form of literary Modernism that Pound and Eliot went on to refine and establish.

I have discussed in this chapter the relationship between the medieval artist and the appropriation of certain techniques by Lewis. Where the medieval artist through proximate vision established an

²⁴⁵ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Manifesto’, *Blast 1*, p. 17.

optically privileged hierarchy, Lewis created conflict. For the creative writer and poet this arrangement creates an internal conflict between the time-logic of language and the space-logic, implicit in Modernist verse. Like Lewis's discriminating viewer who perceives meaning from the structure of the painting, Pound's and Eliot's readers must achieve a complete reorientation towards the structure of language. Joseph Frank defines this reorientation as the principle of reflexive reference:

Since the primary reference of any word-group is to something inside the poem itself, the language in modern poetry is really reflexive: the meaning-relationship is completed only by the simultaneous perception in space of word-groups, which, when read consecutively in time have no comprehensible relation to each other. Instead of the instinctive and immediate reference of words and word-groups to the objects or events they symbolize, and the construction of meaning from the sequence of these references, modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of individual references can be apprehended as a unity.²⁴⁶

Frank bases the modernist structure of literature on what he terms 'reflexive reference'; that the reader can only understand the text after reading all of it so as to make the connections between juxtaposed phrases. Dasenbrock questions this fundamental aspect of Frank's otherwise exemplary interpretation. Frank dismisses sequential meaning of language whereas Dasenbrock considers that it's the connection that the reader makes of sequential phrases which really counts. To quote Dasenbrock, 'the order of a modernist text is not referentially directed, but effectively directed'.²⁴⁷ Frank, in his view, bases his analysis too literarily on Lewis's interpretation of Modernism in 1914. Sequence is allied to narrative as time-value and therefore dismissed by Lewis in his move to apply Vorticist art to literature. The literary Vorticism of Pound and Eliot overcame the problem of sequential understanding by using spatial form as a direct input from Vorticist art. Drawing from, for example, the reordering from history of primitive art form to modern sensibility of Epstein's *Female Figure in Flenite* (1913) (fig. 31) compared with the reordering of syntax in Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars*, a new style of writing could be created not limited to the simple time-line association of Imagism. But Pound and Eliot went further. They established their own spatial-line of history that

²⁴⁶ J. Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', *The Sewanee Review*, (53), no.2, 1945, pp. 229- 230.

²⁴⁷ R. W. Dasenbrock, p. 142

overcame temporal and narrative sequence by treating historical reference as a pattern and not as a time-line. They jump from one association with history to another and another and so on, to establish a relationship with the reader. This places the work in its meaningful entirety rather than as a chronological text. The modernist literary work becomes a historically determined structure where the pattern of historical juxtapositions takes the place of sequential narrative and sequential syntax. This doesn't necessarily mean that time is totally excluded as Frank argues. The pattern of historical references still occupies time-space in the mind of the reader but in a non-sequential form. Dasenbrock calls this 'spatio-temporal form'²⁴⁸. Lewis regarded himself as detached from the flux of life at the centre of the vortex, believing that the Vorticist aesthetic could escape from time. However, as we have seen with time's intrusion via the masses into *The Crowd*, he could not shut out Life. What counts is the pattern of history that the writer constructs and presents to the reader, in order to understand the present. In 1914, the template was the plastic arts of Vorticism. Modernist literature built into its structure the dynamism of Vorticist art, which Lewis failed to satisfactorily replicate in *Enemy of the Stars*. Looking at Lewis's *The Crowd*, its schematic structure symbolizing 'containment', itself imparts meaning to the 'intelligent, discriminating viewer'. Something similar happens with Pound's *The Cantos* and Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 147.

Chapter Three.

Vorticism: A Modernist Movement

Introduction: 112-113

Taking Stock: Lewis in 1908: 113-115

Pound, Hulme and Imagist Poetry: 115-121

Pound's interpretation of Vorticism: 121-133

Lewis's Methodology and Bergson: 133-143

Hulme's changing attitude towards Bergson: 144-152

Hulme's relationship with Vorticism: 152-156

Lewis and Roger Fry: 157-173

Layering the Past: 173-187

Wyndham Lewis was probably more prolific in his literary output than in his art production during his life. This dual capacity for the arts in its broadest sense was there in his practice right from the start of his career. His early days in Brittany laid down the foundations for *The Wild Body* stories and some of his earliest drawings. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the aesthetic that Lewis developed in his art found its way into his writing. This is apparent when comparing Lewis's development of Vorticism in his art and in his literary work. This chapter sets out to show how a Vorticist structure straddled both forms of art, looking in detail at the early drawings and paintings and providing comparisons with *The Wild Body* stories and his play, *Enemy of the Stars*. The chapter also makes reference to the associated literary development of his close colleagues, most notably Ezra Pound who was laying the foundations for his *tour de force*, *The Cantos*. It is through this dual association of visual structure in fine art and literature that modernism develops: reader and viewer perceive form

and language in different ways. I set out to show how Lewis and Pound developed these different forms of Vorticism and how the third major participant, Hulme, influenced them both. I examine the relationship between Lewis and Pound and how Hulme's philosophical thinking related to both of them. Hulme's input was a major factor in Pound's development of Imagist poetry. Lewis's Vorticism evolved separately, but the key factor common to Hulme and Lewis was the emphasis on form proceeding from the 'eye': the idea of a 'concrete' thing or image. Hulme saw beyond Bergson's theory of duration in breaking down the rhythm of temporal perception into discrete visual concrete images. It was this concept that Hulme and Pound applied to a form of poetry, Imagism, which provided a new visual language. Hulme's interests moved to modern art and I show how he related the 'concrete' image to uncover a sensibility relevant to the 'real' world, an art form that was separately pursued by Lewis and Epstein.

Taking Stock: Lewis in 1908

When Lewis returned to London in December 1908 it marked the end of his Continental travels. Since leaving the Slade in 1901 Lewis had spent time in France, Holland, Spain, and Germany. He had taken studios in Paris and Madrid and lived in numerous boarding houses and cheap hotels. Actual records of the life Lewis led are sketchy, the most reliable being the letters he wrote to his mother.²⁴⁹ Information can be gleaned from two books that Lewis wrote about himself; *The Caliph's Design* (1919) and *Rude Assignments* (1950). As with all art students Lewis maintained a network of contacts with fellow artists, the most prominent during these Continental years were Spencer Gore and Augustus John. He shared studios with Gore in Paris and Madrid and was in regular contact with the 'bohemian' John and his 'family' in Paris and Normandy. Lewis's interests ranged from pure art to poetry, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. Lewis wrote poetry, though only one work was ever published in his lifetime: 'Grignolles' appearing in *The Tramp* in December 1910. He read the poetry of Samuel Butler, Laurence Binyon and Sturge Moore, maintaining close contact with Binyon and Moore, both of whom Lewis had first met and mixed with during his Slade days. Binyon was to be a particularly important figure in connection with the reception of Bergson's thought in Britain's art community.

²⁴⁹ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, 1963, op. cit.

Back in London, Lewis had materially very little to show from his time abroad. His drawing skills, which had been recognized as his strength by his tutors at the Slade, were developed in classical drawing from the model. While his draftsmanship was of the first order, Lewis experienced many false starts in trying to develop a style of his own. He was totally reliant on financial support from his estranged father in America and from his mother who lived an unsettled life from numerous addresses in England. Remittances were irregular leaving Lewis to live on loans from better off fellow-artists in a hand-to-mouth existence. Nevertheless, he had the necessary British ex-public school confidence to mix socially with those who were financially secure. We have a record of only five drawings surviving from his art school days to 1908, of which two are studies from the model done at the Slade, two are street scenes made between 1902 and 1905, and one, the most promising of future development is *Two Nudes* (1903) (fig.32), whose vitality suggests a Bergsonian influence.²⁵⁰ But although Lewis had little to show on his return, the period abroad had in other ways been fruitful. He had been exposed to a European culture that in the coming years found its way into his art and literature.

Looking back, this influence becomes apparent. Although not a Cubist in the analytical sense of Picasso and Braque, Lewis took from Cubism what he could use. There is no evidence that Lewis ever visited Picasso or other French avant-garde artists in Paris, but he might have seen examples of their work through their dealers' shows. Durman and Munton quote several examples of where and when Lewis came into contact with the work the French avant-gardes during this period, and mention a letter to Sturge Moore written in 1909 where he refers to Picasso and Matisse.²⁵¹

Augustus John, had visited Picasso's studio and probably saw *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) (fig.33) while it was still being painted. This event most likely would have been related to Lewis. Lewis's work of 1912-14 has something of the grotesque of Picasso's cubist figures. Many years

²⁵⁰ Detailed in W. Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: paintings and drawings*, 1971, plate 1.

²⁵¹ M. Durman and A. Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', in *Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura*, 1982, pp. 107- 8.

later, Lewis's wife and former model, Anne, gave us an account of his intellectual interests during these years:

During nearly ten years of his "travels", he was studying at Julian's in Paris, at the Haymann Academy in Munich, visiting the Bauhaus on various occasions, studying in the Museums of Spain, Germany, France and Holland; was in very close touch with the Apollinaire Group and their associates, knew Modigliani, Derain, Gertrude Stein and friends, and many other artists as well as poets and writers, even Prince Kropotkin; attended Bergson's lectures at the College de France as well as other lectures.²⁵²

There is some inaccuracy in the above quote, for as Jeffrey Meyers points out 'The Bauhaus was not founded until 1919; Lewis must have visited Dessau during his trips to Germany in 1928 and 1930'.²⁵³ However, acquaintanceship with Stein, an important collector of Picasso's work at this time, would necessarily have brought him into direct contact with the latest developments in cubist painting.²⁵⁴ Similarly, involvement with members of Apollinaire's circle, for example the Italian poet Ricciotto Canudo who founded the journal *Montjoie!*, an influential platform for Cubism, would have been an important influence from Lewis's Paris days.

Pound, Hulme and Imagist Poetry

The most important meeting of minds on Lewis's return to London was in 1908 when he first came into contact with the young American poet and critic Ezra Pound who would become a life-long friend and associate. Yet in 1927 Lewis would describe Pound as 'a sort of revolutionary simpleton'.²⁵⁵ At this point in Lewis's career, he was striving to establish himself as a critical force in questioning the modernist literature of writers such as D. H. Lawrence, Joyce, and Eliot, and he was equally critical of Pound's poetry. Looking back to Pound's involvement with the Vorticists, Lewis said of the Group,

What struck them principally about Pound was that his fire-eating propagandist utterances were not accompanied by any very experimental efforts in his particular

²⁵² Anne Wyndham Lewis, 'Correspondence', *Arts Review*, 27 Nov. 1965.

²⁵³ J. Meyer, *The enemy*, 1980, Chapter 2, note 7, p. 344.

²⁵⁴ 'Gertrude Stein recalled Lewis looking at the paintings in her collection when he visited the Stein's flat in 1913 (and 'taking very careful measurements of the canvas, the lines within the canvas and everything else that might be of use'. G. Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, 1966, p. 132. Quoted in Durman and Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', p. 108.

²⁵⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 37.

medium. His poetry, to the mind of the more fanatical of the group, was a series of pastiches of old french or old italian poetry, and could lay no claim to participate in the new burst of art in progress.²⁵⁶

And yet during Pound's London years (1908-1920), George Bornstein tells us he 'functioned as a permanent principle of innovation in modern literature, establishing one interaction, technique, or institution only to hurry on to the next'.²⁵⁷ Pound was exceedingly generous in encouraging poets and writers such as Eliot, Joyce, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Lewis. Lewis acknowledged his worth in his autobiography, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937): 'I have never known a person less troubled with personal feelings. This probably it is that has helped to make Pound that odd figure- the great poet and the great impresario at one and the same time'.²⁵⁸

Pound's interest in fine art developed from seeing the work of the American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Whistler's art was steeped in a combination of French Symbolism and a British form of Aestheticism, which championed 'art for art's sake'. Pound's primary interest was Imagist poetry where 'abstract ideas must be translated into visual images to be effectively communicated'.²⁵⁹ Pound had become aware of the importance of de Gourmont's theory of language with its emphasis on the visual, and began to make connections with Lewis's approach to form, and its relationship with 'the concrete'.²⁶⁰ Essentially, in Lewis's art the concrete proceeded from the 'eye'. But it was through the relationship between Pound and Hulme that the real significance of 'the concrete' in its effect on the power of language became critically importance in his development as a literary Vorticist. Hulme subsequently turned away from poetry to embrace art as the conduit for a visual language to describe a new sensibility, a sensibility that was taken up by Pound. Along the way I mark out the pitfalls in Pound's understanding of the new sensibility arising from his love of historical Romanticism and the influence of Bergsonian temporality that had infiltrated modern art.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 38.

²⁵⁷ G. Bornstein, 'Ezra Pound and the making of modernism', in I. B. Nadel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, Cambridge, 1999, p.23.

²⁵⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 280.

²⁵⁹ R. Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, pp. 53- 4.

²⁶⁰ R. de Gourmont, *Le Problem du style*, Paris, 1924.

The relationship between Pound and Hulme was more significant to Vorticism than that between Lewis and Hulme. Pound first met Hulme in 1909 at the Poets' Club, a breakaway group of mainly young poets, including the poet and critic F. S. Flint, who gathered on Thursday evenings at the Tour Eiffel restaurant. Here Hulme introduced Pound to the connection between visual poetry and accessing a concrete 'thing' or image via Bergson's theory of real duration. Quoting Beasley: 'It was above all T. E. Hulme who gave Pound's visual metaphors literal meaning'²⁶¹. In *Time and Free Will* Bergson proposed to differentiate between time and space. Quoting Beasley,

The hegemony of spatial over temporal perception in Post-Renaissance metaphysics had falsified understanding of time, meaning and life itself. Mental life is not of discrete moments (Bergson urged) but an individual whole existing in real duration.²⁶²

Bergson stated that only in real duration could we experience freedom. In poetry, words intervene between 'the thing' and us. To quote from *Le Rire, 1900, (Laughter)*, temporal perceptions 'grasp something that has nothing in common with language, certain rhythms of life and breath which are closer to man than his inmost feelings'.²⁶³ Hulme saw beyond Bergson's duration in applying a *visual* concrete image. He envisaged a new mechanism for modern poetry that replaced the regular metre of Victorian verse; a spatial image that broke down the hypnotic effect of rhythm. Beasley argues that Hulme 'transfers Bergson's theory of knowledge into a theory of aesthetics'.²⁶⁴ Hulme was breaking down Bergson's theory of mental life perceived as an individual whole existing in real duration. Hulme stated: 'It 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'.²⁶⁵

The new verse excluded regular metre while striving to be contained within poetry and not merely prose. Hulme did not abandon the idea of rhythm, but by introducing successive but separate images, the imagist poetry avoided the hypnotic effect of rhythm. Quoting Hulme: 'This new verse

²⁶¹ R. Beasley, p. 54.

²⁶² Ibid, p.5 6.

²⁶³ Bergson, *Laughter*, 1911 translation, London, p. 156.

²⁶⁴ R. Beasley, p. 56.

²⁶⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'A Lecture on Poetry', (presented at the Poetry Club, London, Nov. 1908), in *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, ed. K. Csengeri, p. 54.

resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than the ear'.²⁶⁶ Note how Lewis used a very similar comparison between sculpture and music to ridicule Bergson's theory of time in *Time and Western Man*, in effect by using Bergson's methodology but reversing the outcome.

However, Hulme in 1909 remained committed to Bergson. Intuition still prevailed but in a form of mediated imagery; the image or successive images each become arrested in the reader's mind rather than allow the mind to run along unhindered to a conclusion.

Thomas Ernest Hulme (1883-1917) made an important impact on art and philosophical thought in Britain despite the few years he was active in the field. He published very little although up to his untimely death on the Western Front, he lectured, contributed to journals, was a forceful and witty conversationalist, translated Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* in 1913 and Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* in 1916. He profoundly influenced the group of writers and artists around him in London, the most prominent being Pound, Eliot, Gaudier-Breszka, Epstein and Lewis. Although he failed to complete his studies at Cambridge, (he was sent down twice from St Johns), he acquired a wide knowledge of German philosophy, and became known to Bergson through his interpretation of Bergson's theory of art. Hulme's importance to Modernist thought is best seen through Csengeri's edition of Hulme writings, *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* (1994). It forms a rearranged and expanded assemblage set out in a more accessible chronological way than Herbert Read's edited volume of Hulme's writings in *Speculations* (1925). Csengeri makes Hulme's *Writings* more understandable in his development as a philosophical and political theorist. She maps out in the introduction four areas where Hulme was most influential: by preceding Pound in Imagist theory; by helping to introduce Bergson to the UK and America; by being one of the first critics to write about modern art; and in helping Eliot form his ideas on classicism and original sin. Despite the lack of published material, Hulme left behind his extensive notes, some having already been used for lectures and articles. He had almost completed a book on Epstein at the time of his death but the manuscript was lost. The papers remaining were for the most part incomplete, but a number of

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 56.

finished works, including essays on humanism, modern art, romanticism and classicism, and Bergson's theory of art were published posthumously in *Speculations*.

Hulme's philosophical position can be traced over several distinctive periods: from 1906 to 1909 in his philosophical musings about the nature of reality: 1909 to 1912 in linking Imagist poetry with Bergson, and going on to develop a more fleshed out exposition of the importance of Bergson's methodology in applying a view of the real world, which could be understood in direct comparison with the mechanistic one. Finally, the years 1912 to 1917 when Hulme developed his ideas about what constitutes art in relation to modern life, a process that by 1915 rejected Bergson as 'the last disguise of romanticism'. An important aspect of Hulme's philosophical thoughts is set out in *A Tory Philosophy* (1912), a political treatise in which he reclaimed the classical past from romanticism, substituting the doctrine of Original Sin as the true value required for man to live by. From his earliest philosophical enquiries, Hulme rejected mechanistic theories on how the world evolved and functions. This led to Hulme's support for Bergson's philosophical theories relating to time and space, but Hulme found that he could not accept Bergson's ideas about intuitive rhythm achieving *esprit* in a hypnotic way and that this was not the way to perceive reality.

In 1906 Hulme was sent down, or 'rusticated', from Cambridge. During the following three years he travelled extensively, first in Canada, where exposure to the wilderness awakened philosophical enquiry into the nature of man's relationship with the cosmos, and later in Germany. These musings took the form of notes that became known as *The Notebooks of T. E. Hulme*, published by *The New Age* in 1922, and in an abridged form as *Cinders* in *Speculations*. The term 'cinders' came from Hulme's belief that the world could not be understood as a unifying scheme for truth, because all theories to achieve this result were determined by 'laws of the intellect'.²⁶⁷ Quoting Hulme, 'The cosmos is only organized in parts; the rest is cinders'.²⁶⁸ While these observations did not add to philosophical knowledge, his critique on the mechanical nature of language led to

²⁶⁷ T. E. Hulme, 'Searchers after Reality', *The New Age*, Aug. 19th 1909, p. 315.

²⁶⁸ T. E. Hulme, 'Cinders', in *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme*, p. 9.

Hulme's enquiries into what constitutes reality, through image-generated poetry and its connection with intuition and Bergson.

Hulme's 1909 critical article on R. B. Haldane, the prominent Liberal politician and philosophical writer, in *The New Age*, challenged Haldane's spatial 'counter' philosophy, arguing that in poetry temporal flux pinpoints reality through the concrete images it generates. Haldane, the spatial realist, would say reality is an intellectual system and that flux only has reality where it fits into this system: otherwise, flux is a mere appearance.²⁶⁹ Hulme compared prose with poetry, the former being a 'counter' language where the meanings of words are determined by their arrangement. Poetry is intuitive by nature; Hulme noted,

It is not a counter language, but a visually concrete one. 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.²⁷⁰

Hulme argued that prose is an abstract process where metaphors have lost their physical impact. Visual meaning requires the use of metaphors, which have the immediacy that 'counter' metaphors have lost. 'Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language'.²⁷¹

Hulme took a more positive approach to the power of language than Bergson, who while strongly advocating linguistic precision saw difficulties in using language that occupied space with intuition that did not. Quoting Bergson: 'it may be asked whether the insurmountable difficulties presented by certain philosophical problems do not arise by placing side by side in space phenomena which does not occupy space'.²⁷² Did Hulme envisage the embedding of intuition into the visual language of fine art? Hulme wrote of modern art in February 1914 in *The New Age* that nature cannot be

²⁶⁹ R. B. Haldane, (1856-1928), Politician, firstly, Liberal Imperialist, later joined the Labour Government, lawyer and philosopher, translated into English Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, (1883). Pound in his article on Wyndham Lewis, in *The Egoist*, 15 June, 1914 makes a reference to Haldane inferring that he cannot understand and hasn't the mentality to grasp the new art. Haldane appears to be the butt of the avant-garde.

²⁷⁰ T. E. Hulme, 'Searchers After Reality-II, Haldane', *The New Age*, 19th August 1909, p. 315.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 315.

²⁷² Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1911 edn., xix.

divorced from abstraction; that there was a place for emotion in form.²⁷³ Reviewing Bomberg's painting *In the Hold* (1913-14) (fig. 34), he considered all the general emotions produced by form have been excluded and that pure intellectual embodiment alone could not convey the state of things in the modern Western world of 1914.²⁷⁴

Pound's Interpretation of Vorticism

Pound took from Hulme the concept of 'a visual concrete image' in his poetry, which he later was able to relate to Vorticism. William Wees makes the point: 'To see more or to see in a different way was what Pound gained as a Vorticist, and this new way of seeing or new sense of form came to him through the visual arts'.²⁷⁵ While Pound derived a strong sense of visual form from Vorticism, which he was able to apply to his poetry, he did not at that stage develop the all-enveloping aesthetic that Lewis achieved, although he made the Vortex a central concept.²⁷⁶ In the visual arts Pound was still clinging on to the language of temporal narrative well into 1914. Even Pound's manifesto, *Vortex*, in *Blast 1* is ambiguous. In its presentation as a 'word image' it works as a Vorticist polemic, but as a presentation of the Vorticist aesthetic it is muddled. Temporal terminology infiltrates into the narrative; for example-

Every conception, every emotion presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form

and

The DESIGN of the future in the grip of the vortex. All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future, is pregnant in the vortex, NOW.²⁷⁷

Compare Pound's *Vortex* with Lewis's *Our Vortex* in *Blast 1*. Despite its polemical tone Lewis clearly establishes his aesthetic:

Our vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten it's (sic) existence....The new

²⁷³ T E Hulme, 'Modern Art-III', *The New Age*, 26th March, 1914. pp. 661- 662.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 662.

²⁷⁵ W. Wees, 'Ezra Pound as a Vorticist', in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1965, p. 69.

²⁷⁶ A striking example is 'Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess', in *Blast 2*, 1915.

²⁷⁷ E. Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast 1*, p. 153.

vortex plunges to the heart of the Present...The chemistry of the Present is different from that of the Past....With our Vortex the Present is the only active thing...Life is the Past and the Future....The Present is Art.²⁷⁸

Nevertheless, I argue that Lewis does use the past as exemplified by Duccio's *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* (Fig. 15) in structuring *The Crowd* (Fig. 7). Lewis's aesthetic encompasses the past flowing into the vortex. Pound only later grasped that Lewis's Vorticism was envisaged through the eye of the artist and could only be comprehended by an individual. Lewis made this clear in *Life is the Important Thing!*: A polemic in which in art, life is not the important thing; it equates to nature, which encourages imitation. Lewis states: 'Who would not rather walk ten miles across country (yes, ten miles my friend) and use his eyes, nose and muscles, than possess ten thousand Impressionist oil-paintings of that country side?'²⁷⁹ Vorticism alone reflects modern living: Art overrides Life.

Dasenbrock is critical of Pound's credentials as a Vorticist writer, describing him as second rate to Lewis during this period. He considered the poem *Salutation the Third* that Pound contributed to *Blast 1* a polemic, which could not match Lewis in vigour. Dasenbrock makes the point that the connection between Vorticist painting and writing was one-sided; that art influenced writing, and that Pound had not fully grasped its Vorticist aesthetic. Wees takes a contrary view, praising *Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess* published in *Blast 2* (1915) as an example of Vorticism allowing him to see in a different way. Dasenbrock agrees that 'Vorticism has its importance, not because it leads Pound into new territory, but because it clarifies and organizes for him the territory he has already begun to explore in his art'.²⁸⁰ I argue that *Dogmatic Statement*, amounts to a straight transcription of the style of a Vorticist painting to the arrangement of chess pieces on a chessboard and as such fails to layer the aesthetic of chess with that of Vorticism. Humphreys regards it as Pound's response to Lewis's prose play *Enemy of the Stars*. To quote Humphreys, '“Dogmatic Statement” falls into the trap of trying to achieve in one art what can be

²⁷⁸ Wyndham Lewis, 'Our Vortex', *Blast 1*, p. 147.

²⁷⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Life is the Important Thing!', *Blast 1*, p130.

²⁸⁰ R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, p. 90.

achieved best in another. It could not compete, for instance, with Lewis's *Red Duet* of 1914'.²⁸¹ The poem opens;

Red knight, brown bishop, bright queens

Striking the board, falling in strong

“L's” of colour

Reaching and striking in angles

Holding lines of one colour... (Blast 2)

In comparing Lewis's gouache and chalk drawing, *Vorticist Composition* (fig.78) (1915) and its aesthetic with Pound's Vorticist poem, its geometrical lines and structural form display layerings of meaning that Pound could not achieve through chess moves on a board. The drawing complements the oil painting *Workshop* (fig.11) and the drawing *New York* (fig.77) (both 1914-15). Structurally, the arrangement of geometrical forms is mechanical and architectural, rather like an architectural plan. There is a dichotomy of movement of converging blocks from left to right and right to left across the picture plane. But predominately, the upward diagonal lines from bottom to top edges suggest the vertiginous thrust of skyscrapers. In Lewis's Vorticist practice, the energy generated through these conflicting moves is brought to a standstill; in *Composition* along the central diagonal axis. The arrangements of geometrical forms derive from the angular imagery that in Lewis's earlier Vorticist art might have started as Cubist figures. The diagonals thrusting upwards derive from Futurist 'lines of force'. All movement is brought to a standstill. As with a game of chess, this can be seen as 'check-mate'. The viewer is left to relate the imagery of a near abstract cityscape devoid of any feeling of human scale. There is a bleakness about the drawing only slightly relieved by its soothing colour arrangement of mauve, black and gold.

What Pound gained from Vorticism is not the direct transposition of Vorticist art into his poetry, but his appropriation of Vorticism as a 'conceptual image' that requires interpretation. Its

²⁸¹ R. Humphreys, 'Demon Pantechnicon Driver: Pound in the London Vortex. 1908-1920', in *Pound's Artists: Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy*, London, 1985.

‘machinery’ is that of the vortex: the place where energy and ideas are concentrated. Essentially, in this context Vorticism represents ‘activity’, ‘as opposed, to the tasteful passivity of Picasso’.²⁸² This is where Lewis was critical of Picasso’s still life constructions: Examples that Lewis might have seen include *Head, Paris*, and *Head of a Young Girl* (both 1913). ‘Most of Picasso’s recent work (on canvas as well) is a sort of machinery. Yet these machines neither propel nor make any known thing: they are machines without a purpose’.²⁸³ Bergson would have disagreed. It is only through symbols, where the symbol is read as a sign, that the self can manifest itself. These signs represent, not the thing in itself, but manifestations of intuition, which generate a renewal allowing the spirit to overcome the automatism of the intellect. The spirit, or *élan vital*, is the force that pushes life along the evolutionary road. Whereas imagistic knowledge describes the thing in itself, symbolic knowledge is read from signs of something else. In the case of the ‘Two Heads’ of 1913, above, Green describes a transformation in which the double curve incorporated in both could easily represent both a guitar body and a girl’s head: ‘the signs for dead things and living beings have become easily interchangeable’.²⁸⁴ His comments on the still life paintings Picasso produced between 1912 and 1933 are appropriate here:

There is good reason to think of (Picasso’s) art as developing out of two almost diametrically opposed compulsions: one an obsession with the possibility of realizing in painting and drawing the living presence of bodies in the world as he experienced them, the other an obsession with the malleability of signs in a rarified aesthetic sphere.²⁸⁵

Picasso’s still-life *Fruit Bowl and Bottle on a Pedestal Table* (1920) (fig. 35) illustrates the point: a bowl holding fruit sitting on a pedestal table represents the symbol, but there is a feeling of death (a sign) in its shadowy presence, its cubist geometry pointing to the exclusion of the living, and yet, there is a feeling of humanity which lifts the work not only as art but as beyond ‘death’ to some higher plane of human existence.

²⁸² Walter Michel & C J Fox (eds.), *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings, 1913-1956*, 1969, (referred to in R. W. Dasenbrock), p. 95.

²⁸³ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Relativism and Picasso’s Latest Work’, in *Blast* 1, p. 139.

²⁸⁴ C. Green, *Life and Death in Picasso*, London, 2009, p. 62.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 89.

Taking Picasso's sculptural sheet metal assemblage, *Guitar* (1912-1913) (fig. 36) as the start of his still life series, and comparing it with Lewis's pen and ink wash drawing *The Enemy of the Stars* (1913) (fig. 37), one can identify similarities and contradictions. Both works are Cubist, each incorporate signs of an 'other' state, both play off geometric straight edges against curves, but the geometry of Lewis's work proclaims only 'deadness'. Not so with *Guitar*: according to Green,

the viewer is confronted not with a straightforward simulacrum of guitar, but with a collection of signs, put together as they have been, can denote a guitar, but which put together in other ways, could denote entirely different things, a head, for instance.²⁸⁶

Lewis was much more ambivalent in his commentary on Picasso's art, in particular his 'constructions', questioning where his art rests: 'He no longer so much interprets, as definitely MAKES, nature (and "DEAD" nature at that)²⁸⁷ Lewis's drawing *Enemy of the Stars* sought to exclude nature, and therefore life, in its geometrical imagery. Geometry represented 'the mechanical' and as such was a repudiation of 'vital art' and the concept of Bergsonian durational time, but in repudiating 'vital art', Lewis still used Bergson's methodology.

Pound was working towards a position in his March 1915 article *Affirmations II: Vorticism* in which he viewed Vorticism as 'a correlated aesthetic, which carries you through all the arts'.²⁸⁸ Pound first used the analogy 'the primary pigment' to describe the Vorticist's expressive ideology in his polemic, *Vortex* in *Blast 1*:

The Vorticist relies on this alone; on the primary pigment of his art, nothing else.

Every conception, every emotion presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form.

It is the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred pictures, the most highly energized statement, the statement that has not yet SPENT itself it (sic) expression, but which is the most capable of expressing²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 61-62.

²⁸⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work', p. 140.

²⁸⁸ E. Pound, 'Affirmations II: Vorticism', *The New Age*, 14th Jan. 1915, p. 227.

²⁸⁹ E. Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast 1*, July 1914, p. 153.

It is interesting to note that Pound's definition of what constitutes the primary pigment in Vorticist art bears a close similarity to Hulme's definition of what constitutes concrete images in Imagist poetry.

It was only when Pound began to assimilate Hulme's theory of the power of geometric art and wrote *The New Sculpture* in 1914 for *The Egoist* that his focus changed from 'romantic' 'humanist' art to Hulme's 'anti-humanist' stance. But even then, Pound, possibly thinking of his 'individualist' audience in *The Egoist*, remained unfocused in his explanation: 'one might regard the body either as a sensitized receiver of sensations or as an instrument for carrying out the decrees of the will (or expressing the soul, or whatever you choose to term it)'.²⁹⁰ Whist Hulme's lecture to the Quest Society in January 1914 was measured in its progression, precise in its terminology, inclusive in its analysis, Pound's dissemination of its content was wildly attributive, vague and selective. Pound did not fully grasp the crux of Hulme's lecture; that the 'new geometrical art' was the product of a change of sensibility resulting from a change in attitude, which drove the artist to create art whose formal arrangement mirrored these changes. The new art may have shocked the critics, and certainly did so after seeing Epstein's geometrical genitalia drawings for sculpture connected with birth exhibited in December 1913, but they had not been purely to shock bourgeois society out of its complacency towards Romantic art. They represented a 'tendency towards abstraction';

the desire to turn the organic into something hard and durable, is here at work, not as something simple, such as you get in the more archaic work, but on something more complicated. It is, however, the same tendency at work in both. Abstraction is much greater in the second case, because generation, which is the very essence of all the qualities which we have here called organic, has been turned into something as hard and durable as a geometrical figure itself.²⁹¹

The 'new art' embodied a complete reversal of nature to the inorganic nature of abstraction. This is how Hulme saw humanity, or rather as he interpreted certain artists as seeing in their 'new art' a tendency moving away from humanity towards inhumanity. Lewis and Epstein through their art were in the vanguard in assimilating the way humanity (life) has changed in relating to nature. Pound

²⁹⁰ E. Pound, 'The New Sculpture', *The Egoist*, Feb. 1914, p. 67.

²⁹¹ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and its Philosophy' in *The Collected Writings*, p. 284.

concentrated on the ‘shock of the new’ but failed to explain that ‘the new’ was not a revival of archaic art; that while primitive art embodied the hard angular geometrical lines of abstraction it was not in itself representative of modern society. He placed much greater emphasis on the impact of the primitive: stating ‘introduction of the Djinns, tribal gods, fetiches, (sic), etc. into the arts is therefore a happy presage’; the artist now ‘recognizes his life in terms of a Tahitian savage’; ‘his gods are violent gods. A religion of fashion plates has little to say to him’.²⁹²

Archaic art was made by a society that saw nature as foreign, as something of which they wanted no part, a position which Hulme described as ‘space shyness’. The Western world of 1900 was a totally different place, but in terms of art geometrical abstraction provided a more accurate and powerful interpretation of modern life, of the way people interact, than did ‘vital’ art with its emphasis on beauty and empathy. Pound saw things differently: ‘These men work in an unchanging world. Their work presents no argument’.²⁹³ This was clearly not the case. He had moved on from his Bergsonian humanist stance of November 1913, but the evidence of ‘*The New Sculpture*’ suggests that Pound had failed to grasp the aesthetic underpinning the ‘new art’. He was prone to ‘sloganizing’, a characteristic that continued into *Blast 1*. Pound’s contribution to Vorticism lies predominantly in the form of a literary aesthetic. Wees marks the start of this literary change with Pound’s poem *Salutation the Third*: ‘The dry, hard, Imagist decorum is gone; a totally new tone, sometimes angry and moralizing, sometimes satirical, but certainly more declamatory, more “rhetorical” than Imagist doctrine allowed, has taken over’.²⁹⁴

The centenary 1985 exhibition at Kettles Yard, Cambridge and at The Tate, ‘Pound’s Artists: Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy’ set out to explore his lifelong interest and involvement in the visual arts. The accompanying article by Humphreys covers the period 1908-1920 and provides a brief but succinct account of Pound’s developing Vorticist aesthetic.²⁹⁵

‘Demon Pantechnicon Driver’, a slightly barbed description coined by Lewis in *Blast 2*, refers to

²⁹² E. Pound, ‘The New Sculpture’, *The Egoist*, 16th Feb. 1914, p. 68.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 68.

²⁹⁴ W. Wees, ‘Ezra Pound as a Vorticist’, p. 59.

²⁹⁵ R. Humphreys, ‘Demon Pantechnicon Driver: Pound in the London Vortex, 1908-1920’, in *Pound’s Artists: Ezra Pound and the visual arts in London, Paris and Italy*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1985.

Pound's appropriation of the past in fashioning his aesthetic. Humphreys emphasizes Pound's love of rebellious ideas, and finds in Lewis and his fellow Vorticists the perfect repository for propagating them. Lewis's notion of Vorticism was clearly much more formed than Pound's during 1914 and into 1915, when the Vorticists was at their most active. But Pound had much to offer, most notably his own development of the 'concrete object' as the basis for Imagism, leading to the 'primary pigment' in finding a pattern, first as an arrangement of forms within visual art, and later in a 'radiant node or cluster', a fragmented form of history where contemporary life could be engaged. Out of this 'vortex' *The Cantos* emerged.

Pound offered the *Timon* drawings as a symbol for change in *The Egoist* article on Lewis he published in June 1914. Pound's grasp of Lewis's practice was limited, the poet having come late to Modernist art. He only began to realize its possibilities after Hulme moved away from poetry to art during 1912. A meeting with the young French sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska at The Allied Association Exhibition in 1913 led Pound to assimilate Hulme's theories through Gaudier's sculpture. While describing Lewis as 'a great artist' and remarking that 'Mr Lewis has got into his work something which I recognize as the voice of my own age', Pound offered the reader very little information about what underpinned the *Timon* series.²⁹⁶ He suggested that *Timon* represented an enlightened class which included Lewis himself, 'shut in by the entrenched forces of stupidity'.²⁹⁷ Pound, in passing, stated that 'if he has made *Timon* a type emotion and delivered in lines, masses and planes, it is proper that we should respect him in a way that we do not respect men blaring out truisms or doing endless embroidery of sentiment'.²⁹⁸ Pound thus declares war on the art establishment of 1914 as exemplified by the Royal Academy: 'In Mr Lewis's work one finds not a commentator but a protagonist. He is a man of war'.²⁹⁹ Pound establishes himself as the propagandist who proceeds to help guide the Vorticist movement.

²⁹⁶ E. Pound, 'Wyndham Lewis', *The Egoist*, 15th June, 1914, p. 234.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 233.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 233.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 233.

Close examination of two surviving Lewis paintings, *Plan of War*, and *Slow Attack* (1913-14) (Figs. 8 & 9), the original paintings now lost, reveals how a visually complex image might provide the material for interpretation of a view of the world that Pound developed in poetic form. These images are concerned with seeing, not hearing. The titles were probably added by others, not by Lewis: Edwards attributes the naming of *Plan of War* to the critic Frank Rutter who probably saw the massive 8 ft. 4ins by 4ft 8 ins. oil painting at the Allied Artists Association Exhibition in July 1914.³⁰⁰ One can understand why Lewis may have been reluctant to title his images as being an impediment to interpretation. Sherry singles out these two works as examples of Lewis's 'developing ideology of the eye'.³⁰¹ Lewis achieved this by his emphasis on black wedge shapes which seem to ride on the surface, standing out against possibly white or ochre and creating a flatness, or lack of depth, which draw the eye in. The arrangement of blocks forms 'an impasse' which signifies aggression. There is no progressive movement to stimulate flux, as would be the case with a Futurist image work such as Russolo's *The Revolt* (fig. 18). *Plan of War* and *Slow Attack* were reproduced in *Blast 1* in black and white, and any indication of their colour schemes is unknown. As with all of Lewis's Vorticist output, their strength lay in their arrangement of form, and the dynamic, yet static, energy generated. For the viewer, the two images describe pure aggression, in boxing terms the 'knock out' blow to the solar plexus. The eye singles out the crux of the work; the impact of the diagonally opposing wedges on the surrounding blocks; in the case of *Plan of War*, to a standstill, and in *Slow Attack*, a crumbling of compacted energy. Here is the Vorticist 'activity' which Pound could reinterpret into his chosen mode of representation.

Lewis, in *Time and Western Man* (1927) accused Pound of writing 'pastiche of old French and Italian poetry, and could lay no claim to participate in the new burst of art in progress'. He was referring to the Vorticists of 1914. Such criticism is unjustified because Pound came to realize how he could use the Vorticist aesthetic to break out of the restrictive construction of Imagist poetry. Imagism as a poetic method presented the visual image in words as concisely as possible, restricting the narrative to the primary qualities of the subject, 'the primary pigment'. But it had to be more than the

³⁰⁰ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, p. 125.

