

# **In London, Around 1914**

**Rosie Šnajdr**

Ph.D.

University of East Anglia

School of Literature Drama and Creative Writing

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## Abstract

This approximation to a year study considers London, 1914 as a site of early modernism's emergence. It focuses on the cultural interactions between experimental and popular artists, aesthetics, and institutions that were an impetus for, and influence on the development of early modernism. Chapter one discusses the complexity of early modernism's relationship with popular literary sphere. Two staged public events that happened in January are compared—G. K. Chesterton's trial of a Dickens character and Ezra Pound's dinner in honour of the poetic accomplishments of an old man who insisted he was not a poet. Both involved bids for literary autonomy and attempts at public self-fashioning. Neither included attempts to enact a separation of experimental and popular culture. Chapter two concerns the strategies by which the *Egoist* advertised its resistance to the commercialisation of literature. Attempts were made to shame profitable cultural arbiters, battles were waged against censorship in protection of the artist's right to autonomy, and attacks were made upon the purveyors of jingoistic war poetry. Rather than being evidence of vehement anti-commercialism, these resistances are shown to operate in the commercial interests of the little magazine. Chapter three considers the competition between rival experimentalisms, charting the way in which the composers of *BLAST* appropriated notions of heroism from a new breed of adventure story—mechanical war fiction—to distinguish their talk of machines from that of the Futurists. By interacting with popular culture the Vorticists embraced an avant-garde aesthetic, even as they resisted certain kinds of avant-garde activity that they perceived to have been cheapened by their success and ubiquity. Chapter four re/visits three poets—formative *Georgian Poetry* contributor W. H. Davies, anthology abstainer Rose Macaulay, and one-poem-Imagiste Skipwith Cannell—to demonstrate the ways in which appearances in anthologies have distorted and deleted parts of the poetic record.

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## Introduction

As the chimes rang out over Parliament Square, announcing the arrival of 1914, a lot of things did not happen. The spirit of old London did not collapse, the Christian era did not end, human character did not change, and the world did not break in two. That these things did not happen meant that the year had much in common with the later years about which writers would come to make these claims.<sup>1</sup> To date, human culture has proven to be stubbornly resistant to total ruptures and seismic shifts; a fact that fundamentally problematises all attempts that we make to periodise it.

Whether critics limit themselves to a long century, a monarch's reign, a decade, or, as has been the case with this study, a single year, there is inevitably some arbitrariness about the precise dates that are chosen to bookend analyses of cultural trends. If anything, the tighter the temporal focus, the easier it is to notice the inherent difficulty of drawing lines in the sand. Attendant to the limitations of periodisation, my thesis approximates to a year study—wandering out of my year whenever a discussion seemed to require it, but always in the end returning back to the London of 1914.

The project began with the notion that 1914 was an important year for experimental writing. After all, Wyndham Lewis had named his friends after it and the many critical books that subsequently took his phrase, 'The Men of 1914', into their titles attest to the significance of that year's publications. Since periodising culture was a messy business even for Lewis, it is necessary to note that there were no publications by Eliot in 1914, he being more properly a man of 1915 onwards. Nevertheless, Pound, Lewis, and Joyce did publish works that would become part of the modernist canon—*Des Imagistes*, *BLAST* and *A Portrait of the Artist*. It was the publication of these important experimental works within the space of a few months and a few miles that led me to suspect that London 1914 could be postulated as the scene of canonical modernism's emergence.

Over the last thirty years, we have come to accept that the works of modernism did not develop in a vacuum. These texts and the aesthetic ideas that underpin them were produced within a wider framework of cultural production and, furthermore, this broader field was an impetus for, and influence on their development. The intense scrutiny of a selective canon of literary texts and their immediate biographical context, which had previously constituted the field of modernist studies, had, in the words of Tim Armstrong, 'come at the cost of the suppression of a broader discursive world.'<sup>2</sup> It was not a question of throwing out the canon but of deregulating its borders. The 'big' texts, thus de-privileged, would be stripped of their critical insulation and could be better understood. Around them would grow a criticism of

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<sup>1</sup> In the order listed, these were claims made by D. H. Lawrence about the winter of 1915-16 in *Kangaroo*, London: Martin Secker, 1923, 243; Ezra Pound about midnight on 29-30 of October 1921 in "Note to Calendar," *The Little Review* 8.2 (Spring 1922), 40; Virginia Woolf about December 1910 in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, London: Hogarth Press, 1924, 4; and Willa Carther on 1922 in the preface to *Not Under Forty*, London: Cassell and Company, 1936: v.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, 27.

popular literature, book production, publishing practices, and marketing. Following in this vein, I have attempted to resituate the canonical texts of 1914 in the discussions, production, and marketing of broader literature, both popular and classic, in an attempt to better understand the drive and character of emergent modernism.

What did happen in 1914? The question can be answered with a quick leaf through the penny papers—a category that *The Times* joined, with much fanfare, in March. News of the price reduction and the difficulty its printers experienced with meeting the subsequent increase in demand was reported widely, even on the other side of the globe.<sup>3</sup> In Parliament, the question of Irish Home Rule continued to be a political football, as Asquith's minority Liberal government attempted to retain the essential support of Irish Nationalist ministers and the Tory opposition attempted to stop them. Irish Unionist politician, barrister and judge, Edward Carson, presided over the arming of likeminded citizens in Northern Ireland and, in March the situation nearly boiled over into civil war.<sup>4</sup> In the event, the British Army at Curragh found mutiny preferable to the prospect of shooting at civilians who marched under the Union Jack.

Women continued to pursue the right to vote and, in the same month as the Curragh Incident, Mary Richardson took a meat-cleaver to Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* in the National Gallery. A number of experimental art groups found interesting ways to promote themselves and their artworks by entering into dialogues with the commercial and political spheres, sometimes whilst arguing that they were not. The Vorticists, for example, provided a patronising condemnation of Richardson's actions, arguing that 'IF YOU DESTROY A GREAT WORK OF ART you are destroying a greater soul than if you annihilated a whole district of London', but approved of their energy, calling them 'comrades' and 'the only things' apart from artists 'left in England with a little life in them.'<sup>5</sup> I am almost certain that, had Richardson turned up at the Rebel Arts Centre, she would have been permitted to make the tea.

Cinema attendance continued to be a popular pastime, with patrons witnessing the film debut of both Charlie Chaplin and his tramp alter ego in *Making a Living* and *Kid Auto Races at Venice*. Early scenes for another famous film would also be shot, as Frank Hurley took up his role of official photographer on Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition to cross Antarctica. The mission, which would come to be seen as the last major expedition of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration, would have all the calamity and redemption of an adventure novel. Meanwhile, on the pages of *Strand Magazine*, the adventure protagonist was utterly transformed, as writers engaged with their preoccupations about the changes that machine warfare would enact upon heroism.

Popular fiction continued to be popular. Ethel M. Dell's *The Rocks of Valpré* sold well, providing readers with the tried and trusted romance cocktail of lust, duels, blackmail, and love. G. K Chesterton's *The Flying Inn* imagined an England rebelling against sobriety, after a politician under the thrall of a charismatic Muslim sage institutes prohibition. In *The Valley of the Moon*, Jack London presented a boxer, beaten down

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<sup>3</sup> Unattributed, "Penny Times Success, Concept of Modern Journalism, Fighting for Circulation," *Gippsland Mercury*, May 15, 1914, 7.

<sup>4</sup> The same Edward Carson who had led the Marquess of Queensbury's defence against Oscar Wilde's prosecution for criminal libel, his success therein precipitating Wilde's bankruptcy and subsequent trial for gross indecency.

<sup>5</sup> Unattributed, "Suffragettes," *BLAST* 1 (July, 1914), 151-2.

by poverty and labour strikes, attempting to pursue an antiquated agrarian dream, but eventually submitting to the efficacy of more sophisticated modern farming techniques and the capitalism that had developed them. Tarzan swung through his first book, as Edgar Rice Burroughs's serialised story was brought together as *Tarzan of the Apes*. Sax Rohmer expanded his brand of quaintly racist fiction with *The Sins of Séverac Bablon*, a novel about a Jewish global conspiracy to sit beside *The Mystery of Dr. FuManchu*, a novel about a Chinese global conspiracy. These books, along with around two hundred others, were reviewed in the pages of *The Times Literary Supplement*, which began issuing as an independent periodical in March.

Of course, the biggest news was the arrival of war, the seeming inevitability of which had preoccupied the public mind long before the assassinations in Sarajevo. In the early months of the year, a sweaty expectancy permeated all political and cultural debate. In the months after England's entrance into the war, nagging concern tipped over into total preoccupation. Yet, since the Zeppelins did not begin their raids until early in 1915, the un-enlisted of London experienced the war more as a cultural phenomenon. The penny dailies sold hundreds of thousands of copies a day, all of them thick with reports of fighting in Flanders, but *Publishers' Circular* still had to invent the category of 'Military and Navel' to record the hunger for information that spilt over into the book market.

Having cursorily introduced the context in which modernism emerged, it is necessary to discuss the context that informs my critical approach. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz have provided a sketch of the trajectories that can be seen to characterise the contemporary field of modernist studies, following its gradual transformation under the aegis of *Modernism/Modernity* and the Modernist Studies Association. As part of a wider trend in humanities, they note that the scholarship of modernism has entered into a period of 'expansion', which they divide into three main research strands. A 'temporal' expansion has seen centuries become 'long', as received delineations of periodisation have been called into question. A 'spatial' expansion has been noticeable in the preferment of a wider geographical focus, in which modernism is investigated as a global phenomenon and previous tendencies to focus tightly on Europe and North America are critiqued for their 'politics, historical validity, and aesthetic value'. Lastly, they identify a 'vertical' expansion, in which received boundaries of 'high art' and 'popular forms' are reconsidered, canons reformed, and attentions turned to previously marginalised writers and groups. The taking up of these new trajectories, they note, has gone hand in hand with a turn towards the material history of 'production, dissemination, and reception'.<sup>6</sup> And well it might, since the material on which to base such revisions is unlikely to be found in earlier scholarly works, which had their roots in the polemics, critical paradigms and canons propagated by practitioner-critics like Pound, Lewis and Eliot.