³⁰¹ V. Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Radical Modernism*, p. 94.

presentation of an image. Like Vorticist art it should be a ‘vortex’ where ideas burst out in a myriad of activity. Pound’s best-known imagist poem from 1913 illustrates the point:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.³⁰²

Pound juxtaposes an image of the faces of the crowd against an image sourced from Far Eastern art, leaving the viewer to make a connection. While there is a strong abstract quality about the poem; this was not always the case with imitators. *In a Station of the Metro* its two juxtaposition lines create a loop in which an image from the past (‘petals on a wet, black bough’; a traditional image of the Orient) can be connected indirectly to an image portraying modern life. The connection does not imitate the past; it uses the past to create something new and revealing about the present condition of humanity. Dasenbrock calls this process the ‘ideogrammatic loop’ by which the reader, or viewer in the case of the plastic arts, creates a meaningful relationship to the present, much in the same way that a Chinese symbol, or ideogram, makes a visual connection with a ‘thing’. It is seeing the present through the past, but not of the past. Gaudier’s-Brzeska’s sculpture, *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* (1913) (fig. 38) is carved in the simplified geometrical style of a Primitive Easter Island statue, but the head itself is uncompromisingly modernist. In Hulme’s language a temporal perception of primitive man becomes quite literally ‘a visual concrete image’, a spatial image, and a theory of aesthetics. This is how Pound sought to apply Vorticism: first through Imagist poetry, progressing to Hulme’s awakening as to the possibilities implied in Vorticist art; leading to an understanding of Lewis’s structural approach to art, which he could replicate through *The Cantos*. Pound summed up his notion of Vorticism in his tribute to Gaudier-Brzeska:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing...

It is true for the painting and sculpture as it is for poetry. Epstein Wadsworth and Mr

³⁰² E. Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p.119, in R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, 1985, p. 94.

Lewis are not using words, they are using shape and colour.³⁰³

Lewis was disingenuous in his treatment of Pound in *Time and Western Man*. Although Pound was not a Vorticist painter, his contribution to the movement was substantial in *Blast 1* and 2, and in his understanding and involvement in Vorticism as a literary form. Lewis passed through periods of his life when he could be much more generous towards his old friend Pound as in the following passage from *Blasting and Bombardiering*.

In his attitude towards other people's work Pound has been superlatively generous... Also he is the born teacher; and by his influence, direct and indirect, he has brought about profound changes in our literary techniques and criticism: changes, in both cases, for the better.³⁰⁴

From the beginning, as an exponent of Vorticist art, Pound was first and foremost a propagandist, (he claimed to have been the first to coin the name Vorticist), and a forceful ally to Lewis's cause. Pound was a major contributor to *Blast 1*. Together, Pound and Lewis share a collection of manifestoes and assertions, which were designed to show that Vorticists were artists who rose above the 'mediocrity' surrounding art in Britain. They were in the vanguard. They were 'men of war'! *Blast* is immensely important to our understanding of Vorticism and where Lewis and his fellow Vorticists stood in relation to the art world of 1914. Just as important is its value in addressing the social and political questions of that period, given the polemic style of that address. Lastly, the visual style of the manifestoes was a breakthrough.

Pound did not begin to assimilate Lewis's artistic moves towards Vorticism until 1914/15 with his input into *Blast 1*. His articles in *The New Age* and *The Egoist* between 1912- 1915 did however publicize Lewis, Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska. But Pound's understanding of the 'new art' and Vorticism fell considerably short of what drove the movement. Vorticism is closely associated with Lewis who claimed that Vorticism was what he painted whereas the artists who associated with the Movement made their art in different ways. What distinguished Bomberg and Roberts from Lewis

³⁰³ E. Pound, *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*, London, 1970, p. 92.

³⁰⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 280.

was the continuing Bergsonian vitality of their paintings. True, their depiction of the human body was pared down to the lines of a mechanized puppet, the empathic pleasure of flesh was absent, but there remained an emotional vitality of movement that went against a change in sensibility found in Lewis and Epstein's work. This element can also be seen in Gaudier's sculptures, which Pound admired and wrote about. Gaudier's letter in support of Pound's *The New Sculpture*, which appeared in *The Egoist* (16th Feb, 1914) argued the case very much in the vitalist terminology of Bergson: 'The modern sculptor is a man who works with instinct as his inspiring force. His work is emotional'.³⁰⁵ Gaudier's *Head of Ezra Pound* (1914) also known as *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound*, possesses this mixture of the *vital* and geometrical monumentality. I suggest this echoes Gaudier's statement that 'instinct' is the primary force: an uneasy combination of Easter Island primitive gravitas and an expression of Pound's character. Gaudier had warned Pound, 'it will not look like you, it will...not...look...like you. It will be the expression of certain emotions which I get from your character'.³⁰⁶ But it does look like Pound, while not far removed from caricature. Lewis and Hulme would disagree that instinct should be the primary force: their primary force in the new art was a set of visual signs which signify to the viewer a negation of humanity. Hulme was to describe Epstein's drawings for sculpture as 'the desire to turn the organic into something hard and durable...as a geometrical figure itself'.³⁰⁷ The *Head of Ezra Pound* is related directly to nature by its presence. Lewis described the work as 'Ezra Pound in the form of a marble phallus'.³⁰⁸

Mary Gillies discusses how Modernists incorporated both Romanticism and Classicism into their work to create a model associated with Bergson: 'What results is an uneasy union...a constant tension'.³⁰⁹ Lewis incorporated figures from Renaissance art into his paintings, for example Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* (c.1435-1460) (Fig. 13) held in the National Gallery collection, whose influence can be detected in Lewis's drawing, *Alcibiades* (1912) (Fig. 14) from the *Timon of Athens*

³⁰⁵ Letter from Gaudier-Brzeska published in *The Egoist*, 16th Mar. 1914, p. 117.

³⁰⁶ E. Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska. A Memoir*, p. 50.

³⁰⁷ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and Philosophy', in *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, ed. K. Csengeri, p. 284.

³⁰⁸ 'Wyndham Lewis, Early London Environment', in *T. S. Eliot. A Symposium*, eds., March, Richard and Tambimuttu, 1948.

³⁰⁹ M. Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, 1996, p. 41.

series.³¹⁰ Examining the portfolio coloured print *Alcibiades*, this dualism is heavily skewed towards Lewis's use of the formal arrangements of the Uccello painting. As Beasley points out, 'the elements of The Wild [*modernism's*] formalist vocabulary were developed in early Italian painting'.³¹¹ With *Alcibiades*, Lewis took both form and content from Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*.

Lewis's Methodology and Bergson.

Fry and Lewis shared similar views on the importance of form in making a modernist painting and that these views also encompassed Bergson's thought. Much of this chapter traces how Fry, Lewis, Hulme and Pound reacted to Bergson's theory of time in so far as it constituted a major influence in art, literature and thinking. While Fry remained committed to Bergson's influence throughout, Lewis, Hulme and Pound were much more discriminating to the point of rejection of this influence, and the thrust of this section of the thesis is to show how this process evolved. Fry, together with fellow Bloomsbury Group member, the art critic Clive Bell (1881-1964), were by 1910 firm believers in Bergsonian theory as a motivational stimulus for modern artists. Fry described vitalism as a uniting feature of modern British art in the catalogue for the 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition' held at the Grafton Galleries in October 1912. Fry's formalist theories used Bergson's dualist principle of the interaction in space of time as pure duration, with time as quantity. He translated this relationship in art-historical terms, as the interaction of Modernism and Romanticism. Romanticist art is heavily weighted towards its narrative content; the artist sets out to create an aesthetic from his inner consciousness leaving very little for the viewer to create other than that which the artist has perceived. Modernist painting, where structural form takes precedence, allows the viewer to go beyond the artist's perception picking up the formal arrangement of colour and structure to create a new aesthetic. Fry emphasized the Bergsonian concept that the artwork takes on a rhythmic quality in the consciousness of the viewer, a kind of dream state, a state that elicits a sympathetic response. He then went on to state that the further the

³¹⁰ W. Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: paintings and drawings*, 1971, pp. 354- 355. The *Timon* series refers to drawings made by Lewis in 1912, and to the same drawings reproduced as a portfolio each containing 16 sheets (6 coloured) and published by the Cube Press in 1913. Six drawings were included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in Oct. 1912, but which ones are unknown.

³¹¹ R. Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the visual culture of modernism*, p. 63.

artist's formal arrangement moves towards abstraction, the stronger the viewer's aesthetic: the viewer becomes an artist. Narrative (language) impedes the process of pure duration or dream-like state. Language intrudes into our consciousness suppressing duration by trying to separate out thoughts into an orderly succession. Form moves away from narrative and social life creating an inner meaning in the conscience of the viewer. Here it is not possible to see an orderly succession of meaning; the artist's aesthetic, seen and felt in the plasticity of the work, is appropriated and enlarged to take on a meaning exclusive to the viewer. For Bergson, pure duration is a process, not a product. We are torn between trying to separate out our feelings, and thus organizing time in space, from our immediate consciousness where our thoughts 'dissolve into and permeate into one another without any precise outlines, without the least tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another'.³¹²

Bergson's concept of 'vital spirit' (*élan vital*) came from *L'Évolution créatrice* (1907) (*Creative Evolution*) published in English translation in 1911. 'Vitalism' appeared to provide an answer to how human beings attained their position as 'higher' forms of life within and outside the Darwinian evolutionary progression. Bergson's theory of evolution rests on the role of the intuitive nature of humanity: Bergson explains,

Consciousness, in man, is pre-eminently intellect. It might have been, it ought, so it seems, to have been also intuition. Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter.³¹³

He continued that if both intellect and intuition were in equilibrium, humanity would have reached its full development. But intelligence always prevails because in conquering matter, the intuitive spirit is sacrificed: 'Intuition is there, however, but vague and above all discontinuous ... But it glimmers whenever a vital interest is at stake'.³¹⁴ Intuition leads us to the spiritual life. It allows us to move forward. Intellect leads us to new ideas that separate us from other species. Intellect and

³¹² Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1910, p. 132.

³¹³ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, (1911 translation), p. 281.

³¹⁴ Bergson, p. 282.

intuition inhabit our consciousness and both constitute life, but it is the ‘spiritual life’ that holds the key to our evolution. It is through *élan vital* that Bergson marks the spirit as the major determinant: ‘Thus souls are continually being created, which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed’.³¹⁵

Bergson’s theories go much deeper than simply working counter to modern life. Lewis, by 1910 was already familiar with Bergson, having in 1903 attended his public lectures in Paris. A letter from 1949 describes how Lewis encountered Bergson:

I did not go from Public School to University: Paris... was my University: There I followed Bergson’s lectures at the Collège de France (...) Bergson was an excellent lecturer, dry and impersonal. I began by embracing his evolutionary system.³¹⁶

Bergson’s public lectures at the Collège de France were based upon his *Time and Free Will* (1889) updated as *Matière et mémoire* (1896) (*Matter and Memory*) to include refinements in the idea of ‘intuition’ to describe aesthetic emotion. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson explained that ‘quality’ time comes from the inner consciousness. *Creative Evolution* took the concept of ‘intuition’ as the component that really placed mankind above lower forms of life. Unlike ‘spatial time’, which regulates our lives, ‘quality’ time cannot be measured. Quality time allows us to experience life through our feelings. Bergson singled out artists, (as a generic type, rather than individuals), and stated that the process of capturing how they perceive what they see in front of them, or what they have previously experienced, derived from their ‘inner experience of consciousness’ and not just from what they see at any point in time. Given that Lewis was on record by 1914 as disparaging Bergson’s theory of time and space, we are left to weigh up the evidence of Bergson’s influence on Lewis’s output. This thesis traces Lewis’s involvement with Bergson from having a strong input in *The Wild Body* stories to his ‘mirror image’ employment of Bergson in his art from the *Kermesse* series of 1912 right through to his Vorticist imagery of 1914-15. Yet by 1912-1913, when Lewis made his *Timon* series of drawings and the *Kermesse* painting and its associated drawings, he appeared to be rejecting Bergson’s theories of perception. The letter from 1949 is ambiguous about Lewis’s real

³¹⁵ Ibid, p. 284.

³¹⁶ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, pp. 488- 489.

feelings towards Bergson. He proposes his philosophical work, *Time and Western Man*, as his primary teaching text. (When he wrote the letter, Lewis was applying for a job teaching philosophy). In that book, Lewis avoided analysing Bergson's theories of time and space directly, but instead criticised later interpreters, such as Alfred North Whitehead, it is self-evident that Lewis took an opposite philosophical position to that of Bergson.

There are aspects of Lewis's art that can be seen as a mirror image of the way artists used Bergson's temporal interventions as an entry into our thought process. Sue Ellen Campbell discusses what she regards as Lewis's philosophical position.

In his analyses of other philosophers, Lewis generally adopts a serious tone, moving only occasionally into mild sarcasm. When he refers to Bergson, though, we hear the unrestrained voice of the Enemy, the flamboyant satiric persona Lewis adopted during the late 1920s and early 1930s to dramatize his attacks on his contemporaries. Bergson, says the Enemy, "is the perfect philosophic ruffian, of the darkest and most forbidding description: and he pulls every emotional lever on which he can lay his hands." (Quote from *Time and Western Man*, p.166).³¹⁷

Campbell argues that Lewis's art, particularly prior to 1914, was more indebted to Bergson than he would later admit. She sets out to demonstrate that Lewis incorporated a Bergsonian structure of time in his work but then arrived at a directly opposite outcome. Campbell is not alone in her critique of Lewis's attitude to Bergson. Charlotte de Mille makes similar claims that Lewis applied Bergson's methodology in his work: 'because Lewis applied Bergson's method, the fact that he distorted his conclusions does not take away from Bergson's system'.³¹⁸

Lewis made the distinction between the concept of Bergson's 'becoming' or 'making', which he labelled 'mechanistic' (the very opposite of Bergson's thinking where the spiritual rhythm passes into, and acts upon, the mechanical succession of notes) and what has 'become'. He used the example of a piece of music as against a solid statue. By Lewis's analysis of its creation over time, the piece of music is transformed from a 'space-phenomenon', a spatially mechanical arrangement,

³¹⁷ S. E. Campbell, 'Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson and Their Philosophies of Space and Time', in *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 29, (3), 1983, p. 353.

³¹⁸ C. de Mille, *Bergson in Britain*, PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute, 2008, p. 40.

into a 'time-phenomenon', a pattern of musical notes with its temporal multiplicity playing on the memory of the listener. Lewis sought to exclude Bergson's real duration of time, the concept whereby the artist sought to transfer the aesthetic impact of temporal imagery to the viewer. Durman and Munton make the point that Lewis's stance was always one of detachment.³¹⁹ *Kermesse* originated from Lewis's visits to Brittany between 1903 and 1908. Lewis saw the Breton peasant fêtes as a form of frenzied ritual. Durman and Munton maintain that Lewis did not experience: he observed, but in any case it is very unlikely that he could have directly participated in such a celebration. Through his detachment, Lewis's aim was to exclude emotion, to make the break from Bergson's ideas, but not the Bergsonian methodology. Campbell remarks that 'Lewis's philosophical position is a sort of mirror image of Bergson's'.³²⁰

I argue that in *The Dancers*, Lewis transfixed the image into 'geometrical rigidity' by a process of 'mental' cropping of the image. The effect of 'the crop' was to capture the 'geometrical rigidity' of the painting's structure. The crop employs Lewis's 'cross' diagonals to emphasize the Euclidian geometry. This was the antithesis of the Romantic tradition of Graeco/Roman Classical aestheticism. The Romantic entered into Bergson's world of time where intellect formed that necessary, but inferior, part of human consciousness as opposed to the other half, intuition. Lewis, according to Campbell, was opposed to Bergson's view of intellect being the inferior part of consciousness, but in reality 'Bergson's view is basic to Lewis's own philosophy'.³²¹ The crop allies itself to cinema. It encompasses a single frame. Bergson's idea of temporal stability in primitive and early pre- Graeco/Roman cultures could be seen represented in a similar way. Campbell quoting from *Creative Evolution*, makes the point that Bergson's description of the intellect has its roots in ancient philosophy and that its transition to the present day is only one of degree. This mechanism can be likened to a series of discrete snapshots; the natural movement being described as 'mechanism of our ordinary knowledge... (perception, intellection, language)... is of a

³¹⁹ M. Durman and A. Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', in *Wyndham Lewis Letteratura/Pittura*, p. 1

³²⁰ S. E. Campbell, p. 366.

³²¹ *Ibid*, p. 352.

cinematographical kind'.³²² The philosophy of ideas provided a mechanism through language to preserve intellectual reality over time while seeing spatial movement and change in general as being pure illusion. Bergson wrote, '...we end in the philosophy of Ideas when we apply the cinematographical mechanism of the intellect to the analysis of the real'.³²³ By ignoring 'movement of the real object', the ancient philosophers excluded the perceptual world. I would argue that Lewis employed a cinematic technique, in effect the artist's cropping device, to shut out the intuitive side of Bergson's consciousness from the viewer. The Futurist/Bergsonian vitality 'lines of force' of *The Dancers* are stopped dead in their tracks.

According to Campbell, Lewis worked in a number of ways that continued to accord with Bergson. Lewis placed great emphasis on Classical art. Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, argued that the Ancients (e.g. the Egyptians) treated time and change as a negligible factor in life. For Bergson, time in ancient culture did not primarily relate to space. The ancients did not think in terms of space; time entered the human consciousness as an important but non-measurable factor or, translated into Bergson's terms, a real time of duration. The non-measurability of the real time of duration, Bergson's term for 'inner experience of consciousness', becomes in *The Dancers* 'lines of force' which portray the extraordinary sexual forcefulness of the dancers. The artist, Lewis, took on the qualitative nuances of consciousness, which manifested themselves in the sexual imagery of the dancers. However, the tightly cropped image had a counter effect of pinning down the dancers within the boundaries of the canvas. Lewis himself came up with a different explanation: "The artist, in his defiance of Fate, has always remain'd,(sic), a recluse, and the enemy of such orgaic participation of life, and often lives without this emotion felt in the midst of the wastefulness'.³²⁴ This is part of a fragmentary diary entry on Breton fêtes, dated August 1908. But in any case, the effect on *The Dancers*, as Durman and Munton and Edwards have noted, is to shut out the viewer. Lewis viewed his dancers like a lepidopterist might view his specimen butterfly; or as exotic animals assembled in a documentary. He is not entering into the dance (or if he is, he is suppressing it in the

³²² Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 323.

³²³ Ibid, p. 332.

³²⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Breton Journal' in *The Complete Wild Body*, 1982, pp. 194- 195.

way he constructs his painting) so that his imagery records the sensation of a tribal ritual with the detachment of an anthropologist. While Lewis was suppressing the subjective Bergson methodology at this stage of his artistic development, (1912), he was using his painter's 'eye' to 'objectify' the image. But, as Campbell argues, Lewis was applying Bergson's methodology but reaching the opposite conclusion. Or as Charlotte de Mille discerns: "The Bergson system then is all about "movement and change": intuitive duration defies categorization and thus becomes methodology".³²⁵

In the arts, Bergson's theory of duration of time, *durée*, is primarily applicable to metaphorical figures in music and poetry. However, in broad terms he also attributes the theory to the plastic arts. The dance, a subject much taken up by artists in the early twentieth century, was seen as having important Bergsonian attributes in its temporality. In his theory Bergson located time as a non-measurable component of the human spirit, that component which allows us to incorporate a flow or flux of time from past memories, present and indeed the future into our consciousness. Bergson called this process the real duration of time, or *durée*. This intuitive process allows us to experience what Bergson calls qualitative time. Unlike 'spatial time', (clock time), which regulates our lives, quality time allows us to experience life through our feelings. There are no certainties with *durée*, unlike those claimed by the Positivists who measure time in space. Bergson's theory is one that personifies individual freedom: the ability to transcend the things that we can locate in space through knowledge. While Bergson acknowledged that society needed the quantitative sciences to broaden our lives, to spiritually enhance our lives we need to achieve a deep-seated conscious state that has no relationship to quantity.

The deep-seated conscious states have no relation to quantity, they are pure quality; they intermingle in such a way that that we cannot tell whether they are one or several, nor even examine them from this point of view without once altering their nature. The duration, which they thus create, is a duration whose moments do not constitute a numerical multiplicity.³²⁶

³²⁵ C. de Mille, *Bergson in Britain*, p. 39.

³²⁶ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 137.

Bergson's first major work, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889) (*Time and Free Will*) singled out the dance to illustrate his theory of *durée*. Unlike spatial time, *durée* gives the individual a level of pleasurable feelings that cannot be achieved by theories based on the systematic measurement of time. Bergson used the way we progress through dance movements, as participant or observer, to achieve a level of pleasure that he called a qualitative progress to 'differences in kind'. They register how our consciousness reacts to the dance by our experience of time past, present, and anticipation of the future. These moments in time cannot be separated. They are in flux. This is what Bergson called pure duration of time

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. For this purpose it need not be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea; for then, on the contrary, it would no longer endure. Nor need it forget its former states, it is enough that in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another.³²⁷

Lewis equated pure duration with emotion, the very opposite of intelligent thought and outside the framework of the detached observer of life. His Art depends on the eye to achieve its aesthetical impact.

The argument really related to Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and humankind's struggle to move on to a higher level of existence, but in *Time and Western Man* Lewis proclaimed the superiority of the spatial approach, the 'outside' view of things

You move around the statue, but it is always there in its entirety before you: whereas the piece of music moves though you as it were. The difference in the two arts is evident at once, and the different faculties that come into play in the one and the other. When you are half-way through the piece of music, or it is half-way through you, if you do not remember what you have just heard you would be in the position of a clock ticking its minutes, and all the other ticks except the present one is no longer existing: so it would be with the notes. You have to live with the music in some sense, in

³²⁷ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1910, p. 100.

contrast to your response to the statue.³²⁸

But here Lewis is merely using Bergson's theory to knock it down. Bergson asserts the superiority of the perceptual world over the spatial, Lewis turns it around and goes on to equate the statue, the concrete object, with the intellect; an intellectual object. Bergson did not deny the value of modern science in mankind's development; just that *durée* was the decisive factor. Bergson described the process of human development:

Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter....At one point alone it passes freely....At this point is humanity; it is our privileged situation....Thus souls are continually being created, which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed....Finally, consciousness is essentially free; it is freedom itself; but it cannot pass through matter without settling on it, without adapting itself to it: this adaption is what we call intellectuality; ...Thus, to the eyes of a philosophy that attempts to absorb intellect into intuition, many difficulties vanish or become light. But such a doctrine does not only facilitate speculation; it gives us also more power to act and to live.³²⁹

Bergson was asserting the superiority of the perceptual world over that of the Positivists.

Mechanical laws determined spatial reality, but it was only through *durée* that the reality of life could be fully experienced. *Durée* constituted the living spirit; the living spirit was in constant danger of being held back by mechanistic knowledge:

Our freedom, in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by constant effort: it is dogged by automatism. The most living thought becomes frigid in the formula which expresses it. The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit.³³⁰

Lewis's critique of Bergson was essentially about human freedom. *The Wild Body* stories described a class of people who were not free: in life they operated in a mechanical way. Bergson recognized that society was 'dogged by automatism' but saw a way out for humanity through *durée*. Bergson's *Le Rire* (1900) (*Laughter, an essay on the meaning of the comic*) focuses on the mechanical connection

³²⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 170.

³²⁹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 284- 285.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 134.

between the human body and being laughed at: 'The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportions as that body reminds us of a mere machine'.³³¹ But for Bergson this descent into automatism was a transitory thing. For Lewis, automatism became permanent. Only those people with the intelligence to transcend this state, (people like him), were capable of a consciousness which could embrace a freedom of spirit that overcame the mechanical.

The Wild Body stories describe various characters locked into behavioural patterns that seem to suggest a society that did not quite add up to what Lewis might have considered 'normal'. Lewis did not set himself as an arbiter of 'normal' behaviour, but as an outsider looking in. Lewis was not being judgemental, instead placing himself in the mode of 'scientific' researcher. This approach initially involved more than a nod towards Bergson, particularly his essay on laughter. Lewis was familiar with Bergson's, *Le Rire*, an essay on the meaning of the comic, where laughter equates to a rigidity of the body. Lewis's second published story, 'Some Innkeepers and Bestre' (1909) described the characteristics of Breton innkeepers; their commercial mind and attitude to money being surprisingly irrational.³³² While the main thrust here was sociological, Lewis's description of the boarding-house keeper Bestre had deeper philosophical roots. In describing Bestre's behaviour, Lewis the writer began to construct an aesthetic that could apply to Lewis the artist. Bestre's attitude towards his customers was one of detachment, his approach one of confrontation through presence. Normand remarks 'This type of action - combative, disruptive, uncompromising -- provides an early outline of Lewis's psychology of the artist'.³³³ Bestre had a comic presence whose description suggested a man who separated body from mind: 'He is a large man, grown naively corpulent: one can see by his movements that the gradual and insidious growth of his stomach has not preoccupied him in the least'.³³⁴ Lewis's Bestre was something less than a higher form of man. While he was not exactly a puppet in his actions, his 'dumbness, arrogant calm and attentive nonchalance' indicated a

³³¹ Bergson, *Laughter*, 1911 edn, p. 29.

³³² Wyndham Lewis, 'Some Innkeepers and Bestre' in *The Wild Body*, First published in *The English Review*, June, 1909.

³³³ T. Normand, *Wyndham Lewis: the artist.*, 1992, p. 23.

³³⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'Some Innkeepers and Bestre', *The Complete Wild Body*, 1982, p. 228.

psychological mechanism that transcended biological life.³³⁵ In terms of Lewis's approach to Art, Bestre was a 'low' model of 'art' transcending life. The model had relevance to Nietzsche and to Bergson and, as Bergson wrote in *Creative Evolution*, 'evolution is not only a movement forward....a marking time, and still more often a deviation or turning back'.³³⁶ Bestre might be seen as 'marking time'.

Bernard Lafourade's 'Afterword' article in *The Complete Wild Body* (1982) named six basic attributes of the stories; '1) a real presence, 2) fascination, 3) and 4) comedy and tragedy, 5) the grotesque, and 6) the absurd'.³³⁷ These subjects followed Lewis throughout his literary and artistic career. Just as Nietzsche used Greek mythology to pinpoint the position of modern society, Lewis did something similar with *The Wild Body* stories. The stories describe human behaviour that can be attributed to contemporary anthropological, philosophical, and sociological studies including works by Emile Durkheim, J G Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*, Lévy-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality*, and Jane Harrison's studies of Greek religion, mythology and primitive ritual. For example, Bestre is locked into his behaviour by what Lewis regarded as a form of primitive worship. Lafourade describes Lewis's 'characters' as "'shells," congealed in rituals'.³³⁸ 'Shells' is an apt description for a Lewisian character given its special meaning in his art as 'all on the outside'; the Bestre model described above as 'a "low" model of Art transcending Life'. Essentially, as with his art, Lewis saw himself as the outsider positioning himself at the centre of the vortex, collating and labelling these 'bodies' or 'shells' and attributing categories to them in a literary form closely allied to Vorticism. This position covers the early-published versions of the *Wild Body* stories. Later versions, while developing the basic elements lost something of the early innovatory writing structure, mirroring the move in art away from Vorticism brought about by the stark realities of mechanized warfare in the Great War.

³³⁵ Ibid, p. 228.

³³⁶ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1954, p.111.

³³⁷ B. Lafourade, (ed.), 'Afterword', *The Complete Wild Body*, p. 405.

Hulme's changing attitude towards Bergson

While Lewis's attitude towards Bergson was at odds with the evidence revealed from his practice, Hulme and Pound were much more forthcoming. We owe it to Hulme to unravel over this period of Bergson inspired artistic innovation between 1909 and 1915, his position of enthusiastic Bergson supporter to final rejection. It was Hulme who pushed Pound's thinking on modern art towards an understanding of Vorticism. The catalyst was the Quest Lecture later published under the heading *The New Art and its Philosophy*. In drawing on the attitude to life expressed in pre-Renaissance art, particularly Byzantine art, Hulme argued the case for a new attitude to the condition of modern society seen in the new art of, for example, Lewis and Epstein. Implicit within the text was the fact that by 1914 Hulme had moved away from Bergson and had adopted an anti-humanist stance. This he made clear in the following extract:

Renaissance, (sic), art we may call a "vital" art in that it depends on pleasure in the reproduction of human and natural forms. Byzantine art is the exact contrary of this. There is nothing vital in it: the emotion you get from it is not a pleasure in the reproduction of natural or human life. The disgust with the trivial and accidental characteristics of living shapes, the searching after an austerity, a *perfection* and rigidity which vital things can never have, leads to the use of forms which can almost be called *geometrical*.³³⁹

Hulme wrote extensively on Bergson from 1909 to 1913. Notable were the four lectures, 'The Philosophy of Bergson' given in London at the home of Mrs Franz Liebich in November and December 1911 and also his 'Notes for a Lecture' written in 1911 or 1912. The notes for these lectures are incorporated in *Speculations: The Philosophy of Intrusive Manifolds*, and *The Note-Books of T. E. Hulme*, the latter under the heading *Bergson's Theory of Art* in *The Collected Writings*. Much of the narrative of *The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds* is recognizable from Hulme's articles in *The New Age* from 1911 and 1912. The term 'intrusive manifold' was first used in the article 'Bax on Bergson', in August 1911, but not defined in any depth by Hulme. *The Philosophy of Intrusive Manifolds* set out to show how Bergson moved from a subjective theory of time in *Time and Free Will*, to an objective,

³³⁹ T. E. Hulme, 'A Notebook' in *The Collected Writing of T E Hulme*, ed. K. Csengeri, 1994, p. 447.

identifiable theory in *Creative Evolution*. In all his articles for *The New Age*, Hulme set out in forceful language to dismiss the theories of the Positivists, or ‘counters’ as he called them. He singled out E. Belfort Bax (1854-1926) the Socialist journalist and philosopher, who wrote *The Problem of Reality* (1892).³⁴⁰ Hulme regarded Bax as an apologist for those who only recognize space as an intellectual construct. The argument revolved around the reality of intuition or flux. Hulme set out Bergson’s general theory; that in dealing with reality the intellect distorts, that intellect understands matter but not life; that you need to employ intuition to understand how the mind works, therefore there must be two strands to understanding reality, intellect and intuition. The important point is that to explain the reality of how we evolve, we need to get inside the process of evolution, and not merely observe it. This Hulme described by using the term ‘extensive manifolds’ to encompass the scientific phenomena of matter which involves the breaking down of atoms, or an unravelling of its separate parts. Here nothing will change, but merely be rearranged. Intensive manifolds cannot be unravelled; the parts are so interlocked and interpenetrated that they cannot exist separately. Hulme called these parts ‘a qualitative multiplicity’. With the ‘extensive manifolds’ model, time is not involved because everything is predetermined. Intellect sees to it that with rearrangement there is always a certain outcome because the moves are capable of being scientifically understood. For example, when an alarm clock goes off, our next move is to get up. There is no real change in our behaviour. Bergson asked the question what impulse takes us in the evolutionary process beyond the lesser forms of life. Hulme isolated these movements in the ‘intensive manifolds’ model, where the parts cannot be unravelled. Here lay real duration or real time; continuous change creating new and unpredictable states. Only intensive manifolds could explain evolutionary change because the mechanical change (which is not real change) related only to matter that did not age; only living things aged. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson named ‘impulse’ as the equivalent to the creative activity of the individual which he posited in *Mind and Matter*. Creativity or ‘becoming’ in time is distinct from determinism or ‘finalism’ where there is no creativity or ‘novelism’. The evolutionary process causes matter to separate out the characteristics of the interpenetrating parts; ‘intuition goes in the

³⁴⁰ E. B. Bax, *The Problem of Reality, Being Outline Suggestions of a Philosophical Reconstruction*, 1892, Swan, Sonnenschein and Co. London. (can be found at Internet Archive Digital Library of Free Books. <https://archive.org/index.php>).

very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter'.³⁴¹ Instead of an accretive process, evolution works by 'dissociation'. Intensive manifolds are what constitutes the impulse: to quote Hulme: 'This force or impulse is not a force in the ordinary sense of the term; it is not material at all....for it is of the same nature as the kind of activity we feel in ourselves and which being an intensive manifold, could not be understood by the intellect'.³⁴² This is how Bergson's theory can be understood. The mechanical process of intellect cannot show how one species evolves further than another because any proof of how, for example, a human hand evolves to have more functions than an animal's paw, when both have an infinitely complicated structure, cannot be made by analytical reasoning. The answer lies in life as the overriding factor that makes the species what it is, not some complex building up process. Instead, the impulse for life is a separating out process.

Far from abandoning Bergson's theory of time, in 1911 Hulme sought to interpret it to a wider public, which he considered had been led into simplistic and inaccurate ideas of body and mind dualism akin to a Kantian mind-set, when the real value of the theory lay in its methodology. It was here that Hulme could test the objective value of duration in applying a sense of reality to the process of artistic creation, which could transcend the popular idea of duration as being an unexplainable, but somehow a productive 'hypnotic trance'. Hulme then, needed to apply his idea of 'objective' duration to the way major artists achieved a certain vision of things where lesser artists fail. He applied the same reasoning as with the intensive manifold, but in art it was aesthetic intuition, or 'emotion', that Hulme called 'an account of actual reality'.³⁴³ Like the evolutionary process, the intensive manifold contains a flux of interpenetrating elements, which cannot be separated by intellect. These aesthetic emotions combine with other emotions, the latter merely conveying a heightening of perceptions that do not change. Ordinary emotions relate to things, which are seen only from the outside, for example, a beautiful view of nature. Hulme regarded the purpose of the innovative artist was to probe, to get inside the 'thing' to lift the veil, which the

³⁴¹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 281.

³⁴² T. E. Hulme, 'The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds', in *The Collected Writings*, p. 184.

³⁴³ T. E. Hulme, 'Bergson's Theory of Art', in *The Collected Writings*, p. 193.

intellectual action generated from ordinary emotions conceals, to reveal what others could not see; things as they are in themselves, the real nature of things. To quote Hulme: ‘In Bergson it... (art)... is an actual contact with reality in a man who is emancipated from the ways of perception engendered by action, but... (for Hulme)... the action is written with a small “a”, not a large one’.³⁴⁴

Hulme’s analysis questions the basis of Modernism through the aesthetic of the innovative artist. Here, one has to be cautious. Robert Peppin writes of the growing dissatisfaction in European high culture with what was seen as the false hopes of the Enlightenment project, the notion of a ‘free life’; ‘a shift in culture ... (was required)... from philosophy primarily, but also from science and religion to art as a leading or “legislating” force in a genuinely modern culture’.³⁴⁵ Such a shift can be labelled ‘aesthetic modernism’ or ‘modern self-determination’. Peppin poses the question, is this a ‘complete, aesthetic self-definition, a radical act of imagination’, or only a reformulation in modernism of the Enlightenment? ³⁴⁶ Hulme thought that through geometric abstract art its ‘pure’ intensity in expressing modern life could represent a truly modern epoch. Hulme in his review of modern art wrote,

But as this intensity is at the same time no romantic revival, but part of a real change of sensibility occurring now in the modern mind, and is coloured by a particular and original quality due to this fact, it quite as naturally develops from the original formula one which is for it, a purer and more accurate medium of expression.³⁴⁷

But taking a wider view art has its limitations, and quoting Peppin; ‘in trying to determine what philosophical claims simply in an art work being presented this way rather than that, or structuring the experience it presents this way rather than that, there is always a danger of speculative over-kill, of making the work do or say more than it can or should’.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 194.

³⁴⁵ R. Peppin. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: on the dissatisfactions of European high culture*, Oxford, 1991, pp. 29-30.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 30.

³⁴⁷ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art,-I’, *The New Age*, 15th Jan. 1914, p. 342.

³⁴⁸ R. Peppin, p. 31.

By the spring of 1912, Hulme had begun to formulate a rejection of humanism and an indication of his political leanings with the paper ‘A Tory Philosophy’ published in the *Commentator* in five instalments between April and May 1912. He linked his philosophical ideas to what constituted ‘a certain kind of Tory’. Hulme’s ‘Tory’ stood for discipline, order, and traditional values. Hulme linked these values to what he terms ‘the classical attitude’; in religion this meant belief in the dogma of original sin, and is expressed through art by rules that ensure continuing stability in religion and ethics. The antithesis of this classical position is ‘the romantic attitude’, the emphasis being on freedom where man who is essentially ‘wonderful’ and can only achieve his full potential by ‘breaking the rules’. For Hulme this ideology stemmed from Rousseau and his pursuit of ‘Reason’. In art ‘the romantic attitude’ could be reached by embracing nature to achieve inspiration. Hulme thought this concept blatantly ridiculous that such a course could not achieve real progress for humankind and any progress could only be achieved through a rigid belief system, as for example the Byzantine attitude to religious belief. Scientific progress merely added to our fixed area of accommodation, and not in altering the capacity for knowledge. The latter was already there waiting to be filled. For Hulme, the boundaries could not be breached. This constancy could be applied to religious and ethical beliefs by accepting that the solidarity achieved by man needed a stable world governed by a set of immutable values. In terms of evolutionary change the ideology of classicism was directly related to Hulme’s distinction between intensive and extensive manifolds. In ‘A Tory Philosophy’, Hulme - taking up the Mutation theory of the botanist De Vries (1848-1937) - described a species brought into being ‘in one big variation, as a kind of “sport”, and that once constituted, a species remains absolutely constant’.³⁴⁹ While Hulme acknowledged that De Vries’ theory shuts out any further progress with its fixed mental and moral capacity, which in man’s case is not supportable, the idea of unbreachable boundaries held true. Romanticists always strive to break out; in humanist religion, God is first translated into Reason and thence into Life. Hulme was at his most succinct in this area when describing the political ideology of the anarchist Sorel in his preface to the English translation of *Reflections on Violence* (1916). For Sorel, man was bad, a concept which sprang from Classical pessimism and its relationship with Original Sin. The

³⁴⁹ T. E. Hulme, ‘A Tory Philosophy’ in *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, ed., K. Csengeri, pp. 242- 243.

opposite Romantic democratic view saw progress based on peaceful and intelligent readjustment. Sorel, and Hulme, maintained that man could not be transformed by the rational. Human beings needed disciplines; ethical, heroic, or political. Sorel saw the way forward through class struggle:

I (also) believe that it would be useful to thrash the orators of democracy and the representatives of the government in order that none of them should be under any illusion about the character of acts of violence. These acts can only have historical value if they are *the brutal and clear expression of class struggle*: the bourgeoisie must not be allowed to imagine that, aided by cleverness, social science or noble sentiments, they might find a better welcome at the hands of the proletariat.³⁵⁰

Hulme was less forthcoming, but his political position suggested an anti-Liberal stance and the possibility of progress through reactionary change.