As might be expected, the title of the journal in which new modernism developed can provide a handy summary of the critical endeavour that underpins the field. If we take the 'Modernism' in *Modernism/Modernity* to mean the canon of 'old' modernism, and 'Modernity' to be the broader historical period in which it occurred (including all attendant cultural phenomena and artefacts that are not

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA* 123.3 (May 2008), 737-8.

enmeshed within the first term), the slash locates and characterises the critical projects of new modernism. The slash is at once a dividing line and, given that there can be no certainty about which phenomena and artefacts properly fit on either side, a site of collapse. It is in this interstice that new modernism goes to work.

As Ann Ardis notes, some might feel a temptation to do away with the slash altogether, creating an undifferentiated field of interdisciplinary scholarship that we might call ‘turn-of-the-twentieth-century studies’.<sup>7</sup> In practice, I do not think this would change much. In the words of Dora Marsden, an understudied contributor to the politics and philosophy of the London experimental art scene—‘[t]he name of a spade can be abandoned and beyond a little hesitancy, a greater circumlocution in speech, nothing is changed; the spade remains: but abandon the names of thoughts and you have nothing left.’<sup>8</sup> Following the material turn in the humanities, modernism has started to become more spade than thought, as hard evidence of the interactions between the experimental and popular literary spheres have emerged in all their complexity. Whatever we call it, there exists a body of early twentieth century experimental work that bears the traces of its producers’ complicated relationship with more dominant areas of cultural production.

The ‘year study’ is far from a new form—there was, for example a history of my year undertaken in 1959—but it has proven uniquely adaptable to the concerns of new modernist studies.<sup>9</sup> Since the mid-1990s, there has been a proliferation of books concentrating upon a single year in the period we claim for modernism. The majority of the critics who have contributed to the growing body of modernist year studies, describe their chosen year as a frame—an artificial boundary that limits their scope and encourages a deeper scrutiny than might be possible when studying a longer period. Moreover, nearly all of them base the rationale for their research model on a desire to de-insulate modernism. That is, to decentralise and destabilise the small body of ‘modernist’ works that have historically been the priority of the field. It is a model within which scholars can approach early twentieth century culture without limiting their scope in less fashionable ways, like canons, disciplines, and national boundaries. As such, it was always going to be popular in a period when humanities is undergoing a material turn in an attempt to vanquish the ‘interpretive and evaluative paradigms through which the study of early twentieth-century literature and art was institutionalized in the 1920s, 1930s, and beyond.’<sup>10</sup> It is worth taking a brisk survey of the year study, as it developed in response to the expansive tendencies of the broader scholarly field.

In *Refiguring Modernism* (1995) Bonnie Kime-Scott posits the ‘Women of 1928’ as an alternative to Wyndham Lewis’s formulation the ‘Men of 1914’. Her aim is to critique the blithe way in which much previous criticism had inherited its co-ordinates from the proclamations of a few of the loudest (male) practitioners of literary modernism. In effect, she argues that the core personnel of early experimental literary production might be quite different if the critical focus were shifted on to a different locus of

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict 1880-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Dora Marsden, ‘Men Machines and Progress’, *The Egoist* 1.3 (2 February 1914), 41.

<sup>9</sup> James Cameron, *1914*, London: Cassells & Company, 1959.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Ardis, “Democracy and Modernism: *The New Age* under A. R. Orage (1907-22),” in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume 1 Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 223.



activity. As such, Kime-Scott's study fits largely into the vertical axis, as a feminist re-evaluation of the delineation of the scholarly field that brought previously marginalised women to the centre stage.

In 1996, a year in which the approaches that comprise new modernist studies were not yet dominant, Peter Stansky published *On or About December 1910: Early Bloomsbury and its Intimate World*. Drawing his title from Virginia Woolf's famous dating of rupture in the human character, Stansky provides a close historical account of the interactions and literary production that the Bloomsbury set were engaged in during that year. In the same year Thomas J. Harrison published *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, in which he pursued the Expressionist movement across borders and disciplines, providing an account of intellectual and artistic developments in Europe, encompassing the fields of music, painting, literature, philosophy, sociology.

In *1926: Living on the Edge of Time* (1997), Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht attempts a descriptive account of the 'dominant surface perceptions' of his year. His sidestepping of interpretation and diachronic contextualisation penetrates into the arrangement of the book, which he claims has no beginning and no end. Instead, readers are invited to start with any of the short alphabetised sections and thence to select and pursue cross-references until they desire to stop. The intention of his attempt to simulate simultaneity is to 'bring out dominant surface perceptions as they were offered by certain material phenomena, and dominant world views as they were produced by certain concepts during the year 1926.'<sup>11</sup> It is, of course, no coincidence that 1926 was the year in which Heidegger was composing *Sein und Zeit*, whatever Gumbrecht might mischievously suggest in accordance with his anti-interrogative method.

Discomforted by the artificiality of a number of stubbornly persistent scholarly separations—between 'low' and 'high' literatures, English and American modernism, and contemporary academic disciplines—Michael North set out to become an 'ideal reader of 1922, with an insomnia so ideal it would be adequate not just to *Ulysses* but to anything else published in the same year.'<sup>12</sup> In the book that resulted, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (1999), North considers the broader cultural practices that underpinned the development of Anglo-American literary modernity; including, contemporary developments in anthropology, archaeology, philosophy, celebrity, and fashion.

In *1913, The Cradle of Modernism* (2007), Jean-Michel Rabaté argues that the early modernist artistic production was 'part and parcel of a resolutely transatlantic, comparatist and multidisciplinary method'.<sup>13</sup> Using for his frame the year in which *Le Sacre du Printemps* premiered in Paris, the Armoury Show opened in New York, and Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Rabaté undertakes a formidably international and interdisciplinary account of the intersection between modernist artistic endeavour and the technologies of travel, communication, and dissemination.

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<sup>11</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *1926: Living on the Edge of Time*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern*, New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, v.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913, The Cradle of Modernism*, Malden MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, 18.

Given the politics at stake, I should be embarrassed that my study does not draw the modernist period ever wider—I do not concern myself with the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries, nor do I cross continents (barring a few trips on the overcrowded Transatlantic steamer). The expansion enacted by my project is confined to the ‘vertical’ axis. A study that considers the ways in which the publication and reception of a number of critically privileged works intersected with the wider literary field necessarily involves a good deal of archival work and, for this practical reason, it was important to keep a tight limit on my focus. Methodologically speaking, the unification of my focus on a single place, London, in a single year, 1914, was crucial to meeting my aim of situating the first enunciations of what we used to mean when we talked about ‘modernism’ amid the louder, but less familiar conversations of popular culture.

My study will concern some unfashionably familiar names, including Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis. Since it also concerns the wider literary field into which these texts were released, a number of famous popular writers will also feature, with prominent attention being given to Arthur Conan Doyle, G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells, Rose Macaulay, and W. H. Davies. In addition to this familiar cast, there are cameos from a number of less well-known personnel from either side of the ‘great divide’.

The vast proportion of work that goes on in the field of new modernist studies is theoretically underpinned by Huyssen’s account of culture from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day. You could almost consider the work that Mao and Walkowitz situate on their ‘vertical’ axis—that which explores the relationship of modernism to popular culture with an emphasis on research into material culture and hard evidence—to be a reaction formation against the definition of modernism that Huyssen provided in *After the Great Divide* (1986).

As this study will prove to be no exception, it may be helpful to provide a quick summary of Huyssen’s formulation, which provides definitions of ‘popular culture’, the ‘historical avant-garde’, ‘modernism’, and ‘postmodernism’ that rely upon their critical and aesthetic relations to one and other. Huyssen dates a period of modernity back to the mid-eighteenth century and into the present day. Prior to this period, culture is considered to be relatively autonomous from the demands of capitalism. The period of modernity, therefore, begins with the alignment of the cultural superstructure with the base economic structure. The change is seen to be manifest in the development of an economically driven popular culture and the commodification of the pre-existing legitimate cultural sphere, or, in literary terms, the ‘classics’.<sup>14</sup> Huyssen argues that, in reaction against the commodification of legitimate art and the market saturation enacted by the proliferation of popular culture, new forms of unpopular art began to display a reactionary aspect. He applies modernism as a term to describe all modern art that exhibits an anxiety about the commodification of art and contempt for the popular culture which is its expression.

Huyssen’s modernism can be identified by a number of salient characteristics. First and foremost, its practitioners’ preoccupation with asserting the autonomy of their artworks and their attempts to enact

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<sup>14</sup> It has been nearly thirty years since *After the Great Divide* was published and, in that time, cultural sensitivities have rightfully developed. For the same reasons that the term ‘mass’ is now routinely replaced with ‘popular’, I prefer not to apply the terms ‘high’ and ‘low’ to art. When talking about the work that earlier critics have called ‘high’, I will take up Pierre Bourdieu’s term ‘legitimate,’ favouring the contentious and negotiated nature of the hierarchisation that it implies.

strategies to distance their production and consumption from the popular literary sphere and the increasingly commercialised legitimate literary sphere. This is seen to take the form of anti-commercialism, elitism, and 'rupture' from historical forms, like the sonnet, and historical modes of artistic expression, like realism. The art itself becomes self-referential, ironic, ambiguous, and rigorously experimental, becoming, at times, little more than a protracted exploration of its working medium. The work is considered as an attempt to build and patrol a fortifying wall between an aspiring anti-commercial legitimate literary sphere and commodified culture and bourgeois living.

By contrast, Huyssen defines the historical avant-garde by its attempts to interact with popular culture, in an attempt to challenge the artificial separation of art from life. Postmodernism is constituted by its interest in the 'mutual relations and discursive figurations' that exist between modernism, the avant-garde and popular culture.<sup>15</sup> In terms of its critical and aesthetic programme, postmodernism is thusly identified as the historical avant-garde's heir.

Critiques of Huyssen's formulation—which appear in nearly every book about modernism that has been published since the mid-eighties—rely upon two interrelated points. Firstly, that *After The Great Divide* makes unwarranted generalisations and relies upon an inadequate evidence base. Sceptical of the whole enterprise of grand theories, North argues that the 'antipathy between modernism and mass culture' is 'one whose existence has always seemed more a matter of theoretical necessity than empirical fact'. He goes on to question Huyssen's failure to offer any 'specific discussions of conditions in the United States or Great Britain' whilst asserting his conclusions as if 'they were as applicable to Eliot as to Wagner.'<sup>16</sup> Secondly, critics have disagreed with the definition of modernism Huyssen provides. In taking issue with the simplicity of Huyssen's theory, Lawrence Rainey has noted that '[m]odernism, in this account, becomes little more than a reactionary, even paranoid fear of popular culture [...] modernism is naïve and irredeemably reactionary, whilst the historical avant-garde and postmodernism are self-aware and emancipatory.'<sup>17</sup> In other words, this definition did not adequately represent the works and practices to which Rainey and lot of other critics wanted to apply the word 'modernism.'