Hulme came to his final philosophical position in constructing a model which described the highest level of reality in art in an article he published in *The New Age* on 9th December 1915 under the title 'A Notebook'. Here he maintained that art should strive to capture the austere, monumental stability and permanence. These factors he presented as the very opposite of humanist thought, an ideology which could be described as the highest expression of the 'vital'. Paradoxically, Hulme was underpinning modernist art with traditional values: realist art had to embody ethical, or religious, absolutes, which mark unchanging human spiritual values. These values represented permanence and not progress and were expressed through art by geometrical hard-edged forms. Unlike Renaissance humanist art, no form of human emotion is depicted. The Bergsonian relationship between nature, life and vital art is no longer part of the model. Essentially, Hulme's view of life was that you could not mingle religious absolutism with the organic world of biology. Renaissance art applied this mix to humanize Christianity; to depict Christ in human terms was an expression of the divine. Hulme's model now imposed a barrier between ethical and religious values and organic life, just as he imposed a barrier between the inorganic world of matter or materialism and organic life. His model stemmed from Byzantine, Egyptian and early Greek art in which such barriers were absolute. These societies chose to view the physical world around them as alien. Their art reflected

³⁵⁰ G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ed., J. Jennings, 1999, p. 77.

in a geometrical form this insular world by stressing austere monumental stability and permanence in their imagery, which was essentially non-vital in character. Hulme described their art:

If we think of physical science as represented by geometry, then instead of saying that the modern progress away from materialism has been from physics through vitalism to the absolute values of religion, we might say that it is *from geometry through life and back to geometry*. It certainly seems as if the extreme regions (physical science and religion) had resemblances not shared by the middle region. This is because they are both, in different ways, absolute.³⁵¹

The cardinal error had been to mix the absolute with the relative in the belief that mankind must benefit by applied science and by a religious attitude, which embraced life. 'A Notebook' amounted to Hulme's final dismissal of Bergson's theory of time. Hulme had clung on to the theory of vitalism and biology in evolution, but by rejecting any connection between religious values and life, reality based on humanism became untenable. The nineteenth century brought theories of human evolution where there was a continuous progression in development through nature. Hulme set out to show that this was not the case; that there were also discontinuities and that there were gaps between one region of reality and another. To cite Hulme: 'Biology is not theology nor can God be defined in terms of "life" or "progress" '.³⁵² The gap between matter and biological life could easily be recognized because it fitted in readily with humanism. But the gap between religion and biological life was more difficult to accept because the whole concept of modern religion had, since the Renaissance, been one of incorporating the divine into human emotions. For Hulme, religious and ethical values were entirely independent of vital things; a misunderstanding that led to 'Romanticism in literature, Relativism in ethics, Idealism in philosophy and Modernism in religion'³⁵³. Hulme maintained that society had allowed itself to believe that the absolute worlds of matter (physical science) and of ethics and religion can mingle with the natural organic world of 'life'. The mingling of inorganic matter in terms of knowledge with the vital world of biological life

³⁵¹ T. E. Hulme, 'A Notebook', *The New Age*, 9th Dec.1915, p. 138, (and reproduced in *The Collected Writings, A Notebook*, p. 426).

³⁵² *Ibid*, p. 138.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 138.

had been predominantly a nineteenth century philosophical ideology, exemplified by Spencer who applied a purely mechanical view of biological evolution. The religious mix with the vital world started with the Renaissance and the abandonment of Original Sin. The result for Hulme was a picture of the modern world, which bore no resemblance to its reality. Hulme stated that Bergson and Nietzsche recognized the gap between the two worlds of life and matter, but ignored the gap between ethics and religion and life. Religious values being non-material had been included in what is vital. As a counter to this misconceived ideology, Hulme picked out Epstein's sculpture *Figure in Flenite* (1913) as breaking the mould of the 'modern' mind. Here, nature was left behind. The statue says more about the reality of modern life in its feeling of isolation, perhaps even desolation, than any humanist art could express.

It was through Pound that Hulme came into contact with Lewis in 1913; Hulme's and Pound's relationship being centred on Imagist poetry. It was only after Hulme had first seen Epstein's solo exhibition at the 21 Gallery in December 1913, and Lewis's and Epstein's work, possibly at the 'Cubist Room' Brighton Exhibition (December 1913- January 1914), that Hulme recognized the significance of their work to his ideas on the superiority of Classical art as a philosophical approach to life. Lewis had exhibited his drawing *The Enemy of the Stars* (1913) in Brighton, a static, cubist figure, stark in its geometrical simplicity. Hulme made the connection between Epstein's and Lewis's art and what he now saw as the repudiation of 'vital' art as the way forward for a modern society.

Lewis first addressed the conflict between the vital humanism of Bergson and the geometric severity of anti-humanist primitive art in his *Kermesse* series of 1912. The process of 'transfixing the image into geometrical rigidity' was a neat solution whereby Lewis could discard his 'Bergsonian baggage'. It pre-dates Hulme's anti-humanist stance and allowed Lewis to exclude nature and therefore 'life', as it is constituted in Bergson's natural signs. Bergson's signs relate to his creative evolution, the 'social organism' of the group, which Lewis related to Breton peasants. Lewis's 'The New Egos' in *Blast 1* made this abundantly clear:

THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY.

It now, literally, EXISTS much less.....

Dehumanization is the chief diagnostic of the Modern World.³⁵⁴

Lewis's Breton peasants lacked *élan vital* and are so devoid of feelings that their 'life' lacked the evolutionary growth and change, (not the equivalent of intelligence), that would eventually foster the intuitive process to have a quality of life. The result, in Lewis's *Wild Body* stories was a peasantry that acted in a mechanical puppet-like manner. An earlier manifestation of the simplistic body and mind interpretation of Bergson can be seen in Lewis's pre-Vorticist drawing *Café* (1910) and his description of Bestre in *The Wild Body* stories.

Hulme's relationship with Vorticism.

Hulme, having previously embraced Bergson's vitalism and its relationship with nature (life), by 1914, rejected these ideas in favour of 'geometric' art. In artistic language, this constituted a rejection of humanist Renaissance art and its emotional connections with religion; the notion of a creative God bringing religious salvation to the world through Christianity. Hulme looked to a belief system that did not rely on the natural world. He saw modern art reaching back to incorporate the perfect form of primitive art, which was geometric in construction. However, Hulme's review in *The New Age* of the London Group Exhibition held at the Goupil Gallery in March 1914, could not rule out that abstraction has any connection with nature, and that the banishing of all emotion for intellectual interest was invalid. Hulme argued against Ginner's notions that 'All good art is realistic'; that 'The new movement in art is merely an academic movement of the kind, springing from the conversion of Cézanne's mannerisms into formulae' and that 'The only remedy is a return to realism'.³⁵⁵ Ginner's 'realistic' for Hulme means art from nature whereas 'true' abstraction is not. But in another sense he went on to say that the best modern art was derived from nature and through expression and not as interpretation. He criticized Bromberg's

³⁵⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'The New Egos', *Blast* 1, p.141.

³⁵⁵ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art -II', *The New Age*, 12th February, 1914, p. 467.

painting *In the Hold* (1913-14) as an extreme example of a fully abstract work on a 64-squared grid, each square independent of its neighbours. To quote from Hulme's review: 'All the general emotions produced by form have been excluded and we are reduced to a purely intellectual interest in shape...I see no development along such lines'.³⁵⁶ According to Hulme, Bomberg failed to balance emotional identity with intellectual creativity. Hulme identified geometrical abstraction as a precursor to a tendency that the world was changing in a way that mirrored the inward looking attitude of pre-Western cultures towards their environment. Hulme recognized that the English 'Cubists' led by Lewis, despite such deviations as *In the Hold*, were striving to reach a position where a particular kind of form relating to the mechanized world could be established. But Hulme snubbed Lewis, singling out Epstein's work as having the necessary qualities to signpost this change. Epstein's drawings for sculpture which are connected with birth were judged much more successful, and citing Hulme:

the tendency to abstraction, the desire to turn the organic into something hard and durable, is here at work, not on something simple, such as you get in the more archaic work, but on something more complicated. It is, however, the tendency at work in both. ³⁵⁷

While Epstein's work is in profound sympathy with the attitude of the pre-Western societies, it is not imitative, but rather it expresses the anti-humanist emotions of these pre-Renaissance cultures.

Hulme wrote in some detail at this time about Epstein's works in *The New Age*, singling out the drawings for the flenite statue and for the *Rock Drill*. They are related to the sculpture *Female Figure in Flenite* (1913) (Fig. 31) with the drawing *Study for Figure in Flenite*, (1913) (Fig. 41) and to *Study for Rock Drill, Venus and Doves* (1913) Fig.39). There is a marked difference between the way Hulme attributes the two forms: the statue is more difficult to articulate in abstraction: 'With three dimensions we get the relativism and obscurity of appearance'.³⁵⁸ *Female Figure in Flenite* has a recognizable human form with the characteristics of primitive statuary, and yet, there is in its form

³⁵⁶ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art-III', *The New Age*, 26th Mar 1914, p. 662.

³⁵⁷ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and its Philosophy' in *The Collected Writings*, p. 284.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 275.

a suggestion of leaving nature behind and creating a sense of isolation that evinces the modern world. The head is formed like a helmet, bending down to connect with the body; the figure appears to be pregnant, her belly and sexual organ thrust prominently forward, her feet placed firmly on the ground. There is a feeling of tragedy, which generates an aesthetic for the viewer, not unlike the contact with reality that Hulme saw in Bergson's account of art with his intuitive sympathy, but the overriding feeling is one of human isolation. This raises the question whether Hulme is expressing his emotions in the form of humanism, that general state of mind emanating from the Renaissance? His answer is not in that particular sense. The figure communicates an aspect of modern life. Hulme described the *Flenite* carvings as 'of an order more intense than any conception of tragedy which could fit easily into the modern progressive concept of life'.³⁵⁹ Yet some doubts remained: Hulme finally broke the link between religion, ethics and life in 1915. In 1913 Hulme retaining his belief in Classicism, clung on to what he perceived as Bergson's underlying humanity.

The drawing, *Study for 'Rock Drill, Venus and Doves'* (1913) (Fig.39), incorporates three separate, but connected, images for *Rock Drill*, a work that shocked the critics in its brutality when first exhibited. *Rock Drill* (1913) (fig.40) in its resolved three-dimensional form is totally innovative in concept; a combination of the 'ready-made' mechanical drill surmounted by a stone figure. There is no room here for even a glimmer of humanity. It is brutal in its sexual imagery, the geometrical lines of the figure combined with the drill turning humanity into a machine. The *Study for Rock Drill* takes the central procreation image and translates to the male image on the left-hand side whose thrusting limbs take on a combination of man and drill. The drawing *Study for Figure in Flenite* (1913) (fig. 41) also known as *Creation*, is similar to the *Rock Drill* studies. The pregnant mother enclosed in cavernous lines according to Hulme should not be seen as 'a medical drawing', or seen as 'alien and unnatural', but rather as a concept of humanity which is beyond the recognition of its viewers. This concept of humanity bears no relationship to what Hulme saw as the hackneyed imitative expression of humanity with 'an exotic or romantic past'. It has that stiff geometric arrangement of

³⁵⁹ T. E. Hulme, 'Mr. Epstein and his Critics', *The New Age*, 25 Dec. 1913, p. 252.

line, derived from how the world looked in Epstein's eyes. Lewis's work shows affinity with the Flenite and Rock Drill studies if one compares the similarities in structure and concept between Epstein's lost drawing illustrated in *Blast 1* (p. xv) (fig. 42) and Lewis's drawing *Argol* (1914) (fig. 43).

Hulme in his writings had nothing to say about Epstein's *Rock Drill* itself. This might seem at first sight surprising for such a challenging sculpture. However, his essay 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy' clearly defines where Hulme stands on artists incorporating mechanical principles into their style: that mechanical lines represent 'desire for austerity and bareness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature and natural things'.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, Hulme emphasizes that the new art is not related to actual changes in human perception: 'The point I want to emphasize is that the use of mechanical lines...is in no sense merely a reflection of mechanical environment'.³⁶¹ It represents something much more complex than changing from the organic to the inorganic. It is not a new presentation of archaic art. Miriam Hansen describes the new sensibility as a 'religious' attitude which she sums up in the following quote: 'As a mere function of the new "religious" will-to-art, however, an aesthetics of machinery loses its critical possibilities- possibilities clearly present in such contemporary works as Lewis's *Timon of Athens* series or Epstein's sculpture *Rock Drill*'.³⁶² *Timon of Athens* is where we first see these critical possibilities emanate: As Frederic Jameson writes:

However, I think I glimpse a point from which all these themes may at least become visible: a true vortex, if you like, in which politics, literary narrative, visual form and Vorticism as a movement, at least briefly, come into view as a unified movement, as a single stream of energy. This point is the *Timon of Athens* series.³⁶³

With the new art, hard geometric lines represented for Hulme modern technology as a rebuttal of the organic and its association with human Progress through life, But Hulme's interest lay in

³⁶⁰ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and Philosophy', in *The Collected Writings*, p. 278. (Delivered as a lecture to the Quest Society on 22 January 1914).

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 284.

³⁶² M. Hansen, 'T E Hulme, Mercenary of Modernism, or, Fragments of Avant-garde Sensibility in Pre-World War 1 Britain', *ELH*, Vol. No. 2, 1980, p. 374.

³⁶³ F. Jameson, 'Wyndham Lewis's *Timon*: The War of Forms', in M. Antliff and S. W. Klein (eds.), *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, 2013, p. 17.

rejecting Romanticist humanist art to a form that related to the Classical aesthetic: To quote Hulme, to ‘translate the changing and limited into something unlimited and necessary’.³⁶⁴ Pursuing a critique on the relationship between society and the machine was not part of Hulme’s remit.

The transformative process is explained purely on anti-humanist grounds. The Romantic aesthetic of empathic pleasure is lost to a change in sensibility, which Hulme identified as ‘the precursor of a much wider change in philosophy and general outlook on the world’.³⁶⁵ Geometrical art, with its relationship to machinery was nothing but a symbol pointing to the reality of Hulme’s neoclassical world. This world relates back, and is projected forward, to a world where man is bound by the dogma of Original Sin, where ‘man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet appreciate perfection’, whereas, ‘no humanist can understand the dogma. They all chatter about matters which are in comparison with this, quite secondary notions- God, Freedom, and Immortality’.³⁶⁶

Hulme reviewed two of Lewis’s paintings exhibited at the London Group exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, and he criticized them on the grounds that ‘the whole sometimes lacks cohesion and unity’. He is referring to *Eisteddfod* and *Christopher Columbus* (1913-14); both paintings now lost and not reproduced. On abstraction Hulme stated that Lewis painted in a way that ‘one form springs out of the proceeding one as he works’, implying that Lewis was merely echoing the phase beyond analytical cubism.³⁶⁷ Lewis’s drawing *Enemy of the Stars* (1913), however, was singled out as quite remarkable but surprisingly Hulme did not make any further comment. This typically cubist figure’s strength lies in its complete absence of humanity. And yet one wonders whether Hulme was attracted to this image for its similarity to a drawing study for sculpture rather than a finished work. Hulme may have seen this drawing as closer to the qualities he so admired in Epstein’s work.

³⁶⁴ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art and Philosophy’, p. 283.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 285.

³⁶⁶ T. E. Hulme, ‘A Notebook’, in *The Collected Writings*, p. 456.

³⁶⁷ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art- III The London Group’, *The New Age*, 26 Mar.1914, p. 661.

Lewis and Roger Fry.

This section of my thesis looks at contemporary thinking in the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy in the British art milieu from 1910 to 1914. I look in some depth at the interactions between Fry and Bertrand Russell inquiring into what constitutes reality in our perception of the world, and how the artist can demonstrate this. The process critiques philosophical thought and questions the relevance to artists of incorporating theories of logic and perception in their practice. The general view has been that Lewis developed his thought from Continental sources, most notably from Nietzsche, and more disputably, from Bergson. While Nietzsche remains a major factor in Lewis's philosophical thinking, particularly in his approach to history through Classical mythology, I suggest that Lewis was drawn into the new British theories of knowledge centred on G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, although later in *Time and Western Man* he refuted this. As Cambridge theorists they were socially and philosophically linked with Bloomsbury and Roger Fry. Their challenge was to refute the accepted doctrine of Romanticism in Britain; questioning the principles of Idealism for a new philosophy, Realism. Russell usefully provides a critique of Bergson, which in the context of art was seen as a yardstick to contemporary thought. Russell dismissed his theory of time and space as 'indefinable'; a belief system rather than a predominantly empirical view of the world where a combination of the senses, logic and mathematical science interact.³⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Russell's analysis was useful, for example if compared with Hulme's analysis of intensive manifolds. Russell on Bergson stated:

It...(intuition)...apprehends a multiplicity of interpenetrating processes, not of spatially external bodies. There are in truth no *things*; "things and states are only views, taken by our mind, of becoming. There are no things, there are only actions." (*Creative Evolution*, p.261)....Intuition alone can understand this mingling of the past and the future: to the intellect they remain external, spatially external as it were, to one another. ³⁶⁹

Hulme interpreted Bergson as pure process. Only intuition describes change, not intellect that distorts reality, or perception. Creativity equals 'becoming'. Becoming is a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another. Russell countered this by stating: 'For Bergson

³⁶⁸ B. Russell, *The Philosophy of Bergson*, London, 1914. (Published for "The Heretics" by Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge, Macmillan, London).

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

change cannot be measured because it is always at any given point in space, motionless or static'.³⁷⁰ For Russell, perception of reality cannot rely purely on intuition or perception. He was a logician and a mathematical scientist. Together with Moore, he set out to show that the philosophy of Idealism, (and he includes Bergson as an Idealist), was out of touch with the modern world. Yet Bergson's theories of time and space continued to find favour with art theorists and critics such as Fry.

We can say with certainty that the philosophical theories of both Nietzsche and Bergson enter into Lewis's art. It is more difficult to pin down Lewis's attitude towards science during these critical years of 1910 to 1915. Science in the West was seen by some as progress, a progression in human knowledge leading to greater understanding of how humankind could be elevated to a position of supremacy. Yet many theorists had doubts, ranging from the eighteenth century cleric and Idealist George Berkeley, (1685-1753), who championed 'common sense' as the driving force over 'knowledge', to Bergson's analysis that science was a necessary factor in human evolution but not the overriding factor, to Nietzsche's prediction that science leads to disaster. Social theorists such as Sorel and Le Bon recognized science as a means to empowering the masses for good or for bad. Carlyle pinpointed the moral uncertainties of empirical science. Traditional religious values were being subsumed by science according to Le Bon. Within the Bloomsbury circle Fry, along with Bertrand Russell, mathematician and scientist, sought to define how the aesthetical qualities of artists could be theorised. Whereas Fry initially looked towards the senses to determine what constitutes aestheticism in art, Russell suggested that perception was not enough; *a priori* knowledge was also required for people to identify what exists in the real world.

For Fry the senses generate imaginative life providing the artist's vision. What lies outside the senses provides the design, or formal arrangement of the painter's image. Of the two, the latter provides the principal source of aesthetic enjoyment, a creative vision, the prerogative of the artist alone. The artist finds moral truth, not to be confused with morality, in the objects or forms that he

³⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 19.

describes, and a logical coherence in the relationship between these forms. Fry described examples of this creative vision among the early Italian painters, including Uccello and Signorelli. Of Uccello, ‘the design itself, the scaffolding of the architectonic structure, is really what counts’.³⁷¹ This chimes with Lewis’s selection of the Uccello *The Battle of San Romano* (circa 1450) (figure 13) in determining the structure for *Timon of Athens: Alcibaides* (1912) (figure 14) and extending this same structure into the more abstract works which followed on. As Fry explained, referring to followers of Cézanne in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, ‘They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life’.³⁷² Fry was attempting to apply the Russell ‘eye and eyeless’ formula to Cézanne. Russell’s theory, *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), suggests that the eye can only go so far in describing and understanding the world; ‘eyeless’ logic is also needed. Russell suggests, in *The Scientific Outlook* that in this respect Bergson falls down because visual images generated by intuition exclude ‘unseen’ mathematical continuity. Sense-data is real in identifying physical objects because, although people may see or perceive a table in different ways, shape, colour, etc., nevertheless they still identify a table. But people also need to be in possession of *a priori* knowledge, or knowledge by description, to know that the table is a real object that exists in the physical world. Thus objects exist independently of our perception or experience, unlike Idealist theory that reality is not physical but exists only in the mind, or in the mind of God.

The attitude towards science of both Lewis and Fry is ambivalent. Fry had a scientific background from his Cambridge days, and was in contact with Bertrand Russell, yet in engaging with art theory he came out on the side of emotion, as the primary driver in formulating a theory of modern art. Lewis, while professing to exclude emotion from his work, applied the vitalism of Bergson and Nietzsche to his art, but then claimed to override this attitude through his intellectual forcefulness. His avant-gardism rejected the imitative emphasis on humanism and nature in Romantic art, as did Fry, Hulme and Worringer. All agreed that the move towards a geometrical abstract art better represented modern society. In making abstract art, Lewis strove to exclude nature, and by ‘nature’

³⁷¹ R. Fry, ‘The Jacquemart-André Collection’ 1919, in *Vision and Design*, p. 134.

³⁷² R. Fry, ‘The French Impressions’, Catalogue of the 2nd Post-Impressionist Exhibition, Grafton galleries, 1912, in *Vision and Design*, p. 167.

he meant the Post-Renaissance attitude towards nature, an attitude where humankind's increasing understanding of the world through science had come to reject the mystery of Divine authority. But Lewis did not exclude science from his art. Vorticism encompassed modern life in industrial Britain, but reflected a changed sensibility towards life. This sensibility was expressed through art. To quote Lewis's fictional protagonist artist Tarr discussing art with Anastasia; 'Life is anything that could live and die. Art is peculiar; it is anything that lives and that yet you cannot imagine as dying'.³⁷³ Lewis's art shows the hard surface of life, what he terms its soul, not what lies underneath. When Anastasia includes in art 'Paleozoic matter, Dolomite, oil paint, and mathematics', Tarr replies 'Heavens! = I only believe in one thing, pleasure of taste. In that way you get back, though, with me, to mathematics and Paleozoic times, the coloured powders of the earth'.³⁷⁴ Science was there in his art but what counted was Lewis's intellectual aesthetic and the way the recipient of his art received it. How did this square with Hulme's ideology? By December 1915 Hulme favoured a philosophical model where the inorganic physical sciences were separated from the organic biological sciences, or nature, and religion and ethics were separated from both. Separating inorganic matter from organic life followed the pathways of Bergson and Nietzsche. Adding a third component, religion, created absolute divisions between the inorganic world, life, and religion. This final position allowed Hulme to refute Bergson's vitalism by excluding religion from life. In terms of Worringer, humanity expressed through nature produces empathic art, the mark of Renaissance art and the Western tradition thereafter. Geometrical art from, for example, Ancient Egyptians or from the Byzantines indicated a strong emphasis on a feeling for absolute values, and in the case of the latter a religious attitude of spiritual belief having no connection with nature. This attitude marked out by discontinuity can, according to Hulme, be seen in the modern world, represented through geometric form in the new art. There are similarities here between Hulme's analysis of modern art and Lewis's separation between life and art. Both look to geometric form to represent modern life. For Lewis, the image always became the 'object'. There was no split between 'object' and 'subject', no room for the 'eyeless'. Lewis claimed to follow the Idealism of Berkeley; an object remains an object, reality is exclusively determined in the mind. What we cannot

³⁷³ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 300.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 300.

see we determine through our memory. In effect, Lewis qualified this; in art he only recognized the objective real world as a 'dead' shell. He had no wish to bring the underlying pure science of matter that constitutes nature to life. Materialist science added up to mechanical 'deadness'. Lewis developed this notion twelve years later in *Time and Western Man*, but largely to counter the 'time philosophy' of Bergsonism. Lewis's art was exclusively the product of his intellect.

Fry became acquainted with Lewis after seeing, an oil painting that Lewis made as part of his remit in painting 'primitive' motifs as decoration in the 'Cave of the Golden Calf', a briefly modish West End nightclub. In 1912, Lewis was involved in decorating society hostess Frida Strindberg's nightclub with Hamilton, Gore, Ginner, Jacob Epstein and Eric Gill. The club, located in a basement in Heddon Street, off Regent Street, was decorated in the theme of Dionysian 'primitivism'. It was here that Lewis first hung his major work, a nine feet square oil painting, titled *Kermesse* (1912). Fry praised the painting when it was included in the Allied Artists' show in 1912. Lewis continued in the role of decorator, providing painted panels for the Countess of Drogheda's dining room at Wilton Place, completed in February 1914. The arrangement, mainly in the form of a frieze reflected the vitality of the *Kermesse* painting which Lewis's patron would have seen and admired. This frieze can be seen along the top of the black-painted walls (Fig. 2).

Kermesse, the dance of Dionysiac energy and excess, typified the interest among the avant-garde in Nietzschean inspired imagery. It is interesting to compare Lewis's treatment of Dionysian excess with that of his contemporary Duncan Grant. Both artists painted Dionysian dancers; Lewis with his *Kermesse* series of 1912, Grant with his painted screens for Omega, *Female Dancer*, and *Male Dancer*, both 1913-14. The influence of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* is present in these works by both artists, but Grant's work exemplified Bergson in its emotional excess. Lewis used Bergson's methodology, but arrested the emotional impact by representing himself as the intellectual artist in Apollonian guise responding to the violence of the drunken god, Dionysus. For Roger Fry, Grant's mentor, the emotional ideas emerging from both Bergson's intuitive temporality, and perhaps less

so from Nietzsche's Dionysiac excess, were of the most critical importance in achieving a new approach to art. Quoting Christopher Green;

Fry was met with cries of 'primitive' and 'uncivilized' from the critics in response to the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition. He replied to the critics by posing the question in *The Nation*, 19th Nov. 1910; 'why...should the artist wantonly throw away all the science with which the Renaissance and all the succeeding centuries have endowed mankind?' Because 'if art has to be rescued from the hopeless encumbrance of its own accumulation of science; if art is to regain its power to express emotional ideas'.³⁷⁵

Green explains that Fry saw the input of primitivism into modern art as the necessary expressive capacity to rescue art for civilized society. He goes on to describe how Fry encouraged the idea of the 'brutally primitive' in decorating Omega objects intended for the drawing rooms of the middle class. It is this aspect of their input into art that so irked Lewis. He might have compared his Dionysian painting *The Dancers* (1912) (Figure 1) against Grant's Dionysian *Female Dancer* (design of a painted screen) (1913-14), and seen his innovative art against Grant's 'debased' use of the imagery. Yet Lewis painted 'primitive' motifs as decoration at the Cave of the Golden Calf (1912), a commission important to Lewis for his work to be seen by London society.

Fry, art historian, curator, and art theorist, by 1912 was a prominent and influential figure within the milieu of the London art scene who went on to lead the Bloomsbury set of artists and intellectuals into establishing the Omega Workshops. Fry believed that the power of art generated 'emotional ideas', in keeping with Bergsonian theory. Lewis believed that his art was a manifestation of the artist's intelligence, reciprocating with the viewers' intellect. Fry considered that form in art was the supreme element that united artist and viewer to the highest level of aesthetic experience. The further the artist moved into abstraction, the further away from nature and the more self-contained within human consciousness the art became. (The viewer should recreate the art form into what Fry calls 'imaginative life', which is higher than nature in coming to terms with what the artist has represented). This builds on Bergson's theory that life exists in the dynamic interaction of the boundaries defined by spatial time, that is, between knowledge and intuition. Fry emphasized that the aesthetic resulting from art depended on all the senses; Lewis on the eye. Both men had in

³⁷⁵ C. Green, 'Expanding the Canon', in *Art made Modern, Roger Fry's Vision of Art*, 1999, p. 123.

common the belief that to appreciate creative art, the viewer (society) needed to have the intellectual capacity to appreciate it through their critical detachment. This, for Fry, was the mark of a 'civilized' nation. Fry also elevated 'primitive' art as a form that existed outside the constraints of spatial time, as a form developed by a society whose temporal sense related only to the natural world; he saw this as the highest form of art. Fry, initially, thought of Lewis as an artist making modernist paintings emphasizing form. By Fry's analysis, Lewis's work was underpinned by Bergson's thought. He considered this to be particularly apparent in the painting *Kermesse*, which Fry included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Lewis had spent much of his formative years as an artist in Paris and a Cubist influence persisted in his art into the 1920s. Cubism was an art form that chimed with Fry's search for innovative art that expressed form and rhythm, whereas Lewis saw Cubist art as primarily an object, and a dead object at that.

Both Lewis and Fry saw the need for art to be driven by some big belief outside art. In one of the few letters that Fry wrote to Lewis, he wants to talk over this idea of the 'big belief', 'I must talk it over with you. The situation of the artist becomes more and more hopelessly paradoxical the more one gets some idea of what art is'.³⁷⁶ The paradox revolved around the relationship between life, nature and religion. The pathway to Lewis's abstraction in art was to exclude nature, but found that nature could not be totally excluded from his work. Humankind's taming of nature, becoming as one with nature, was a basic tenet of Romanticism, leading to the idea that 'Man is God'. But as Daniel Schenker points out, Lewis in reducing people to machines displaces the 'human as divine' ideology, yet has to recognise that one 'cannot *not* be human, that throughout life one remains a prisoner of nature, culture and language'.³⁷⁷ Lewis's protagonist Arghol in *Enemy of the Stars* finds himself in this position.

"I am Arghol."

He repeated his name --like sinister word invented to launch a new Soap, in gigantic advertisement- toilet-necessary, he, to scrub the soul.

He had ventured in his solitude and failed. Arghol he had imagined left in

³⁷⁶ R. Fry, Letter dated 5th April, 1913, in *The Letters of Roger Fry* (ed.), Denys Sutton, London, 1972.

³⁷⁷ D. Scheckner, *Wyndham Lewis: Religion and Modernism*, 1992, pp. 12-13.

the city. --- Suddenly he had discovered Arghol who had followed him, in Hanp. (sic)
Always a deux!³⁷⁸

Arghol's fall is described in more detail in Chapter Four in the section 'truth through art'. Lewis, in order to emphasize his individuality, increasingly saw himself as an inspired poet-prophet or as a spiritual aristocrat. This largely accounts for his often high-handed and confrontational attitude towards the people around him. The redemptive power of the artist as 'spiritual aristocrat' links Lewis's thinking to Nietzsche and the Dionysian myth as an alternative to Christianity. Nietzsche's philosophical prediction of history repeating itself, a theory derived from Ancient Greek historical mythology, fits his model of modern life. By 1912 material life had changed and modernity must be seen as a reinterpretation of artistic and intellectual life.

Fry needed to encompass a philosophical underpinning to his *Essay in Aesthetics* (1907), which could explain the aesthetical impact of Post-Impressionism. In turn, Virginia Woolf later derived from this coming together of minds within the Bloomsbury Group, a philosophy of the novel that challenged the orthodoxy of for example, Arnold Bennett and G.K.Chesterton. Meanwhile, Lewis associated with the circle that included Sturge Moore, the poet and brother of G. E. Moore, Lawrence Binyon, poet and expert on Eastern Art, Pound, and later, Hulme, where the emphasis was on Imagist poetry, and its association with the intuitive time theory of Bergson. From 1910, Fry was firmly established in the Bloomsbury circle of the Stephen sisters, Virginia and Vanessa who was married to the art critic Clive Bell, their brother Adrian, and Leonard Woolf who married Virginia. The connection linking G. E. Moore, Russell, Leonard Woolf, Adrian Stephen, and Fry was that all were members of the Cambridge Apostles, an exclusive philosophical society. Other prominent Bloomsbury members and associates were the painter Duncan Grant (though Grant had no academic background), the economist John Maynard Keynes, and Lytton Strachey the writer and critic.

³⁷⁸ Wyndham Lewis, 'Enemy of the Stars', *Blast* 1, p. 80.

Moore, in 1910 was best known for his paper *The Refutation of Idealism* (1903). He sets out a relentlessly logical argument to refute the Idealist theory that reality exists inside our consciousness and that reality is spiritual. The famous example the Idealists used is that of the table and chairs; although these objects seem different from us, in a spiritual sense they are more like us than we think. Extending this example to the universe, it is different from what it seems and it has quite a large number of properties that it does not seem to have. The argument hinges on perception and stretches back to Berkeley, and his famous maxim, *esse est percipi*, 'being is perception'. This supposition directly contradicts the empiricist view that all knowledge derives from experience. F. H. Bradley (1846-1924), then a leading exponent of modern Idealism, placed reality within whatever is experienced through sensation, the power to feel things physically, or through thought, or mental reasoning. Moore proffered the example of the colour yellow; the Idealist belief that yellow and the sensation, or experience of the colour yellow, is a separate and different reality, yet both are yellow. His answer was that there is no way of knowing if they are separate and different. We know within our consciousness that yellow exists because it features as a material 'thing' in our mental colour chart, and that yellow differs from blue. Sensation of yellow also emanates from our consciousness, is not a 'thing' or object, and it cannot be proved that the sensation of yellow is identical or not to the colour yellow. We should really ask the question; what reason do we have for supposing that material things do *not* exist, since that must also be an inseparable aspect of our experience of it? Moore turned the argument around and substituted the universal reality of materialism. In effect he is saying that reality corresponds to common sense. Nevertheless, there is an argument that Moore and Russell 'shared' a philosophical language with Berkeley and Hume, a link established earlier by the philosophical writings of Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's father. To quote Ann Banfield: "The echoes of Stephen's texts in Russell are explicable by the common source in Berkeley, Hume and others, and establish a shared philosophical language, one that is "closer to home" for Woolf herself."³⁷⁹ In this respect there is a commonality with Lewis's relationship with Bergson in his art practice.

³⁷⁹ A. Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 39.

From Moore's logic, Russell went on to bridge the gap between knowledge derived from the senses, our consciousness, and scientific, material knowledge derived from empiricism. The crux of their debate was that there are two realities; one sensible, the other inaccessible to the senses but both real. The way to bridge this gap was through a combination of logical thought and mathematics, but this course does not negate the language of Idealism; 'Science is the interface between logic and the world, joining empirical and mathematical reality. Without sense-perception, there is no way out for the logical-philosopher; without logic, there is no knowledge beyond sensation'.³⁸⁰ Of the two men, Russell's methodology was more determined by science. While Moore relied on the common-sense approach to universal truth, Russell's contribution to the debate was seen by Bloomsbury as of more practical application to Modernism in fashioning an aesthetic applicable to Fry's analysis of modern art, and in providing the philosophical impetus to Woolf's developing style of the novel. Russell the physicist, mathematician and empiricist was drawn into the philosophical questions of the art world; defining aesthetics and beauty, and the boundaries between the two.

1910 was a critical year for British art with the impact of the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Banfield describes it as a change in society, a move from the dark to the light. These changes included ones in practical ethics and aesthetics. Fry developed some early thoughts on aesthetics in his collection of essays *Vision and Design* (1920). In *An Essay in Aesthetics* (1909), as he admits himself in its introduction, he was doing little more than codifying what artists do. He needed to underpin his analysis with a philosophical framework to uncover reality in art. The reality that Fry struggled with was in interpreting Cézanne's paintings, and the common link that Fry made with the new reality of Russell's philosophical investigations was that of the 'kitchen table'. The painted image of the table represents an object that is visible to the eye and yet is 'eyeless'. The genius of Cézanne's 'table' is that out of a single visual image he can project two realities uniting what the eye physically sees with knowledge of 'the table' that lay outside the senses.

³⁸⁰ A. Banfield, p. 24.

Fry set out to make the link between ‘eye’ and ‘eyeless’ in his analysis of ‘vision and design’, with the Cambridge Realists’ philosophy of the duality of ‘sense-data’. This concept comprises the empirical accumulation of knowledge perceived through our senses, and *a priori* knowledge, or truths that we know from logic and mathematics. Russell’s major work *The Problems of Philosophy* maintains that knowledge obtained through the senses; the eye, touch, smell, ear, and feelings, and from scientific truths, the material world, are all equally real: they combine to give us a world in which all objects are physical and real, unlike the Idealists’ world where reality is not physical but exists only in the mind. Fry’s observations of ‘eye’, and unobservable material or ‘eyeless’, appear to have a relationship with Russell’s ideas about the nature of reality. This relationship is a reciprocal one; art provides a practical input to the philosopher’s picture of the real world. In terms of colour, Russell ascribes the colour patch, or ‘appearance’, to matter made up of atoms that are colourless and outside our senses. We apply colour to brighten our vision of the world, but in science or matter, the building blocks -atoms of the physical world- are colourless. Our sense of colour makes the world tolerable and real. Here we have an example of ‘appearance’ or ‘acquaintance’ through our sensations combined with our scientific knowledge of the physical world. The atoms can be classified as remote objects where knowledge of them is gained by empirical science, although ultimately Russell thought they could be traced back to knowing by acquaintance. Together, objects known by direct contact and objects that fall within the same class as the direct object but are known only by description, form Russell’s theory of epistemology. Fry set out to apply Russell’s work to describe an epistemology of Modernism.

The problem that Fry identified with his investigation into what constitutes aestheticism is that all his analysis was centred on perceived knowledge of the mind derived from mental images. He defined pictorial unity as a sense of order in which ‘the forms being presented to us in such a sequence that each successive element is felt to have a fundamental and harmonious relation with that which preceded it’.³⁸¹ How does the artist achieve the arousal of our emotional needs? Emotions are generated by sensibility: the factors being rhythm of line, mass, space, light and

³⁸¹ R. Fry, ‘An Essay in Aesthetics’, 1909, in *Vision and Design*, 1923, p. 23.

shade, and colour. The eye perceives all. In the eyes of the beholder they constitute what Fry called 'imaginative life', a life higher than we might perceive from Nature. The artist depicts what he sees without applying levels of value; all is seen equally. Yet in elevating the image through his sensibility we have an added consciousness of purpose to be regarded and enjoyed, and this feeling is characteristic of the aesthetic judgement proper. In this Fry was close to Bergson;

Art is certainly only a more direct vision of reality. But this purity of perception implies a break with utilitarian convention, an innate and specially localised disinterestedness of sense or consciousness, in short, a certain immateriality of life, which is what has always been called idealism.³⁸²

Bergson saw the artist as revealing nature, but Fry's artist strives to perceive a life higher than nature. In effect, Bergson's art described the Impressionists; Fry looks to Cézanne and Post-Impressionism, or back in history to Byzantine art. Indeed, to quote Fry's definition of what makes Post-Impressionist art so different; 'They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life but to find an equivalent for life...in fact they aim not at illusion but at reality'.³⁸³ *An Essay in Aesthetics* is about the senses. Fry believed that Post-Impressionism has an additional quality. Virginia Woolf described this process: 'Then there was a moment of fusion, of comprehension...how was it done? By the union, it seems to me, of two different qualities, his reason and his sensibility'.³⁸⁴ By 'reason' Woolf meant Fry's Cambridge training in science and logic, knowledge underpinned by data and how to use this data. 'Sensibility' meant the artist *seeing* 'the emotional elements of design': rhythm of line, mass, space, light and shade, and colour. How did Fry translate Russell's epistemology to describe Cézanne's paintings? The 1910 exhibition caused an outcry amongst critics and public seeing Cézanne's imagery as clumsy and awkward. They failed to appreciate that his paint handling or 'hand-writing', expressed a new sensibility that reflected a reality totally lacking in the imitative art they were used to. Fry described this elevation of purpose; as 'a tendency towards the most simple and logical relations...simplicity becomes fully evident...feeling of gravity and solemnity...of these commonplace objects'.³⁸⁵ Above all, Cézanne's strength lay in his plastic materiality; the way he built up his construction with short parallel

³⁸² Bergson, *Laughter*, 1909, p. 157.

³⁸³ R. Fry, 'The French Impressions', in *Vision and Design*, p. 167.

³⁸⁴ V. Woolf, 'Collected Essays, IV', p.89. (quoted in *The Phantom Table*, p. 245).

³⁸⁵ R. Fry, *Cézanne: a study of his development*, London, 1927, p. 47.

hatchings to conciliate the firmness of the contour line of the object, giving to the forms the solidarity and weight described above. His handling of colour gives off a ravishing intensity and purity. His self-portraits, particularly the late ones, express the same inquiry in their build up as the still -life: 'he looks at his own head with precisely the same regard that he turned on an apple on the kitchen table'.³⁸⁶ With Cézanne's series of 'Bathers', the emphasis is upon volumes; parallelograms and pyramids and, quoting Fry, 'these forms are situated in the picture-space with that impressive definiteness, that imperturbable repose of which Cézanne had discovered the secret'.³⁸⁷ This 'secret' is the unity of Cézanne's sensibility with his inquiry into how form can express reality. The 'eye' and the 'eyeless' creating a pictorial unity that reflect a living reality. Fry applied the same logic to describe primitive African sculpture; 'the negro (artist) scores heavily by his willingness to reduce the limbs to a succession of ovoid masses sometimes scarcely longer than they are broad'.³⁸⁸ The 'living reality' common to Cézanne's bathers and to primitive African sculpture is a timeless geometry, a monumental stasis, a sense of strength reflecting the society in which they are centred.

Where did Lewis fit in the debate initiated by Fry to attach a philosophical underpinning to the aesthetic properties of Cézanne? Certainly he shared a common interest in non-Western art, in particular Chinese and Japanese art, which Lewis saw as having a tendency towards abstraction. What is less clear is Lewis's attitude towards the connections Fry was trying to make between the Post-Impressionists and the sense-data theory of Russell. On a Vorticist propaganda level, Lewis was very disparaging in his oblique reference to Bloomsbury from *Blast 1*, 'There is a violent boredom with that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable "intellectual" before anything coming from Paris, Cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many quarters'.³⁸⁹ There are references to Russell and the debate between the Idealists and the Cambridge Realists in *Time and Western Man*, but in this context the argument is very much skewed towards the dangers of Bergsonism as an invasive force within the political and social milieu of 1920s Britain. Lewis assumed the persona of 'The Enemy' as a critic trying to provoke debate, a detached outsider who

³⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 56.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 60.

³⁸⁸ R. Fry, 'Negro Sculpture' in *Vision and Design*, p.72.

³⁸⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto III, no.2', *Blast 1*, p. 34.

was quite prepared to change his position to maintain his immunity to outside influences. His principal opponent was Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), the Cambridge mathematician and philosopher who co-authored *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) with Russell. Lewis's critique centred on the relationship between the self and the world; a relationship that Lewis accused Whitehead of reducing to a purely organic one, a 'narrow' form of Realism which excludes the modern world: 'Machinery is the greatest Earth-medium, incidentally it sweeps away the doctrines of a narrow and pedantic Realism at one stroke'.³⁹⁰ Accusing him of being a 'time-cultist', Lewis regarded Whitehead's philosophical enquiries as a removal from the world of any form of 'concrete' objectivity. In *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead and Russell set out to describe the relationship between knowledge, perception and the material world, the latter as configured by physics. This work was followed by Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, which is described above, and brings together reality derived from the senses with 'eyeless' reality derived from scientific truths that describe the material world. Lewis accused Bergson of confusing the Subject and the Object; 'but Bergson is not the only culprit. Mr Russell himself is not entirely guiltless of such a confusion, if confusion it be'.³⁹¹ For Lewis, the eye and his intelligence was all important in determining reality; what he cannot physically see could be ascertained through his intelligence. Lewis's view of the world developed from his Vorticist practice and was reiterated ten years later in *Time and Western Man* is essentially 'the philosophy of the eye'.

That sensation of overwhelming *reality* which vision alone gives is the reality of 'common-sense', as it is the reality we inherit from pagan antiquity. And it is indeed on that 'reality' that I am basing all I say.³⁹²

Offering the table and chair example as object Lewis looked back to the Idealist Berkeley's theory of the mind. The Berkeleyan doctrine, ideally allows for no inference from other sources. Inference means non-perceptive 'verbal fictions' of the kind that, in Lewis's words, 'establish a competitive reality outside us: and the sign-world of mathematics, developing out of the abstraction of

³⁹⁰ Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto IV, no. 5', *Blast* 1, p. 39.

³⁹¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, 1927, P. Edwards (ed.), 1993, p. 381.

³⁹² *Ibid*, p. 392.

verbalism can only reinforce that process'.³⁹³ While accepting that this was an extreme position, Lewis offered Berkeley as the 'common-sense' approach to reality whereas Whitehead and Russell had obscured the 'concrete' object by turning it into a 'scientific' object and 'something abstract and mental'. The Berkeleyan 'common-sense' view is a picture; an ideal world containing both 'stable and substantial' objects that we see directly and believe what we are perceiving is what we are seeing. What we cannot see, we derive from our memory; an abstraction that together with direct 'concrete' knowledge of the object provides us with a picture. Lewis wrote of the world described by Bergson and Whitehead: 'the "organic" world of chronological mentalism...(where)...you lose not only the clearness of the outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them'.³⁹⁴ Lewis then made a jump in describing the world of Bergson, Whitehead, and includes Russell, as being in a state of flux: 'And it is this picture for which the cinematograph of the physics of "events" is to be substituted...(according to Mr Russell and other enthusiasts)'.³⁹⁵ Russell's 'eyeless' reality derived from scientific truths creates a *moving* cinematograph picture, and quoting Lewis; 'better described as Time-space than Space-time, since Time (in the bergsonian sense) is of its essence'.³⁹⁶ The substance of the world is in continuous process. There is no time to pause and contemplate. Out of this analysis, Lewis envisaged a flat world of successive images, and then made the analogy to his favourite dislike; music. 'A world of motion is a world of music, if anything'.³⁹⁷

The above quote could be linked with Lewis's other *bête noire*; Futurism. Sound constitutes the very foundation of Marinetti's aesthetic in his founding manifesto and subsequent lectures involving auditory experience, for example where Nevinson beats the drum at the Doré Gallery; rhythm representing speed and military might.³⁹⁸ In Boccioni's painting *The Street Enters the House* (1911), the pictorial movement from street to surrounding houses suggests the noises of the urban exterior

³⁹³ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 164.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p.167.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p.383.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, p.384.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. p.385.

³⁹⁸ Described by Lewis in *Blasting and Bombardiering*: 'So Mr. Nevinson concealed himself somewhere in the hall, and at a signal from Marinetti belaboured a gigantic drum'. p. 33.

taking on a visual representation, which rise to merge with the interior. In this depiction of visual culture, Futurism has appropriated Bergson's *durée* such that object and subject merge into one within the context of urban space. No longer can we anchor our perception to concrete things. The 'thinking Subject' became inseparable from, in Lewis's mind, a degraded Object, which by its entanglement precludes the mind from exercising any intellectual objectivity. In political terms rational thought is subsumed by musical noise presented as political slogans. Having in mind what he saw as the transformed 'object' as being at the heart of a 'futurist' picture, Lewis wrote:

'Dispersal and transformation of a space-phenomenon into a time-phenomenon throughout everything – that is the trick of this doctrine'.³⁹⁹ Lewis's critique of Bergson is in effect a mirror image of Bergson's theory of time and space. Bergson argues that mechanization, (the intellect), is insufficient to sustain the evolutionary process and that *durée* is the predominant factor for life. Lewis translated this into 'Romantic' time epitomizing the duration of the sensation of life; a label he applied to the Impressionists through to the Futurists.

Music stands for an empathic art, the art of the Post-Renaissance, but for Lewis music in the 1920s stood for Modernism and that vague, acoustic-driven lack of substance permeating the life and politics of Western Man. Lewis's analysis of what constitutes reality moves from Berkeley's Idealist stability of the world through perception, to what he sees as an over-emphasis on material scientific truths muddying the object by submerging the 'concrete' into abstraction, and finally introducing a continuity of the physics of 'events' that relieves us of needing to think about what constitutes reality. For Lewis, we become immersed into a world of musical flux. James Mansell's recent critique of Bergson supports Lewis's claim that Bergson, 'more than any other single figure was responsible for the main intellectual characteristics of the world we live in'.⁴⁰⁰ These 'intellectual characteristics' were in reality 'temporal' characteristics, epitomized by musical *durée* and were in effect anti-intellectual. To quote Mansell, 'Bergson's conceptualization of *durée* –and the sonic

³⁹⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 172.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 158.

examples he gave to illustrate it-were part of a self-consciously organicist and anti-intellectual account of perception and its representation in consciousness'.⁴⁰¹

It is difficult to remove the politics of 'musical flux' from Lewis's analysis of reality in *Time and Western Man* and find underneath the rhetoric a critique of modern art to compare with Fry. Lewis is so obsessed with the 'concrete' and the exclusion of any abstract scientific analysis that he can only offer a neo-Berkeleyan appeal to 'common-sense' perception to explain the reality of the external world. He concedes that 'some inferential or sign-world is necessary' but does not define it; merely suggesting that the Bergson/Whitehead world is an organic world where clarity of outline is lost both in what you apprehend and in one's own individuality. But this can only be construed as a political critique of 'Western Man'. Clarity of outline does describe Lewis's own art, but one could equally describe Cézanne's 'Bathers' in similar terms. The drawing *Indian Dance* from 1912 (Fig. 44) bears a close structural relationship with Cézanne's 'Bathers'. Lewis did not acknowledge any affinity because he ascribes to Cézanne's work no more than a furtherance of the Impressionists' addiction to Nature and organic art. Not that Lewis was averse to drawing on subjects from nature provided that there is something about these works that demonstrate clarity of outline. An example is the drawing *Abstract Bird* (1915) (Fig. 16), which has a strong Oriental influence about it. The general consensus amongst art critics in Britain at that time, such as Holmes, was that Oriental art was first and foremost a direct expression of nature. I argue that Lewis thought not. The attraction for him lay in the structural qualities of Oriental art and particularly Japanese print-making technique, where the absence of 'depth', the plastic qualities of surface imagery, the importance of line, the image as 'objectified' can all relate to Lewis's philosophy of the 'eye'.

Layering the past

Throughout this thesis I have set out to show how Lewis and his fellow modernists incorporated the past into their vision of what constitutes a modern critique of the world as they saw it. Unlike,

⁴⁰¹ James Mansell, 'Sound and the Cultural Politics of Time in the Avant-garde', in *Wyndham Lewis and the culture of modernity*, 2011, p. 115.

for example, the Pre-Raphaelites who appropriated the imagery of the early Italian artists as a means to depict a highly stylized version from the medieval world, modernists used the past to disrupt the conventions of the present. I argued that *The Crowd* is structurally close to Duccio's painting *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well*; that there are similarities in both artists' placing of a visually recognizable hierarchy within the picture space, a form of privileging, or ordering, appropriate to the early Italian painters. In Lewis's painting such indexical methodology acts in a destabilizing way to disrupt the picture space. And yet within these two pictures a continuity of transformation takes place. Duccio placed the biblical scene in a European setting complete with medieval city walls. Lewis transformed his architecture to the modern city arranged in semi-abstract form. Both artists dismissed chronologies with their respective interpenetrations of images within their environments. *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades'* spatial and temporal intersections drew heavily from Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano*, (about 1450). Art historians such as Worringer cast new light on how attitudes towards humanity in pre and post medieval ages could be related to contemporary society. Examples of literary Modernism such as Pound's *Cantos* drew upon medieval poets Villon and Guido Cavalcanti as an interventionist technique to disrupt the time-logic of language. Similarly, we find in *Cantos 1* (1922) the use of Anglo-Saxon rhythmic chant, whereas the framework of the poem follows the Greek myth Ulysses. Here again, Pound took an Italian Renaissance Latin translation of Homer's *The Book of the Dead* to make a link with yet another historical period.

This thesis traces Pound's relationship with Lewis and the difficulties he experienced in abandoning the rhythm of temporal perception in art with its relationship to the musical 'ear'. I highlight their respective contributions to *Blast 1* to illustrate the gap between the two protagonists in understanding the Vorticist aesthetic. What Pound gained from Vorticism was the 'machinery' of the 'vortex' where energy and ideas are concentrated. I closely examine Lewis's artworks how this 'machinery' generates through form the dynamics of Modernism; how he uses historical layering and pre-Renaissance art techniques to describe contemporary life. Pound evolves a prose form of

Vorticism in reaching back and incorporating fragmented references from history and from Oriental culture to present a view of the world where contemporary life can be engaged.

An indication of what is to come is to be found in Pound's article, *Affirmations*, writing about the creative fusion of the 'unexplored arts and facts... pouring into the vortex of London', with the 'machine age' of 1915:

They cannot help but bring about changes as great as the Renaissance changes, even if we set ourselves blindly against it. As it is there is life in the fusion. The complete man must have more interest in things which are in seed and dynamic than in things which are dead, dying, static'.⁴⁰²

Pound attempts to define 'things which are in seed and dynamic'. He draws his model from early Renaissance literature, the input of Lorenzo Valla for 'exactness' of language, the universality of Pico della Mirandola in drawing from Arab and Hebrew knowledge, and the clarity of Machiavelli. His twentieth century equivalents included the Orientalist Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) whose work on Chinese poetry and Japanese Noh drama, Pound described as the 'finds in China and Japan'. (Pound had worked on the late Fenollosa's research papers). Also prominent are Maddox Hueffer (Ford) for his 'conversational' style of prose 'out of Flaubert and Turgenev and Stendhal', and from contemporary art Lewis, Wadsworth, Gaudier and Epstein are deemed to be in the vanguard. The art equivalent to precision in language is something similar; a directness and intensity yet allowing for the 'individual impulse'. Described under the heading 'primary pigment', Pound fell back on machinery as being at the heart of the new art, but he could be accused of using machinery as a cliché himself in comparing the enjoyment of machinery in the present decade to the 'enjoyment of nature for its own sake' in the Renaissance. Hulme was reticent about using machinery as a life-changer. He was more interested in drawing from the archaic period of primitive art to redefine a modern method of expression. This is how Hulme described Epstein's drawing of a pregnant woman⁴⁰³. Hulme avoided the mechanical in his reviews of Epstein; most conspicuous by its absence in his writing was the statue *Rock Drill*. Lewis's Cubist-inspired figures

⁴⁰² E. Pound, 'Affirmations VI', *The New Age*, 11 Feb. 1915, p. 411

⁴⁰³ illustrated in *Blast 1*, p.xv.

have mechanical qualities but as Alan Munton points out: 'Representation of mechanism was not an end for Lewis, who was much more concerned to explore the psychological relation between figures within the work, and the audience's response before it, as he was interested in this simplified modernist motive'.⁴⁰⁴

Writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, Pound made the connection between the visual arts of Vorticism and Imagist poetry in his September 1914 article 'Vorticism'.⁴⁰⁵ Imagist poetry was conceived to overcome what modernists regarded as the limitations of lyrical poetry to transcend language. With Imagism, the poet used an image 'because he sees or feels it'. The Imagist poet approached his subject 'directly' through the paring down of words to only the essential, whereas the lyricist used words to 'dress-up' the subject. In Vorticist art, the artist used colour 'because he sees or feels it'. Here Pound brings in the analogy of 'the primary pigment', which he first used to describe the Vorticist's expressive ideology in his polemical writing, 'Vortex' in *Blast 1*.⁴⁰⁶ The image is the poet's pigment, 'the most highly energized statement', the repository where ideas are constantly rushing; the vortex where intensive art is centred. Vorticist art employs colour *and* form; form that is derived from the past to energize the present. Pound proceeds on to equate form with great art: 'Great works of art... cause form to come into being'.⁴⁰⁷ Humphreys emphasizes this: 'He liked linearity and a sense of "clarity". "Carvings" might be the best word to describe this preference and could encompass a painting by Uccello or Wyndham Lewis, sculpture by Agosti or Brancusi, a building by Alberti or Sant'Elia'.⁴⁰⁸ Vorticist form employed analytical geometry not for its mathematical value, but for its universality in relating to life. In Imagist poetry the image speaks; the form from the past related to the present. In one example Pound drew from his work on Fenollosa's research papers; employing the Japanese form of *hokku* where 'one idea set on top of another'.⁴⁰⁹ Lewis did something similar in deriving form from historical sources, for example, the form he derived from

⁴⁰⁴ A. Munton, 'Abstraction, Anarchism and the Future', in *T E Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, 2006, p. 77.

⁴⁰⁵ E. Pound, 'Vorticism', *Fortnightly Review*, 1st Sept. 1914, pp.461- 471. (Reproduced in *Ezra Pound and the visual arts*, (ed.), H. Zinnes, New York, 1980, pp. 199- 209).

⁴⁰⁶ E. Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast 1*, July 1914, p. 153.

⁴⁰⁷ E. Pound, 'Vorticism' in *Ezra Pound and the visual arts*, p. 207.

⁴⁰⁸ R. Humphreys, *Pound's Artists: : Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy*, 1985, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*, to apply in *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades*. Pound described Lewis's painting as 'nearly always emotional', a much used, but ambiguous term in art criticism. Lewis would not agree, linking 'emotion' with 'flux' and Bergson. Pound still equated Vorticism with intuition and musical rhythm; an evolution going back to Whistler and more recently to Kandinsky. He had not at that stage assimilated Lewis's emphasis on the eye in respect of form. By January 1915, Pound began to understand that the eye was the driving force of Lewis's aesthetic. To quote Pound: 'I have my new and swift perception of forms... There are new ways of seeing them'.⁴¹⁰ But he found it difficult to exclude the musical conception of form: 'This organisation of form and colour is; just as a musical arrangement of notes by Mozart is expression... The musical conception of form... as a musician uses form'⁴¹¹. Kandinsky was considered, admittedly on little evidence, the lesser artist than Lewis, but it is clear that Pound linked the two artists through musical "expression". Pound still employed this concept of equating form and combination of forms with emotion in 1919 when describing Lewis's war painting *To Wipe Out* at the Goupil gallery as 'here the purely optical effects of shell-burst and of battle are fused with emotional expression'.⁴¹² This suggests a latent belief in the Symbolism influenced by W. B. Yeats' *The Symbolism of Poetry*. To quote Yeats, 'All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions'.⁴¹³

The problem that Pound faced in his quest to equate Vorticism with form in poetry was to break out of the limitation of the two-line juxtaposition of Imagism: to extend the format to a long poem breaks down the concept of meaningful relationships for the reader. While the two lines, or phrase format, drawn from totally different historical moments in time affect meaning when placed side-by-side, the use of a multiplicity of phrases from across history creates chaos. *The Cantos*, Pound's epic poem written between 1915 and 1959, and particularly the Early Cantos, I to XII, are structured, with their emphasis on abrupt changes in direction, to achieve such meaning. As in Vorticism, chaos is a necessary ingredient. Pound envisaged his epic poem as a form of history

⁴¹⁰ E. Pound, 'Affirmations-II', *The New Age*, 14th Jan. 1915, p. 278.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p. 278.

⁴¹² E. Pound, 'Art Notes', (by B.H.Dias), *The New Age*, 20th Feb. 1919, p. 264.

⁴¹³ W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, London (1991), pp. 156-157.

itself, outside the text, codifying the world into a form or pattern, but this created problems in making sense out of disconnected images where historical sequence is absent. Pound applied his concept of ‘the primary pigment’ to the early *Cantos*: ‘The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX’.⁴¹⁴ Pound set out to fashion the epic poem as a number of cultural vortices. To quote Daniel Albright;

The notion of a whirl of ideas fining themselves down, focusing on some central point, seems more useful to an epic poet than the notion of an interminable gallery of terse and disconnected images- pattern-units in the absence of a pattern.⁴¹⁵

‘Pattern-units’ become critical vocabulary for Pound’s form of Vorticism. To quote Ronald Bush, ‘“pattern-unit” had certain overtones that could be explained only by its derivation from Lewis and Wadsworth. A “pattern-unit” was a well-formed entity possessed of the hard, geometric beauty of twentieth century graphics’.⁴¹⁶ The term was first used by Pound in ‘Affirmations IV’ to describe Vorticist form: as ‘so simple that one can bear having it repeated several or many times. When it becomes so complex that repetition would be useless, then it is a picture, an “arrangement of forms”’.⁴¹⁷ This combination of repetition of simple geometric forms with sheer compacted energy is typical of works such as Lewis’s *Timon of Athens* portfolio, which Pound singled out, and Wadsworth’s *War Engine* (Fig. 45) reproduced in *Blast 2*. The Vorticist artist conjured up a place of frantic cultural activity, of chaos and creativity, with the threat of violence always looming as typified by Lewis’s manifesto, ‘WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel it’s crude energy flowing through us’.⁴¹⁸ Pound recognised that the form of his epic poem drawn from disparate historical images held similar characteristics if viewed in its entirety. Furthermore, Pound in his fascination with the Renaissance tried to fashion a connection between that period of history and present day London. The key was the notion of the city-state applying to both centres through what Pound perceived to be similar tension between creativity and violence. Thus these early

⁴¹⁴ E. Pound, ‘Vorticism’, in *Fortnightly Review*, p. 207.

⁴¹⁵ D. Albright, ‘Early Cantos, I-XII’, in *The Cambridge companion to Ezra Pound*, ed., Ira B. Nadel, Cambridge, 1999, p. 60.

⁴¹⁶ R. Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound’s Cantos*, Princeton, 1976, p. 45.

⁴¹⁷ E. Pound, ‘Affirmations -IV, As for Imagisme’, *The New Age*, 28th Jan. 1915, p. 349.

⁴¹⁸ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Long Live the Vortex’, *Blast 1*, Introduction.

Cantos’ depends upon the image or concept of the vortex itself.⁴¹⁹ The reader is left to complete the loop.

How close to Lewis’s visual imagery was Pound in tackling *The Cantos*? As mentioned above, by 1915 Pound began to recognise that Lewis’s art practice primarily rested on ‘seeing’ and not through ‘feeling for’ the image. Lewis went further; he discriminated as to how he saw form and in discussing earlier in this chapter his two paintings reproduced in *Blast* 1, *Plan of War*, and *Slow Attack* (1913-14), it becomes clear that Lewis’s developing ideology of the eye singled out where the heart of the Vorticist activity is located on the picture plane. The challenge for Pound was to transpose Lewis’s Vorticist activity into the structure of the poem while leaving room for the reader to make cultural connections. Pound set out to achieve this by positioning the reader into history. The reader is made to feel almost a participant in an event, albeit with fragments of information to go on; to draw inferences from what is presented by the poet as juxtaposed fragments within a chaotic and confusing narrative, which nevertheless forms a pattern of history itself. The reader is a participant in the process and not merely a receiver of prose. Furthermore, because the reader does not lose sight of the present, the present remains part of the overall pattern of history; a codifying of the world that lies outside the text of the poem. Pound was echoing Lewis’s polemic ‘We only want the world to live’ and re-emphasizing the opening lines of ‘Long Live the Vortex’: ‘We stand for the Reality of the Present- not the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past.’⁴²⁰ Pound’s ‘radiant nodes or clusters’, or pattern-units, that form his vortices are just such juxtaposed fragments from history. They create for the reader the excitement, chaos, violence, cultural heights and dissipation that Lewis similarly claimed for Vorticism.

After what Pound regarded as a false start with *Cantos I-III* from 1917 known as the *Ur Cantos*, Pound started again to write his epic poem in 1922. *Canto 1*, on the face of it begins with a straight rewriting of Book XI of the *Odyssey*. Pound then introduced a Renaissance Latin translation of ‘The

⁴¹⁹ R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, 1985, p. 198.

⁴²⁰ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Long Live the Vortex’, *Blast* 1.

Book of the Dead', the Nekuia, by Andreas Divus Justinopolitanus. Divus becomes part of the poem's narrative;

Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,

In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.

In keeping with Divus, Pound went on to introduce a fragment of Latin, 'Cypri munimenta sortita est', (the citadels of Cyprus are her destined home), referring to Aphrodite 'Bearing the golden bough of Argicida'. In introducing a Vorticist structure into the poem he was already shaping an arrangement of forms that generate meaning outside the text. Like Eliot's *The Waste Land, Canto I* reflects the carnage of war, ostensibly the Trojan War, but a relationship can be discerned with the carnage of World War 1: like a Good Soldier looking at a comrade. There is a feeling that we have been here before;

Unburied, cast on the wide earth,

Limbs that we left in the house of Circe,

Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged other.

Pitiful spirit.

The goddess Circe has an affinity with the natural world. Why is she in the poem? Pound sought to evoke a different experience of the world. All the imagery here is of sacrifice. The reader is not losing sight of the present. The present has become part of history; part of a pattern. Pound identified himself with Odysseus but at the same time with Joyce and Eliot. A kind of fraternity is being made here. The style of delivery is direct and to the point. It is getting away from all the extravagance of the Romantic poets. For example, take the way that Pound described nature;

Covered with close-webbed mist, unpierced ever

With glitter of sun-rays

Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven

Swartest night stretched over wretched men there.

The poem's structure is hard-edged; not like Wordsworth, by its refusal of rhythm on line ending and in its internal stresses. Then the metre itself: the poem reads like Anglo-Saxon verse using words such as 'ell-square Pitkin' (little pit) or 'that swart ship' (that black ship) yet communicating a

pre-Christian activity. Examine the start of the poem and its ending. It starts ‘and then’ and ends ‘so that’; it starts in the middle of things and the suggestion is that the narrative has to be rearranged. Pound was trying to purify the English language. His model for starting in the middle is Dante’s *La Divina Commedia*. What appears to be a relatively straight rendering of Book XI of the *Odyssey* turns into an overlaying of the ages from Greek myth, to Renaissance Latin, to the twentieth century, in the form of Anglo-Saxon heroic verse. All these ‘pattern-units’ from history come forth in a whirl of ideas; a ‘vortex’, bringing together a view of the world in which the arrangement of form itself tells the story.

We are left to glean what Lewis thought of Pound’s efforts to move Vorticism into poetry through comments he made much later. Their correspondence over the period from 1915 to 1917 was largely characterized by a generous and helpful Pound acting as Lewis’s agent in trying to influence publishers and to raise money on Lewis’s behalf through art sales. Potential art sales centred on the American collector, John Quinn, and Pound’s efforts to arrange, through Quinn, a Vorticist exhibition in New York.⁴²¹ In later writing, Lewis tended to play down Vorticism and be less than generous towards the literary achievements of Pound, Eliot and Joyce as early Modernists. In 1950 Lewis wrote of the time following *Blast*:

My literary contemporaries I looked upon as too bookish and not keeping pace with the visual revolution. A kind of play, *The Enemy of the Stars* was my attempt to show them the way. It became evident to me at once, however, that words and syntax were not susceptible of transformation into abstract terms, to which process the visual arts lent themselves quite readily.⁴²²

Lewis appeared to have not appreciated the significance of Pound’s achievement in treating the structure of *The Cantos* in a similar way to his Vorticist visual art. It was in Pound’s application to his poetry of the vortex, or to be more accurate, multiple vortices that the connections were made. In excluding time value, Pound, by juxtaposing the medieval against the present, aimed to transcend historical limits and encompass all times. As Frank argues, ‘past and present are seen spatially, locked in timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any

⁴²¹ T. Materer, ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, 1985.

⁴²² Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, 1950, p. 129.

feeling of historical sequence by the very act of juxtaposition'.⁴²³ Spatial form is taking precedence over time so that depth is eliminated when historical time sequence no longer obtains. As with Lewis's *Plan of War* and *Slow Attack*, Pound's structure of juxtaposed history creates an alliance between dynamic content and visual form to generate energy just as immediate to the reader as Lewis's Vorticist imagery is to the discerning viewer.

Like Lewis, Pound drew on the arts of Renaissance Italy and medieval history. For Pound, the Provençal poetry of Cavalcanti, the intellectual clarity of Aquinas and Dante, the painters Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca come to the fore. But 'medieval' could be stretched to include the world of the ancient Mediterranean. Pound looked back to the Italian nobleman, the *condottiero* or mercenary warlord, Lord of Rimini, Sigismundo Malatesta (1417-1468). Malatesta occupies the *Cantos 8-11* as a reference to both creativity and violence; creativity in his sponsorship of the Tempio Malatestiara in Rimini, a landmark Renaissance building incorporating work by Piero della Francesca and the sculptor, Agostino di Duccio; violence in his domestic behaviour and as an aggressor in interminable wars between city states. Pound saw a parallel between the 'energy, creativity, but also instability and tendency to dissipate' of the Italian city-states and the Vorticist environment of 1914 London.⁴²⁴ Just as the Vorticism of *Blast 1* is seen as a high point in British culture, so Pound found its parallel is the high Renaissance.

In reality any direct comparison between the Italian Renaissance and modern times lacks credibility. Social conditions were incomparable between the two ages. In visual art the modernist artist has no parallel aesthetic with the Renaissance master and studio system, with an utterly different mode of patronage and finance for the arts. The respective artists represent completely different worlds. Lewis realised this; Pound perhaps less so. Pound the art critic modelled himself on Marinetti and Apollinaire in showing the way to bring Vorticism to the notice of the public. The problem is that

⁴²³ J. Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', *The Sewanee Review*, (53), no.3, p. 553.

⁴²⁴ R. W. Dasenbrock, *The literary vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: towards the condition of painting*, p. 198.

Pound's version of Vorticism was not quite the same as Lewis's version, which is closer to Hulme's. Pound in his admiration for the Renaissance was supporting its emerging ideology of Christian humanism and its association with nature. Although Lewis uses medievalism as structure, he avoids any form of eulogy for its aesthetic. To quote Lewis:

We 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.

The Past and Future are the prostitutes Nature has provided.

Art is periodic escapes from the Brothel.⁴²⁵

For Lewis, art transcends life. We cannot avoid past history but 'our Vortex' rises above the considerations of history; 'the chemistry of the Present is different to that of the Past. With this different chemistry we produce a New Living Abstraction'.⁴²⁶ Pound's Vortex is much more universal in its application through the 'thing' that he terms 'The Primary Pigment'. Quoting Pound:

The DESIGN of the future in the grip of the human vortex. All the past that is vital, all
the past which is capable of living into the future, is pregnant in the vortex, Now.⁴²⁷

Tradition was an important element in Pound's poetry whereas Lewis dismissed the past as unavoidable in life but not conducive to producing a new way of seeing. Lewis was being polemical here, in keeping with the tone of *Blast 1* when in reality Lewis drew on history as part of his practice.

The crucial element that unites Lewis and Pound's versions of Vorticism is that both layer and re-image the past. In a letter to Joyce, Pound wrote; 'I have begun an endless poem, of no known category. Phanopoeia or something or other, all about everything...I wonder what you will make of it. Probably too sprawling and unmusical to find favour in your ears. Will try to get some melody in it later'.⁴²⁸ Pound drew upon from a whole range of history. He has his preferences; medieval poets,

⁴²⁵ Wyndham Lewis, 'Our Vortex', *Blast 1*, p. 148.

⁴²⁶ Ibid, p. 147.

⁴²⁷ E. Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast 1*, p. 153.

⁴²⁸ E. Pound, Letter to James Joyce in *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, New Directions Publishing. 1954. pp. 25- 26. Pound defines Phanopoeia as 'a casting of images upon the visual imagination...In Phanopoeia we find the greatest drive towards the utter precision of word; this art exists almost exclusively by it.'

Japanese 'Noh' plays, Chaucer, Ancient Greece, troubadours, the Renaissance with, in Pound's words, 'its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion, and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time'. Lewis's use of history was more discerning, more pointed, more disguised. What they have in common is that their respective use of history was disruptive. They sought to interrupt the progress of history. Chronology was discarded.

Dasenbrock makes the case for Pound the publicist; that Pound wrote of the visual arts primarily because he realised that, unlike modern poetry, the public noticed modern art.⁴²⁹ This was not entirely the case following the publicity generated by the arrival of avant-garde Continental art into Britain. The publicity generated by the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition organized by Fry and the Futurist exhibition of 1912 gave avant-garde art notoriety amongst the general public, but there was little public market for modern art in Britain. Nevertheless, there were patrons of poetry, for example, Edward Marsh, civil servant, Cambridge Apostle, and associate of the Bloomsbury Group, some of whom, such as Maynard Keynes, and Marsh, also became collectors of contemporary modern art. What Pound really wanted was patronage, and Dasenbrock in linking Pound's vision of the Renaissance and the patronage of Sigismundo Malatesta with his quest for support for modernist arts, sees a linkage between art and poetry. Apart from finding Quinn, the quest for patronage was unsuccessful but an important outcome was that Pound turned his attention to addressing the problem through the *Cantos*. The *Malatesto Cantos* VIII-XII presents the problem but provides no strategy in relation to modern art. Pound later goes on to politicise the patronage of modern art through his growing admiration for Fascist Italy in the 1920/30s.

Herbert N. Schneidau regards Pound as the saviour of Vorticism by injecting into his poetry a strong element of tradition; 'The infusion of this conservative habit into Vorticism saved it, and perhaps the modernist tradition as a whole, from rootless nihilism and the sentimentalizing of a

⁴²⁹ R. W. Dasenbrock, 'Pound and the Visual Arts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (ed.), Nadel, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 224-233.

Robert Browning's epic poem 'Sordello' (1840) and the following opening passage is typical of Pound's approach:

Hang it all, there can be but one Sordello:
 But say I want to, say I take your whole bag
 of tricks,
 Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say the
 thing's an art-form,
 Your Sordello, and that the modern world
 Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in;
 Say that I dump my catch, shiny and silvery
 As fresh sardines flapping and slipping on the
 marginal cobbles?
 (I stand before the booth, the speech; but the
 truth
 Is inside this discourse- this booth is full
 of the marrow of (wisdom.)
 Give up th' intaglio method.⁴³⁴

It is clear from this short extract that Pound, the narrator, is the controlling force, a puppet-master bringing his individuality into play. Pound, like Lewis, placed himself at the centre of the vortex, drawing references from art and literature, bringing in snatches from Catullus and el Cid, mixed in with memories of his 1908 trip to Venice. Pound, in attempting to echo Hulme's argument in support of Epstein's Flenite sculpture as the model for modern art looked to the past, to the 'djinn's': 'It is by them that we have ruled and shall rule...the aristocracy of the arts is ready again for its service'.⁴³⁵ Like Lewis, Pound saw himself as part of 'the aristocracy of the arts'. Hulme drew on the past to accentuate the present and by doing so transcended historical limits to encompass all time. Pound sought to achieve the same result through the *Cantos*. Having arrived at his 'form-motif' from 'the primary pigment', Pound applied the concept to the epic poem. To quote Pound from January 1915, 'It is possible that the search for form-motif will lead us to some synthesis of

⁴³⁴ E. Pound, 'Three Cantos', *Poetry*, June, 1917, Vol. X, No. III.

⁴³⁵ E. Pound, 'The Serious Artist', *The Egoist*, 16th Feb. 1914, p. 68.

modern life comparable with the synthesis of oriental life which we find in Chinese and Japanese painting'.⁴³⁶ In keeping with Vorticist practice, Pound chose Robert Browning's epic poem *Sordello*, an obscure subject from history; to quote Albright on Browning's poem, '*Sordello* soon became a byword for gnarled and wilful obscurity.'⁴³⁷ *Sordello* was a thirteenth century troubadour who eloped with a nobleman's wife. Similarly, Lewis chose to illustrate *Timon of Athens*, one of Shakespeare's less well-known plays. Even by 1915 there were differences in interpretation of what constituted Vorticism between Lewis and Pound in how for example they assimilated past history into the Vorticist concept. Pound was much more 'immediate' and less discriminating than Lewis; more prepared to adopt the 'scatter-gun' approach. Lewis was much more considered and selective.

Our Vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten it's (sic) existence (Lewis, *Blast 1*, 'Our Vortex', p.147).

All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live (Pound, *Blast 1*, 'Vortex', p. 153).

Lewis the Vorticist controls the flow of energy at the silent centre of the vortex, whereas Pound, to quote Lewis: the 'Demon pantechnicon driver, busy with old world into new quarters. In his steel net of impeccable technique, he has lately caught Li Po. Energy of a discriminating Element'.⁴³⁸ Helen Carr writes: 'It was a description that delighted Pound'.⁴³⁹ It neatly encapsulated his boundless energy.

⁴³⁶ E. Pound, 'Affirmations-II', *The New Age*, 14th Jan, 1915, p. 278.

⁴³⁷ D. Albright, p. 62.

⁴³⁸ Wyndham Lewis, 'American Art', *Blast 2*, p. 82.

⁴³⁹ H. Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD, and the Imagists*, London, 2009, p. 715.

Chapter Four: Cultural Exchange

The Appropriation of History, 188-194

Lewis and Culture, 194-201

Medievalism and the Byzantines, 201-206

The Archaeological Effect: Nietzsche and Greek Mythology, 206-211

Truth through Art: Lewis's Nietzschean Approach, 211-219

Religious Culture, 219-227

Lewis and Bloomsbury, 227-236

Art culture from the Orient, 236-245

The Appropriation of History

The Crusades, chivalry and medieval spirituality and mythology provided rich, protean sources of images, tropes and narrative motifs for people to give meaning to the legacy of the Great War.⁴⁴⁰

The above quoted from Goebel's *The Great War and Medieval Memory* related to remembrance in the form of war memorials. In 1920 Britain, medievalism was seen as a way to anaesthetize the trauma of machine-age warfare. Vorticists saw it as a way of drawing from the past to understand the present. The Victorian age romanticized the Medieval in art and literature. Modern art scorned the Romantic, but continued to be influenced by the past. In this chapter I set out to demonstrate that Lewis, like the majority of avant-garde artists of his day, drew from history. His individuality sought out historical reference points, for example perceiving the Elizabethan era as a watershed for the power a monarch exercised over that of the State. In modern times, Lewis's ideal social model stems from Proudhon's 'small man'. Like Eliot, Lewis draws on anthropological antecedents to explain Western society. The fragmentation of society through the erosion of ritual, customs, and values could be understood through anthropology. The late nineteenth century was an era of

⁴⁴⁰ S. Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: war, remembrance and medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940*, Cambridge, 2007, p.1.

cultural inquiry where, for example, Frazer's exposition of ritual and magic in *The Golden Bough* was taken up by Harrison's theories surrounding Dionysian myth, death and rebirth. I will link Cathy Gere's account in *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, (2000), of Sir Arthur Evans turn-of-the twentieth century archaeological findings with her proposition that Evans activities on Crete turned the Bronze Age into the pre-history of Modernity. The Dionysian myth from *The Birth of Tragedy* exemplifies Nietzsche's dilemma for society in attaining 'the will to truth'. Lewis was much occupied by this subject during his Vorticist period. In art, he followed the principle that the Nietzschean artist made good Art whose permanence transcended Death. In literature I argue how Lewis's Nietzsche-inspired *Enemy of the Stars* and the novel *Tarr* attempted to mirror his Vorticist aspirations.

Lewis and the Vorticists drew on the geometrical form of Byzantine and Early Italian art as an indicator of machine-age society. Pound widened the field and drew on a broad swathe of Mediterranean art and history from the Ancient Greeks to the Renaissance because he was entranced by these societies and continued to be throughout his life. Medievalism can be seen predominantly as a form of 'cultural memory' that entered the consciousness as a mix of spirituality and myth. Lewis, always the individualist was much more precise in using the early Italian Gothic painters' methodology and formal visual arrangement as a template for his art. Although Pound accepted that he was 'a ragbag of sounds and citations', (quite the opposite of Lewis), and this was clearly the case in the early *Cantos*, his use of the Vorticist structure in the *Cantos* was just as valid as Lewis's structural approach to, for example, *The Crowd*, or his more abstract paintings *Plan of War* and *Slow Attack* (1913-14), both reproduced in the first issue of *Blast*.

Ronald Bush singles out the *Timon* portfolio as the connecting structure for the early *Cantos*;

Images that function in a long poem like the "forms in combination" in Lewis's *Timon* could be developed without obscuring their individual impact. Because such images would be designed to make a pattern of their own when repeated "in combination", they would have no further need of an imposed narrative structure⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ R. Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, 1976, p. 48.