For my own part, I find Huyssen's theorisation a helpful framework to bear in mind when attempting to understand the negotiations and disputes that went on between emerging modernism and popular culture in London 1914. If the evidence that my spade-work has turned up serves to wear away at the hard edges of Huyssen's categories, if it serves to demonstrate that the 'paranoia' which he argues characterises modernism is more complicated in fact than it appeared in theory, and if the drives which Huyssen allocates to the avant-garde and modernism are sometimes seen to appear in the same artefacts, it was somewhat inevitable. Detail will always show up the complexity and contradictory nature of human expression and interpretation that, piecemeal, makes up culture. Presuming Huyssen's terms to be non-exclusive, the central question of my study is how far are the terms 'avant-garde' or 'modernism' applicable to the

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<sup>15</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986,

<sup>16</sup> Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, 2.

experimental art sphere that was emergent in London in 1914? Or, in its broadest expression, what kind of a relationship did early modernism have with popular culture?

The first chapter focuses on the complexity of early modernism's relationship with popular literary sphere. Rather than a purely textual approach, I compare two staged public events that happened in January—G. K. Chesterton's trial of a Dickens's character and Ezra Pound's ritualistic dinner in honour of the poetic accomplishments of an old man who insisted he was not a poet. Both involved bids for literary autonomy and attempts at public self-fashioning which some people found upsetting. Neither included attempts to enact a separation of experimental and popular culture. Indeed, in the case of the dinner, Pound went to much effort to ensure that popular writers were included in an event that hoped might unify all poets under the banner of artistic individualism.

The second chapter concerns the strategies by which the newly literary *Egoist* advertised its resistance to the commercialisation of literature. Attempts were made to shame profitable cultural arbiters like the *TLS*, battles were waged against censorship in protection of the artist's right to autonomy, and attacks were made upon the purveyors of jingoistic war poetry. Rather than being evidence of vehement anti-commercialism, these resistances are shown to operate in the commercial interests of the little magazine.

The third chapter discusses the competition between rival experimentalisms, charting the way in which the composers of *BLAST* appropriated notions of heroism from a new breed of adventure story—mechanical war fiction—to distinguish their talk of machines from that of the Futurists. By interacting with popular culture in this way, the Vorticists embrace an avant-garde aesthetic, even as they resist certain kinds of avant-garde activity that they perceive have been cheapened by their success and ubiquity.

The fourth chapter considers three poets—formative *Georgian Poetry* contributor W. H. Davies, anthology abstainer Rose Macaulay, and one-poem-Imagiste Skipwith Cannell—as evidence of the way in which appearances in anthologies and experimental group membership have distorted and deleted parts of the poetic record.

## Chapter One

### Public Relations

In his manual for aspiring authors, *The Author's Craft* (1914), Arnold Bennett divides writers into two types—'those who admitted and sometimes proclaimed loudly that they desired popularity; and those who expressed a noble scorn or a gentle contempt for popularity.'<sup>18</sup> The latter group, he claims, are identifiable by their badly concealed envy of the former. The popularity seeker is amenable to his public, compromising his interests in pursuit of their satisfaction. The contemptuous writer pledges to 'consider nothing but my own individuality and powers' and 'be guided solely by my own personal conception of what the public ought to like'.<sup>19</sup> He is talking about the difference between popular writers, like G. K. Chesterton, and experimental writers, like Ezra Pound.

In January 1914, Chesterton and Pound took part in separate staged events. The first, which took the form of a dramatisation of the unwritten conclusion of Dickens's final novel, was a sell-out and a press sensation. The second was a 'private' lunch in celebration of an aging aristocrat and poetic hobbyist, which was disseminated to four periodicals by select attendees. Whilst these events might seem too different to be meaningfully compared, both were seized by the aforementioned writers as an opportunity to make explicit the terms of their artistic contract with the general public.

#### The Trial of John Jasper

On the evening of Wednesday 7 January 1914, a large crowd gathered before King's Hall in Covent Garden. It was not uncommon to see an excited throng outside the premises of the National Sporting Club. Only a few weeks earlier, a crowd of similar proportions had amassed to watch the British boxer Billy 'Bombardier' Wells fight George 'The Orchid Man' Carpentier for the European Boxing Union heavyweight title. It had been an important contest in one of the country's most popular sports. In its post-match report, the *Daily Mail* dubbed it the 'Waterloo of British Boxing'—a headline that bore little relation to the evening's action, given that the Frenchman had knocked-out the Englishman in under a minute.<sup>20</sup> That the January crowd was as large is noteworthy because it was composed, not by fans of pugilism, but of the *Pickwick Papers*. The entertainment, organised by the Dickens Fellowship, was to be a *Trial of Jasper, Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral in the County of Kent, for the Murder of Edwin Drood, Engineer*.

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<sup>18</sup> Arnold Bennett, *The Author's Craft*, London, New York and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914, 103.

<sup>19</sup> Bennett, *The Author's Craft*, 108.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Black, "Waterloo of British Boxing," *Daily Mail*, December 9, 1913, 9-10.

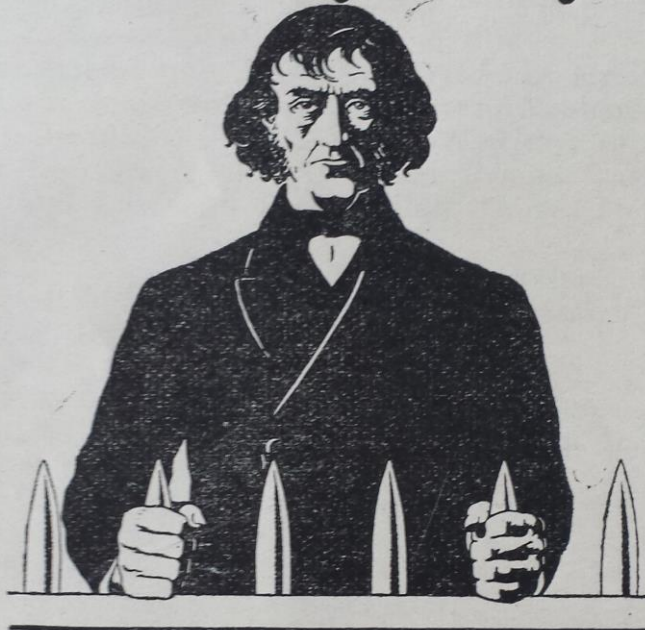
# THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP.

**KING'S HALL,** KING STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7TH, 1914,

WILL BE HELD A DEBATE IN THE FORM OF

## A TRIAL OF JOHN JASPER



FOR THE

# MURDER

## OF EDWIN DROOD.

Judge **Mr. G. K. CHESTERTON.**  
Counsel for Prosecution **Mr. J. CUMING WALTERS & Mr. B. W. MATZ.**  
Counsel for Defence **Mr. CECIL CHESTERTON & Mr. W. WALTER CROTCH.**

The jury will consist of the following:

Max Pemberton.  
Coulson Kernahan.  
Sir Edward Russell.

W. L. Courtney.  
Francesco Berger.  
Tom Gallon.

Edwin Pugh.  
W. W. Jacobs.  
Arthur Morrison.  
Raymond Paton.

Wm. De Morgan.  
Ridgwell Cullum.  
Hilaire Belloc.

**COMMENCING AT 7 O'CLOCK PRECISELY.**

Members can obtain Tickets from the Secretary, The Dickens Fellowship, 33, Craven Street, Strand, W.C.

Printed by JOSEPH COLLARD, 41, Charing Cross Road, W.C.

1. Reduced facsimile of trial poster, published in  
*The Dickensian* 10.2 (February 1914): 30.

The event was a great success. The Fellowship's official journal, *The Dickensian*, reported that a large number of people who had not been lucky enough to secure tickets had 'begg[ed] to be allowed to pay for the privilege of standing or a seat in the gallery upstairs'.<sup>21</sup> In recognition of the Victorian author's social principles, the account of the evening printed in the society's journal emphasised the diversity of the audience, which was said to encompass 'every phase of society', from 'lords and ladies, actors and actresses, barristers, solicitors, authors, journalists, dramatists, scientists, city magnates and typists, clerks and office boys.'<sup>22</sup> However, it seems unlikely that office boys were well represented, since the cheapest ticket cost a shilling. Moreover, as tickets were split into six classes, with the most expensive costing 10s 6d, the hygienic separation enacted by the superfluous 'and' in the *Dickensian's* list of attendant professions must surely have been replicated in the auditorium seating arrangements. Certainly, no Estella-types were likely to find themselves sat beside a Pip.

It was an unquestionably grand affair, with the media circus to prove it. *The Dickensian* counted fifty pressmen, sportingly attired in period costume. News of the trial appeared prominently in all the major national dailies, with particular interest shown by the *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express*, as well as in numerous provincial newspapers across the land, from the *Brighton Argus* to the *Aberdeen Evening Gazette*. Even a number of foreign papers picked up the story. All told, the event inspired more than a hundred articles in sixty-four different periodicals. In the *Dickensian*, the press attention was seen to be proof of 'the universal regard in which the great Victorian writer is held by his fellow-countrymen'.<sup>23</sup> There is, however, another explanation for the great interest shown by press and public and that was the trial's intriguing cast.

The *Daily Telegraph* described the trial's performers as 'a constellation of literary stars'. The *Pall Mall Gazette* called them a 'literary and dramatic constellation'.<sup>24</sup> The defence team, though only dimly recognisable to the wider public, were important figures in the Dickens Fellowship. J. Cuming Walters, an author and critic who specialised in Dickens's unfinished mystery, led the defence, with B. W. Matz, a founding member of the Fellowship and the editor of its journal, acting as Cuming Walters's second. The prosecution was led by *New Witness* editor and self-confessed *Drood* fanatic, Cecil Chesterton. It was only the previous spring that Chesterton's own court appearance had filled the papers, when he had been found guilty of criminal libel for his reporting of the Marconi Scandal. The public were no doubt amused to see him back in court so soon.