He goes on to state that ‘they... (forms, or images, “in combination”)... possessed a very *Timon*-like “sense of dynamics”, an inexorable movement towards a receding center’.⁴⁴² Looking at the main ‘narrative’ drawings in the *Timon* series; *Act 1* (Fig.29), *Alcibiades* (Fig. 14) and *Composition* (Fig.28), the energy generated by Lewis’s visual form is directed towards the centre of the picture plane, the still centre of the vortex. While each image is an amalgam of geometric shapes and Cubist figures locked together to form a highly dynamic, and in some cases almost abstract arrangement, the ‘story’ of Timon’s struggle and downfall can be ‘read’ from their combination of form and energy. Converging forces towards the ‘receding centre’ is prevalent in *Act 1, The Creditors* (Fig.46) and *Composition*. In *Alcibiades* the directional forces while compacting in the centre, from the screaming figure of Timon on the right and Alcibiades’ army and mistresses moving from the left to right, results in emphasising the strength of the mighty general. The eye is drawn to Alcibiades standing in the centre of the drawing, the epitome of a Uccello composition. *Composition* is the most striking example of a receding centre where Timon is being ‘sucked down’ by a spiral of abstract geometrical shapes representing the worldly forces ranged against him.

Pound’s article, *Affirmations VI*, published in *The New Age*, February 1915, set out a framework for Vorticism as a structural concept for modern poetry which later found its way into *The Cantos*. Pound concentrated here on the early Renaissance, ‘the study of the quattrocento which communicates vigour... especially to such scholars as have considered the whole age, the composite life of the age in contradiction to those who have sentimentalised over its aesthetic’.⁴⁴³ Yet Pound’s admiration of the Renaissance age, its essential vigour, sits uneasily with his admiration for the sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska whose focus on ‘planes and lines’ has more in common with Ancient civilisations, particularly the Hamite culture of Egypt. Gaudier was less sympathetic about Western cultural history: quoting from his ‘Vortex’ in *Blast 1*, of the medieval he writes;

Gothic sculpture was a faint echo of the HAMITO-SEMITIC energies through Roman traditions, and it lasted half a thousand years, and it wilfully divagated again into the Greek derivative from the land of Amen-Ra.

⁴⁴² Ibid, p. 48.

⁴⁴³ E. Pound, ‘Affirmations-VI, Analysis of this Decade’, *The New Age*, 11th Feb. 1915, p. 409. (and reproduced in H. Zinnes (ed.), *Ezra Pound and the visual arts*, 1980, p. 23).

VORTEX OF A VORTEX !!

VORTEX IS THE POINT ONE AND INDIVISIBLE !

‘VORTEX IS ENERGY! and it gave forth solid EXCREMENTS in the quattro é cinque cento. LIQUID until the seventeenth century, GASES whistle till now. This is the history of form value in the West until the FALL OF IMPRESSIONISM.⁴⁴⁴

Pound’s analysis placed the major emphasis on Renaissance literature, notably the ‘exactness’ of Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) the Italian Humanist, who revived the classics of Homer, but in the clarity of Latin. Pound’s homage to Valla can be seen in *Canto 1* mirroring the Divus Latin translation of ‘The Book of the Dead’ in its structure. In fine art, his analysis did not have the crispness of the Hulme/ Worringer analysis in their differentiation between empathic and geometric art. Pound compared the Renaissance’s emerging relationship between humanity and nature with the creativity of the machine age: ‘This enjoyment of machinery is just as natural and just as significant a phase of this age as was the Renaissance “enjoyment of nature for its own sake”, and not merely an illustration of dogmatic ideas’.⁴⁴⁵ His analysis tends to look literally at the two ages rather than drawing from the past to determine a sense of the present. Despite his vague analysis of Vorticism; writing ‘forms well organised’ and describing Epstein’s ‘Flenite’ sculpture as ‘The feeling of masses in relation’, Pound’s main line of attack is that after Leonardo ‘rhetoric and floridity’ became the version of the Greek language. He wrote that Quintilian ‘did for the direct sentence’, and its equivalence in painting; ‘The habit of having no definite conviction save that it was glorious to reflect life in a given determined costume or decoration ‘did for the painters’.⁴⁴⁶ For Pound the decline into imitation and romanticism began with the ‘Renaissance shackles’ imposed by flowery language that ‘when words ceased to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish’.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ H. Gaudier-Brzeska, ‘Vortex’, *Blast 1*, p. 156.

⁴⁴⁵ E. Pound, ‘Affirmations- VI’, p. 411.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 410.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 410.

In fine art, Pound expressed difficulties in trying to maintain a critical distance between aestheticism and culture. For Pound, the Renaissance was a golden age, an age whose essential vigour is mirrored by the idealised modern age of Vorticism. In reality, the two ages are not comparable other than as each marking a fundamental change in the outlook of their societies. Pound asked the question what makes modern society's new focus on life? His answer, 'a certain number of simple and obvious ideas running together and interacting are making a new, and for many a most obnoxious art'.⁴⁴⁸ These 'simple and obvious ideas' constituted Modernism in art and literature, with the Vorticists as the 'mercenaries' fighting the war against the 'many' who cling to the 'passéism' and imitativeness of the Victorian Romantic: the public's taste in 1914 was for a pale replica of the high art and letters of the Renaissance.

Pound's problem was one of definition. He eulogised the Renaissance as a golden age that could be compared with the present age of Modernist innovation for its artistic vigour, while at the same time lending support to Hulme, Epstein, and Gaudier, in their criticism of Renaissance enlightenment. Western society with its romanticised belief in religious humanism was for Hulme the new and detrimental life factor of the modern age. While Hulme rigidly separated religion from life because religious values can only be understood as 'absolute', Pound continued to idealise for example, the religious humanity of Sigismundo Malatesta, which is featured in the *Cantos*, VIII-XI. Malatesta's vision of a coming together of Christianity and the Classical Greek found its place in his Tempio at Rimini. This celebration of a Christian religion expressed through the natural beauty of the classical by the sculptor Agostino Duccio sits uneasily beside Malatesta's reputation as a violent and brutal *condottier*. But this dichotomy was exactly what Pound was looking for in order to compare that age with the Vorticists as 'belligerents'. He saw himself and Lewis as modern *condottiers* striving to create a new golden age of Modernism. Pound's first prose book, *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) highlighted the old, unreformed Pound, a devotee of the Provençal language of troubadours, of Dante and el Cid. His reference point emanated from the Pre-Raphaelites, namely Rossetti and his circle. From the medievalism of the romantic, Pound progressed to Modernism,

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 410.

his bridge being the influential *English Review* edited by Ford Maddox Heuffer, who later changed his name to Ford Maddox Ford (1873-1939). The *English Review*, established in 1908, featured contributors such as Yeats, James and Conrad, and up-and-coming writers including Lawrence, Forster, Lewis and Pound. Lewis's first literary publication was *The Pole*, later one of *The Wild Body* stories, which appeared in the May 1909 edition of the *English Review*. Ford made the transition to a modernist language style with his two best-known novels, *The Good Soldier* (1915) and *Parade's End* (1924-28). While Ford's modernism lacks the feel of experimentation about it or any depth in historical association in comparison with Joyce's *Ulysses*, (other than a repudiation of the Victorian dressing up of the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere), an extract from *The Good Soldier* was published in the first issue of *Blast* under the title *The Saddest Story*.

Pound's consolidation as a modernist poet was initially an all-embracing, hugely ambitious project, the 1917 *Ur-Cantos I-III* modelled on Robert Browning's *Sordello*. As with Browning's epic poem, Pound positioned himself as the showman delivering a 'rag-bag' of sights and citations for the modern world 'to stuff all its thought in'.⁴⁴⁹ *The Cantos* project extended over thirty years involving false starts, changes in structural form, renewals and reinterpretations, networks of connection, and a continuous widening of the field. For Pound, his modernism encompassed style, subject and value. As with Vorticism, the process was as important as the end result. Pound's *Cantos* project sought to recreate in prose form the dynamic energy of the vortex. Pound proclaimed this at the end of *Ur-Canto I*:

Barred lights, great flares, new form, Picasso or Lewis.
 If for a year man writes to paint, and not to music-
 O Casella!

In October 1922 T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) published *The Waste Land* in the *Criterion*, a literary magazine edited by himself. A close colleague of Pound, Eliot drew from the Ancient past to

⁴⁴⁹ E. Pound, 'Three Cantos (I)', 1917 *Poetry*, Vol. X, No. III.

interpret the condition of contemporary society. *The Waste Land* draws upon the legend of the Holy Grail, the twelfth century legend of how Christ's blood came to King Arthur's court at Glastonbury, but the poem symbolises the human desolation that Eliot perceived in post-war society. There is no close analogy in a historical sense, the distance between the literary medievalism of Chaucer or Dante cannot be bridged; negativity and despair mark *The Waste Land*, not the compassion of Dante or the humanity of Chaucer. Nevertheless, literary references abound between the psychological condition of war-ravaged Europe and medieval literature characterised by Eliot's opening line 'April is the cruellest month'. This refers to Chaucer's first lines from the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*;

'Whan that Aprille with its shoures soote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote'.

But in comparison, quite different tones are established from the start. Similar to Pound's *Cantos*, *The Waste Land* is fragmentary in style yet its continuity is maintained through its underlying and powerful sense of loss, a loss of ancient values built up over the ages. It agonisingly presents the state of mind of humanity as desolate, employing the form of the poem as an indicator of moral ennui much in keeping with the Hulme/Lewis depiction of Western Society. In that sense, there is a link with Vorticism, but not in stylistic terms. The approach of Eliot is mannered in its analytic presentation; there isn't the explosive charge of energy so characteristic of Lewis and replicated by Pound. The cultural theories Lewis and Eliot developed over their literary careers are diametrically opposed and yet there are similarities in approach if not in conclusions. Both men sought to mine antecedents to better explore Western society.⁴⁵⁰

Lewis and Culture

In attempting to pinpoint Lewis's cultural ideology during the early years, later developments frequently need to be taken into account. I described how Lewis's Brittany travels during 1908 led

⁴⁵⁰ V. Barac uses this approach in his essay 'The Cultural Theories of Wyndham Lewis and T S Eliot', in A. Gasiorek, A. Reeve-Tucker and N. Waddell (eds.), *Wyndham Lewis and the Cultures of Modernity*, 2011, Aldershot, 2011.

him to take an anthropological interest in primitive society that found its way into the *Kermesse* paintings and drawings, and in the *Wild Body* stories. This anthropological approach began to take on a political meaning by 1914 with his painting *The Crowd* and in Lewis's essay on crowd psychology 'The Crowd Master' in the second edition of *Blast*. Lewis approaches cultural change by comparing its relationship between history and the psyche. During this politically turbulent period from 1910 to 1915, Lewis referenced the notion of cultural change, most notably revolutionary change, in socialist and anarchist movements. In doing so Lewis harked back to pre-modern history from Ancient to Renaissance times. By 1914 British society began to change markedly from individual to collective life with the mobilization for war. This process has its historical antecedents in the understanding of Shakespeare and of his times. Lewis's *The Fox and the Lion* (1927) attributed an anthropological explanation to understanding Shakespeare comparing Elizabethan England with the cultural practices of the Dahomey kingdom of Africa. This approach contradicted the standard Victorian explanation that Elizabethan cultural bloodlines came from Saxon and Celtic times. Lewis's thesis suggested that cultural practice changed with the rising power of the state over the individual. The ultimate 'individual' was the feudal monarch or ruler whose power to rule came from the ability to raise a militia rather than through legislation. In modern times it was the French anarchist leader Proudhon's emphasis on the 'small' man that was Lewis's ideal social model, in sharp contrast to Marx whose individual was but a cog in the machinery of State control.

Like Hulme, Eliot saw the Renaissance as a watershed where the community first experienced the fragmentation of traditional ritual, customs and values. He differed from Hulme and Lewis, in that they looked to humanity's capacity to make critical judgements to achieve truth. Eliot looked towards Christian values to achieve salvation, not as theologians but as a community; the idea of a Christian Society, not devoid of a privileged hierarchy in which an intellectual elite class was essential for the continuing health of society. To quote Barac, 'an open Christianity fortified by an endless conflict of ideas'.⁴⁵¹ This ideology, developed over the course of Eliot's life had its roots in Classicism. Like Lewis, Eliot recognised the machine age as the epitome of a fragmented society

⁴⁵¹ V. Barac, 'The Cultural Theories of T S Eliot and Wyndham Lewis', p. 193.

that he and Lewis, sought to put together through their respective art forms. While anthropology provided the framework to inform their cultural theories, their goals were to be achieved through British Modernism.

Lewis invariably positioned himself as an outsider. His highly egoistic personality has led commentators to place him as sympathetic towards anarchism in his formative years as a writer and artist. Yet doubts arise because of his close association with the Tory-led philosophy of Hulme, and his interest in the right wing organization *L'Action française*, who while pursuing anti-Republican aims, were for the most part a body of academics steeped in the traditions of French historical culture. In his detached position as an outsider, Lewis the Vorticist was critical of liberal bourgeois society. While the term culture covers a whole range of meaning, at the turn of the century it could include both the traditional area of religion and philosophy and anthropological theories on what separates one group of human beings from others. Lewis's art and writing entered into both areas. Contrary to the 'scatter-gun' propaganda approach of *Blast*, I consider Lewis to be close to the high culture of Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). The son of Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Lewis's school, Rugby, Arnold, the professor of poetry at Oxford, in 1869 published a collection of his essays entitled *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold asked what happens to our culture with the growth of democracy and while he encouraged the spread of education to the masses - he was for most of his working life Inspector of Schools - he saw machinery as the enemy of culture. Arnold believed that machinery meant individual innovation leading to secular interests: imperialism, wealth and *laissez-faire* capitalism. He uses the word 'anarchy' to describe individual behaviour as the enemy of high-minded culture. By culture, Arnold meant a Classical education; a study of perfection, 'sweetness and light': Materialism led to confusion: the aristocracy were barbarians and the middle class were philistines. Lewis described the upper classes in similar language and although he sees himself as a critic rather than a force for improvement of society, he shared Arnold's elitist spirit. In 1954 Lewis wrote an appreciative review of Arnold's poetry and prose which include these sentences which

suggest a certain shared affinity: 'Matthew's mind was marvellously independent. He excelled in disagreement'.⁴⁵²

The anthropological approach as to what constitutes culture rests on the acquisition of knowledge within separate societies. Here knowledge includes organizational structures such as beliefs and laws. This approach challenges the Victorian view that different human societies are ranked in order of their biological evolutionary progression. This highly politicised approach that sanctioned colonialism as a civilizing mission placed Western European society at the top of the world order and aborigines at the bottom. This theory fashioned in Darwinian terms links material progress to evolutionary stages of development. The social anthropologist Edward Tyler (1832-1917) countered this by saying that aside from the biological, there is also a non-biological inheritance of knowledge that is cumulative and progressive. This progression should not follow in stages from savagery, through barbarianism to civilization of the Northern European model. Tyler took the view that different cultures should not be compared. Like most avant-garde artists of his generation Lewis was interested in cultural diversity. Anthropology occupied his early art and literature. Biological evolution entered his thinking with an emphasis on arrested development and a belief that humans can take on the characteristics of machines. Lewis first developed this theme in *The Wild Body* stories describing the cultural behaviour of Breton peasants. Philosophical underpinning for these were drawn from Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, and *The Gay Science*, and from Bergson's *Laughter*, and *Creative Evolution*, and can be discerned in the paintings and drawings from the *Kermesse* series. Bergson's theories of the role played by intuition in evolutionary development entered the sociological works of Sorel and Le Bon which Lewis drew on to describe and depict crowd psychology. While these theories of organic unity touch on, and can be developed along the lines of racial superiority, the work undertaken in America by Franz Boaz (1858-1942) in his collected lectures *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) maintained that all cultures were relative and that superiority was not racial. According to Boaz, race only explained differences. Boaz explained that culture was an integrated organic unit, but was made up of bits and pieces borrowed to make

⁴⁵² Wyndham Lewis, 'Matthew Arnold' in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change*, P. Edwards (ed.), Santa Rosa, 1989, p. 374.

something new; it had nothing to do with arrested development. While this line of reasoning was applied to 'primitive' cultures, the concept of separate development could apply equally to those countries isolated from Western cultures up to the middle of the nineteenth century, such as China and Japan. Their cultures were not primitive or retarded, and particularly in art were highly ranked in cultural standing, and in many cases were more culturally significant with regard to modern sociological development. The artist and critic C. J. Holmes offered a more ambiguous interpretation. Writing in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1905 'The Use of Japanese Art to Europe' Holmes, while recognizing the strengths of Japanese art, considered its techniques as a useful addition to European realism, he also argued that the European masters already had these qualities to make great art. The whole tenor of the article is that the European tradition has the strength of the Renaissance behind it, and the foundations of the early Italian primitives, whereas Oriental art lacks similar substance. To quote his conclusion, it 'often lacks substance for want of a realistic foundation'.⁴⁵³ Holmes, a colleague of Roger Fry, had a long-standing interest in modern art and contributed to the 1910 Post-Impressionist Exhibition catalogue.⁴⁵⁴ Fry's views on Japanese art were similar to those of Holmes in seeing its techniques as an 'input' to modern art while doing little more than weighing up its strengths against Western art. In 1909, when Fry published his *Essay on Aesthetics*, he and Holmes were very closely associated professionally and shared a belief in Bergson's *elan vital*. To quote Holmes from his 1905 article on Japanese art: 'The first principle which the artist of the East has to observe is the expression of rhythmic vitality, the communication to the spectator of the living force in man and in nature...anatomical structure, resemblance to nature, colour, composition and finish, are all less important'.⁴⁵⁵

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western society sought to reconcile other cultures, both contemporary and from past history, with their own. There emerges a 'scale' ranging from 'primitive' to 'civilized other'. All were generally regarded as inferior to modern western society in

⁴⁵³ C. J. Holmes, 'The Use of Japanese Art to Europe', *Burlington Magazine*, Vol.18, No 31, Oct. 1905, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁴ R. Fry and Holmes were fellow directors of the Burlington Magazine, and Holmes became Slade professor of fine art at Oxford in 1904, a post that Fry coveted.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

that they were 'different'. Tribal cultures were often linked with the Darwinian model of evolution, as 'arrested' in their cultural development. Tribal objects were sometimes labelled under the 'archaeological' category if regarded as from a past civilization now defunct, but more often, to quote Colin Rhodes, 'products of cultures both presentistic, (or ahistorical), and in a state of "barbarism" preceding civilization'.⁴⁵⁶ This definition ensured that primitive artefacts were not regarded as part of art history. The critical reception of Fry's Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1910 as 'uncivilized' art met with the response from Fry that art needed to regain its power to express emotional ideas, and that primitivism was the way to recuperate art for civilized society.

Fry wrote extensively about the formal qualities of pre-Renaissance and Oriental art. I will show how Fry and Lewis took separate, but related, pathways in applying these formal qualities to their aesthetic ideologies. Fry's interpretation is closer to Bergson and in keeping with Binyon's thinking. Both Fry and Lewis related Byzantine mosaics to their essentially modern geometrical form, and in their superiority to the post-Renaissance art with its emphasis on humanity and its focus on empathy. Unlike Hulme, Fry saw only Byzantine art's outward formal qualities. I show how Lewis's and Hulme's hostile attitude towards Fry was related more to personal animosity and an irrational desire to distance Vorticism from Cubism, as well as an ill thought out attack on the Post-Impressionists motivated mainly because of Fry's championship of them. This becomes apparent in Lewis's drawing *Indian Dance* (1912) in which I find an affinity with Cezanne's *Dancers*. The ideological differences between Lewis/Hulme and the Fry/Bloomsbury Group were largely a question of perception. Fry could not incorporate an ideology that excluded nature, although he recognized abstraction as the highest form of modern art. Hulme made claims to exclude nature- 'cutting the umbilical cord'- but failed in his argument to show how nature plays no part in full abstraction. Lewis saw modern life as centring on the metaphor of the machine. Hulme and Lewis thought truth was not to be found in nature: abstraction represented truth. Fry could not fully subscribe to this view.

⁴⁵⁶ C. Rhodes, 'Burlington Primitive: Non-European Art', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 146, No. 1211, Feb. 2004.

Fry believed that the power of art was to generate ‘emotional ideas’ through all the senses, whereas Lewis held that the emphasis was through the eye to reciprocate with the viewers’ intellect that of the artist. Both men felt in common that, to appreciate creative art, the viewer (society) needed to possess the intellectual capacity to appreciate it through their critical detachment. This, for Fry, was the mark of a ‘civilized’ nation. It was by this marker that Fry distinguished between ‘primitive’ tribal people such as the African Negro, who produced creative artists making work of the ‘most exquisite sensibility and the finest taste’ but who remained ‘uncivilized’.⁴⁵⁷ The Negro people, in Fry’s analysis, lacked ‘a conscious critical sense and the intellectual powers of comparison and classification’.⁴⁵⁸ Fry went on to say that, by contrast, the Chinese have possessed these faculties from the earliest times.

Fry developed a connection between Chinese and Japanese art and the primitive art of the South African bushman, an art he distinguished from the art of the Negro. He defined Negro art as conceptual and Bushman art as perceptive and very much related to the ‘eye’. Bushman art, like the Palaeolithic art of the cave dweller, presented the subject as vitally truthful representation. Fry made the comparison between Bushman and Japanese art in their mutual regard for the silhouette, ‘accepting the single whole instead of reconstructing it from separately apprehended parts’.⁴⁵⁹ The point is well made, particularly as he singled out ‘the Japanese drawings of birds and animals approach more nearly than any other civilized people to the immediacy and rapidity of transcription of Bushman and Palaeolithic art’.⁴⁶⁰ But although Fry classified the Japanese as ‘civilized’, his reasoning on how art qualifies a nation to be regarded -by Western standards- as civilized seems muddled. Marianna Torgovnick’s paper ‘Making Primitive Art High Art’ is bitingly critical of the Western attitude towards art and race: ‘Fry’s celebration of primitive art is a masked (even to itself) re-encoding of the primitive as modern, and a validation of the West’s dominance over the Other’.

⁴⁶¹ The argument over what constitutes a ‘civilization’ is a rather sterile one when it seems clear that

⁴⁵⁷ R. Fry, ‘Negro Sculpture at the Chelsea Book Club’, *The Athenaeum*, 16th Apr. 1920, p. 516.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.516.

⁴⁵⁹ R. Fry, ‘Bushman Paintings’, *Burlington Magazine*, Vol.16, No. 84, Mar. 1910, p. 337.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁴⁶¹ M. Torgovnick, ‘Making Primitive Art High Art’, *Politics Today*, Vol.10, No. 2, 1989, p. 304.

Modernists primarily used 'primitive' techniques as a means to sweep away repetitive and devalued modes of expressing 'high' art. Green makes the point that Fry did not regard primitive art as 'civilized', but as a means of sweeping away the art of perspective, atmospheric values, etc. the legacy of the Renaissance. Modern art was to be starting again along a path that reincorporates the Renaissance anatomical model, but this time 'with passionate zest and enthusiasm'. 'As for Fry, the power to make this happen could only be in the hands of the "civilized", like himself and his friends'.⁴⁶²

Lewis and Fry had more in common than is often supposed. The schism between the two men, which arose from a disputed Omega workshops contract for the Ideal Home exhibition in October 1913, has led people to see the protagonists as total opposites in temperament and in their respective approach to modern art. Yet both men recognized the relationship between the Ancient world and their world in changing perceptions through the modern art. Lewis must have read Fry's numerous articles on the Italian Primitives relating their formal qualities to modern art that were published in the *Burlington Magazine*. Fry also wrote a regular column on art in the *Nation* and an important essay on the nature of art, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', for the *New Quarterly*, in 1907. In place of the nineteenth century concept of likeness to nature as being the touchstone of aesthetic appreciation, Fry defined aestheticism as being the emotional response to visual forms and their relationship with one another. 'Sensation apprehended in their relations'.

Medievalism and the Byzantines

Fry's interest in Medieval art centred on Italy and the Byzantine cultural impact on art, ranging from the sixth century reign of the emperor Justinian through to the fourteenth century. The Byzantine marked the assimilation of the Roman classical style of art into a more inward looking austere symbolic and geometrical style; the sixth century mosaics found at Ravenna were regarded as its purest manifestation. The mosaics came to be seen as an interesting element in art practice in the late nineteenth century and were widely assimilated by the French Symbolists, such as Maurice Denis, for their Byzantine emphasis on the icon as a religious or cultural symbol. Fry visited

⁴⁶² C. Green, 'Expanding the Canon', in *Art Made Modern*, 1999, p. 130.

Ravenna several times from 1891 and, initially thought the images to be ‘childish’ but that they provided a foundation for new ideas to move away from the classical. By 1900, Fry had recognized the importance of the Byzantine in art as ‘the process of passing from a naturalistic to an abstract and symbolic art’.⁴⁶³ Five years later, Fry began to consider their arrangement of form as the important part of Byzantine art. An article in the *Athenaeum* (February 1905) describes Byzantine art as ‘essentially modern’ and ‘art dependent on outline, without modelling or relief or true chiaroscuro’.

By 1906, Fry began to relate the formal style of Byzantine art with the art of Cézanne and Gauguin. The structural figure arrangement in Cézanne’s *Bathers* (1906) (Fig. 47) was seen by Fry as an outstanding example. Fry placed the emphasis on contour and line, by the Post-Impressionists as an indication of the ‘recovery’ from the emphasis on nature by the Impressionists. Fry called the Impressionist style ‘a totality of appearances’ and, the move away from it as equivalent to the move from Roman classicism to the Byzantine.⁴⁶⁴ By ‘totality of appearances’ Fry meant a fusing together of line, mass and colour, such that the resultant image presents an ‘appearance’ where the depiction of nature carries no discernible message about an attitude to life. This is in stark contrast to the naturalism of the early Italian masters:

Nor has Impressionism any true analogy with naturalism, since the naturalism of the fifteenth century was concerned with form, and Impressionism with the aspects of appearance in which separate forms are lost in the whole continuum of sensation.⁴⁶⁵

Fry dismissed the charge from his detractors that ‘Neo-Impressionism’ was pure ‘archaism’. The new art represented a continuity from Impressionism whereas ‘archaizers’ could have no real sympathy for an art form whose methodology could only be guessed at. Fry’s aesthetic emphasis was on the relationship generated by pure form over any naturalistic arrangement of line, mass and colour. His ideas pre-dated and worked at a tangent to Worringer’s findings published the same year. Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) recognized that empathic art associated with the

⁴⁶³ R. Fry, ‘Art before Giotto’, in *Monthly Review*, 1900, p. 127.

⁴⁶⁴ R. Fry, Letter to the editor of *The Burlington Magazine*, March, 1908, in *Letters of Roger Fry*, ed., Denys Sutton, pp. 298-301.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 299.

Classical tradition was inferior to art associated with the urge towards abstraction, itself an outward manifestation of man's attitude towards the impermanence of outside nature. Fry came to appreciate the possibilities offered by his reading of Byzantine art to progress modern art to an art form that was superior to the Romantic tradition through the tendency towards abstraction. But Fry's theories were eclipsed by Hulme's interpretation of Worringer's theory of art with his emphasis on the anti-humanism of modern art. Both Fry and Hulme were reluctant to dismiss Bergson's theory of intuition with its association with nature and humanism. Hulme finally did so in 1915 when he stated in *A Notebook* that there was no connection between religious values and life, thus any reality based on humanism becomes untenable. Where they differed was that Hulme looked beyond Fry's stance that the tendency towards abstract form was aesthetically superior to the Classical/Renaissance tradition of vital, romantic, naturalistic art. Fry's theories did not extend beyond 'art for art's sake' to the underlying condition for humanity, whereas Hulme made the case for modern art to act as a conduit. Fry saw only art's outward formal qualities. Hulme described Fry as having 'no conception whatever of the new art, and is in fact a mere verbose sentimentalist'.⁴⁶⁶ But this typically blunt and dismissive remark does not do justice to Fry's achievements in highlighting the connections between the conceptual nature of medieval and primitive art and the new Continental art.

Fry's work must have acted as a spur to Lewis who, from 1908 to 1912 was looking to break new ground in his artistic development. J. B. Bullen points to the drawing *Indian Dance* (1912) (Fig. 44) as an example of Lewis's new tendency to be influenced by the geometric line of the Byzantine.⁴⁶⁷ Like Cézanne's *Bathers*, *Indian Dance* forms a pyramid of hard-edged geometrical figures. In the body outline of each of the three dancers, the curve or contour familiar to the Byzantine is emphasized. A close reading of *Indian Dance* indicates a degree of experimentation in relating modern art to that of earlier ages. The face of the dancer looking out towards the viewer suggests a Cubist influence, but without the faceting, her oriental eyes and prominent slightly curved lips constitute a Lewisian

⁴⁶⁶ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and its Philosophy', in *The Collected Writings of T E Hulme*, ed. K Csengeri, p. 282.

⁴⁶⁷ J. B. Bullen, 'Byzantinism and Modernism 1900-14', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 141, No. 1160, Nov. 1999, p. 675.

feature of his *Kermesse* dancers. This is clearly a fertility dance; the arrangement of furrows; the dancers' gestures to a divine authority; the phallic looking plant in the foreground. The drawing lacks any feeling of vitality with each dancer physically apart and absorbed in an individual appeal to their god. Lewis arrests the movement of the dancers from a state of flux. The surrounding darkness suggests that the outside world is a hostile place. On a philosophical level, the darkness indicates an immense spiritual dread of space. The vertical post, or tree, reinforces this environmental and philosophical containment by pinning down the dancers to the centre of their world. Lewis has emphasized this inner world by using white paper mounted on board as a ground. This emphasizes the flatness of the drawing, reinforced for the viewer by looking down on the image. Lewis is not using negative space to full advantage; unlike his later more developed imagery, where the interactions of negative and positive shapes activate the forcefulness and energy so characteristic of Vorticism. To achieve this position, Lewis needs to move these primitive forms further towards abstraction and absorb them into the more abstract surroundings that Lewis is attempting here. Nevertheless, *Indian Dancer* is a starting point in bringing together in its depthless occupation of space, a tendency towards a geometrical depiction of life reflecting in the dancers' containment; a barrier between life itself and nature. These primitive ancestors do not have proprietary rights over nature.

Earlier drawings *The Theatre Manager* (1909) (Fig 10) and *Dieppe Fishermen* (1910) (Fig. 48) exhibit the characteristic formal arrangement of curved lines where a group of figures take on a monumental oneness of form. Bullen's article illustrates the fifth century mosaic *Lot and his suite* from S.Maria Maggiore, Rome (Fig. 49), where in its emphasis on curvature and mass the mosaic takes on an essentially modern aspect that Fry recognized and disseminated to aspiring modernists such as Lewis. *The Theatre Manager* and *Dieppe Fishermen* are tentative examples where the Byzantine influence of the hard-edged arrangement of the curved line are employed: the tendency becomes much more inclusive as Lewis's style progresses to *Two Muscular Figures* (1912-13), the *Kermesse* drawings (1912), and the *Timon of Athens* series of drawings.

The year 1912 marked Lewis's breakthrough towards a more mature style. In comparing the two drawings *Courtship* (Fig. 50) and *The Courtesan* (Fig. 51) one can trace how Lewis progressed from a relatively simple image of two stylised but recognizable figures to an intensely dynamic figure in which the drama is achieved to a point of abstraction: The figure becomes absorbed in geometrical line. The former is a straight interpretation of the primitive, the latter the transposition of life to the characteristics of a machine. The link is the Byzantine influence. To quote Bullen, "The Byzantine use of symbolism, its reduction of form to stylised linearity, and its intuitive expression of non-material values attracted some of the most imaginative thinkers in that early modern tradition".⁴⁶⁸ *Courtship* is essentially primitive. The male and female figures are drawn side by side in a stylised dance-like movement, the leading edge of the male inclining diagonally away from the somewhat predatory female. It is a simple line drawing, yet expressive through the drawing skills of Lewis to bring out the nature of human interaction. The figures are composed of simple geometric curved lines, angularity being restricted to knees and feet. While the overall forms of the two figures suggests the primitive roots found in Cubism, the arrangement of curved lines comes from a Byzantine source. *The Courtesan* is a much more adventurous and innovative image. The face is recognisably human, as are her arms, but her figure is tightly contained within a framework of angular diagonal lines. While the image is still recognisably that of a female, the diagonal lines form an axis that suggests either a 'flailing' of her arms or an 'enveloping' posture, all contained within the upper right limits of the picture plane. The arrangement of geometric lines has a machine-like appearance. Both drawings have Byzantine roots. *Courtship* expresses the iconic, stylised linearity of the Byzantine, but primarily as an outward manifestation of its formal qualities. *The Courtesan* in its containment goes much further in ascribing the tendency for Byzantine art towards insularity from the outside world, also applies to the modern world. Lewis achieves this through the way in which he energises line and mass to portray an image ostensibly with 'Old Master' connotations, yet with its machine-like automation, its flatness, the overpowering feeling remains one of dehumanization. The surprise is that Lewis makes this jump so quickly to the verge of Vorticism. Lewis produced all these works before he made contact with Hulme in 1913. What distinguished Lewis's Byzantine

⁴⁶⁸ J. B. Bullen, p. 675.

input from that by other followers of Fry such as Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, who took a more literal interpretation in their paintings, was that Lewis appropriated the non-materialistic values of the Byzantines such as the distrust of the natural world which he expressed through line and form to the point of abstraction.

Two works that Lewis made during 1912 illustrated the speed of his move from the tentative to the resolved; the drawings *Indian Dance* (Fig. 44) and *The Dancers* (Fig. 1). The latter forms part of the *Kermesse* series that evolved from Lewis's travels in Brittany. *Indian Dance* has all the elements of experimentation in relating pre-modern art to modernism through Cubism. The work does not entirely come together in its occupation of space, and is too firmly emphasising the primitive rather than moving the emphasis to reflect a change in sensibility. One can read into its structure alienation from nature that could equally apply to modern life. The geometrical forms of the dancers and the flat depthless surface are typical of Ancient art elements that Grant also used in *The Tub* (1913) (Fig. 52) and *Head of Eve* (1913) (Fig. 53). As with Lewis's *Indian Dance*, the metamorphosis to modern life is not fully resolved. *The Dancers*, of the same year, is more resolved as an integrated artwork drawing on both Nietzsche and Bergson in its Dionysian vitality. It points the way towards the energy flowing into the vortex while incorporating the fundamental notion of Lewis taking a personal position of violent antagonism. He achieved this by converting his dancers into 'objects' dominated by the bounding frame of the image.

The Archaeological Effect: Nietzsche and Greek Mythology

Cultures from antiquity attracted Lewis, and particularly a culture associated with Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. The Homeric tragedy from Greek mythology took on a modern conception in Nietzsche's writing as a warning to the individual of a world crisis brought on by industrial capitalism. Archaeological discoveries in Greece, Turkey and Crete led to a wide interest in pre-Classical culture. The German amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1897) in 1876 claimed to have dug up the treasure of the Trojan king Priam at a site that he insisted was that of Troy. He led the way in presenting Greek myth to the western world as material reality. The

publicity his writings generated led to the belief that he had found an archaic culture, which, far from being primitive could re-explain the process of creation. Such a culture contradicted the Western view of cultural ascendancy through chronological historical advancement. The idea formed that a pre-Hellenic mythical culture not only was a reality but might also provide a solution for curing the ills of modern society. Archaeology seemed to support Nietzsche's prophecies; to quote Gere, 'Nietzsche turned the Bronze Age into the prehistory of modernity'.⁴⁶⁹ If the dystopia of modern capitalism could be replaced by the tragic age of Apollo and Dionysus, an age brought to a close by the rational enquiry of Socrates; the only hope for modern society was to mobilize the mythical pre-Hellenic world. *The Birth of Tragedy* addressed the question as to how far we can go to ascertain the truth without being destroyed by it. Nietzsche's response was that the best approach is through art and music. Here was the lifeline that archaeology threw to a susceptible public, a conduit developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century with the excavations at Knossos on the Greek island of Crete.

Gere writes of how an archaeological dig on Crete turned into a re-creation of the Dionysian myth under the direction of the British archaeologist Arthur Evans (1851-1941). At Knossos Evans thought he had uncovered the palace of the mythical Ariadne, daughter of the Minos king of Crete. Having excavated what he believed to be the 'bath' and 'throne' of Ariadne, by 1903, Evans, in his quest to establish a matriarchal system at Knossos became convinced that he had found the site described in Homer's *Iliad*; a 'dancing floor like the one Daedalus made at Knossos for Ariadne'. He then made the sweeping assumption that through this 'dancing floor' a connection could be made between Ariadne and the god Dionysus. His approach in making the connection was from the traditional Cretan labyrinth dance; through the multi-meaning word 'choros'; the meaning relating to a winding peasant dance and chorus, and thence to the chorus of the Classical Greek play. By 1909 Evans' interpretation of the dance had developed into an 'orgiastic' dance comparing Dionysus with 'whirling dervishes'. The latter image derived from one Evans found on a gold signet ring showing four women in Minoan dress in a field of lilies. I believe that Evans' prophetic

⁴⁶⁹ C. Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, 2009, p. 28.

mixture of myth, archaeology and anthropological culture influenced Lewis in his 1912 *Kermesse* series of paintings and drawings. *The Dancers* has all the ingredients served up by Evans, including the imagery of ‘whirling dervishes’, and of female gender in keeping with Evans matriarchal society. On the other hand, the three dancers who could be described as Dionysian *maenads*, have a distinctly Indian look in their facial features in keeping with the Nietzschean telling of the myth:

The time of the Socratic man is past. Put on wreaths of ivy, take up the *thyrsus* and do not be surprised if tigers and panthers lie down, purring and curling round your legs. Now you must only dare to be tragic human beings, for you will be released and redeemed. You will accompany the festive procession of Dionysos from India to Greece! Put on your armour for a hard fight, but believe in the miracles of your god! ⁴⁷⁰

Gere describes the transition from Homer’s telling of the age of tragedy to Evans reinterpretation: ‘Dionysus, it turns out, was not a barbaric import from the Orient but a home-grown Greek. He was the son and consort of Ariadne, the “the most holy”, the Great Cretan Mother’. ⁴⁷¹

The classical scholar and feminist, Jane Harrison (1850-1928) was an enthusiastic supporter of Cretan matrimony linked to Dionysian mythology. Her publication, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) pursues the case, influenced by Evans archaeological findings, that a Nietzschean invocation of the Great Cretan Mother led to the overthrow of the Minoan nation and that this female-dominated society then succumbed to a masculine Athenian society. In the process, not only did women’s place in society become subservient to the male, but also the Dionysian ritual changed from primitive mimetic dance to Homeric drama. In the course of this transition within the *dithyramb*, the choral hymn in praise of Dionysus, a fundamental change occurred where a class of spectators became separated from the participants. In Harrison’s analysis, Cretan art embodied in communal primitive ritual, became a male dominated Athenian art emanating from outside the established ritual. In effect, Greek classical art took root out of primitive Nietzschean feminism, in which the checks and balances of Apollonian rationality did not operate, to a patriarchal society shaped by Apollonian Hellenism. To quote Harry C. Payne, the common factor that Harrison shared with her disparate sources is ‘the perception of passionate, non-rational structures beneath the polished

⁴⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, (eds.) R. Geuss & R. Speirs, 1999, p. 98.