Under the foremanship of the eminent playwright George Bernard Shaw, the jury was comprised of popular authors (including Coulson Kernahan, William Pett Ridge, W. W. Jacobs, Arthur Morrison, Max Pemberton, Tom Gallon, Ridgewell Cullum, William Edwin Pugh, and Raymond Paton), belletrists (George Slythe Street

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<sup>21</sup> The Editor, "When Found—," *The Dickensian* 10.2 (1914): 31.

<sup>22</sup> The Editor, "When Found—," 31.

<sup>23</sup> The Editor, "When Found—," 31.

<sup>24</sup> Unattributed, "A Dickens Trial—Mystery of Edwin Drood—Jasper in the Dock," *Daily Telegraph*, January 8, 1914, 12; Unattributed, "Our Special Representative—A Comedy Drama," *Pall Mall Gazette* January 8, 1914, 1-2.

and Hilaire Belloc), and former members of parliament (Sir Edward Russell and Justin Huntly McCarthy). Many of the character parts were also played by well-known literary figures, with former *Daily Herald* editor, C. Sheridan Jones, taking up the role of Thomas Bazzard and Arthur Waugh, the author, critic, and owner of Chapman & Hall publishing firm, appearing as Reverend Canon Crisparkle. In addition to these 'literary stars', the comic actor Bransby Williams (widely known as 'the Henry Irving of the music halls') added a much-commended performance as Anthony Durdles.

Over this most auspicious rabble, the Honourable Mr Justice Gilbert Keith Chesterton presided. On paper, G. K. Chesterton was an excellent choice for judge. In 1914, he was one of the most popular living British writers. Already celebrated as a journalist and novelist, Chesterton's Father Brown mysteries had secured him a large, dedicated, and socially diverse fan-base. The first omnibus, *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911), had been a great commercial success and, a few months after the trial, a second omnibus, *The Wisdom of Father Brown*, would sell just as well. Chesterton's name shifted books, sold papers, and packed halls. By involving him so prominently in the trial, the Dickens Fellowship could guarantee wide press coverage and massive public interest.

There were also other reasons why Chesterton was an apposite choice for judge. Like his brother Cecil, to whom a number of biographers credit the idea of holding the trial, Chesterton had long been a member of the Dickens Fellowship. Moreover, Chesterton was a pre-eminent critic of Dickens's work. As well as articles and introductions to new editions of Dickens's books, he had produced two monographs about the author: *Charles Dickens* (Methuen, 1906) and *Criticism of the Works of Charles Dickens* (Dent 1911). *The Victorian Age in Literature*, which had been published only a few months before the trial, also featured Chesterton's hero and was available in all good bookshops. A few years later, Chesterton's position as the senior authority on Dickens would be validated by his contribution of the entry on the author in the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1929). Frank S. Johnson, Honourable Secretary of the Dickens Fellowship, saw in Chesterton a man who could be relied upon to bring to the trial proceedings great publicity, a lively personal interest, and an appropriate level of decorum. In his third prediction, as those more familiar with Chesterton's frequent speaking engagements might have anticipated, Johnson was much mistaken.

The Dickens Fellowship had been founded in London in 1902 and, since that time, it had expanded exponentially. By 1905, when the first issue of the *Dickensian* came out, the society had in excess of 6,500 members, spread across thirty affiliated groups. By 1914, there were over a dozen Fellowships operating in London alone (including Forest Gate, Hackney and Stoke Newington, and Tottenham), as well as branches spanning out across Britain, incorporating places like Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool and even Swadlincote. Moreover, the Fellowship had quickly become international in scope, boasting societies as far flung as Philadelphia, Montreal, and Sydney.

The Dickens Fellowship was one of the first international author fan clubs and, like many of the comparable associations that would follow, its members took their subject deathly seriously. Those who chanced to leaf through the earnest expositions that filled the pages of the *Dickensian* might never guess that Dickens had



been a humourist. A hundred years down the line, Dickens's fate at the hands of the Fellowship would be mirrored by the activities of the American Chesterton Society, who recently celebrated a breakthrough in their campaign to get Chesterton sainted. The Bishop of Northampton had finally agreed to appoint a priest to make, as he put it, 'tentative enquiries'.<sup>25</sup> One can only imagine what the author of 'The Resurrection of Father Brown', a story in which the cleric sleuth narrowly avoids being accused of shamming a miracle, would make of the Society's well-intentioned crusade for his halation.

For the Dickens Society, the object of the trial was not to raise Dickens's profile, which, given their swelling ranks, was clearly unnecessary, but to raise funds for its charitable wing. If this had been the only gauge of success that contributors to the *Dickensian* had used to measure the event, then the night would have been an unmitigated success. Unfortunately, many of its more active members had a professional and financial interest in the evening being more serious than Chesterton's involvement would permit. Jasper's lead prosecutor, J. Cuming Walters had published widely on Dickens, but his works had attracted little of the public interest that had been generated by Chesterton's contributions to the field. In 1911, Chapman & Hall had brought out *Phases of Dickens: the Man, his Message, and his Mission*, in which Cuming Walters writes as passionately and seriously about Dickens as the title suggests. In addition to a more general interest in Dickens, Cuming Walters was fascinated by the unfinished *Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In 1905, he had put forward his own theory about the book's planned ending in *Clues to Dickens's Mystery of Edwin Drood* and, in 1912, had followed it up with a second book on the history of *Drood* theories, *The Complete Mystery of Edwin Drood; the History, Continuations, and Solutions, 1870-1912*. With so much of his professional life sunk into the question of John Jasper's guilt, the Fellowship's mock trial was unavoidably bound up with Cuming Walters's livelihood. The trial would offer him the opportunity to appear in public, on a level stage with Dickens's most eminent critic. It would not, however, offer him the chance for which he had most hoped—to 'prove' his theory correct above that of his competitors.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the business of finishing Dickens's novel had become a profitable niche in the literary market. In addition to the numerous dramatic and prose fiction continuations of the mystery, critical books that attempted to 'solve' the question of Jasper's guilt were legion. In the year that Cuming Walters had published his *Clues*, two other accounts competed for the public's cash and credulity. Barring minor differences, Andrew Lang's *Puzzle of Dickens's Last Plot* and William Archer's 15 July, 1905 article in the *Morning Leader* both accorded with the theory that had been put forward by Richard A. Proctor in 1887.<sup>26</sup> In *Watched by the Dead: A Loving Study of Dickens' Half-Told Tale*, Proctor had argued that Drood was not dead.<sup>27</sup> In an opium haze, Jasper had bungled his nephew's asphyxiation. Having also been drugged, Drood had not been able to identify his attacker and had taken on the disguise of Datchery to solve his own 'murder'. A lone voice amongst many, Cuming Walters had argued otherwise—Drood was dead and Helena Landless had disguised herself as Datchery in an attempt to clear the name of her beloved brother. As the sole propagator of the Helena-as-Datchery theory, Cuming Walters could expect professional satisfaction and, perhaps, interest sufficient for a further edition of his book, if only the

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<sup>25</sup> "G.K. Chesterton: Bishop of Northampton Probes Sainthood Claims," BBC News, published August 26, 2013, accessed September 23, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-23769750>.

<sup>26</sup> William Archer, "The Mystery of Datchery," *Morning Leader*, July 15, 1905, 5-7.

<sup>27</sup> Richard A. Proctor, *Watched By the Dead: A Loving Study of Dickens' Half-Told Tale*, London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1887.

London jury could be convinced to find in his favour. All he had to do was beat Cecil Chesterton in a public debate.

A verbatim report of the trial proceedings was published by Chapman & Hall a few weeks after the trial, with copies priced at 2s 6d. Its script-like format permits a unique insight into the events as they unfolded. The book also included a list of rules that had been drawn up with aim of securing a 'fair trial', which, to Cuming Walters and his ilk, meant one in which the verdict remained faithful to Dickens's text. Three of the rules directly concerned the enforcement of literary fidelity. Firstly, neither legal team could call Drood as a witness, regardless of their views about the state of his health. Drood could prove too much, including Jasper's innocence or guilt, and could take too little of his testimony from the book. A second rule, that Cecil Chesterton would later rely on in court, stipulated that '[a]ll statements made in the book shall be taken to be true and admitted by both sides, and any statement by a witness contradicting such statements shall thereby be proved false'. A third rule bound the witnesses exclusively to evidence provided by the book. Only the chief witnesses, Helena Landless and Bazzard, were permitted some creative leeway, so that reasonable progress could be made. This rule effectively precluded any useful input from Durdles, Crisparkle, and Princess Puffer. Instead, these characters took on the responsibility of setting the scene for the audience, prior to the examination of the chief witnesses. There was no way to legislate the degree of creativity that the chief-witnesses could employ and, as it turned out, the defence's chief witness was willing to be a lot more inventive than was the prosecution's.

As we might have guessed, the prosecution's chief witness provided testimony in accordance with Cuming Walters's theory. Helena Landless attested that she had disguised herself as Datchery with the motive of clearing her brothers' name and, having found the only piece of jewellery that Jasper had not known Drood to possess in the pile of quicklime in the tomb, had been convinced that Jasper had killed Drood. Apparently keen to maintain the audience's suspension of disbelief, the defence did not point out how few pages this account would have added to the novel that Dickens's notes indicate was only half finished. Instead, Cecil Chesterton focussed upon the ludicrous proposition that Landless, a woman who had lived in Cloisterham for six months, could convince her friends and neighbours that she was a strange old man, simply by putting on a wig. Furthermore, how had such a dainty girl manage to consume the pints of sherry, pots of ale, and hearty meals that Datchery is known to have ordered? Finally, where had she acquired knowledge of the system of scoring used in old English taverns? Her answer to the latter—that she picked up the system during her childhood in Ceylon—was preposterous enough that Bazzard joked about it when he took the stand.

I rather amused myself by opening the cupboard door in my room, and chalking it up as is done in taverns which on occasion I have visited in Ceylon—I mean Norfolk.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> J. W. T. Ley, transcribed, *Trial of John Jasper, Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral in the Country of Kent, for the Murder of Edwin Drood, Engineer*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1914: 60.

After only a few minutes of cross-examination, Cecil Chesterton had Landless's testimony and, with it, Cuming Walters's thesis, up against the ropes. It was time for him to step in and deliver a final crushing blow.

Had not Landless claimed that, whilst disguised as Datchery, she had pretended to get lost during her initial exploration of Cloisterham? Landless admitted that she had done so in an effort to make her disguise more credible. Reading out the passage describing Datchery's disorientation, Chesterton reminded the prosecution of the second rule. The passage in question, he claimed, represented a 'definite statement as to the condition of your mind and not as to your external actions', which meant that Helena Landless was a liar.<sup>29</sup> Accusing Landless of masterminding a plot against Jasper, Chesterton found the motive of fraternal love that Cuming Walters's had used to explain Landless' decision to masquerade as Datchery to be equally suited to his version of events. The trial would continue, but Cuming Walters's theory had been thoroughly defeated.

As the prosecution simmered, there followed an entertaining but ultimately inconsequential comic interlude, in which Cecil Chesterton examined the evidence of his girlfriend Ada Jones (otherwise known as 'Keith' Chesterton, or by her journalistic pseudonym, J. K. Prothero), who was playing the part of the opium dealing Princess Puffer. Then it was Thomas Bazzard's turn to take the stand. Cecil Chesterton's examination proceeded on the assumption that Bazzard, rather than Landless, had assumed the identity of Datchery—the claim that had been made by Lang. During his examination, cross-examination, and re-examination, Bazzard unfolded an account in which Jasper had attempted to drug and kill Drood but had failed, suffering a seizure brought on by prolonged opium use at the crucial moment. In Cloisterham to spend Christmas with Rosa Budd, Grewgious had found Drood unconscious in the churchyard. Bazzard had then taken on the disguise of Datchery in an effort to prove Jasper had attempted murder. He had placed the ring in the quicklime and he planned to put up posters enquiring after the lost jewellery, in the hope of catching Jasper returning to check the tomb in which he imagined he had placed Drood's remains. It was known that Dickens had provided insights about the ending of his novel to a number of individuals, including his illustrator and, on the famous title page that had been destined to accompany Dickens's text, Chesterton pointed out a poster bearing the single word '[l]ost'.

In the course of his testimony, Bazzard also claimed that he had seen Drood alive and well on 1 January, 1861. If Cuming Walters had been annoyed by the short work that Cecil Chesterton had made of his theory, then Bazzard's testimony was too much. The declaration that Drood was alive and well had the same effect as putting the supposed murder victim on the stand. Furthermore, C. Sheridan Jones's amusingly sharp-tongued and quick-witted portrayal of Bazzard bore little resemblance to the oafish character that Dickens had outlined. Yet, instead of complaining about these infractions, Cuming Walters decided to proceed with his planned line of questioning. He claimed that Bazzard had cooked up his entire testimony in an attempt to raise his profile enough to find a publisher for his play, 'The Thorn of Anxiety'. Faithful to Dickens's

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<sup>29</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 11.

narrative though it was, Cuming Walters's argument sounded so fanciful that Bazzard barely needed to defend himself.

It was clear that the defence had prepared for the trial with very different ideas about its purpose than those held by the prosecution. Chesterton's willingness to bend the rules had produced an amusing and compelling case against Jasper, but had made it impossible for a verdict to be arrived at that would satisfy the earnest members of the Dickens Fellowship. If Cecil Chesterton had failed to take the event as seriously as Cuming Walters had hoped, then George Bernard Shaw's conduct as lead juror must have disappointed him bitterly. Apparently under the misapprehension that an audience needed to be entertained, Shaw took every opportunity to inject a little mirth into the proceedings.

As the *Dickensian's* editor B. W. Matz brought to a close his Case for the Prosecution, Shaw interjected.

[A]ll I can say is, that if the learned gentleman thinks conviction[s] of a British jury are going to be influenced by evidence, he knows little of his fellow countrymen!<sup>30</sup>

As a seasoned lecturer and after dinner speaker, Shaw's comic delivery was dry, devilish, and impeccably timed. One can only imagine the relief that accompanied the laughter, as the journalists who had turned up with the sole aim of procuring witty quotations from Shaw and G. K. Chesterton realised that the night would not proceed entirely as Matz's dry opening speech had suggested it might. In his high Irish accent, Shaw invited the audience to laugh at themselves—a beloved English pastime—and to laugh at the trial, which his off-hand assertion had entirely undermined.

Shaw had great esteem for the author of *Drood*. He once noted that the best dramatic writing was accomplished when playwrights lifted their characters 'bodily out of the pages of Charles Dickens.'<sup>31</sup> Yet, the public trial of John Jasper was not, for Shaw, an opportunity to venerate his hero, nor was he interested in 'solving' a mystery. What it offered him was a chance to amuse an audience and to be in the papers. Like G. K. Chesterton, his reputation as a writer was such that he did not need help to sell tickets to the forthcoming London premier of *Pygmalion*, which would run at His Majesty's Theatre for 118 performances from 11 April, but extra publicity was always welcome.

The fact that the publicity was on Shaw's mind is evident in the second of his many jokes of the evening. When Arthur Waugh appeared on the stand as Reverend Canon Crisparkle, Shaw interrupted with an assertion of identity fraud. Was it not rather Christopher Nubbles who stood before them, whom G. K. Chesterton had previously 'tried' and 'found guilty' of 'snobbery' in 'one of those summings-up which have made your name famous wherever the English language is spoken'?<sup>32</sup> In his 1907 introduction to the Dent edition of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Chesterton had concluded that 'Kit' Nubbles was a snob, by virtue of his acceptance of his position in a fixed social hierarchy; a revised version of the essay had also been included

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<sup>30</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 17.

<sup>31</sup> A quotation from *Prophets of the Nineteenth Century* (then unpublished), cited in Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw, His Life and Works, A Critical Biography (Authorized)*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1911, 357.

<sup>32</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 23.

in his *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Dickens* when it appeared in 1911.<sup>33</sup> If an aspect of Waugh's history, appearance, or costume had provoked Shaw's comment, there now remains no evidence of it. The author of the *Daily Express* report was nonplussed, cagily suggesting that the joke was 'only understandable by Dickensians'.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, Shaw had seen an opportunity to make a tenuous link to the fine quality of G. K. Chesterton's Dickens criticism and he had taken it.

In a later quip, Shaw also revealed the public networking he and his fellow jurymen had been engaged in during the event itself, when he admitted that they could not refer to the court documents because they had all 'gone, covered with our autographs.'<sup>35</sup> The progress of the trial was, to Shaw and his panel of literary lights, of secondary importance to the relationship between them and their fans in the stalls. In his attitude towards the evening, G. K. Chesterton was of a mind with Shaw. He made a number of jokes that relied upon rupturing the audiences' suspension of disbelief, with the effect of turning their attention to the personalities on stage.

During Cecil's examination of Durdles, G. K. Chesterton pretended to forget their shared surname, addressing Cecil as 'Mr. Chesterman—or Chesterton—whatever it is.'<sup>36</sup> Later, after Crisparkle had been accused of being influenced by his attraction to Rosa Budd, Chesterton interjected thus:

I should suggest that question is very improper. We are all under the influence of each other to a great extent. I am as much under the influence of the foreman of the Jury that I almost entirely agree with the view he takes of the situation when he mentions it.<sup>37</sup>

Here Chesterton returns Shaw's earlier compliment—though in a more backhanded manner—since members of the audience would have been well aware of the good-humoured but vehement disagreements that the pair had aired in the press, as in 1907, for example, when they had participated in a protracted dispute about socialism with Hilaire Belloc and H. G. Wells in the pages of the *New Age*.<sup>38</sup>

In the spirit of Shaw's 'bit' about the autographs, Chesterton made his own jokes about fame. Quickly picking up on the irony of Cuming Walters's line of questioning in his disastrous cross-examination of Bazzard, in which he argued that the witness had falsified his testimony with the object of promoting his writing, Chesterton put forward a humorous objection.

Cuming Walters:                      Do you think it would be to your advantage to be a little famous?

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<sup>33</sup> G. K. Chesterton, "Old Curiosity Shop," in *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*, London: Dent, 1911, 50-64.

<sup>34</sup> Unattributed, "The Trial of John Jasper—Dickensian Mystery Laid Before Jury of Authors—The Verdict!," *Daily Express*, January 8, 1914, 1.

<sup>35</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 58.

<sup>36</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Hilaire Belloc, "Thoughts about Modern Thought," *The New Age* 2.6 (December 7, 1907), 108-116; G. K. Chesterton, "Why I am Not a Socialist," *The New Age* 2.10 (January, 4 1908), 189-90; H. G. Wells, "About Chesterton and Belloc," *The New Age* 2.11 (January 11, 1908), 209-10; G. K. Chesterton, "On Wells and a Glass of Beer," *The New Age* 2.13 (January, 25 1908), 250; and George Bernard Shaw, "Belloc and Chesterton," *The New Age* 2.16 (January 4, 1908), 189-90.

Judge: I must interpose, because I don't think I know any human being in the world who would not think it to his advantage to be rather famous.<sup>39</sup>

Wittingly or unwittingly, Cuming Walters's had put the real motives of the celebrity participants under the spotlight. It is testament to G. K. Chesterton's commitment to comedy that, rather than letting the awkward correlation between the world of the trial and the reality of its actors slip by, he decided to bring the comparison to the fore with an acknowledgement of his own hunger for renown. In his summing up, Chesterton returned to the subject of the trial participants' 'day jobs'.

You must forget that you [the jury] are solid and good citizens summoned to decide a serious matter, nay, I must forget that I am an experienced Judge seated on this Bench for many years; and we must all try to think—both the Jury and myself—try to think we are authors.<sup>40</sup>

The comment masterfully blurred the fictional reality of the trial, the historical fact of *Drood's* fictionality, and the actual reality of the public relations exercise the contemporary authors were engaged in. The delivery of the trademark 'paradox' made the audience roar with laughter, their real anticipation for the evening, it must be suspected, having just been met.