⁴⁷¹ C. Gere, p. 85.

surfaces and rational pretensions'.⁴⁷² If we think of 'polished surfaces' as Classical Hellenic sculpture, then the collective emotions generated from communal rituals, 'pre-presented' the idea of the art that formed the foundations of classical art. While this might be seen as nothing more than supposition, the attraction of 'Ancient Art' to modernists was at its peak in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Payne describes this attraction as a 'modernist pattern' and I consider that the likelihood that Lewis subscribed to this thinking with regard to his *Kermesse* output of 1912. Phillips draws together the strands: 'Harrison synthesizes Nietzsche's Dionysian merging with nature, Durkheim's blending with the group, and Bergson's blurring in subjective "duration", with an ideal of a thoroughly integrated life'.⁴⁷³ K. J. Phillips offers as an example imagist poetry and Pound: 'Harrison's advice to reproduce on the page whatever it was that caused an emotion rather than merely to name it became an ideal not only in poetry (as in Ezra Pound's Imagism)'.⁴⁷⁴ Pound's best-known imagist poem *In a Station of the Metro* illustrates this; that an image from the past, which in that context represents tranquillity, can create something new and uncomfortable about the present. Harrison stated;

'Modern life is not simple... art that utters and expresses our emotions towards modern life cannot be simple...it must before all things embody not only the living tangle which is felt by the Futurists as so real, but it must purge and order it, by complexities of tone and rhythm hitherto unattempted'⁴⁷⁵

Harrison's theory of ritual and art rested on the archaeological approach to history whereas the conventional approach by her fellow classicists was an empirical one in which theories were determined chronologically. Her thinking followed closely on from the social anthropologist James Frazer (1854-1941) whose *The Golden Bough* (1890) revealed similarities across a range of different 'primitive' cultures; for example the Ancient Greeks and the medieval world of Europe. These similarities centred on the agricultural cycle of 'death' and 'rebirth', a pattern which Harrison and

⁴⁷² H. C. Payne, 'Modernizing the Ancients: The Reconstruction of Ritual Drama 1870-1920', in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol.122, No 3, (June 9th, 1978), p. 189.

⁴⁷³ K. J. Phillips, 'Jane Harrison and Modernism', in *The Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 14, no 4, 1991, p. 471.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 472.

⁴⁷⁵ J. Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, London, 1913, p. 233.

her followers went on to apply to the arts with the emphasis on drama. The primary factor influencing Harrison was Frazer's link between agricultural ritual and 'magic'. It was just a short step between 'magic' and Dionysian myth that could be redefined as Dionysian worship. The universality of Dionysian worship across the ages involving 'land' rituals might be explained by a primitive spirit that Harrison called *eniautos-daimon* meaning 'year spirit'. Lewis's drawing *Indian Dance* replicates such rituals. The analogy of the ritual performance could be applied to the mythical heroes of Greek tragedy: death, dismemberment and resurrection, even although the specific rituals had moved from the cycle of agriculture and taken on new forms in drama. In modern society the work of the French sociologist Durkheim (1858-1917) recognized the communal need for ritual as a non-rational counter to the political values imposed on the surface of everyday life. Hence the attraction of Harrison's ideas to Modernists as a counter to what they saw as stifling Victorian intellectual values. Art should have a social purpose, harking back to the Cretan dances exemplifying a matriarchal age. This should apply equally to modern art.

Lewis incorporated pre-modern elements into his art practice but, writing in 1931, was most critical of Harrison's theories on art and ritual. He wrote, 'back to ritual...back to the community-singing, the mass-dancing, back to the excited crowd'.⁴⁷⁶ Lewis the individualist and anthropologist could not contemplate the idea of cultural fixity permeating the freedom of the individual to make art.

Blast 1 placed great emphasis on this;

The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously...

Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals...

We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals, wherever found.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Wyndham Lewis, *The Dithyrambic Spectator*, 1931, p. 234.

⁴⁷⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', *Blast 1*, 1914.

And yet writing in *Blast*, the war number, Lewis expressed doubts in the face of the pressure to identify with the wartime crowd. He redeemed himself by seemingly to identify with his fictional character, the American Multum; to quote Multum on being an American, 'But shall I absorb my element, because I am still living whereas you are 80 per cent dead'.⁴⁷⁸ Interestingly, Lewis anticipated his late work, *America and Cosmic Man* (1948) in which he wrote: 'No American worth his salt should go looking around for a root...to turn one's back on race, caste, and all that pertains to the rooted State'.⁴⁷⁹ In *Time and Western Man*, Lewis's major critique of modern culture, 'Time-Philosophy' and the introduction of Bergsonian time and space into the mechanism of art and philosophy, became a model for all the wrongs of post-war society. A major factor was the collective nature of Western society that Lewis thought a destructive influence on art (here Lewis may have been anticipating the politically driven nature of Soviet Socialist Realism) but as Edwards points out, he accepted the need for 'small communities' to be reflected by the artist seeing himself as part of a 'crowd'. Here the 'crowd' meant 'made up of warring impulses and contradictory possibilities and values, some of them springing from some pure, uncontaminated self, with the world'.⁴⁸⁰ 'Bigness' was an anathema to Lewis and he likened it to the 'collectivity' of Harrison's aesthetic. He devoted several pages in *Time and Western Man* in scathing comparison of her 'collectivist emotionality in the reader' of Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) to 'a perfect time-mind'. Bigness as displayed by the *Five Towns* saga indicated quantitative pleasure for Harrison, whereas Lewis was uninspired by 'this "dreary reality" reached across the big "waste spaces of life"'.⁴⁸¹

Truth through Art: Lewis's Nietzschean Approach

The Birth of Tragedy addressed the question of how far we can go in order to ascertain the truth without being destroyed by it. Nietzsche's answer was that the best approach was through art and music. This question appealed to Lewis and constitutes the plot of his Vorticist play, *Enemy of the*

⁴⁷⁸ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Crowd Master', *Blast* 2, 1915, p. 100.

⁴⁷⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *America and Cosmic Man*, 1948, p.165. (Quoted by V. Barac in 'The Cultural Theories of Wyndham Lewis and T S Eliot', p.197).

⁴⁸⁰ P. Edwards, Editorial Section, 'Afterword', in *Time and Western Man*, p. 461.

⁴⁸¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, pp. 225- 229.

Stars. By 1914 with the development of Vorticism, a more rounded analysis of the limitations of Life upon the individual was possible within the prose of *Enemy of the Stars*, a Modernist text which explores the crisis of how to achieve an authentic absolute truth. The protagonist Arghol seeks to attain the ultimate state of mastering reality, where Nietzsche stated that this was the unattainable aim of the Apollonian individual. His companion and pupil Hamp embedding a slave economy, which for Nietzsche, as for the Ancient Greeks, was a basic requirement for maintaining a cultured society. The oppressed Hamp murders his mentor Arghol, thus threatening to knock down the 'walls of culture'. Arghol, seeks to attain the ultimate truth though his attempt to transcend what he sees as an imperfect life, by taking the path of violence and self-immolation. He mirrors the self-contradictory duality implicit in Vorticism and propagated in *Blast 1*. To quote Edwards: 'What is most important in the present context...[*Enemy of the Stars*]...is that it provides an indirect critique of the transcendental aspirations (Bergsonian, theosophical, technological) embodied in the chief artistic practices of the period leading up to the First World War'.⁴⁸² Edwards is pointing out that through the medium of painting, or through any other medium, the artist's 'self' cannot fully transcend life to achieve authentic truth. By accepting what is for him a ritual nightly beating from his uncle, Arghol suffers from the disease of consciousness which keeps humankind on the path of 'a beginning and an end' instead of the hoped for liberation. By fighting his companion Hamp, Arghol reverts to type and cannot escape from the pattern of life that characterises humankind.

Arghol used his fists.

To break vows and spell continuity of instinctive behaviour, was a prize that would only be a trophy never drunk from, is always fine.

Arghol would have flung away his hoarding and scrapping of thought as well now. But his calm long instrument of thought, was too heavy. It weighed him down, resisting his swift anarchist effort, made him giddy.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸² P. Edwards, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist Aesthetics and Literature', in *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918*, Aldershot, 2000, p. 116.

⁴⁸³ Wyndham Lewis, 'Enemy of the Stars', *Blast 1*, 1914, p.74.

Edwards sets out this Nietzschean dilemma: 'the conflict between a will to truth and a will to illusion'.⁴⁸⁴ The play highlighted Lewis's scepticism in drawing on Nietzsche from *The Gay Science* on erroneous articles of faith; 'that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good absolutely'. Hence, what we think of as truth through knowledge and our moral code, originates out of primeval impulses that we find to be contradictory more and more. We are led to believe by Nietzsche that our condition of life is dependent on a set of contradictory moral truths. He concluded the section by asking; 'How far is truth susceptible to embodiment- that is the question, that is the experiment'.⁴⁸⁵ Arghol's failure was to live up to his aspirations for transcending life. Edwards equates this failure to the Vorticist aspiration for the geometric image as a means of transcending its original purpose - to portray a higher level of life. Lewis used Arghol to say that Life as truth can never be totally attained. The counterpart in Lewis's art is an urge towards abstraction and the geometrical line, itself an outward manifestation of man's reaction towards the impermanence of nature.

While *Enemy of the Stars* is essentially pessimistic in its portrayal of Arghol, the novel *Tarr* was much more positive. Both works were heavily influenced by Nietzsche in the quest to transcend life to achieve truth, but whereas Arghol fails, Tarr, largely succeeds. Tarr is presented as the creative artist able through the Nietzschean transcending of life to become a 'Self'. To quote Alistair Davies, Tarr is able to 'sublimate his sexual drives through creativity rather than repress them' to achieve true freedom.⁴⁸⁶ Christian moral values are swept aside: the tradition of Original Sin becomes meaningless to the intelligent and emancipated man. In terms of Art, good art represented permanence by transcending Death. The Nietzschean artist left a legacy for humankind, by not forecasting the romanticized world of the hereafter through godliness, but a world where only the strong made enduring works of art.

There is bad art and bad life. We will only consider the good= A statue, then is a dead thing; a lump of wood or stone. Its lines and masses are its soul. Anything living, quick and changing, is bad art, always; naked men and women are the worst art of all, because

⁴⁸⁴ P. Edwards, 'Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist Aesthetics and Literature', p. 116.

⁴⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 110.

⁴⁸⁶ A. Davies, 'Tarr: A Nietzschean Novel', in *Wyndham Lewis, A Revelation*, London, 1980, p. 110.

there are fewer semi-dead things about them.⁴⁸⁷

Here Tarr discusses Art and Life with Anastaysia, his lover, whom Tarr sees as anti-bourgeois, and in a Nietzschean sense, leads Tarr to sublimate his sexual drives through creativity rather than in repressing them.

Durman and Munton make the point that Lewis the artist should be able to practice his 'critical thought' by the separation of the subject matter from the spectator.⁴⁸⁸ Edwards when considering the 1912 *Kermesse* studies, *Lovers* (Fig. 54) and *The Dancers* (fig.1) agrees; Lewis is 'presenting an image of Dionysian abandon transfixed into geometrical rigidity'.⁴⁸⁹ Dionysus, son of Zeus, that most terrible yet most gentle of gods, is represented in Greek mythology in a number of guises: Bacchus in the element 'music', leading the Maenads in drunken Dionysian revels; but Dionysus in his vengeance tragically has the women tear Pentheus to pieces for opposing him. A second element in the myth is the intervention made by the poet, Homer, of the god Apollo into the Dionysiac. Apollo resists Dionysus turning him to stone by showing him the Gorgon's head. To cite Edwards: '*The Dancers* exhibits the Gorgon power of Apollo to solidify the fluid stream of Dionysian intoxication while using its energy'.⁴⁹⁰ By this act of transfixing the dancers 'to stone', Lewis may have seen himself as Apollo, the god of ideas and awareness, essentially an individualist, ready to intervene in the wild excesses of Dionysus, and go beyond detachment. It is in these Dionysian opposites that Lewis constructed his *Kermesse* studies of abandon overshadowed by the suggestion of violence. And in translating the myth to describe the condition of humanity, Lewis attributes this approach to Nietzsche.

Lewis drew on Nietzschean philosophical principles in his writing: such as the novel Tarr and play, *Enemy of the Stars* and extended this to his drawings and paintings: the *Kermesse* studies, the *Timon of*

⁴⁸⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 299.

⁴⁸⁸ M. Durman and A. Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', in *Wyndham Lewis, Letteratura/Pittura*, 1982, p. 110.

⁴⁸⁹ P. Edwards, *The growth of modernism in the writing and painting of Wyndham Lewis 1908-17*, PhD thesis, Royal Holloway University Library, Egham, 1994, p. 93.

⁴⁹⁰ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, p. 86.

Athens series and in his Vorticist painting, *The Crowd*. They are based on Nietzsche's lifelong study of myth, which he related to the state of humanity. *The Birth of Tragedy* dealt with myth on two levels: firstly as 'music and dance' in which the revelry can be seen as a drunken, orgiastic togetherness which excludes the individual, and then, in contrast, the tragic Dionysian plot. Nietzsche then states that the myth is beyond tragedy and reveals a terrible truth. This truth can be likened to the legend of Prometheus, whom Apollo punished by encasing him in stone so his liver can be eaten daily by an eagle. According to Nietzsche, the myth can be likened to the state the entire Aryan race:

What distinguishes the Aryan conception [from the Semitic] is the sublime view that active sin is the true Promethean virtue; thereby we have also found the ethical foundation of pessimistic tragedy, its justification of the evil in human life, both in the sense of human guilt and in the sense of suffering brought about by it.⁴⁹¹

Christiano Grottanelli adds: 'Humanity's highest good must be bought with crime and suffering, expressed in the Prometheus myth'.⁴⁹² The cultural forces of the two gods, Apollo and Dionysus are contrasted; the former representing the dialectic in the individual, the person who seeks the truth, while the latter represents exuberance crossing boundaries to the abyss. The Apollonian principle reaches out for a higher level of civilization through the intellect, but to attain the highest achievements in the arts and music, the Dionysian route signals that both danger and allure must also play their part.

Nietzsche's application of myth to humanity changed over time. The original 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy*, was hopeful for a German nation in which the German race would achieve redemption through suffering, -as Prometheus suffered in the myth. Here Nietzsche subscribed to the German Romantic thought that the nation achieved cohesion through its ancient roots. He developed a theory of nationhood based on the rebirth of the German myth by equating it to the Dionysian myth. The life of the tragic man through which redemption comes leads the Dionysian procession out of India to Greece: 'Now you must only dare to be tragic human beings, for you will be

⁴⁹¹ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, (eds.), R. Geuss & R. Speirs, 1999, p. 50.

⁴⁹² C. Grottanelli, 'Nietzsche and myth', in *History of Religions*, 37,(1), 1997, p.4.

released and redeemed'. The 'German myth' comes from the Romantic thought and philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and the work of the composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Nietzsche posed the difference between Dionysian and Semitic myths. Nietzsche related the latter to the Christian myth through the fall of Eve, laying the blame for the ills of the world on human weakness. The former essentially represented a male-dominated life offering no redemption, in which humanity's highest good must be bought through tragedy, crime and suffering. Nietzsche laid the greatest blame for the decline in tragedy on Socrates, the bringer of knowledge devoid of wisdom. For Socrates, everything must be conscious to be good. He stood for intellectualization and logic. The creative consciousness of the Dionysiac was ruptured. Only through music; through the German Romanticism of Wagnerian opera, could the Dionysiac be recaptured.

Nietzsche's next phase in applying the myth to humanity is much darker. By 1888, in the preface to a second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche turned against all ethical, religious and philosophical categories: there is no God, no sin, no redeemer: (*Der Antichrist*, published 1895): Religious truth is embodied in Nature: There is only Life; life must be affirmed: There is no crime; crime is part of life to be affirmed. Nietzsche was scathing of intellectual thought (which he saw as a move away from myth) instigated by Socrates in applying rationalism leading to a modern historical outlook. For Nietzsche there was no authentic absolute, only a set of contradictions that he called 'perspectivism'.

Lewis drew from Nietzsche, as he does from Bergson, where their theories have meaning for him, but never in totality. Lewis's reference to 'a statue' coincided with his comparing the attributes of the statue to those of music from *Time and Western Man*. He compares the mechanistic 'dead' statue with the ever-changing music, the former spatially fixed or 'concrete', the latter, governed by movement. Lewis dismissed the intuitive vitalist approach to art, as 'anything living, quick and changing, is bad art'. Lewis labelled Nietzsche's Dionysiac as pure *élan vital*. For Lewis, the intellect was the important factor that drove good art. Lewis is the artist who stands apart from common humanity. Lewis derived from Nietzsche the idea of the artist as 'the aristocrat of the spirit' who

‘has the potential for true freedom’, but for Lewis this can only be achieved through his detachment. Lewis singled out the German philosopher and historian, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) who he claimed identified the ‘classical’ with the ‘popular’; quoting him as saying; ‘Emotion is an exceptional and very noble thing, the intellect is a “popular” one’. Lewis continued; ‘This is the opposite of the view taken by Benda, or even, for that matter, by Nietzsche, or indeed by almost anybody’.⁴⁹³ By ‘anybody’ Lewis meant the discerning few. Lewis saw himself as an individual, not part of the crowd. The crowd was reserved for the bourgeoisie and on a more universal level, to the Dionysian un-redemptive world condemned to the ‘tragic plot’ of unremitting suffering. Shane Weller makes the point that Nietzsche in Lewis’s eyes could not break out from his formative years grounded in Schopenhauer’s pessimism, in the notion of the will.⁴⁹⁴ For Schopenhauer, the will controlled all human actions and they could only lead to ‘nothingness’. Society remained imprisoned in its unhappy, crime-ridden world. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian world mirrored that of Schopenhauer. The only redeeming factor was the great creative energy of Art over nihilism. Nietzsche wrote in *The Birth of Tragedy*, ‘for only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world externally *justified*’.⁴⁹⁵ By 1919, Lewis treated this statement with some scepticism:

But we would have to disembarass “art” of a good deal of cheap adhesive matter, and cheap and adhesive people, before it could appear a justification for anything at all: much less for such a gigantic and, from every point of view, dubious concern as the Universe!⁴⁹⁶

Although Lewis later came to mock Nietzsche as a ‘time philosopher’, dismissing the Dionysiac as ‘something that happens, between two opposites, when they meet in their pyrrhic encounters’⁴⁹⁷, he believed that Nietzsche sought ‘the will to Truth’: that ‘the “stronger and livelier” ones, are still

⁴⁹³ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p.283.

Spengler was famous for his book *Decline of the West* (1918 and revised 1922). He analyses the decline of the West after the 1st World War in a series of pessimistic predictions, which rationalize the economic downfall of Germany as part of a larger world historical process. Lewis dismisses his writing as that of a ‘Time philosopher’, a damning label that also applies to Whitehead, and of course, Bergson.

⁴⁹⁴ S. Weller, ‘Nietzsche among the Modernists: The Case of Wyndham Lewis’, *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 14, (no.4), Nov. 2007.

⁴⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, (eds.), R. Geuss & R. Speirs, 1999, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁶ Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph’s Design*, p.66.

⁴⁹⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p.21.

consumed with an appetite for life'. (Nietzsche, *Will to Power*). Weller singles out recent commentators Edwards, Foshay and Gasiorsek for casting a new light on Lewis's relationship with Nietzsche, not least, to correct the view that Lewis's right-wing political inclinations ('modernist as fascist') in the 1920s and 1930s were driven by Nietzsche's Superman (or Overman) in the realization of the essence of man as the will to power.

Toby Foshay identifies the years just before the First World War when Lewis was writing *Tarr* and *Enemy of the Stars* as the formative period, during which he was assimilating Nietzschean psychodynamics 'that had from the beginning, been at the basis of Lewis's understanding of both modernity and the artist's role within it'.⁴⁹⁸ He seeks to redeem Lewis by highlighting Jameson's analysis of Lewis's position and in particular his view that Lewis was 'characterized by a "consistent perversity."'⁴⁹⁹ Frederic Jameson came to this view because of the inconsistency between Lewis's standing as an important experimental modernist of his age and his continuous critique of modernism as a rapidly institutionalized movement lacking subversive force for society. While on closer scrutiny lacking substance, Lewis's critique has important connotations for a reassessment of his own standing as someone looking from outside at the accepted tenets of Modernism. Jameson casts Lewis as 'unwilling to identify himself with any class, position or ideological commitment'.⁵⁰⁰ Perceptively, Jameson goes on to identify his fall-back position as resting on the 'painter's eye'.

Lewis's critical approach to Modernism was by what he referred to as the 'external' approach. I have emphasised previously in this thesis the importance to Lewis's art of de Gourmont and Benda in claiming the superiority of the eye over the ear. To cite from Lewis's reasoning in *Men Without Art* concerning the internal and external approaches to contemporary literature:

- (1) The external approach to things belong to the 'classical' manner of apprehending: whereas the romantic outlook (though it may serve the turn of the 'transitionists') will

⁴⁹⁸ T. Foshay, *Wyndham Lewis and the avant-garde: the politics of the intellect*, 1992, p.4.

⁴⁹⁹ S. Weller, 'Nietzsche among the Modernists', p. 627.

⁵⁰⁰ F. Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis: The Modernist as Fascist*, Berkeley & London, 1979, p.17

not, I believe, attract the best intelligences in the coming years, and will not survive the period of 'transition'.

(2) The external approach to things (relying on the evidence of the eye rather than the more emotional organs of sense) can make of 'the grotesque' a healthy and attractive companion. Other approaches cannot do this.⁵⁰¹

He applied his own approach to painting, highlighting the masculine formalism of the Egyptian or the Chinese as the way forward for contemporary writing, in comparison with the stylistic writing of James Joyce and Henry James whose work was, at best, only at a transitional stage of development. Continuing the analogy, but if Joyce and James 'were to paint pictures'; 'these pictures would be the lineal descendants of the Hellenic naturalism'.⁵⁰² Lewis's dismissive critique argued that essentially their work was of a romantic, aesthetic flux-like nature:

There art (consisting in 'telling from the inside', as it is described) has for its backgrounds the naturalism (the flowing lines, the absence of linear organization, and also the inveterate humanism) of the Hellenic pictorial culture.⁵⁰³

According to Lewis they situated themselves on the inside looking out.

Religious Culture

Byzantine icon painting can provide a useful measure in understanding Lewis and Hulme's thinking on religion; its socio-political application through the power of the image. This section goes into some depth in describing power, both religious and temporal. I draw on Marie-José Mondzain's extensive structural analysis of the icon in order to cast light on Lewis's motivation to make two depictions of the icon: *Russian Scene*, and *Madonna and Child*, both from 1912, and ask the question; what do these images indicate about his religious beliefs? Medieval art was judged and controlled by the Church and by rulers who were frequently in conflict with one another. To quote Mondzain:

Throughout the twentieth century, the image had been at the heart of our concern for the safeguarding of liberty and thought. However, since a visual and audiovisual imperialism has invaded the planet and reduced all critical reflection and discussion to a state of servile stupor and acephalic fascination, it has become incumbent on us to attempt to understand the elements of a genealogy whose ultimate offspring is the

⁵⁰¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, Santa Rosa, 1989, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁰² Ibid, p. 127.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, p. 127.

carrier of the best as well as the worst of things⁵⁰⁴.

Mondzain traces this continuing conflict between truth and manipulation of the truth back to the Byzantine age of confrontation between iconoclasts and iconophiles and how the church leaders communicated their intuitive thought towards society. For them the argument revolved around what she calls ‘the fundamental interdependence that ties the fate of the artificial image, or icon, to the transfigured flesh of the natural, invisible image and to our living, corporeal reality as desiring, political and mortal beings’.⁵⁰⁵ Authority in the Byzantine world just as today, had an in-built tendency to manipulate the truth through the dissemination of images, and yet Mondzain argues that the initial polemic of the icon signifying the invisible truth of the Trinity, the ‘iconophiles’, versus the icon as a false idol distorting the truth, the ‘iconoclasts’, does not stand up to reality. She argues that the two sides cannot be understood without acknowledging that the interdependence of the iconoclasts and their adversaries really mirror the contradictions inherent in the nature of the image itself. For the Byzantine Christian church, behind the artificial image of the Trinity, the icon, stood a form of economy, or management, which in its turn underpinned temporal power, or State management. The Byzantine world was thus built on power determined by imagery that reflected a myth that for the believer bears the truth. This edifice might be threatened by a medieval tendency to worship the image itself and thus destroy it. Superficially the conflict between iconophile and iconoclast was conducted on this level, but what was really at stake for secular versus religious protagonists was the economy itself. That is as true today as it was then but now conducted in a lay and profound world. The equivalent of the ideological ‘icon’ still dictates politically the way authority operates in a way that modernists recognised in Lewis’s day just as artists do today.

The power derived from the concept of Original Sin occupied the socio-political thinking of T. E. Hulme and as demonstrated within this thesis, the transmission of these ideas into the imagery of the Vorticists, most notably Lewis and Epstein. Hulme did not directly use the concept in terms of the icon; rather he used the philosophical approach of Classicist versus Romanticist in terms of

⁵⁰⁴ M. Mondzain, Marie-José, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imagery*, Stanford, Calif 2005, p.xii.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. p. xiii.

humanity. The message Hulme provides relates to the fixed nature of man to the Deity that is bound up with classicism. Romanticism is bound up with rational thought and natural instincts, which according to Hulme are suppressed leading to agnosticism. Humankind begins to believe that man is a god. Hulme related these differences between romanticism and the classical to attitudes in poetry:

I can only say that it means the result of these two attitudes towards the cosmos, towards man in so far that it gets reflected in verse. The romantic, because he thinks man infinite...

What I mean by the classical in verse then is this. That 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.⁵⁰⁶

In politics, Hulme argued that the Conservatives should model their policy in a similar way: Liberalism stands for the unattainable; achieving 'heaven on earth'; Conservatives for the stability of the past using a mix of traditional beliefs and prejudices. The use of phrases and catchwords, which stand for certain emotions to the believer such as 'order', 'tradition', 'discipline' expresses a certain attitude. They stand for a deeply entrenched belief that Hulme could equate to the Byzantine world, a world revolving around the power of the icon. Can the use of such rhetoric change the course of politics and economy? Only when allied to imagery according to Hulme; and in applying the Byzantine model, to quote Mondzain, 'the icon is superior to hearing due to the speed in which they operate and their emotional effectiveness'.⁵⁰⁷ Hulme's case for Conservative policy derived from the Byzantine model of government in which temporal power flows from a religious doctrinal system: belief and obedience lead to belief and ruling. Who ever controls the imagery supporting this doctrine controls the economy; political, economic and cultural.

For Modernists, the monumental stability of Byzantine doctrinal belief; an absolute system of religious values expressed through the geometrical rigidity of their art, might equally be expressed

⁵⁰⁶ T. E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism', K. Csengeri (ed.), *The Collected Writings*, p. 62.

⁵⁰⁷ M. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imagery*, p. 6.

through art ‘to recover the real significance of many things which it seems absolutely impossible for the “modern” mind to understand’.⁵⁰⁸ Hulme, writing in 1914, thought Vorticist art exhibited this tendency towards a new sensibility in which, like Byzantine art, its geometrical rigidity left no trace of humanity. He singled out two Lewis paintings, (while reviewing the London Group exhibition of March 1914), *Eisteddfod* and *Christopher Columbus* (both are now lost), and perhaps taking icon painting as a benchmark, Hulme noted ‘they do not produce as a whole, the kind of coherent effect which according to the theory, they ought to produce, but on the whole sometimes lacks cohesion and unity’.⁵⁰⁹ Byzantine icon art relates to the presence of emptiness. By ‘presence’ we mean, for example, the body of Christ that we see as a human form captured in iconic space: carefully drawn lines enclosing the form. Nevertheless, for the believer, Mondzain states that the pictorial representation of Christ indicates a withdrawal from this world. It is a symbolic presence. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word is the image of God.⁵¹⁰ In the language of the icon the Trinity equals the Father, his Image, and the Voice.⁵¹¹ This Image of the Father, remembering that Christ is the image of God, is invisible and yet through the artificial image of the icon, God speaks to the viewer, and through the power of the icon lies the link between belief, obedience, and the Byzantine economy. The icon institutes a gaze and not an object of worship.

In terms of graphic space the line marks the beginning and the end. If the icon plane represents the world, the iconic line will enclose nothing; only the visible periphery of an invisible and transfigured Christ. It reiterates the incarnation and resurrection of the Saviour whose flesh is not of matter yet the light that forms his divine flesh is real and natural. The message of the icon is that light stands for our flesh before the fall, and through the way we live may redeem humankind again. This is the basic premise for the iconophile. The icon painter’s concern is that the image he draws must be a copy or an imprint of Christ. In effect the icon reoccupies the space of previous icons, and so on back to a lost theoretical model. But while being repetitive, the process is not

⁵⁰⁸ T. E. Hulme, ‘A Notebook’, *The New Age*, December 9, 1915.

⁵⁰⁹ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art III’, *The New Age*, March 26, 1914.

⁵¹⁰ ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’. (John 1:1).

⁵¹¹ ‘for it is not ye that speaks, but the Holy Ghost’, (Mark 13:11).

representable. This process is described as a graphic trace; a type of shadow. A close analogy that illustrates the medieval mind is the belief that the Turin shroud bears the graphic trace of Christ's departed body. The emphasis is to avoid any suggestion of the materialism of the flesh. To do so would be to open up the icon to iconoclast claims of worshipping the material body of Christ rather than celebrating the doctrine of incarnation and redemption. The icon portrays Christ as both before the resurrection in human form and as his luminous immateriality after he has risen. The icon painter must add the brilliance of the colours to achieve this state of luminous grace. This luminosity achieves two objectives: it provides a site of brilliance and light to maintain the gaze from within and also the absence; it leads the believer's eye to the divine symbolic presence and absence of Christ's mimetic image. The painter, who is also a believer, seeks the truth through the icon, a truth reciprocated by the viewer through the brilliance of the image. He applies his colours from the darkest through to the transparent, a process that compares with Christ's redemption of the flesh from darkness to the light.

The icon, and Byzantine art as a whole, had nothing to do with empathy as practiced in the Greek Classical style idealization of nature. With the icon, the natural material form is far removed. There is a tendency towards the abstract. The line that encloses 'nothing' is a symbolic enclosure of the departed transfigured Christ. The iconic provider of the image of Christ is the Virgin who within her womb delivers the Word through the flesh of Christ. Indeed, 'the Virginal womb and the child are one and the same form'.⁵¹² The icon is occupied with spiritual and symbolic meaning, the Virgin Mother providing the means of transmitting the Word through the image of Christ. The 'Mother' Church becomes 'as one' with the Virgin thus appropriating the power of the icon.

In 1912, Lewis made the drawing *Russian Scene*, also known as *Russian Madonna* (Fig. 55) an image depicting mother and child in the manner of an icon. His thinking in making this image leaves a number of uncertainties about its purpose. Structurally the image has the outward characteristics of the Byzantine icon, and has much in common with Matisse's portrait of his daughter Marguerite, *Girl with a Black Cat* (1910) (Fig. 56). Matisse's painting was featured prominently in Fry's Second

⁵¹² M. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, p.160.

Post-Impressionist Exhibition, from October 1911 to January 1912, as the main poster image. There is an extreme sensibility about this painting that leads me to believe that Lewis tried to capture it in *Russian Scene*. Fry's article in 1918, *Line as an Expression in Modern Art*, made the point that Matisse's companion pencil drawing to the painting extolled the simplicity of the scheme drawing, the power of the line to evoke the idea of volume and mass, an ideal that Lewis may have tried to replicate.⁵¹³ In the drawing *Russian Scene* the mother sits looking vulnerable, the clinging clothes revealing her body as if from within, her covered head to one side, and her expression is one of sadness. The child she holds looks distraught with head and arm pointing upwards, and in the tradition of the icon, heavenward. Edwards points out that *Russian Scene* forms a continuity with the drawings *Figure holding a Flower*, *Two Figures*, *The Starry Sky* (Fig. 57) and *Man and Woman* (Fig.58) all made in 1912: 'The primitive figures in the pseudo-pastoral drawings ...are partly silhouetted against the sky. But the lower parts of their bodies...are seen against a ground which exhibits "Cubist" striations similar to those from which their own flesh is modelled'.⁵¹⁴ He relates their ungainly bodies to the material earth to which they are partially attached. Lewis's ink and wash drawing *Two Mechanics* (1912) forms a continuation of the series, but where contact with the earth, and by inference, nature, becomes less pronounced. Lewis had moved humanity towards a machine-like representation. The inference is that Lewis follows Bergson in his mapping out of humanity's evolutionary struggles, to break free from nature's materialism and attain a status not dependent on empirical cause and effect. But this reasoning does not hold ground when related to the Byzantine Virgin icon, whose material form is totally absent and whose image is entirely one of spirituality and humanity. Yet there remains a closeness to the doctrine of the icon in Lewis's practice concerning an existential relationship to the presence of emptiness. The concept of humankind as machine indicates emptiness lacking humanity. The icon line encloses nothing. Christ is not the prisoner of the icon but his presence absence creates a duality between closure and openness, between the word and humanity. If Lewis did not intend the Madonna to be seen as an icon then what was he trying to portray? A clue can be found in the novel *Tarr* that Lewis was writing in 1912. The character Tarr explains to Anastasya Vasek the nature of good art as having

⁵¹³ R. Fry, 'Line as an Expression in Modern Art', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.33, No. 189, Dec. 1918.

⁵¹⁴ P. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, 2000, p.67.

two conditions; deadness and absence of soul. Lewis is saying what you see is what you get; nothing else. But in effect this is what Lewis wants the viewer to see. He cannot exclude the world outside his imagination. To quote Schenker, 'Thus, While Tarr's first condition of art celebrates the genius of the artist, it also serves to remind writers and painters of the limitations imposed upon them by an environment that can no more be denied of imagination than death can be denied'.⁵¹⁵ Just as Tarr finds he cannot fully exclude the material world, Lewis's depiction of mother and child works cannot easily be transformed from a pathway for revealed religion to an image that reveals an absence of soul.

In this thesis I have discussed the references to *The Birth of Tragedy* in Lewis's approach to *Tarr* and his *Enemy of the Stars*. In both works Lewis tests just how far his protagonists can transcend material existence to achieve a true authentic identity outside 'life'. Nietzsche's influence became an increasingly pessimistic one that Lewis tries to counter with his manifesto *Blast* in the first issue through rhetorical propaganda. But he only achieved this position by 1914. In 1912, Lewis struggled to acquire a *modus operandi* in which his intellect was the driving force, a difficult concept to sustain in challenging religious imagery pitted against the dogma of the church. It is likely that Lewis saw the icon as a mystical object, a talisman or a fetish. *The Wild Body* stories of Breton peasants point to both Bergsonian marking time in evolutionary development, hence the figures retarded by their relationship with the material ground in his imagery, and in the relationship between these characters and their 'patterned' behaviour. This type of repetitive behaviour featured in the story *Inferior Religions*, in which Lewis likens to a world, to quote from the story: 'They are like little dead Totems. Just as all Gods are a repose for humanity, the big religions an important refuge and rest, so these little grotesque idols are'.⁵¹⁶ Writing in *Time and Western Man* (1927) Lewis positions himself as narrator and creator. 'For me art is the civilized substitute for magic; as philosophy is what, on a higher or more complex plane, takes the place of religion'.⁵¹⁷ One is led to the conclusion that the 1912 drawing *Russian Scene* depicts the Virgin and Child as a fetish object

⁵¹⁵ D. Schenker, *Wyndham Lewis: Religion and Modernism*, Tuscaloosa, 1992, p.32.

⁵¹⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Inferior Religions', (1917), *The Complete Wild Body*, Black Sparrow, 1982, p.316.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. p.188.

and that Lewis saw himself as transcending the Self with the intolerant and uncompromising view of the world of a Calvinist preacher decrying idolatry.

Lewis's only other known image of a 'mother and child' from this period is a painting that he exhibited in Fry's Second Impressionist Exhibition. The painting *Mother and Child* (1912) (Fig.61) is now lost, but a reproduction of it survives from *The Sketch* of 9 October 1912. The painting, reproduced in Edwards *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer* alongside *Russian Scene* depicts a much more considered Virgin in which Lewis begins to incorporate the flat diagonal forms in order to create a sense of monumentality about the Virgin's body.⁵¹⁸ The serpent like head and her over-large, over-emphasized, right hand feel out of kilter with the semi-abstract formal arrangement of her body. The excessively distorted right hand may be derived from Picasso's 1901 painting *Absinthe Drinker* (Fig. 62). Nevertheless, the relationship of Christ's image to that of the Virgin is one of togetherness; a merging of geometrical folds of the drapery to create a centrifugal effect in this occupied space radiating out from the child. Lewis adheres to the received meaning of the Christian icon; a map of the occupation of the spirit, yet radiating out spirituality where iconic space has no boundaries. However, as Edwards points out: 'The painting will not contentedly accept the premise of traditional representations of Madonna and Child, that spirit is incarnated in the flesh'.⁵¹⁹ Instead, as Schenker notes, 'aesthetics of deadness represent Lewis's disenchantment with humanism and his desire for art like that of the Egyptians that acknowledged man's cosmic insignificance- his desire, in short, for a religious art'.⁵²⁰ Lewis, not at that time a practising Christian, nevertheless saw himself as a self-appointed prophet, or perhaps a Calvinist leader. He saw the need for ordinary people to embrace the religious tradition of dogma as a social control mechanism but exempted himself on the grounds of his creative ability. In a letter to Augustus John, Lewis wrote: 'My weaknesses and vices are quite patent to me, and I live with them with alternate irritation and bonhomie...I believe with a Calvinistic uncompromisingness that one cannot be too hard on the stupidities of our neighbours'.⁵²¹ *Mother and Child* fulfils Tarr's second

⁵¹⁸ P. Edwards. *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, p.70.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, p.70.

⁵²⁰ D. Schenker, *Wyndham Lewis: Religion and Modernism*, p.95.

⁵²¹ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, No. 44A, p.44.

condition of good art; the absence of soul in the ‘sentimental human sense’ but in doing so creates a barrier to what the icon stands for without putting something else in its place. (The essential difference between *Russian Scene* and *Mother and Child* is that with the former, Lewis’s visual image aspires to break free from earthbound materiality to the cosmic spiritual world). The mechanism to achieve this is through the power of art. *Mother and Child* sought to achieve a different form of detachment from the sensual world, by removing ‘the soft inside of life’, through geometrical, monumental and rigid form. The iconic content of *Russian Scene* represents an inaccessible authentic absolute, a mythical belief, which may, in terms of *Inferior Religions*, be seen as a superstition. *Mother and Child* can be interpreted as a breaking out of this tradition.

There is another Lewis drawing that, despite its title, assumes some of the characteristics of the Virgin and Child drawings, *The Courtesan* (1912). Here what is striking is the positioning of the figure’s left arm in a protective enveloping way that repeats the composure of the two mother and child works of the same year. The subjects are diametrically opposed. Cork describes *The Courtesan* as ‘a theme as time-honoured as that of a procuress whispering in a prostitute’s ear’ and ‘a stern agglomeration of mask-like faces, elongated arms as straight as connecting rods, and purely abstract forms arranged together with great precision on paper’.⁵²² The drawing was bought at the time by Captain Guy Baker, an important patron and friend of Lewis, and bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1919. The friendship of Baker to Lewis suggests that the title was Lewis’s own.

Lewis and Bloomsbury.