In retrospect, it seems unlikely that Johnson could have expected a collection of literary personalities to stage a serious trial. Yet, even the Honourable Secretary of the Dickens Fellowship was surprised by the extent of Shaw's shenanigans. As the trial rolled into its fifth hour, Chesterton finished his summing up and the jury were invited to retire to consider their verdict. At which point, Shaw rose and, without any attempt to consult his fellow jurymen, pronounced that 'following the tradition and practice of British juries' the group had decided their verdict at lunch. Though Jasper's guilt could not be proven beyond reasonable doubt, he was clearly a sinister fellow and therefore the verdict had to be one of 'manslaughter'. As whatever was left of Cuming Walters's fantasy of a serious, impartial and decisive judgement on the Dickens mystery vanished, he demanded that the jury be discharged for improper conduct. Instead, seeing that it had gotten rather late, Chesterton gleefully found all present in contempt of court and asked that they be locked up. It was inevitable, really, that Chesterton would have seized upon what was likely to be his one and only chance to send Shaw to prison.

The next issue of the *Dickensian* was full of talk of the trial. The editorial reported 'one of the most exhilarating, most enjoyable, and most distinguished and historic literary evenings that London had had the opportunity of taking part in for many years.'<sup>41</sup> Though broadly positive about the event, dwelling on the press interest and charitable revenue raised, the editorial notes that 'some thought it too serious, some thought it flippant at times' and expresses mild disappointment at the verdict. In the two articles that

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<sup>39</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> J. W. T. Ley, *Trial of John Jasper*, 77.

<sup>41</sup> 'The Editor,' "When Found—," 32.

followed, one by the event's stenographer, J. W. T. Ley, and the other by Cuming Walters, a more aggressive tone was taken.

The verdict was no less than an outrage. [...] I am positive I am expressing the opinion of everyone who was present, or [...] had read about the proceedings in the daily newspapers.<sup>42</sup>

According to Ley, the trial was a failure that could be attributed to the conduct of one man. The trial, which had been 'regarded by all concerned as a serious effort to find a logical solution to the mystery', had been 'spoiled by the impishness of Mr. George Bernard Shaw [...] the one man in the building who was not in a serious mood.'<sup>43</sup> As we might expect, Cuming Walters's article takes a similar line, lamenting the fact that 'a certain section, including Mr. George Bernard Shaw, persisted from the first to the last in treating the Trial as an unadulterated jest.'<sup>44</sup> It was rather unfair to single out Shaw, given Chesterton's equally 'bad' behaviour, but it seems that Ley was committed to misrepresenting the conduct of the latter to strengthen his rebuke of the former. Though the Judge had been 'Chestertonian [...] he recognized that the occasion was one of serious debate—legitimate literary debate.'<sup>45</sup> Ley's protestation of Chesterton's seriousness is little supported by the evidence.

Both Ley and Cuming Walters decried the unfaithfulness of Sheridan Jones's portrayal of Bazzard. Cuming Walters had every right to be annoyed by the flexibility with which Cecil Chesterton and Sheridan Jones had treated the rules, especially since, at other moments, they evoked them to strengthen their defence. In his article, Cuming Walters explains that his failure to protest during the trial was not the result of the inhibitive presence of an expectant audience, but rather a capitulation to the absurd turn that proceedings had taken.

[W]e were no longer discussing Dickens's story but a new plot by Mr. Chesterton. [...] I will not abuse Dickens's name by taking part in a wild-goose chase after someone else's unauthorized inventions.<sup>46</sup>

Oblivious to the irony of his condemnation of 'unauthorized inventions', Cuming Walters continued by voicing his disgust at the movement away from the sober consideration of Dickens's intentions, towards a spectacle in which Chesterton presided over the invention of, to his mind, less plausible alternatives than his own.

Of course, it was not Chesterton and Shaw's jokes, but Cuming Walters's faith in the trial—and, rather unfortunately, the general aim of his life's work—that was absurd. If he had read Chesterton's work on Dickens, he would have found an explanation as to why this was the case. In his chapter on *Drood* in

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<sup>42</sup> J. W. T. Ley, "The Trial of John Jasper," 33.

<sup>43</sup> J. W. T. Ley, "The Trial of John Jasper," 34.

<sup>44</sup> J. Cuming Walters, "The Drood Trial Reviewed," *The Dickensian* 10.2 (February 1914), 42.

<sup>45</sup> J. W. T. Ley, "The Trial of John Jasper," 34.

<sup>46</sup> J. Cuming Walters, "The Drood Trial Reviewed," 42.

*Appreciations*, Chesterton had discussed in depth the dominant theories about the conclusion of Dickens's novel, including Cuming Walters's account (though he erroneously refers to him as 'Mr. Cumming Walters' throughout). Chesterton is generally dismissive of Cuming Walters's theory that Helena Landless is Datchery, describing it as 'wild enough to be the centre of [...] a harlequinade' and, anyway, not a tale that would fit well with a title that placed Edwin Drood as the central character.<sup>47</sup>

It was not the reasonableness of Cuming Walters's theory that was the centre of Chesterton's critique, however, but rather the reasonableness of the whole enterprise of second guessing the end of *Drood*.

[T]he whole conflict between a critic with one theory, like Mr. Lang, and a critic with another theory, like Mr. Cumming Walters [*sic*], becomes eternal and a trifle farcical. Mr. Walters says that all Mr. Lang's clues were blinds; Mr. Lang says that all Mr. Walters's clues were blinds. [...] There seems no end to this insane process; anything that Dickens wrote may or may not mean the opposite of what it says.<sup>48</sup>

To illustrate the absurdity of critics attempting to piece together clues from half a murder mystery, which, by its very nature, is full of red herrings, Chesterton provides his own theory. Miss Twinkleton, with the mercenary motive of keeping Rosa Budd paying her school fees, dressed up as Datchery to catch the murderous Drood before he can make the poor girl his wife.

This suggestion does not seem to me more humorous than Mr. Cumming Walters's [*sic*] theory, yet either may certainly be true. Dickens is dead, and a number of splendid scenes and startling adventures have died with him. Even if we get to the right solution we shall not know it is right.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, unlike the creator of Father Brown, Cuming Walters did not fully appreciate that, for a mystery story to be worth the paper it is printed on, its conclusion must not be deducible from its opening acts. To an accomplished mystery writer like Chesterton, earnest attempts to find a correct solution to *Drood* were not just pointless, they were an insult to its author.

Apparently never having read Chesterton on *Drood*, Cuming Walters viewed the trial as professional failure on the part of Chesterton and Shaw, scornfully noting that 'the most remarkable jury of literary experts ever collected have not delivered a definite verdict on a literary subject.'<sup>50</sup> Though they were the most vocal critics of Shaw and Chesterton's behaviour, Ley and Cuming Walters were not alone in being disappointed by the trial's verdict. A few months later, members of the Philadelphia branch of the Fellowship decided to hold their own trial. The published proceedings record an event held on 29 April at the *Academy of Music*. Heeding the problems the literary celebrities had caused in London, the Philadelphian Fellows invited an illustrious company of lawmen to adjudicate: Supreme Court Justice John P. Elkin 'played' judge; the

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<sup>47</sup> G. K. Chesterton, "Edwin Drood," in *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*, 223.

<sup>48</sup> G. K. Chesterton, "Edwin Drood," 227.

<sup>49</sup> G. K. Chesterton, "Edwin Drood," 228.

<sup>50</sup> J. Cuming Walters, "The Drood Trial Reviewed," 42.



Attorney General of Pennsylvania and a Judge of Common Pleas prosecuted; and the Congressman-at-Large for Pennsylvania defended. Despite their decision to keep literary men out of it, the outcome of the five-hour case was a hung jury, which, with a bit of unconstitutional baiting, was eventually transformed into eleven for acquittal and one against. It was not an outcome which lent weight to Ley's assertion that the London jury, had Shaw not rudely spoken for them, would have condemned Jasper by a majority.<sup>51</sup> Rather, it found in favour of Chesterton's view that there would always be too much reasonable doubt to lock Jasper up.

By and large, the newspaper reports felt the trial had been a terrific success precisely because of Shaw and Chesterton's showboating. The *Daily Express* dutifully detailed the trial proceedings, but lingered over Shaw's jokes. Their account of the reception of Shaw's verdict included no mention of the audience 'outrage' that Ley had described.

Mr. "G. B. S." announced, amid loud laughter, that the jury had arranged the verdict during the luncheon interval. They found the prisoner guilty of manslaughter. (Loud laughter.)<sup>52</sup>

The *Pall Mall Gazette* luxuriated in the evening's humour, making the manslaughter verdict the central focus of their front-page article and noting that '[l]aughter was unblushingly encouraged. Everything was Gilbertian, especially Mr. Chesterton.'<sup>53</sup> Taking the ready opportunity to pun on Chesterton's first name, the author of the article likened proceedings to W. S. Gilbert's comic libretto for 'Trial by Jury'. The *Daily Telegraph* also delighted in Shaw's absurdity, calling the verdict a 'triumphantly unreasonable conclusion'.<sup>54</sup> The salient points of the trial are reported but, after lengthy quotation of the jokes, the paper concluded that 'in the main, it must be confessed, the trial went dully.'<sup>55</sup> What they meant was that the trial had needed more jokes, but had instead been blighted by the Dickens enthusiasts' refusal to prioritise audience entertainment.

The British public would have to have gone to great lengths to read a newspaper report that picked up on the tension between the serious and comic aspects of the trial. *The New Zealand Herald* noted that, '[t]he whole affair was a strange medley of conscientious stage realism, of genuine desire in some quarters to get at a feasible solution to the Drood problem, and of mere brilliant fooling.'<sup>56</sup> The *Daily Mail*, meanwhile, had abandoned the idea of taking the trial seriously before it had even begun. On the morning of the trial they ran an article entitled 'Who Killed Edwin Drood? Trial by a Jury of Authors. Mr. Chesterton's Wig.' They were not the only newspaper to worry about the prospect of Chesterton finding a judicial hairpiece large enough to fit over his famously unruly locks, but the *Mail* were the earliest to realise the pantomimic intentions of the trial's main players.

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<sup>51</sup> J. W. T. Ley, "The Trial of John Jasper," 41.

<sup>52</sup> Unattributed, "The Trial of John Jasper," *Daily Express*, January 8, 1914, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Unattributed, "Our Special Representative—A Comedy Drama," *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 8, 1914, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> Unattributed, "A Dickens Trial—Mystery of Edwin Drood—Jasper in the Dock," *Daily Telegraph*, January 8, 1914, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Unattributed, "A Dickens Trial", 12.

<sup>56</sup> Unattributed, "The Drood Problem—The Trial of John Jasper—Brilliant Fooling," *New Zealand Herald*, February 21, 1914, 3.

On the day before the trial, the paper had printed an article by Sir William Robertson Nicoll, minister, journalist, and the founding editor of *The Bookman*.<sup>57</sup> In 1912, Robertson Nicoll had made his own contribution to the *Drood* industry with a book which weighed up the historical evidence of Dickens's intentions for the end of *Drood*. Relying upon an expectation about the nature of the trial that was different to both Cuming Walters's and Chesterton's, Robertson Nicoll provided some facts that he felt might be presented during the trial—the percentage of the book unwritten, the cover illustration, and the various hints that Dickens gave, and so forth. He concluded by stating his belief in Jasper's guilt.

Robertson Nicoll was quickly disabused of his expectation that the trial would be more conference than farce, when Cecil Chesterton's second, W. Walter Crotch, sent a letter to the paper which accused Robertson Nicoll of being in contempt of court, for having 'tried the man and found him guilty.'<sup>58</sup> The newspaper later gleefully reprinted Cecil Chesterton's repetition of the joke at trial, noting that 'Mr. Cecil Chesterton [...] said he had grave doubt whether he ought not ask the judge to commit for contempt of court a well-known writer and editor who had contributed an article on the case to *The Daily Mail*.'<sup>59</sup> Despite their efforts to set themselves up as the trial's unofficial sponsors, Northcliffe's pro-Tory paper could hardly overlook an opportunity to take aim at the ardently socialist Shaw. They did not attack his right to make jokes, however, but the quality of those he made—'Mr. Shaw (who had from time to time made facetious remarks apparently under the impression he was expected to be funny)'.<sup>60</sup> Like most of the newspapers, the *Daily Mail* still found Shaw's verdict to be in keeping with the tone of the trial.

Notwithstanding Shaw and Chesterton's attitude on the evening, the celebrity of the participants would have anyway precluded the possibility of serious debate. Sober, scholarly decorum could not go hand in hand with audience members clamouring after autographs and, despite their sporting adoption of period dress, the press gaggle lent an unavoidably amusing surreality to the proceedings.

[T]he foreman of the jury was about to take his seat again, when a flash of blinding light filled the court, and the crowded audience in King's Hall roared with laughter as "G. B. S." was "snapped" by the camera.<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Seccombe, a regular contributor to Cecil Chesterton's paper, *New Witness*, produced an article from the perspective of a juryman, in which he talks at length about the influence of the judge and jury foreman's fame upon the trial.<sup>62</sup> In sympathy with his editor, Seccombe states that he is convinced that, had Shaw not spoken for them, Cecil Chesterton's prosecution would have resulted in a verdict of 'not guilty'. Possibly reflecting Cecil's own views on the trial, an event that his extensive preparation suggests he hoped would be

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<sup>57</sup> Sir William Robertson Nicoll, L. L. D., "Was Edwin Drood Murdered? The Issue at To-Morrow's Trial," *Daily Mail*, January 6, 1914, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Unattributed, "Who Killed Edwin Drood?—Trial by Authors—Mr. Chesterton's Wig," *Daily Mail*, January 7, 1914, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Unattributed, "The Trial of John Jasper—Midnight Verdict—Fresh Light on Edwin Drood," *Daily Mail*, January 8, 1914, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Unattributed, "The Trial of John Jasper—Midnight Verdict—Fresh Light on Edwin Drood," 3.

<sup>61</sup> Unattributed, "The Trial of John Jasper—Dickensian Mystery Laid Before Jury of Authors—The Verdict!," *Daily Express*, January 8, 1914, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Seccombe is not listed as a jury member in the trial proceedings, however, the lengthy and contradictory jury lists that appeared in the pre-trial newspaper articles suggest that the clamour for seats in the box was such that a number of more minor literary personalities were left unmentioned in the official documents.

an entertaining but competitive debate, Seccombe decides that Shaw's arbitrary judgement had been a 'disappointment', since it meant that the trial could not arrive at 'any semblance of a conclusion.'<sup>63</sup>

Putting his disappointment to one side, Seccombe continues his article with an explanation of why it was inevitable that the event had turned out the way it did.

[P]eople who are represented in Madame Tussaud's (Shaw already there, and the management pledged to include G. K. C. as soon as ever they can find room) cannot be expected to operate like ordinary mortals.<sup>64</sup>

For a public who would pay to see wax reproductions of people like Shaw and Chesterton, the trial's importance was the opportunity it provided to see the celebrities in the flesh. For them, the real disappointment would have been if Shaw and Chesterton had assiduously taken up their character's parts. As was expected of them by their public, 'the judge and the foreman—two lions who the audience were anxious to behold [...] remained themselves, and roared and functioned in a manner entirely independent.'<sup>65</sup> Which led Seccombe to his final conclusion, that the purpose of the trial had not been the solution of Dickens's mystery by debate—'[t]he *raison d'être* of the whole trial [...] was, I suppose, to get G. K. C. upon the bench.'<sup>66</sup> The fundraising aims of the Dickens society and the expectations of the audience had been well met by Shaw and Chesterton's celebrity sideshow, in which Dickens's book had played only an ancillary role.

Without suggesting that Chesterton had the aim in mind when he agreed to take part in the trial, his performance as judge drew a line between he and Dickens. Though Shaw saved him the trouble of exercising it, Chesterton's acceptance of the right to pronounce upon the dead author's intentions created a strong impression among some members of the audience. As Seccombe put it, '[t]here might have been some transfusion of blood between him [G. K. Chesterton] and Dickens.'<sup>67</sup> Notwithstanding the wig and gavel, Chesterton's celebrity and, specifically, the audience's expectation that he would entertain them, created the impression that Chesterton had jostled with Dickens for centre stage. Journalists like Seccombe, who had asked themselves which novelist had won the fight for the limelight, might have imagined themselves holding up the sweaty arm of a victorious Chesterton over the recumbent body of Dickens.

There was, without doubt, some professional jealousy involved in Ley and Cuming Walters's reaction to Shaw and Chesterton's showboating. Nevertheless, the language that they employed—'outrage', 'abuse', 'unauthorized'—suggests that they felt something more than their book sales had been put at risk on the night of the trial. Cuming Walters's vision of how twentieth-century writers should conduct themselves was governed by a number of precepts, and Chesterton had contravened them all.

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Seccombe, "Rex v. Jasper: The Impressions of a Jurymen," *New Witness* 3.63, January 15, 1914, 343.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Seccombe, "Rex v. Jasper," 342.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Seccombe, "Rex v. Jasper," 342.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Seccombe, "Rex v. Jasper," 342.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Seccombe, "Rex v. Jasper," 342.

First and foremost, Cuming Walters believed in the unimpeachability of a corpus of dead writers, a canon that had been established by broad critical consensus in the legitimate literary press. In accordance with the pronouncements of *The Times Literary Supplement*, Cuming Walters felt that figures like Shakespeare, Dickens, and Tennyson deserved to be treated with reverence. In 1892, for example, he had campaigned for Tennyson's birthplace to be taken off the open market. The building, he felt, must be preserved for posterity, not rented out as shelter to 'a peasant's tribe of children.'<sup>68</sup> That a house in which Tennyson had grown up was being treated like any other residential building was an ignominious assault upon the late Laureate's memory. In much the same way, Chesterton's flippant attitude towards the trial had been an 'abuse of Dickens's name'. It had suggested that, far from being an otherworldly genius, Dickens had been a man and a writer much like Chesterton was today—a popular writer whose chief aim was entertainment.

In the eyes of Cuming Walters, Chesterton's misbehaviour was symptomatic of a broader crisis in twentieth century letters. He felt that literature, criticism, and journalism were becoming trivial, cleaving to the profitable aim of providing pleasure to a public who, though they might not know it, were more in want of education. Neither was Cuming Walters at a loss about what action should be taken to pull literature back from the brink. In 1900, he had presented a paper to the Institute of Journalists, calling for the establishment of an entrance exam, in line with those undertaken by lawyers and accountants.<sup>69</sup> If a licence was required to practice journalism, then it follows that writers who were found to be incompetent, unscrupulous, or improper in their conduct could have it taken away. Licensing would create a culture of personal accountability that would help to counterbalance the commercial interests of literary practitioners and the periodicals that employed them. Under Cuming Walters's system, even celebrity journalists like Chesterton could be held to certain professional standards. If so-called literary 'experts' publicly shamed their profession by not providing 'a definite verdict on a literary subject' then, under Cuming Walters's system, the Institute of Journalists would be able to enact their own trial.

Yet, if Cuming Walters's bourgeois fantasy of administering literary production into a more serious phase was naïve, he was not the only writer to think that popular literature's sickness was curable. Several days after the Trial of John Jasper, Ezra Pound staged his own public event. The occasion appears to have been an attempt to renegotiate the relationship between a group of writers and their public. It was not, as we might suspect, an attempt to demonstrate an elite group of experimentalists' contempt for popularity. Rather, it was an attempt to revise the public role of the poet and the function of poetry, with no man, neither popular nor unpopular, to be left behind.

### **The Peacock Lunch**

On the 18 January, Pound presided over a meal in honour of a poet whose verses had so little in common with his recent definitions of 'good' poetry that it is difficult to understand what he saw in them. The guest-

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<sup>68</sup> J. Cuming Walters, "Correspondence," *The Bury and Norwich Post and the Suffolk Standard*, August 9, 1892, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Unattributed, "Conference of Journalists," *Birmingham Daily Post*, September 12, 1900, 9.

list he drew up for the occasion was extraordinarily diverse—including Imagists, former members of the Rhymers' Club, international poets, a contributor to *Georgian Poetry*, and the poet laureate. At the meal, Pound instituted an elaborate programme of formalities, suggesting that the event held for him a great significance, albeit one that he never made plain. He argued that the event was private, then organised notices to be sent to a number periodicals, including the *Times*. His eccentric behaviour confused and irritated many of the guests, including the guest of honour. To give credit where assumption might ordinarily be due—at least he did not eat the flowers.