Earlier in this chapter I set out to ascertain to what extent Lewis, endeavouring to find an art form and to establish himself as an avant-garde practitioner, was drawn to an older and worldlier artist and art facilitator, Roger Fry. I concluded that Lewis was most likely influenced in his practice by Fry’s theories when defining an aesthetic for a new modernism in art though heavily reliant on the Post-Impressionism of Cézanne. Fry was clearly drawn to Lewis by the emphasis the latter placed

⁵²² R. Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the Machine Age*, Vol. 1, 1975, pp. 31-32.

on form and the inventiveness of his style. He saw Lewis as an important potential member of the group of young artists associated with his ambitions for a new avant-garde that clearly could be identified as a specifically British movement. To this end Fry included Lewis in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in October 1912, together with Gore, Grant, Lamb, Adeney, Etchells, Hamilton and Wadsworth. Fry had successfully tried out the idea of a group working together on a project in 1911 for the London Borough Polytechnic dining room, the major contributors being Grant and Etchells. The Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition confirmed Fry as the leader of the avant-garde in Britain by the critics who were beginning to accept that the art of Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Matisse had achieved public recognition. Fry went on to organize two further exhibitions in 1913; at the Galerie Barbazanes, Paris, containing work by Vanessa Bell, Etchells, Grant and Lewis, and at Liverpool. Fry was motivated to create a pool of artists working together to make fine, yet decorative art that incorporated both purity and structure. Hence, the Omega Workshops were established in July 1913 at 33 Fitzroy Square.

Lewis was thirty years old in July 1913 when he joined Omega; an artist who was becoming noticed for his innovative work, but whose finances reflected his lack of sales. On the face of it, the Workshops offered a guaranteed daily income for three and a half days work. Yet Lewis's ego was totally unsuited to a collective occupation. Artists were engaged in applying decorative design to bought items of furniture, or in designing patterns for soft furnishings. Their output was meant to be anonymous, although their various styles are identifiable. From the start it was inevitable that Lewis would not accept Fry's leadership of the project, partly because he would have seen his own art as superior to Fry's rather pedestrian work, but primarily because Lewis considered himself intellectually to be the superior man. Lewis was an outsider, an early school-leaver; unlike Fry, who was a member of the Cambridge Apostles, or as Lewis dubbed Fry and his associates, 'Cambridge Post-Aestheticists'.⁵²³ Lewis's disdain towards Fry and his Cambridge companions found its way into his novel *Tarr* through the scathing polemic Tarr directed at his Parisian acquaintance Hobson.

The Cambridge set that you represent is, as observed in an average specimen, a cross

⁵²³ Wyndham Lewis, 'The London Group 1915 (March)', *Blast* 2, p. 79.

between a Quaker, a Pederast and a Chelsea artist=Your Oxford brothers; dating from the Wilde decade, are a stronger body. The Chelsea artists are much less flimsy. The Quakers are powerful rascal.⁵²⁴

Lewis then extends his criticism of Hobson describing him as a bourgeois Liberal masquerading as a bohemian:

‘You represent, my dear fellow, the dregs of Anglo-Saxon civilisation! =There is nothing softer on earth=Your flabby potion is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent nineties, the wardrobe-leavings of a vulgar Bohemianism with its headquarters in Chelsea!’⁵²⁵

Although Hobson is associated with Oscar Wilde, the real target is Bloomsbury.

Working in 1913 as an art historian teaching at the Slade, Fry had previously been curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in 1913 was co-editor and director of the influential *Burlington Magazine*. Fry and Lewis’s personalities were quite different: Fry had a Quaker upbringing; Lewis the product of a parents’ broken marriage, was very close to his indulgent mother, and reliant until they ceased, on intermittent remittances sent by his American father to support his post-Slade European art studies. Lewis gained from Fry’s theories on modern art with their emphasis on the formal qualities of pre-modern art. Fry recognised Lewis’s important contribution to shaping the new, so the benefits were mutual. However, Lewis’s personality led him to mistrust Fry’s motivations. He felt the relationship was one-sided, that the benefits were all accruing to Fry and, because he tended not to be outgoing, Lewis construed Fry’s business acumen as being ‘short-changing’.

The dramatic exit of Lewis and his colleagues from the Omega Workshop over the disputed *Daily Mail* contract is described in Chapter One. The break-up soured Lewis’s relationship with Fry and the Bloomsbury Group thereafter, and he was to make many disparaging comments throughout his lifetime about their art. Yet the working relationship between Duncan Grant and Lewis in the

⁵²⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 34.

Workshops had been productive. Grant stood outside the intellectual circle of Bloomsbury, his schooling being as brief as Lewis's, but he had family connections with the Bloomsbury insider Lytton Strachey. He had been part of Vanessa Bell's (nee Stephen) Friday Club for artists. Like Lewis, he had attended the Slade, studied in Paris and travelled extensively on the Continent all-be-it as a poor relation. Although well read, Grant, unlike Lewis, did not leave any writing of note on literature or art. Simon Watney writes: 'He never illustrated theories, and was very much an instinctive artist, rather than an intellectual'.⁵²⁶ But his knowledge of art history was extensive, drawing on for example, Giotto, Piero della Francesca, and Titian as major influences in his imagery. Like Lewis, Grant also applied the flat surface style of Byzantine art to his art. His monumental painting, *Bathers* (1911) (Fig. 63) from the Borough Polytechnic dining room project with its wavy seawater bands comes directly out of Byzantine frescoes such as *The Transporting of St. Marks Reliquary* (Fig. 64) a mid-thirteenth century mosaic from St Marks in Venice. The swimmers depicted in *Bathers* form a progression towards the boat suggesting the continuous movement of a single figure. This technique is closely modelled on the Byzantine preference for indexical repetition in their iconic imagery as a sign or signifier. Unlike Lewis, Grant's historical references are much more obvious; for example, the headgear-cum-baskets worn in *The Lemon Gatherers* (two versions 1910 (Fig. 65) and 1912) related directly to the women's hats painted by Piero della Francesca in his San Francesco frescoes, at Arezzo (1466). A second reference can be found in the stance of the three women in della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* (1448-50) Fig. 66) in the National Gallery. Grant is a Modernist in that his style questions the conventions of realism through his engagements with history, unlike Lewis who layers in the conventions of history but depicts modern life by engaging with the metaphor of the machine. Grant's flat style of painting echoes the different styles of Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso but in a far wider historical context, and yet one cannot really regard his output as 'critical' of the world around him. Nevertheless, you cannot dismiss his work as 'decorative' in the disparaging way that Lewis, Pound and Hulme did.

⁵²⁶ S. Watney, *The Art of Duncan Grant*, London, 1990, p. 9.

As suggested above, Grant's output during the period 1910 to 1914 cannot be easily compared with Lewis. In their own ways, both artists produced engaging and challenging work. However, Lewis's output was intellectually deeper and more layered in its content. The year 1912-13 marked tremendous advances in Lewis's practice. Grant relied more on more obvious art history references in influencing the structure of his work. *Bathers*, (1911), working to the polytechnic's unpromising brief 'London on Holiday', shows Grant at his most innovative and clearly moving away from his earlier style typified by *The Dancers* (1910) (Fig. 67). *The Dancers* relates directly to Burne-Jones' Symbolist painting *The Garden of Hesperides: three female figures dancing and playing* (1870) (Fig. 68) with structural input from Lorenzetti's fourteenth century frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. One cannot clearly map out where Grant is going as you can with Lewis's progression in form to Vorticism. *The Tub* (1912) and *Head of Eve* (1913) shows a striking change of style towards a direct and penetratingly simplified image of the female form. The peacock feathers motif that Grant used in both paintings can be traced back to a ceramic at St. Vitale, Ravenna depicting peacocks. The marked red and black hatchings are derived from Picasso's Cubist painting, *Head of Sleeping Woman* (1907) (Fig. 69) and *Study for Nude with Drapery* (1907) (Fig. 70). The compositional arrangement of *The Tub* bears a close resemblance to that of Picasso's *Petit nu assis* (Woman examining her feet) (1907) (Fig. 71). The loose brushwork and patchwork colours are typical of Cézanne's work. But as artworks their conception is arrestingly modern in their own right and not imitative. Yet Grant by 1914 has a change of direction into abstract form unrelated to what came before.

The Bloomsbury tradition was a far cry from Lewis's articulation of Modernism centred on the metaphor of the machine. Fry's motivation in setting up the Omega Workshops was largely a yearning for the Arts and Crafts tradition of the handmade, and with it, the notion of purity. As S. K. Tillyard points out; 'The notion of purity, as opposed to inessential luxuriousness, was central to both Modernist and Arts and Crafts thinking'.⁵²⁷ The stark simplicity of the materials themselves was seen as at the heart of this notion of purity. Lewis's notion of purity was of a more metaphysical nature; that good art depended on a structure stripped down to what he described as

⁵²⁷ S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1900-1920*, 1988, p. 48.

‘nakedness and skeletal form’. Yet there were similarities in that Fry’s enthusiasm for Byzantine art was centred on the stripping away of all that was superfluous. What mattered to the Byzantines was a purity of form bound up in the material qualities of their ceramics. In 1907 Fry used the term ‘truth to nature’ meaning not likeness to nature but ‘the emotional elements inherent in natural form’. By 1910 Fry was applying this maxim to the Post-Impressionists in not trying to imitate form but to create form. Reality meant finding an equivalent for life, not an illusion resulting from imitating life. Lewis employed a skeletal form as subject matter in the drawing *Alcibiades* (1912) in appropriating the structural arrangement of the army lances from Uccello’s painting *The Battle of San Romano* (Fig.13). The outcome creates a structure of strong diagonals that pins down the force of Alcibiades’ progression across the picture plane. Lewis was not imitating Uccello but creates a formal arrangement that is ‘an equivalent for life’ depicting the downfall of Timon, trapped within nature. When Lewis moved further into abstraction in the *Timon* series of drawings with *Composition* (1912), does he follow early Modernist thinking of revealing the truth to nature? Possibly, but what develop from these forms are the machine-like lines and masses associated with Vorticism that should be seen as an *alternative* to truth to nature: as an alternative depiction of reality. This stage of development is found in Lewis’s *Composition* (1913) (Fig. 72), with its structural antecedent in the 1912 *Composition*, and in that sense developed out of nature but should be judged as totally divorced from nature. It is an abstraction in its own right and to quote Hulme:

Both realism and abstraction, then, can only be engendered out of nature, but while the first’s only idea of living seems to be that of hanging on to its progenitor, the second cuts its umbilical cord.⁵²⁸

Hulme was replying to Charles Ginner’s belief that great art can only be created out of a continuing intercourse with nature.⁵²⁹ Fry, after 1910 and the Post-Impressionists Show, found it difficult to fully subscribe to Hulme’s views on what constituted abstraction. In effect Fry, like Ginner, reasoned from nature as the starting point rather than accepting full abstraction as an alternative to nature.

⁵²⁸ T. E. Hulme, ‘Modern Art- II’, *The New Age*, 12th Feb. 1914, p. 469.

⁵²⁹ C. Ginner, ‘Neo-Realism’, *The New Age*, 1st Jan. 1914, pp. 271-2.

If we look at the Fry/Grant and the Lewis/Hulme grouping as two separate and diametrically opposed camps during 1913-1914, were their differences essentially ideological or purely driven by personal animosity or by market competition? One suspects that any supposed ideological differences were generated by rivalry, and the most vocal expressions came from the latter group. For example, Hulme's remarked on the former while reviewing The London Group exhibition in March 1914; 'the works of the painters I have just mentioned...(Gore, Gilman, Ginner, Bevan)...(are) infinitely better than the faked stuff produced by Mr Roger Fry and his friends'.⁵³⁰ He does not elaborate on why, and in fact the Bloomsbury painters did not participate in the exhibition. Both Fry and Hulme defined the best art as falling into abstraction but neither totally lost sight of nature as a starting point. Fry wanted to make the full break but couldn't incorporate an ideology that excluded nature. Hulme wrote of how *cutting the umbilical cord* could not fully resolve nature's exclusion. It is really a matter of semantics; what counts are the sensibilities of the viewer. In the case of the Vorticists it is about (abstract) form generating a method of expression that encompasses the energy of modern life. Lewis even attempted to appropriate nature as a concept to distance himself from Bloomsbury. To quote from the second issue of *Blast*, the War number:

You must be able to organize the cups, saucers and people, or their abstract plastic equivalent, as naturally as Nature, only with the added logic of Art that gives the grouping significance.⁵³¹

Here Lewis was in effect *cutting the umbilical cord*. The label 'Decorative' artist is reserved for Bloomsbury,

Mr Roger Fry's little belated Morris movement...The only people who have nothing to do with Nature and who as artists are most definitely inept and in the same box as the Romantic, - who is half-way between the Vegetable and the God—are these between-men, with that most odious product of man, modern DECORATION.⁵³²

The above quotes are purely polemical. Lewis could no more invent his personal use of nature than he could exclude nature from Fry's Bloomsbury. A more reasoned criticism was that Bloomsbury's

⁵³⁰ T. E. Hulme, 'Modern Art- III, *The New Age*, 26th Mar. 1914, p. 661.

⁵³¹ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast* 2, 1915, p. 46.

⁵³² *Ibid.* p. 46.

enthusiasm for Byzantine art, as a constituent part of Post-Impressionism, never went beyond formal structure; labelled by Bell as ‘significant form’. Unlike Hulme, Fry did not link ‘attitude’ to pre-modern art and how such an attitude of self-containment, or even isolation, might relate to the conditions prevailing in modern life. While Fry and Bell were still engaged in the romantic versus classical debate for good art, Hulme, by 1914 had redefined the debate as humanist versus religious attitudes as the key *factors* defining modern life through art. Yet, the battle lines between Hulme/Lewis and Bloomsbury were marked by the accusation of ‘modern decoration’ against Bloomsbury for their incorporation of Byzantine decorative style, particularly in Grant’s work. What did Lewis mean by calling Bloomsbury ‘between men’? Tillyard suggests that Hulme by inference excludes Fry’s championing of abstraction from the argument with Ginner over realism versus abstraction. To quote Tillyard, ‘But he also allowed Ginner’s criticism of Fry to stand by distinguishing between abstraction that was vital and active, and abstraction that was conventionalised, mannered or decorative’.⁵³³ In Lewis’s critique in *Blast 2*, the War number, Bloomsbury’s art was completely removed from Hulme’s register of what constituted modern art.

One striking difference between the art practiced by the Bloomsbury Group, and by Lewis was the former’s preference for still-life painting. This predication was modelled on the French, and notably Picasso. Lewis recognized Picasso as the outstanding leader of the avant-garde while at the same time denigrating him for his limited subject matter and for his lack of energy. Lewis’s Cubist input, particularly in his early formative work such as *The Theatre Manager* (1909) and *Smiling Woman Ascending a Staircase* (1911) (Fig. 73) was clearly recognizable. These two drawings are Cubist in style, although the latter hints at the shard-like structural forms to come that Lewis later developed into Vorticism. Critics have likened *The Theatre Manager* to Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*, but this is mere speculation as Lewis had not viewed the painting and while his figures, like Picasso’s, have their origins in Primitive art, they lack the stylistic disjunctiveness, the sub-human masks, and confrontational impact of *Les Femmes d’Alger*. Lewis’s criticism of Picasso coincided with his enmity against Bloomsbury after the break up in August 1913 over the Ideal Home contract and one gets

⁵³³ S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1900-1920*, p. 233.

the impression that Picasso has been used as a lever against Fry. Tillyard argues that after the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition the critics could not understand Picasso and therefore condemned his work. They linked Lewis, who had work in that show with Picasso, but without any explanation inferring that Lewis was somehow inferior to him. Fry, whose strength lay with interpreting Cézanne, could not fully explain Picasso's work to the critics, and fell back on 'instinct' as an explanation. Writing in the *Nation* on Picasso that 'sensitivity is his most salient characteristic', Fry weakly admitted regarding Picasso's latest works, 'I confess I take them somewhat on trust'.⁵³⁴ By late 1912, French Post-Impressionist painting was largely accepted by the critics as the standard by which British avant-garde art might be judged, with Matisse singled out as the model to follow. For Lewis, Picasso and Bloomsbury were linked, a connection he was at pains to make in *The Caliph's Design*.⁵³⁵ To quote Tillyard: 'This may have been in part because he held Bloomsbury responsible for the way in which his work was regarded'.⁵³⁶ To promote Vorticism as a unique art movement, Lewis had to dissociate it from Post-Impressionism, Futurism and Cubism; objectives the first issue of *Blast* was devoted to. At the same time he made it plain that the art of Bloomsbury was merely imitative of the French avant-garde with particular regard to Picasso and Matisse. This aim is neatly summarised in 'A Review of Contemporary Art' in the second issue of *Blast*:

7. 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 the same objections can be made to them as to Matisse DECORATION.

8. The most abject, anaemic, and amateurish manifestation of this Matisse "decorativeness" or Picasso deadness and bland arrangement, could no doubt be found (if that was necessary or served any useful purpose) in Mr Fry's curtain and pincushion factory in Fitzroy Square.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ R. Fry, *The Nation*, 9th Nov. 1912, p. 250.

⁵³⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph's Design*, p. 69.

⁵³⁶ S. K. Tillyard, p. 208.

⁵³⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast*2, p. 41.

Art Culture from the Orient

This final section covers Oriental art: enthusiastically received in the West but its significance little understood. I show how a leading expert in the early twentieth century, Laurence Binyon, judged its quality by Western principles. His book *Flight of the Dragon* includes long passages describing the aesthetics of Oriental Art in the Bergsonian language of ‘rhythmic vitality’. Fry, another enthusiast, echoed Binyon’s analysis. Lewis’s approach was different and in keeping with his general approach to art. For Lewis, it was the Oriental artists’ rejection of shadow, or ‘shallowness’; the ‘outside’ or plastic qualities of their images that counted; qualities of the ‘objectified’ or ‘visuals’, and not what lay underneath. I highlight the Vorticist drawing *Abstract Bird* describing how Lewis uses the bird image as a metaphor for containment of ‘the herd’. My research pinpoints a portfolio of Japanese woodcut prints, *Picture Book Mirror of Birds and Flowers* (1790) in the British Museum collection that Lewis may have had access to as a possible model since his connections with Binyon, the Deputy Keeper of the BM print room, were long established from Lewis’s time at the Slade.

Chinese and Japanese art from the 1850’s attracted the attention of Western artists and intellectuals. In London the hub of activity was centred on the British Museum. Lewis and Pound were drawn into thinking about cultural exchange through their friendship with Binyon who had established a reputation as a leading expert on Oriental art through the series of public lectures he delivered at the Royal Albert Hall in 1909 on the analogies between European and Asian art. Pound attended these lectures and may have used Binyon’s structural analysis to influence the *Cantos*. He shared an interest with Binyon in Japanese prints associated with the ‘floating world’ of Edo (now Tokyo), a world of pleasure spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After 1850, Japanese trade with the West rapidly, and forcibly, expanded. Prints became more accessible and relatively inexpensive, attracting the attention of artists ranging from the French Impressionists to the Symbolists. In Britain, the American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler brought the Japanese concept into his paintings both directly in figure posture and clothing, and more subtly in juxtaposing more than a hint of the floating world of Edo. Whistler transposed this floating world to his Thames series of paintings and etchings made between 1870 and 1900. Pound, an admirer of Whistler’s painting, was

first attracted through his interest in Japanese *hokkeu* poetry; typically seventeen syllable verse that was often presented with a companion illustration. *In a Station of the Metro*, Pound's most famous Imagist poem, has its origins in the Japanese tradition of twinning the *hokkeu* with a corresponding illustration, the *haiga*, often painted by the poet, in this case probably the eighteenth century artist Suzuki Harumobu.

The catalyst that brought 'the new (avant-garde) art' from Continental Europe to London was the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery in 1910. Work by artists such as Cézanne, who had been dead for four years, and Manet for twenty-seven, were greeted with horror by the critics. Those who chose to be more responsive began to analyse what underpinned these new art forms, for example Picasso's cubist simplification of the human face derived from African tribal masks. Gauguin was employing the structural form and colour techniques of Japanese prints. Typical elements include bright colours, flattened space, unusual viewpoints, and heavy outline. The Oriental depiction of nature provided a quite different order of perception to the European tradition. Critics in the West saw Oriental art as an all-inclusive and non-hierarchical arrangement, but suggesting an intense rapport with nature. This misguided but universal interpretation chimed with the myth that their art indicated an arrested civilization, a child-like interpretation of nature. The reality is that theirs is a highly sophisticated art containing nuances of meaning and subtle allusions.

In Lewis's mind, surface, or 'solidness', equated with 'Classical'. Quoting from his *Men without Art*, written in 1934,

The 'classical' has a physiognomy of sorts, then: it has a solid aspect rather than a gaseous: it is liable to incline rather to the side of Aristotle than to the side of Plato: to be of a public rather than of a private character: to be objective rather than subjective: to incline to action rather than to dream: to belong to the sensuous side rather than the ascetic: to be redolent of common sense rather than of metaphysic: to be universal rather than idiomatic: to lean upon the intellect rather than upon the bowels and the nerves.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *Men without Art*, 1934, p.190.

Reading between the lines, the above was an indirect attack on Bergson. Lewis was warning his readers against being seduced by the ‘organic’ life-doctrine of the time-philosopher; the move away from the ‘common-sense’. According to Lewis, ‘organic’ life-doctrine meant that all that was too ‘concrete’ was left behind for the emphasis on ‘life’ and ‘mind’. The plasticity of the object was rejected in favour of the ‘musical object’ that generated rhythm but, unlike the concrete, could not be placed in space; it had no ‘spatiality’.

The key factor governing Lewis’s approach rested on the superiority of the eye over the ear, or perceptually, the ‘outside’ over the ‘inside’. A philosophy of the eye, or a *visual*, Lewis ascribed to de Gourmont. (However, to be accurate, de Gourmont also described *visuals* as *sensorials*, including all the senses, with the eye being the most important). Lewis wrote in *Men Without Art*, ‘it is the shell of the animal that the plastic-minded artist will prefer... (and then went on to write)...not its intestines’. He attributed this plastic quality to non-Western art: ‘the sculpture of the Pharaohs, ‘the masculine formalism of the Egyptian or the Chinese’.⁵³⁹ (‘Masculine’ was an important gender assumption in Lewis’s art.) The naturalism of Greek classical sculpture, by way of comparison, Lewis described as ‘a phenomenon of decadence’. An example of masculine formalism can be seen in the Japanese seventeenth century lacquered wooden sculpture of a retired townsman in Buddhist robes held in the British Museum Asian Art collection. Although *Men without Art* was written twenty years later than the period covered by this thesis, as early as 1913-14 Lewis was proclaiming the philosophy of the eye in his novel *Tarr*.

For Lewis, art was all about the outside, or the surface. This was the way that he used Oriental art; the shallow space, the absence of dramatic light and shade, the firmness of line, the blocks of unmodulated colour, and the absence of perspective. His emphasis on the shell reveals two important aspects of Lewis’s approach to Nature. Firstly, that Nature’s place in Art may only be judged by its outside, or shell. Secondly, what’s under the shell, pulsating Life, has no place in Lewis’s art. His art has no inside. Nature in art is dead. Lewis’s art does not associate the beating heart of humanity

⁵³⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Men without Art*, p. 127.

with the natural world. This would appear to place an unbridgeable gulf between the Oriental attitude to Life and Nature and Lewis's attitude to Nature, certainly as Oriental art was interpreted by scholars at that time. Lewis did not see Oriental art as, to quote Lawrence Binyon, 'rhythm emanating from an inner fire', but as an outward manifestation of 'its lines and masses' being its soul.⁵⁴⁰

As already stated above, Lewis's approach to Oriental art was through form. A clue to his thinking can be gleaned from the *Blast 1* article *Feng Shui and Contemporary Form*. Here Lewis discussed the relationship between the Oriental mind and the environment. Under the heading 'geomancy'. Lewis wrote;

Geomancy is the art by which the favourable influence of the shape of trees, weight of neighbouring water and its colour, height of surrounding houses, is determined.

"No Chinese street is built to form a line of uniform height" (H.A.Giles) the houses are of unequal height to fit the destinies of the inhabitants.⁵⁴¹

Lewis compared good geomancers to good artists. In painting, 'certain forms MUST be SO'. He was not relating the emotionally abstract, rather that good artists have an in-built sensitivity to shapes, to patterns, to internalizing weight. Lewis may well have modelled himself here on de Gourmont's theory of language, where a good writer must translate sensations into images, the images become ideas and finally the ideas become emotions but must originate from the senses. What is important about this final stage in realizing a work of art is that the emotions must relate to the 'concrete'. This is essentially linked to the painter's 'eye', not his 'ear'. Pound, much influenced by de Gourmont, and steeped in the work of the Orientalist Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) similarly approached geomancy. Vorticist art made Pound see 'form'. Writing in *The Egoist* in January 1915, Pound explained how he, as a Vorticist, perceived form:

I have my new and swift perceptions of forms, of possible form-motifs; I have double or treble or tenfold set of stimulæ in going from my home in Piccadilly. What was a dull row of houses is become a magazine of forms. There are new ways of seeing

⁵⁴⁰ L. Binyon, 'The Relation of Man to Nature', in *The Flight of the Dragon*. 1972, pp. 22-27.

⁵⁴¹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Vortices and Notes; Fen Shui and Contemporary Notes', *Blast 1*, p.138.

them.⁵⁴²

Pound extrapolated Vorticist form to all the arts; ‘Vorticism is the use of, or the belief in the use of, THE PRIMARY PIGMENT, straight through all the arts’.⁵⁴³ The primary pigment was Pound’s term to explain the originality of Vorticism;

The journey from Pound’s Piccadilly home is described as ‘a tenfold set of stimulæ’, a new way of seeing, where these ‘form-motifs’ become something else in the hands of the Vorticist. They need to be analysed and reassembled, an activity Pound saw as exclusive to Vorticism. I would question this exclusivity, preferring to define such activity as ‘practice’, applicable to most, if not all, modern artists from Manet onwards. As with other avant-garde artists, Lewis was engaged in creative activity by testing and applying theory against activity. (It may be argued that today’s conceptual artists do not seek to produce works where aestheticism is the dominant factor, and that practice itself forms their model.)⁵⁴⁴ However, in 1914 Lewis sought an aesthetic that would, through his practice, extend from art to literature. This process was what Pound called the primary pigment. Yet even here Pound had a foot in both camps. He could not resist relating form to a ‘musical conception’:

the understanding that you can use form as a musician uses sound, that you can select motives of form from the forms before you, that you can recombine and re-colour them and “organise” them into new form.⁵⁴⁵

Clearly, there were fundamental differences between Lewis and Binyon in approaching Oriental art. Binyon claimed that Nature is the spiritual home of the Oriental artist. The elements are an integral part of his psyche. To quote from Binyon’s 1911 essay *The Flight of the Dragon*, ‘the winds of the air have become his desires, and the clouds his wandering thoughts’.⁵⁴⁶ Lewis saw only the outward manifestation of nature in terms of its shell, hide or feathers; no pulsating living organism that

⁵⁴² E. Pound, ‘Affirmations- II’, *The New Age*, Jan 14, 1915, p. 278.

⁵⁴³ Ibid. p. 277.

⁵⁴⁴ For a survey of contemporary ‘art language’, see Morgan Quaintance’s article ‘Practice’, *Art Monthly*, June, 2012.

⁵⁴⁵ E. Pound, ‘Affirmations- II’, p. 278.

⁵⁴⁶ L. Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, London, 1972, p. 24.

could be related to humanity. In contrast he dismissed the imitative Edwardian realism of Rodin's 'pulsating' sculpture.

If you have ever seen and can recall the sculpture of Auguste Rodin -those flowing, structureless, lissom, wave-lined pieces of commercial marble...the whole philosophy of the Flux is palpitating and streaming in those carefully selected and cleverly dreamified stone photographs of naked nature. ⁵⁴⁷

Lewis was waging his battle against Bergsonism. Bergson asked 'is the object of art to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality?'⁵⁴⁸ Answering in the affirmative, Bergson tells us that consciousness overrides the mechanical order of our reactions to induce a feeling of freedom. Binyon echoed Bergson in describing Oriental art:

The power of rhythm is such that not only sounds and forms and colours, but the meaning associated with them become different, take on a new life, or rather yield up their full potentiality of life, fused into radiance and warmth by an inner fire. ⁵⁴⁹

Chinese and Japanese cultures had a fully developed art history admired by the West but their stylistic non-Western approach to nature, while seen as having a simplistic innocence, was different from post-Renaissance art and therefore perceived as 'arrested' in its development. As Japanese woodblock prints became more accessible to the public in the West, their artists' handling of space and colour disturbed the critics. Yet their use of shallow space and non-adherence to Western rules of perspective has much in common with Byzantine art and it was these characteristics that drew progressive artists to Oriental art. As late as 1911, Binyon wrote of Chinese and Japanese art, 'so long regarded as merely decorative and industrial, and relegated to the ethnographical sections of museums, have at last begun to be a serious study'.⁵⁵⁰ Binyon, who in 1911 was prominent in the study of Oriental art in Britain, applied the principles of a Western philosophical theorist, Bergson, to describe their art. He does not mention Bergson's theory of intuitive duration of time but in his 1910 essay on the theory and practice of art in China and Japan, *The Flight of the Dragon*, there is a close analogy to Bergsonian thought on art. Take for example the passages: 'Art is not an adjunct to

⁵⁴⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, p. 116.

⁵⁴⁸ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p.14.

⁵⁴⁹ L. Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, p. 19

⁵⁵⁰ L. Binyon, 'Cologne Museum for art of the Far East', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 95, Feb. 1911, p. 290.

existence, a replication of the actual; it is a hint and a promise of that perfect rhythm, of that ideal life', or 'In all the art of China and Japan we find this predominant desire, to attain rhythmic vitality'.⁵⁵¹ Bergson asked 'is the object of art to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality?'⁵⁵² Bergson tells us that art, unlike nature that merely expresses feelings, induces rhythm into our consciousness. Binyon echoed this;

we carry about in our hearts dimly the knowledge of the perfect rhythm that life could incarnate...The power of rhythm is such that not only sounds and forms and colours, but the meaning associated with them become different, take on a new life, or rather yield up their full potentiality of life, fused into radiance and warmth by an inner fire.⁵⁵³

Fry agreed in 1910 with Binyon's analysis of Oriental art, perhaps judging both Chinese and European societies on equal terms, although like Binyon, the yardstick to make that judgement was European. Only in his last years did Fry fully reconcile the two civilizations, to quote from Christopher Green's article on Fry's evaluation of the 'civilized' and the 'savage': 'Here (in the 'Last Lectures' 1933-34) Fry treats Eastern and Western civilizations as equally civilized, equally manifestations of "a rationalist conception of the world".⁵⁵⁴

Lewis had known Binyon from his time at the Slade, and had kept in touch at least up to the 1914-18 War. Initially, their mutual interest would have been poetry: Lewis had literary ambitions and at art school he was dubbed 'Lewis the poet'. Their meeting place was the Vienna café near the British Museum where Binyon, and T. Sturge Moore, both connected with the Museum, welcomed the young Lewis into their literary discussions. Lewis attended the Slade from 1898 to 1901, a period when the two older men were beginning to be noticed for their poetry. Writing from Paris in 1907, Lewis asks his mother to send a copy of Binyon's *Odes* (1901) and of *Porphyryion* (1898).⁵⁵⁵ While serving as a bombardier in the Great War, Lewis mentioned Binyon in a letter dated August 1916 to Mrs Hueffer, the author Violet Hunt, requesting her to pass on to Binyon a document for a

⁵⁵¹ L. Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, p. 19.

⁵⁵² Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p.14.

⁵⁵³ L. Binyon, p.19.

⁵⁵⁴ C. Green, 'Expanding the Canon', in *Art Made Modern*, p. 132.

⁵⁵⁵ W. K. Rose (ed.), *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*. No.34, p. 35.

reference in his application for a commission.⁵⁵⁶ Binyon had been Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings in the Asian Collection at the British Museum since 1909, and their leading expert on Japanese, Chinese and Korean art. Referencing Chinese and Japanese art and literature in his development of Imagist poetry, Pound also had connections with Binyon. It would seem likely that Lewis became familiar with Oriental painting and printmaking through his friendship with Binyon and that access to viewing Japanese prints would have been in the print room at the British Museum. The period from 1900-1914 marked an intensification in global cultural interest that can be traced through the access records of the British Museum's Oriental print room.⁵⁵⁷ Rupert Arrowsmith's research through Print Room access records has traced Epstein, Gaudier, Pound and Hulme's engagement with the museum's collection, but does not include Lewis.⁵⁵⁸ Given Lewis's close relationship with Binyon and his record of a keen interest in Oriental art, it is very likely that Lewis did visit the print room and, as a friend of Binyon did not have to sign the register.

The most common Japanese prints were *Nishiki-e*, made from ten or more woodblocks, each woodblock incorporating a separately applied colour. What attracted Western artists was their freshness; their clarity of line and economy of design, and containment of colour within each outline. These attributes were clearly shared by Lewis throughout his painting career. He specifically mentions the attributes of Chinese and Japanese painting, particularly their generality in rejection of shadow, or 'shallowness', in his essay *The Credentials of the Painter*, first published in the *English Review*, in January and April 1922.⁵⁵⁹ But while accepting the necessity in art for general laws, Lewis goes on to stress 'the law of the individual' as being equally, if not more, the mark of the artist. In

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, No. 78, p. 84.

⁵⁵⁷ Today, visitors' records can be viewed at the museum's annexe at 22 Blyth Road, Hammersmith.

⁵⁵⁸ R. Arrowsmith, *Modernism and the Museum: Asian, African and Pacific Art and the London Avant-Garde*, 2012. He traces in some detail the genesis of Epstein's landmark sculpture, the tomb of Oscar Wilde (1912), in the Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris. The tomb was directly influenced by sculptures derived from across the Ancient world: 'The Harpy Tomb' (480-470 BC) from Lyka, Asia Minor for the wings, similarly the immense Assyrian man-headed bull statue 'Shedu' and the 14th Century BC Egyptian statue 'Bust of Akhenaton', for the headdress. Epstein's tomb for Oscar Wilde first alerted Hulme to the possibility of a change coming from Ancient art to escape from a society dominated by Liberal romanticism, to one in keeping with modern living. Far from the flux generated by the likes of Rodin, this monumental carving reflected a stability and permanence that made the organic seem durable and eternal. Arrowsmith emphasizes that Hulme's break with Bergson began here: 'This arrangement of Art from different parts of antiquity... (incorporated into Wilde's tomb)... could not accord with Bergson's temporal flow'. (p. 165).

⁵⁵⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Credentials of the Painter', in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change, Essays in Arts, Literature and Society*, p. 72.

effect he drew from Japanese and Chinese art the concept of shallow space, as he did from Byzantine art, but what really counts is how he used shallow space as a Vorticist concept.

An example where Lewis went beyond generality in appreciating Oriental art is in the drawing *Abstract: Bird* (1914), (fig.16), a typically Vorticist image featuring the analogy of the organic contained within the framework of a machine-like bird. The ‘containment’ of the bird wings within its heavily defined geometric ‘bird’ outline suggests freedom constrained, the wings representing ‘the herd’ or the masses, and Lewis the controlling intelligence, the herdsman and crowd-master. I believe the image could be associated with a portfolio of Japanese woodcut prints called *Ehon kacho kagami* (Picture-book Mirror of Birds and Flowers) dating from 1790. There are two known first edition albums of these prints made by the artist Kitao Masayoshi (1764-1824) and one has been held by the British Museum since 1868; in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts in Lewis’s time. Within the volume, a close reading of two prints depicting *Partridges* (Fig.17) are the most striking; strong black outlines surrounding the textured geometrical design of the birds’ feathers. Colour is minimal: black, white, grey to fawn to ochre, legs yellow. The design technique that Masayoshi applies to each bird bears a close resemblance to the block technique of Vorticist imagery. Each bird is made up of well-defined blocks representing neck, crop, breast, wings and tail. These blocks are either circular or form diagonals, again a technique used by the Vorticists. The well-defined curved and sweeping black outlines indicate a close affinity with calligraphy. Holmes emphasized this affinity when describing *An Eagle* of the School of Sotan (Fig.74); ‘the national feeling for fine calligraphy lends a directness to the drawing and a graceful fluency to the noble curves of the head and claws’.⁵⁶⁰ Lewis’s treatment of the claws, and the heavy outline of *Abstract Bird* suggest the sweeping gestural form of Japanese calligraphy reconfigured in a severe, brutal, geometrical mode.

Lewis’s association with the British Museum is visually confirmed by his drawing *Reading Room* (1915) (Fig. 75), a collection of Vorticist imagery, which might be described as doodles, in pen and ink drawn on a British Museum seat allocation slip. The experimental form on the right bears a

⁵⁶⁰ C. Holmes, ‘The Use of Japanese Art in Europe’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 1905, p. 6.

close resemblance to the architectural features in his drawings *Composition* (1915) (Fig. 76), *New York* (1914) (Fig.77), and paintings of the same period such as *The Crowd* (Fig.7) and *Workshop* (Fig.11). The centre image suggests kinship with the heavily defined Vorticist shape of *Abstract Bird*. The Masayoshi prints are ‘redesigned’ copies of an earlier series of bird paintings by a Chinese artist, Ishosai Shusen Genyu (1736-1824). The background has been reproduced in the typically stylized style of Chinese landscape painting. The formal treatment in the Masayoshi prints of the birds themselves stands out; a flat surface representation where ‘outside’ commands attention. The chapter, ‘Mr Wyndham Lewis’, subtitled ‘The Theory of the External, the Classical, approach to Art’ in *Men without Art* (1934) provides a less formal explanation of where Lewis stood on Reality, art and literature. Lewis set out to justify his ‘superior’ approach to reality quoting a publisher’s reader report on his satirical novel *The Apes of God*, that everything is told from the outside of people: ‘It is their shells or pelts, or the language of their body movements, come first, not last’.⁵⁶¹ The reader defines Lewis’s approach as the opposite of, for example, the American philosopher William James, 1842-1910 who sought to narrate from the *inside* the character’s mind. To quote Lewis: ‘James in short, a Bergsonian where you are a Berkeleyan!’ Lewis agreed whole-heartedly.⁵⁶² This approach to satirical writing extended over the full range of his literature and art, and the key factor rested on the superiority of the eye over the ear, or perceptually, the ‘outside’ over the ‘inside’. A philosophy of the eye, or a *visual*, that Lewis ascribed to de Gourmont, and extended its plastic qualities to non-Western art singling out the sculpture of the Pharaohs; ‘the masculine formalism of the Egyptian or the Chinese’.⁵⁶³ Lewis repeatedly likens plasticity to ‘the shell’ describing Japanese Buddhist sculpture ‘it is the shell of the animal that the plastic-minded artist will prefer’.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, 1934, p. 118.

⁵⁶² Ibid, p. 119.

⁵⁶³ Ibid, p. 127.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 120.

Chapter Five.

Conclusion

‘WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel it’s crude energy flowing through us’.⁵⁶⁵

Lewis grandiosely made this proclamation for the world. Vorticism thrived on disconnections.

Dynamic energy flowing in and out of the vortex suggests vitalism and yet Lewis the controlling mind has to still these disparate forces to achieve a closure that reflects the world as he sees it.

‘Long Live the Vortex!’ concluded with the line, ‘Blast presents an art of Individuals’. By

‘Individuals’ he points to himself as the egoistic visionary; Lewis the guiding mind drawing from

history in order to structure the present and point the way to the future. His vortex is a violent

place where chaos and creativity co-exist, a place where the balance between Dionysian excess and

Apollonian checks and balances might provide the right background for a far-sighted artistic

creativity to excel.

This thesis sets out to determine the place in early twentieth century British Modernism of

Wyndham Lewis. My approach is by examining the art works themselves and the underlying

methodology that Lewis gave to them. I question the published body of work on Lewis’s Vorticism

and make a case for a greater emphasis on the place of history in his practice. Furthermore, I

examine Lewis’s relationship with those around him in the art world of 1908-1915 Britain and

question the widely accepted view that Lewis and Fry were at opposite poles in their approach to

modernism. Historical links, part structural, part mythical, part cultural; all enter into his practice.

Lewis, the visionary guiding mind drew from history in order to structure the present and point the

way to the future. I have emphasized the importance to Lewis of the philosophy of the ‘eye’. Only

the eye has sensory meaning: all is to be seen on the surface; forms are objects; there is nothing

underneath. The power of the art is in its concrete physicality; its ‘plasticity’. Lewis’s Vorticist mix

of historical input, visual privileging and geometrical line reaching back to the Primitive world,

⁵⁶⁵ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Long Live the Vortex!’, *Blast 1*, June 1914.

helped to create a dynamic pattern of historical juxtapositions that Pound took up and refined in *The Cantos*.

The overriding factors that emerge are Lewis's engagement with pre-history and his egoistic, visionary, indeed prophetic positioning of an art form for a modern age. That this new art was so dependent on the past is a factor that Lewis does not care to emphasize in his few direct commentaries on his practice at that time. And in a sense he was right to play down these historical roots, because Vorticism has to be presented as an exciting new art movement. These historical links are part structural, part mythical, part cultural, and while they fashion his art, Lewis's claim to Modernity lay in his visionary drive to interpret modern life through innovative practice. Of prime importance is Vorticism's capacity to be extended to the wider arts. Lewis was in the vanguard in seeing its potential for breaking the chains of conventional 'counter' language in poetry and prose. Although not entirely successful with his Vorticist play *Enemy of the Stars*, it opened up new directions for Pound, Eliot and Joyce to develop their Modernist literary styles.

Lewis was not alone amongst the art community in relating pre-history to modern life. Bergson's predictions involving intuitive time, Nietzsche's reverse chronology to the mythical pre-Hellenic age of tragedy, Le Bon and Sorel's predictions arising from crowd behaviour, all pointing the way that Western society should position itself to face up to the ills of modern life. In Britain and France, Liberal and Republican governments respectively were judged to be stultifying and bourgeois by those who for variously diverse reasons demanded change. The aptly named little magazine, *Blast*, edited by Lewis proclaimed the 'vortex' into which a myriad of views and ideas flowed, often outrageous and contradictory, yet having the effect of shaking British art's inhibiting stupor.

Lewis cultivated an aesthetic that was entirely dependent on the structural relationship between the plasticity of the work and the controlling mind of the artist. By 'plasticity' I mean 'solid'. The work is purely on the surface, its forms are objects; nothing underneath the surface has subjective

meaning, or in the descriptive language of the time, 'rhythm'. Only what the eye sees has sensory meaning. Lewis brought to his work strong elements of de Gourmont's theory of language. According to de Gourmont, writers such as Flaubert brought visual memory to their work, incorporating a clear image that caused them to write in a concrete style. If the writer then placed himself in the emotional state generated by the imagery he saw, then he acquired all the attributes of a great artist. Where Lewis refined the theory was in applying his 'superior intelligence', or egotism, to the practice; his ability to detach himself from the crowd. His aesthetic was reserved for the discerning few; those with the ability to disseminate his art and in his imagery see the truth.

Bergson's theory of time was anathema to Lewis and yet as this thesis emphasizes, Lewis employed Bergson's model in his art. It was an essential part of Lewis's aesthetic. Cubist and Futurist imagery with their attendant subjective temporality entered into his work, but the essence of Vorticism was to distance the artist from vitalist activity. This was achieved through Lewis's use of shallow space and with it the emphasis on what the eye discriminates on the surface of the picture plane, a reinterpretation of the medieval practice of proximate vision. Lewis draws from the past in 'objectifying' his imagery. The silent centre of the vortex is where Lewis controls the frantic cultural activity of chaos and creativity, with its attendant threat of violence always looming. But while this mix of 'chaos and creativity' has all the characteristics of Bergsonian flux in its energizing force, Lewis neutralised its subjectivity by imposing a hierarchical structure on how the eye discerns. The physicality of the past, be it through the geometric tendency of Byzantine, Primitive, Ancient Greek or Assyrian art comes through in Lewis's imagery to make a statement about modern life. Modern life is represented by modern art; fragmented arrangements of form moving towards abstraction. Fragmentation mirrors the 'frantic cultural activity' drawn from layers of past history. There is no feeling of humanity in these images, just as Lewis's interpretation of modern urban life saw automation as the dominant factor. This is the age of the machine in which Lewis depicted his people as puppets. On an individual level; 'Art-Instinct is permanently primitive'. ... 'The artist of the modern movement is a savage'.⁵⁶⁶ As a nation,

⁵⁶⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto', *Blast 1*, p. 33.

The English Character is based on the sea.

The particular qualities and characteristics that the sea claims, engenders in men are those that are, among the many diagnostics of our race, the most fundamentally English.

That universality as well, found in the completest English artists, is due to this.⁵⁶⁷

Lewis eulogized the qualities of England as a Northern trading nation, qualities also found in 'the completest artists'. While on an individual level, the making and appreciation of 'good' art can only lie within the province of those with the intellectually discerning eye, the English Character whose Northern qualities are bound up with Shakespeare, made the English a distinct and superior race to the Latin South. Latins were presented as Romantics, vital bordering on hysteria, whose notion of modern statehood was typified by 'their Futuristic gush over machines, aeroplanes, etc.'⁵⁶⁸ By comparison, Britain's inventiveness for a machine age has created a 'Life-Effort' in which the new Art (Vorticism) could take root. In June 1914, Lewis took a much more positive approach to the modern condition than Epstein and Hulme. Epstein's Flenite carvings of 1913 exemplify a tragic age, of an intensity that is hard to bear. There is no hint of redemption here, unlike Lewis's aesthetic where the redemptive power of the artist as 'spiritual aristocrat' links his thinking to that of Nietzsche. Redemption, for Lewis, lay in his self-appointed role as the visionary who could rise above the mediocrity of mimetic art and its allegorical counterpart, Liberal Romanticism. Lewis saw himself as both 'spiritual' visionary and social realist who could redeem society through his art.

My research concentrates to a large extent on Lewis's painting *The Crowd*. (Fig.7). This painting brings together Lewis's vision of urban life and yet doubts begin to emerge that the power of Art can transcend Life. If we were to trace the development of the Vorticist Movement along a hyperbola, *The Crowd* would lie immediately to the right of its highest point. Perhaps the individualist Lewis was unable to achieve the ascendancy of the 'spiritual aristocrat' in the face of wartime populism distorting all aspects of life. *The Crowd* portrays 'a tragic age' but going back to a Homeric age in the Nietzschean sense is problematic. Reality and myth do not equal one another.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 33.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 41.

The painting depicts modern life yet in its component parts incorporates a whole range of disparate inputs drawn from nineteenth century philosophy, psychology and sociology. Of these, the theories of Sorel and Le Bon on crowd behaviour come to the fore. Structurally the painting exhibits the techniques of the early Italian Renaissance School of artists in visually privileging their subject, be it religious or from the laity. In this regard I have singled out the Siennese master, Duccio di Buoninsegna; *The Crowd* having a close structural relationship with his *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* (Fig. 15) a painting that Lewis would have known. Politically, Sorel on the Left and *L'Action française* on the Right together with Hulme's ideas on strong governance based on traditional values entered Lewis's thinking. The Futurist leader, Marinetti, cannot be excluded in similarly seeking to manipulate the crowd for political ends despite Lewis's avowed hostility.

The relationship between shallow space and hierarchical objectivity belongs exclusively to the eye. Temporal perception, the methodology of Bergson and Nietzsche, is broken up and brought to a standstill through the hierarchical technique of proximate vision. By excluding acoustic sensation, Lewis subscribed to Sorel's attack on Parliamentary Democracy, and by inference democratic humanism. This approach brought his thinking into line with that of Hulme, and by association, back to Worringer's criticism of empathic art. Unlike the certainties of privileged space in establishing a hierarchical order practiced by the early Italian masters, the age when Lewis was emerging as an avant-garde artist, 1912 to 1915, was marked by political and social unrest with no clear pathway for the future. The outbreak of war with Germany changed all aspects of life including art. *The Crowd* becomes an indicator of this changed world. The pressure to become one with the crowd, to lose one's individuality for the communal good had the effect of dividing loyalties: Lewis's egoistic drive to elevate his Art above Life became questionable. Lewis found himself less than fully detached from Life where, in its structural language, *The Crowd* created an element of indecisiveness. The unfinished narrative 'The Crowd Master' in *Blast 2*, the War number, mirrors *The Crowd* in Lewis's attempt to reconcile the conscious thoughtful individual with the hypnotic anesthetised crowd, an analysis that, through the American character Multum exposed the British collective psyche as weak, 'eighty per cent dead', and weighed down by their history. Wragg

describes Lewis's technique as using spatial form to represent the mind's command over the sensations bombarding it. Lewis failed to determine where on the picture plane his command should be directed: the black-capped authoritative figures in the bottom left, the interlocking crowd in the centre, or the marshalled figures in the top right corner. The uncertainties of *Life* create an element of subjectivity at odds with Lewis's Vorticist methodology where closure is achieved through channelling energy into a still and silent object for contemplation.

The Crowd has all of the indicators of Modernism: ambiguity; chaotic structure, and reality interpreted through structural objectivity. All these inputs create a relationship with the modern world, which the viewer is drawn to recognize. Lewis's attempt to replicate these tenets of Vorticism in his play *Enemy of the Stars* through structural narrative was only partially successful: he merely interrupted chronological progression rather than endeavouring to express meaning through the body of the work. Yet *Enemy of the Stars* was an important signpost in progressing Modernist writing. It allowed Pound to see possibilities for Vorticism in his work. Pound had been slow to understand Vorticist art, being reluctant to cast aside Bergson's theory of time and its intuitive rhythmic pictorial representation of Imagism. *The Crowd* allowed Pound to see the possibilities for rhythmic timelines to be neutered through structural containment. Historical input by way of the painting's visual privileging of its structural arrangement, its geometrical emphasis on line, its links with the Primitive world via crowd behaviour; all went to create a dynamic pattern of historical juxtapositions that do not merely describe the modern world but codify it. Pound went on to make the transition to Vorticist literature through *The Cantos*. By structuring the poem through multiple centres of activity, or vortices, which he referred to as 'radiant nodes' or 'clusters', Pound transcended Lewis's Vorticism. Lewis later accused Pound of being a romantic at heart, quoting from his Canto XVII. Pound was enraptured by history but was not sentimental about it; Lewis merely *used* history as a necessary part of his practice, yet both men followed the same path to create a Modernist view of the Western world. Lewis and Hulme equated the soft organic lines of empathic art degenerating into Romanticised imitation with the late Renaissance; Pound with the

rise of 'flowery' language. Both pathways generated a form of High Victorian sentimentalised humanity that was anathema to Modernists.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century were marked by the Imperialist ambitions of the Western powers, which as a consequence led to unprecedented interest in cultural history, anthropology and archaeological discoveries. While this general interest in cultural diversity was often used as a way of cultural ranking to justify the ascendancy of Western nations, cultural history, customs, art and crafts, and past civilisations mythological or real, were appropriated to explain, enhance, change, and even prophesise new modes of living in a modern age. Artists were in the vanguard in appropriating history as I have argued in my analysis of the structural implications of Vorticism. The 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition opened up the possibilities for British artists, and its organiser, Fry, was in the forefront. Fry and Lewis, as I have argued, were in agreement that art needed to reflect modern times through recourse to the art of other cultures. Both men recognised that non-Renaissance informed art, in its hard-edged shapes, stylised linearity and flat imagery, could more intellectually represent modern conditions. Of profound importance was what lay behind these art styles drawn from different cultures and centuries, and how modern society interpreted them. The most prevalent view was that these styles reflected the closeness of these cultures to the natural world around them. Here, vital art comes to mind in line with Bergsonian theory of time and space; 'rhythmic vitality' was widely used to describe, for example, Japanese art. Fry believed that what constituted the aesthetic in art was the power of art to generate emotional ideas through *all* the senses, in response to visual forms and their relationship with one another. Binyon and Holmes agreed. Lewis recognised these tendencies but claimed the superiority of the eye.

A recognizable pattern emerged in Lewis's later writing of critically playing down or even dismissing his literary contemporaries or influential philosophical writers associated with his developing Vorticist art. The obvious one was Bergson and to a lesser extent Nietzsche. Lewis sparingly acknowledged Hulme's influence, while Pound's contribution to Vorticism was not

acknowledged. Marinetti was ridiculed for his belligerent nationalism; Fry for his ‘decorative’ Bloomsbury art. Yet both Fry and Lewis were motivated to define their respective aesthetic positions from pre-historical antecedents. Fry, the more practical of the two, saw a pathway to propagate his aesthetic through crafts; Lewis pursued the notion of metaphysical purity. I also rate the importance of the classicist Jane Harrison, despite Lewis’s scathing dismissal of her non-chronological approach to the layering of archaeological history. I believe that the *Kermesse* paintings, and particularly *The Dancers* (Fig. 1) can be linked to the thinking of the militant feminist Harrison. The series were made in 1912, at a time when the Nietzschean-inspired prophesising of Evans and Harrison was at its height arising from the excavations at Knossos. The *Kermesse* series, an important milestone in the development of Vorticism, suggests that Lewis subscribed to the vogue for re-constructing Ancient Greek myths of Dionysus from well-publicised archaeological digs. Gaudier wrote favourably about the ‘archaic works discovered at Gnosossos’: ‘Gnosossos’ presumably deriving from Knossos.⁵⁶⁹

Above all, I see Lewis as ‘the crowd master’ commanding the Nietzschean high ground. This position is reflected in the two works that I have discussed in depth; *The Crowd* (1914-15) and *Abstract Bird* (1914) (Fig. 16). The latter, a lesser-known drawing, derived from a Japanese print in its structure, and I have linked it with Kitao Masayoshi’s, *Picture Book of Birds and Flowers* (1790). Both *The Crowd* and *Abstract Bird* are structurally configured to represent containment and control. Lewis, ‘the crowd master’, saw himself as the controlling intelligence. While my selection of the Duccio painting, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* (1287) is primarily based on similarity of structure and the medieval practice of proximate vision, I am tempted to link Lewis, the self-proclaimed visionary, to Christ as the bearer of the Word. The riddle of the breach formed by the letters ECLOS, at the bottom left of *The Crowd*, might well have originated in Lewis’s psyche as analogous with Christ’s instruction to the woman to go forth and spread ‘the water of life’.

⁵⁶⁹ H. Gaudier-Breszka, Letter to the editor, ‘The New Sculpture’, *The Egoist*, 16 Mar 1914, p. 117.

Lewis's approach to history was purely one of structural layering in which, unlike in history painting, chronological narrative was deconstructed through the chaotic and cultural bombardment generated by the vortex. The fragmented shards, the 'objectified' shapes, the contained violence, the shallow space in which all is surface-defined and ordered, expressed Lewis's Vorticist view of the world. As in the real world, issues remain unresolved. The certainties implied by a structural visual hierarchy, so implicit in the pre-Renaissance world were absent in Lewis's representation of modern life. Yet in bringing together these disparate strands of cultural activity drawn from down the ages, Lewis provided a unique art form that expresses the fears and anxieties of modern living that can only be seen as Modernist. Vorticism suffered the fate of early twentieth century avant-garde art by the catastrophic impact of the First World War on the Western nations, and with it the call to order. *The Crowd* can be seen as a precursor to this profound change in attitude.

Lewis volunteered as a gunner in 1916 rather than be caught in the draft and served throughout in Western France, first as an artillery officer and in 1917 as an official war artist under the Canadian War Memorial Scheme. As a war artist Lewis's output was mainly drawings on paper using graphite, pen and ink and watercolour; all small-scale depictions of life as a gunner on the Western Front. The strength of these drawings lies in their realism untainted by any feeling of emotion. They have the feel of the 'mechanical' about them, men as adjuncts to the machines they serve, yet convincingly real. Lewis's Vorticist aesthetic comes through in that these soldiers are seen as objects for contemplation. This can be seen in its most intense contemplation of the horrors of mechanized warfare in Lewis's greatest of war paintings, *A Battery Shelled*, (1919).

A Battery Shelled (fig. 21), a large oil canvas in the tradition and scale of a history painting, completed Lewis's war oeuvre. The work was commissioned to hang in a permanent commemorative memorial gallery to the Great War but was never built. Instead, it was exhibited along with other major works by the war artists in Burlington House in 1920, and now belongs in the Imperial War Museum's permanent collection. The painting is structurally divided vertically: the left side depicts three military figures grouped in front of a field gun; the right side depicts a scene of carnage. The

three are 'outsiders', structurally apart from the action. Lewis had borrowed this form of juxtapositioning from Piero della Francesca's *The Flagellation of Christ* (fig.79) in what I believe to be a direct progression of his borrowing from Uccello and the structural arrangement of *The Crowd*. The three relatively representative figures on the left appear to be either oblivious to the action to their right, or are in deep contemplation. The scene draws in violent energies of bombardment and panic generated by the Cubist stick figures contained within a Futurist landscape, and yet what should be a spectacle of military conflict becomes a collection of 'lifeless' objects for contemplation in the typical style of Lewis's Vorticism. In contrast, the three figures on the left could be seen as an amalgam of Lewis the artist being both 'inside' and 'outside' the painting. One can argue along the lines of Jameson that whilst Lewis seeks to remove the artist from the spectacle, he cannot avoid becoming compromised by the very act of painting. Lewis may be anticipating this by including himself within. To quote Jameson, 'But we can now also understand the way in which for Lewis (and in Shakespeare) tragedy bleeds into satire, for it seems to me that herein Lewis the only spectator left for these cruel bloodbaths is the satirist himself (whom they may also shortly engulf)'. But Jameson goes on to say that whilst the object is to remove the artist from the spectacle by painting it from the outside 'only space is innocent, only the visual can stand outside of all that with hands soiled only by the paint of the brushes'⁵⁷⁰ Jameson is taking a metaphysical approach to Lewis the satirist. I believe that Lewis physically by the act of painting may have included himself, all be it unwillingly, as a participant. While *A Battery Shelled* may be seen as the 'last hurrah' of Vorticism, it could also be seen as an opening salvo to Lewis the satirist, and Lewis the 'tyro'

⁵⁷⁰ F. Jameson, 'Wyndham Lewis's Timon: The War of Forms', in *Vorticism: New Perspective*, p.23.

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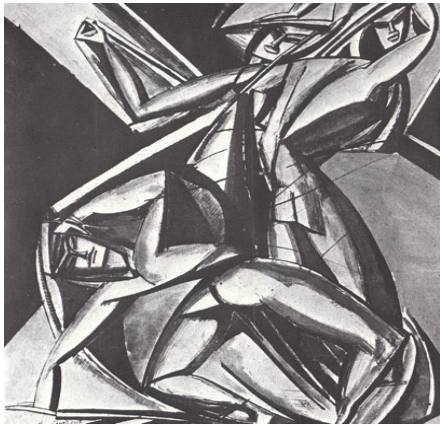


Figure 1, Dancers, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, watercolour, 25.9 x 29cms.

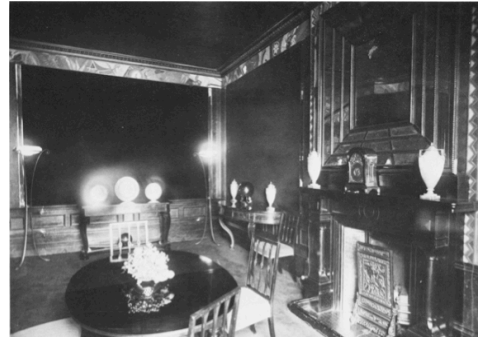


Figure 2, Dining Room, Wilton Place



Figure 4, Vision of Ezekiel, (1912), David Bomberg, oil on canvas, 114.3 x 137.2



Figure 3, The Beanfield, (1914), Spencer Gore

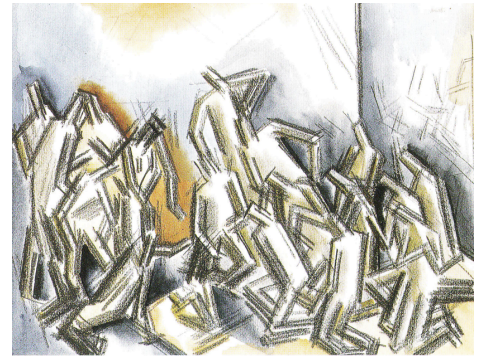


Figure 5, Study for Nativity, (1913), David Roberts, charcoal and watercolour, 28 x 35.5 cms.



Figure 6, Riot in the Galleria, (1911), Umberto Boccioni, oil on canvas, 76 x 64 cms.



Figure 7, The Crowd, (1914-15), Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas, 200.7 x 153.7 cms.



Figure 8, Plan of War, (1913-14),
Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas,
255 x 143 cms



Figure 9, Slow Attack, (1913-14),
Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas,
dimensions unknown.



Figure 10, The Theatre Manager, (1909), Wyndham Lewis. Pen and ink,
watercolour, 29.5 x 31.5 cms.



Figure 11, Workshop, (1914-15),
Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas, 76.5
x 61 cms.



Figure 12, The Street enters the House, (1911),
Boccioni, oil on canvas, 100 x100.5 cms.



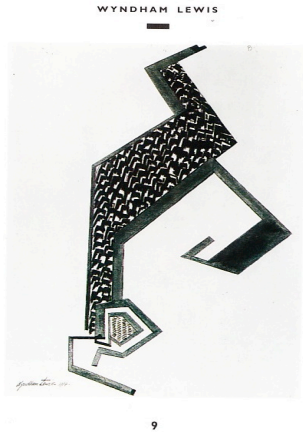
Figure 13, The Battle of San Romano, (circa 1450), Paolo Uccello, panel, 182 x 320 cms.



Figure 14, Alcibiades, Timon of Athens (1913),
Wyndham Lewis, portfolio coloured reproduction,
26 x 38.5 cms.



Figure 15, Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well, (circa 1278), Duccio di Buoninsegna,
panel with gold background, 43.5 x 46 cms.



Abstract: Bird, 1914

Figure 16, Abstract Bird (1914),
Wyndham Lewis, pen and black ink, 33
x23.5 cms.



Figure 17, Partridge, (circa 1790), Kitao
Masayoshi, coloured woodblock print.



Fig. 17A, Partridge, (circa 1790), Kitao Masayoshi, coloured
woodblock print.

The Revolt, (1911-12), Luigi Russolo

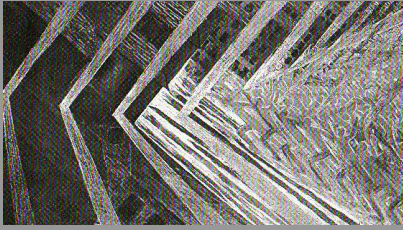


Figure 18, The Revolt, (1911), Luigi Russolo, oil on canvas, 150 x 230 cms,

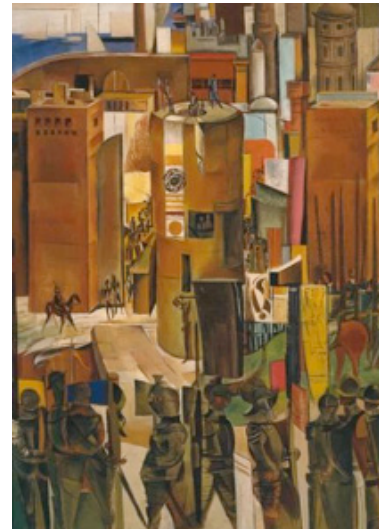


Figure 19, Surrender of Barcelona, (1937), Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas, 83.8 x 59.cms.



Figure 20, Dante and Virgil entering the Inferno, Luca Signorelli, fresco, Orvieto



Figure 21, A Battery Shelled. (1919), Wyndham Lewis, oil on canvas, 182.8 x 274.7 cms



Figure 22, Detail, Christ and the Woman of Samaria, (rocks), Duccio.



Figure 23, Detail, (cubist figures), The Crowd, Wyndham Lewis.



Figure 24, Detail, (tower inverted), Christ and the Woman of Samaria, Duccio

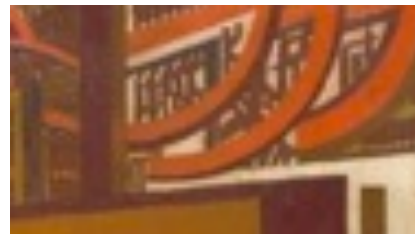


Figure 25, Detail, (Treadmill), The Crowd, Wyndham Lewis.



Figure 26, Danse, (1909), Henri Matisse, oil on canvas, 259.7 x 390.1 cm



Figure 27, Les Eus, (1910), J. D. Fergusson, oil on canvas, 216 x 277 cms.



Figure 28, Timon of Athens: Composition, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, portfolio reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cms.



Figure 29, Timon of Athens: Act 1, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, portfolio reproduction, 26 x 38.5 cms



Figure 30, The City and the River, (1913), Albert Gleizes, oil on canvas, 70 x 90.3 cms.



Figure 31, Female Figure in Flenite, (1913), Jacob Epstein, serpentine stone, 45.7 x 9.5 x 12.1 cms.



Figure 32, Two Nudes, (1903),
Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, ink wash,
24 x 29 cms.



Figure 33, Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.) (1907),
Picasso, oil on canvas, 243.9 x 233.7 cms.

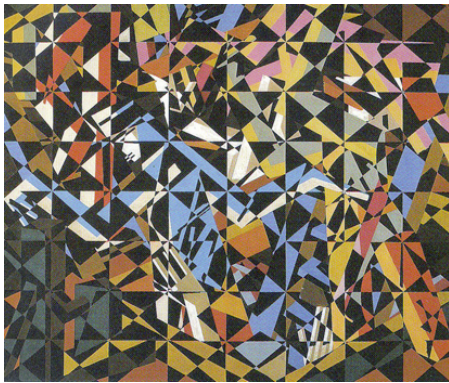


Figure 34, In the Hold, (1913-14), David
Bomberg, oil on canvas, 196.2 x 231.1 cms.



Figure 36, Guitar, (1912-13),
Picasso, sheet metal and wire,
77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cms.



Figure 35, Fruit Bowl and Bottle on a
Pedestal Table, (1920), Picasso, oil on
canvas, 92 x 73 cms.



Figure 37, *Enemy of the Stars*, (1913), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, ink wash, 44 x 20 cms.



Figure38, *Head of Ezra Pound*, (1913), Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, marble, 90.5 x 45.7 x 48.9 cms.

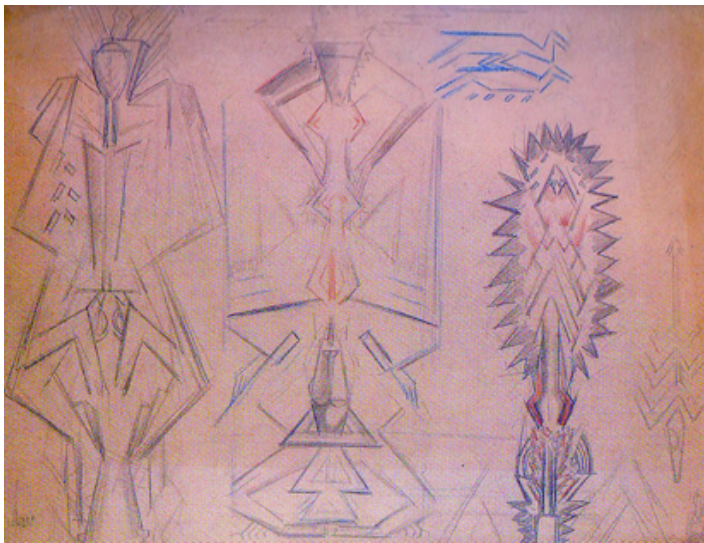


Figure 39, *Study for Rock Drill, Venus and Doves*, (1913), Jacob Epstein, pencil and crayon, 45.5 x 58.5 cms.

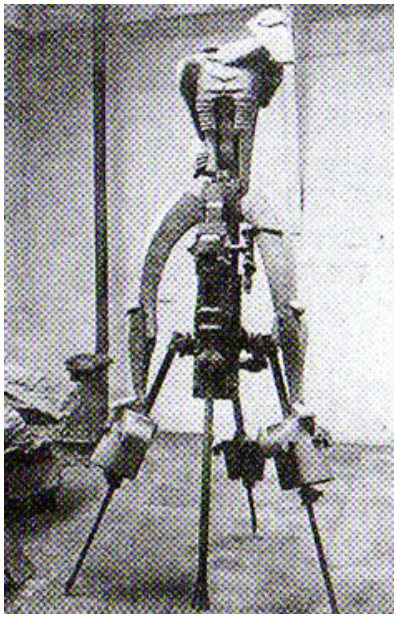


Figure 40, Rock Drill. (1913), original, Jacob Epstein, white plaster figure, actual black metal drill, 205 x 141,5 cms. (dimensions of reconstructed version).



Figure 41, Study for Female Figure in Flenite, (1913), Jacob Epstein, crayon, 68.5 x 42.5 cms.



Figure 42, Lost Drawing reproduced in *Blast 1*, Jacob Epstein.

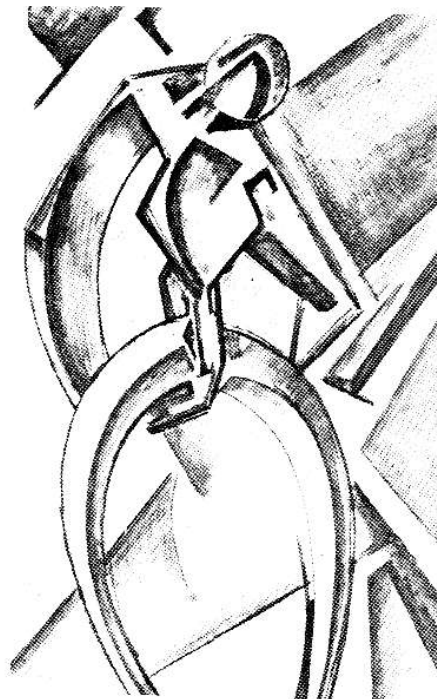


Figure 43, Argol, (1914), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, watercolour, 33 x 20.5 cms.



Figure 44, Indian Dance, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, black chalk and watercolour, 27 x 29 cms.



Figure 45, War Engine, (1915), Edward Wadsworth, reproduced in *Blast*, (The War Number).



Figure 46, Timon of Athens, The Creditors (1912), Wyndham Lewis, portfolio coloured reproduction, 38.5 x 26 cm.



Figure 47, Bathers, (1906), Cezanne, oil on canvas, 127.2 x 196.1 cms.



Figure 48, Dieppe Fishermen, (1910), Wyndham Lewis. pen and ink, 27.5 x 21.5 cms.



Figure 49, Lot and his suite, (Detail), 5th Century, mosaic, St. Maggiore, Rome



Figure 50, Courtship, (1912), Wyndham Lewis. pen and ink, chalk, 25.5 x 20.5 cms.



Figure 51, The Courtesan, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, watercolour, 27.5 x 18.5 cms.



Figure 52, The Tub, (1913), Duncan Grant, watercolour and wax on paper on canvas, 76.2 x 55.9 cms.



Figure 53, Head of Eve, (1913), Duncan Grant, oil on board, 75.6 x 63.5 cms.

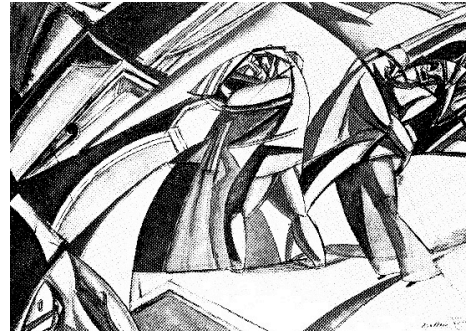


Figure 54, Lovers, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, watercolour, 25.5 x 35.5 cms.



Figure 55, Russian Madonna, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink, chalk, watercolour, 30.5 x 24 cms

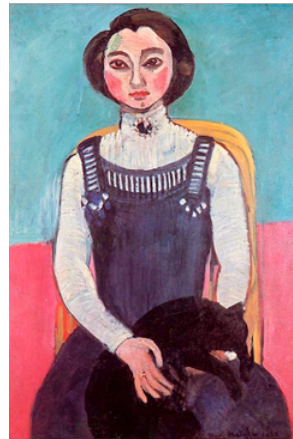


Figure 56, Marguerite with Black Cat, (1910), Matisse, oil, 94 x 64 cms.



Figure 57, The Starry Sky, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, pencil, pen and ink, wash, gouache, 46.5 x 62 cms.

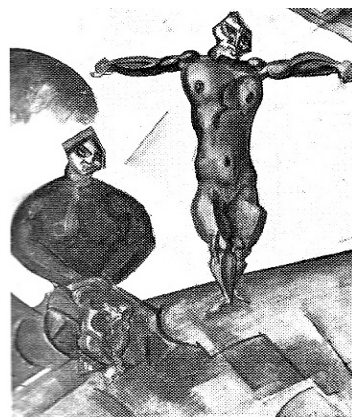


Figure 58, Man and Woman, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, chalk, pen and ink, wash, gouache, 36 x 26 cms



Figure 59. Figure holding a flower, (1912), Wyndham Lewis. pencil, pen and ink, gouache, 37 x 28.5 cms.



Figure 60. Two Mechanics, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, ink and wash, 56 x 33.5 cms.



Figure 61, Mother and Child, (1912), Wyndham Lewis, (lost), oil on canvas, dimensions not known.

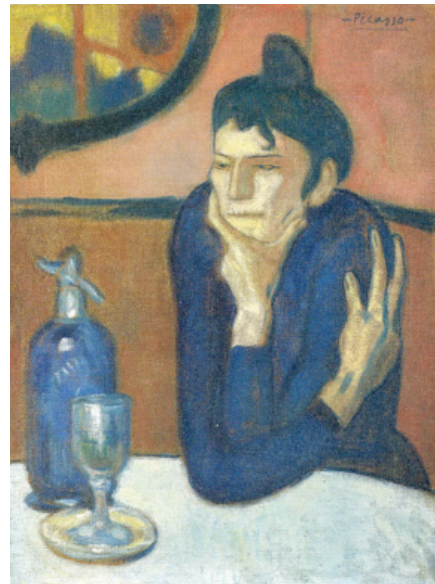


Figure 62, The Absinthe Drinker, (1901), Picasso, oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cms.

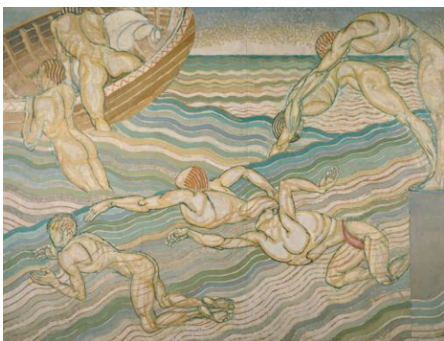


Figure 63, Bathers, (1911), Duncan Grant, oil on canvas, 228.6 x 306.1 cms.



Figure 64, The Transporting of St. Mark's Reliquary, (1250s?), Byzantine mosaic, St. Mark's, Venice.



Figure 65, The Lemon Gathers, (1910), Duncan Grant, oil on board, 56.5 x 81.3 cms.



Figure 66, The Baptism of Christ, (1450s?), Piero della Francesca, panel, 167 x 116 cm



Figure 67, Dancers, (1910), Duncan Grant, oil on wood, 53.3 x 66 cms.



Figure 68, Garden of Hesperides, (1870-73), Edward Bourne-Jones, watercolour and gouache on paper, 119 x 98 cms.

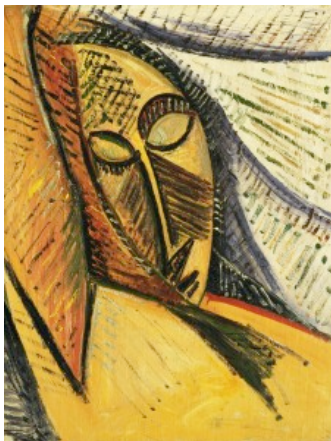


Figure 69, Head of Sleeping Woman, (1907), Picasso, oil on canvas, 61.4 x 47.6 cms.



Figure 70, Study for Nude with Drapery, (1907), Picasso, watercolour and gouache on brown paper, 31 x 24.5 cms.



Figure 71, Woman Examining her Feet, (1907), Picasso, oil on wood, 18 x 15 cms.



Figure 72, Composition, (1913), Wyndham Lewis, pencil, pen and ink, watercolour, 34 x 26.5 cms.



Figure 73, Smiling Woman ascending a Staircase, (1911), Wyndham Lewis, charcoal and gouache, 95 x 65 cms.



Figure 74, An Eagle, 15th Century Japan, School of Sotan, ink and colour on paper

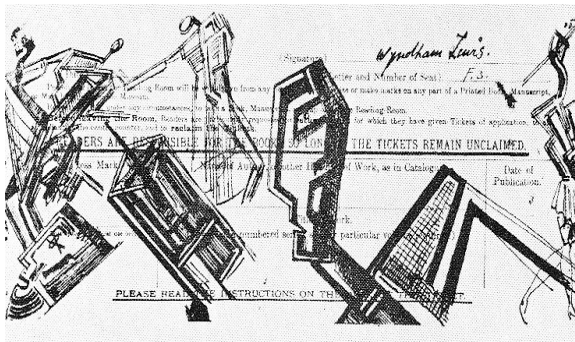


Figure 75, Reading Room, (1915), Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink on book requisition slip from the Reading Room of the British Museum, 9 x 22.5 cms.

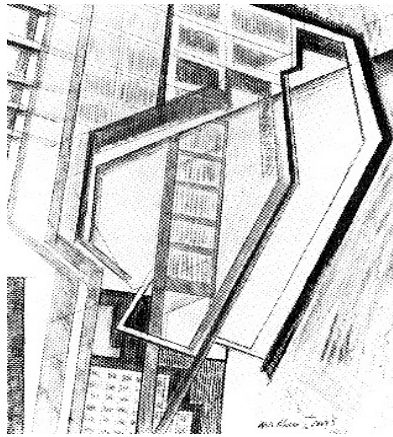


Figure 76, Composition, (1915),
Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink,
pencil, coloured chalks, 31 x 26 cms.

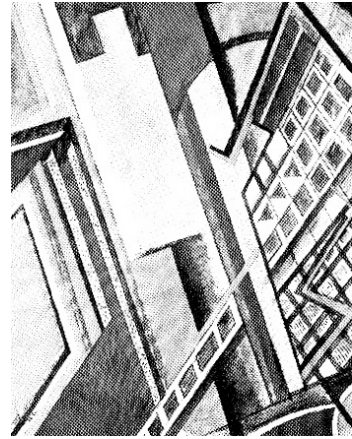


Figure 77, New York, (1914),
Wyndham Lewis, pen and ink,
watercolour, 31 x 26 cms.



Figure 78, Vortical Composition, (1915),
Wyndham Lewis, gouache and chalk,
37.5 x 17.3 cms.



Figure 79, The Flagellation of Christ, Piero della
Francesca, (around 1455-60), tempera on panel, 58.4
x 81.5 cms.