The focus of Pound's strange celebration was Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. His name is no longer a familiar one, but in 1914 Blunt was notorious. He was known chiefly for two attempts he had made to influence British foreign policy during the 1880s. His campaign to prevent the British army crushing a popular revolt in Egypt had been troublesome enough to capture the attention of the Prince of Wales, future King Edward VII, who exclaimed '[c]an nothing be done to stop this disloyal and eccentric Jesuit bent on undermining the Empire'.<sup>70</sup> A few years later, he protested against the eviction of Irish tenant farmers by arranging and speaking at illegal rallies. This time, his actions resulted in a short prison term and, to the aristocrat's surprise and dismay, enduring social ostracism. Whilst it was these acts that publicly defined him, Blunt had also distinguished himself in other fields. Even those who refused him invitation to their parties would acknowledge that the Arabian horses that were bred on his stud were world-class and, amongst those who were inclined to gossip, there had been much whispering about a series of love affairs that had established his reputation as a philanderer. People knew that he also wrote poetry, but it had never been the talk of the town.

Already out of fashion at their time of writing, Blunt's verses would seem to have little in common with even the least experimental poetry that was being published in Britain in 1914. His works were, for the most part, uninspiring late-Victorian stuff—watery imitations of Byron, untouched by the influence of decadence or symbolism. Whilst Blunt's name was never mentioned in the same breath as the top-tier of 'surviving' Victorian poets—with the likes of Hardy, Housman, Kipling, Newbolt, and Yeats—there was a market for his work. He had published several solo volumes (1875-1903) and, in 1898, Heinemann had brought out his collected works. In the winter of 1913-14, he was in the process of putting together a two-volume complete works for Macmillan. If Blunt was gratified by Macmillan's interest in his poetry, there is little evidence of it. His journal entries concerning the book deal are perfunctory, evincing none of the excitement and engagement that characterises his commentary on political developments abroad. Certainly, he was not the kind of man we would expect Pound to be championing at the beginning of 1914.

Following his arrival in London in 1908 Pound had quickly developed a formidable reputation as a poet and provocateur. As early as mid-1909, he had been the subject of a thinly disguised satire in *Punch*, which, if it was not quite a waxwork in Madame Tussaud's, was a sure sign of his growing renown.<sup>71</sup> For all that, poetry did not inspire the same level of public attention as newsprint or mystery stories, and this was particularly true of poetry like Pound's, which did not have entertainment as its primary aim. Indeed, when Pound,

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<sup>70</sup> Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII, A Biography*, vol. 1, London: Macmillan Company, 1929, 458.

<sup>71</sup> Unattributed, "Mr Ton," *Punch, or the London Charivari*, June 23, 1909, 449.

Yeats, and Frederic Manning wrote to propose a dinner in his honour, Blunt did not realise he was in communication with a group of poets and, as their letters had not been specific, he did not guess that it was his poetry that they wanted to celebrate. It took a more candid letter from John Masefield, in which he explained that it was not Blunt's 'politics or [...] horses they admire but [his] verse', before he understood the situation.<sup>72</sup> He was surprised, he was flattered, but he declined the invitation, explaining that he was too old to travel all the way to London for dinner. He made a polite counter-offer of lunch at his home in Sussex, which Pound eagerly accepted.

The guest list Pound drew up included former Rhymers' Club members T. S. Moore and Victor Plarr, and Imagist poets Richard Aldington and F. S. Flint. The future poet laureate John Masefield and Australian poet Frederic Manning also accepted invitations but were unable to attend at the last minute. The presiding laureate Robert Bridges and a visiting Japanese poet Yone Noguchi were also invited, but declined. With Yeats and Pound presiding, the conglomeration of Imagists and former Rhymers' makes some sense, with Pound bringing his stylistic contemporaries and Yeats gathering corresponding figures from his past. Masefield's invitation is more of a surprise, particularly since he was a contributor to the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies. Whilst it is now generally accepted that 'Georgians' and Imagists were not at loggerheads during these early years, there are still so few examples of professional intermingling that this 'near miss' is significant as evidence of their cordiality. The invitation to Noguchi, a man writing outside of the English poetic traditions and indifferent to the growing sectarianism within modern British poetry, is conclusive proof that the stylistic affiliations were far from Pound's mind when he drew up the guest list.

That Pound invited Robert Bridges is the biggest shock. Yet, like most professional animosities, Pound's aversion to Bridges had a trigger and there is evidence that it may well have been his decision not to attend Blunt's lunch. In a letter to Lady Gregory, Yeats notes that Bridges's refusal had caused him to suffer an 'eclipse' in the eyes of Pound.<sup>73</sup> However, as Pound must have been aware, Bridges's public office made it incredibly difficult for him to show any support for a controversial political figure like Blunt. Pound is unlikely to have admired Bridges's poetry, so far removed was it from the kind of experimentalism that Pound had become invested in, which makes the intensity of his disappointment about Bridges's non-attendance intriguing. It seems to suggest that Pound had hoped the lunch would say something about the relationship between the public realm and all poetry. If the poet laureate throwing off his duty of public respectability to celebrate a political outcast's poetic achievement was its prime expression, then we can guess that Pound's message was that poetry was more important than politics. Blunt would have spat.

The party of six poets drew up outside New Buildings at twelve-thirty. Having been tipped-off that Yeats was keen to try peacock, Blunt had made arrangements for some birds from his flock to be slaughtered. As the roasted birds, which had been reunited with their ornate tail plumage, were delivered to the table, Pound recited a purpose-composed panegyric through their feathers. Though the poem was short, Pound had been able to pack in a lot—myriad praises, biographical errors, an unwarranted assertion about the

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<sup>72</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 11, 1914, 34A1-34A2.

<sup>73</sup> Ezra Pound, quoted in W. B. Yeats, Letter to Augusta Gregory, typed letter, postmarked January 12, 1914, Berg Collection, New York Public Library, 916 series, box 12, cited in Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," *PMLA* 120.1 (January 2005), 166.

temperament of the gathered poets, and a cryptic allusion to the bestowal of a stone. The 'stone' was, in fact, a Pentelican marble reliquary, which was handed, trophy-like, to Blunt. It had been carved by the up-and-coming sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who had inscribed its sides with a dedication, 'Homage to WILFRID BLUNT', and a stylised female nude in bas-relief. For Pound, the reliquary was an attractive fusion of classic materials and contemporary primitivist design. For Blunt, its modernity was monstrous. As soon as the visiting poets had left, he turned the 'fantastic futurist [...] naked Egyptian woman' to face the wall.

It had not been Pound's intention to provide Blunt with a new place to keep his pipe. Instead, the box arrived pre-packed with eight holograph poems, one each from those who had accepted Pound's invitation (including the two who were eventually unable to attend). On the top of these, Pound placed a copy of his panegyric, autographed by the visitors. It was a curious trinket but, since gift-giving was part and parcel of celebratory dinners, Blunt accepted it with studied grace, as might the recipient of a Christmas jumper, when it was clear to all present that it was just never going to fit.

At the end of the meal, Blunt made an awkward speech in thanks. He felt he needed to explain that, whilst he had composed verse for entertainment, he had 'really never been a poet'.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Blunt had once put his opinions about the relative significance of public life and poetry in a poem called 'Why I am not a Poet'.

I would not, if I could, be called a poet.  
I have no natural love of the "chaste muse."  
If aught be worth the doing I would do it;  
And others, if they will, may tell the news.

Blunt's life's work had been the defence of human rights, an agenda that he had pursued with a strong sense of duty and at great personal cost. If, once important matters were concluded for the day, there was time to reel off a sonnet or two, then that was a pleasure earned. Composing a poem was just a way to relax that happened to appeal to Blunt more than billiards. The confession he made in his lunch speech emphasised the difference between his hobby and his important activities, distinguishing himself from the professional poets who seemed to be implying they were colleagues. He would not, if he could help it, be reinvented as a poet who had done a bit of politicking.

Glossing over Blunt's inopportune confession, Yeats followed Blunt's speech with some closing remarks. He generously noted that he found that his own most recent work bore parallels with Blunt's. Blunt took the compliment in good grace, though his journals reveal that he thought Yeats had 'written nothing at all worth reading in the last twenty years'.<sup>75</sup> When the ceremony had finished, the group posed for a photograph in the garden. Then, apparently having achieved his objective, Pound ushered the visiting poets back into their rented motorcar and sped off in the direction of London, leaving Blunt to puzzle over the significance of their eccentric ministrations.

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Aldington, "Presentation to Mr. W. S. Blunt," *The Egoist* 1.3, February 2, 1914, 57.

<sup>75</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 18, 1914, 48.

The following day, when Blunt sat down to read the poems, he was surprised to find that he liked them even less than he had liked their 'fantastic futurist' packaging. They were 'word puzzles' that made Blunt feel like 'a stranger [...] too old to learn a new language.'<sup>76</sup> Like a man rewarded for his services to calligraphy with a typewriter, the apparent disconnection between his own work and the poems in the box niggled at Blunt.

Somehow or another the poets visit had left me out of conceit with poetry. The modern poetry represented by these young men is too entirely unlike anything I can recognise as good verse that I feel there is something absurd in their expressing admiration for mine.'<sup>77</sup>

The realisation that the poets did not 'follow at all in [his] footsteps' might have aroused in Blunt a number of suspicions.<sup>78</sup> He might have supposed that the poets mocked him. He might have suspected that they feigned an interest in his poetry, so that they could associate themselves with another, more significant aspect of his public profile. He might have surmised that, rather than a new beginning, the event symbolised the end of his poetic significance. Certainly, these are ideas that have preoccupied the scholars who have discussed the peacock lunch. Of course, since Blunt was not really a poet, he quickly forgot about the whole business, filling his journal with concerned entries about more important matters, like the possibility of civil war in Ireland and Egypt's re-designation as a British protectorate.

The peacock lunch has been recounted numerous times in the biographies of its attendees, but it has not often been analysed. Only two accounts attempt to unpick Pound's motivations for arranging it. In his history of the winters that Yeats and Pound spent holed up in Stone Cottage (1913-14 being the first), James Longenbach argues that the celebration of Blunt was prompted by Pound's desire to associate with an aristocrat—'it was not so much Blunt's poetry as his aristocratic life and thought which were worthy of emulation.'<sup>79</sup> Longenbach notes that the fact that Blunt was able to offer a setting of 'medieval splendor' must have made the whole prospect even more attractive.<sup>80</sup> Of course, the fact that the lunch took place at New Buildings was none of Pound's doing. He had intended the meal to take place in a London restaurant, a context more modern and conspicuous than Blunt's dining room. Whilst the idea that Pound might be attracted to Blunt's aristocracy would seem to be substantiated by his later interest in establishing working relationships with politicians and dictators, if Pound wanted to publicise a connection with landed power and social prestige then Blunt was an odd man to approach. In 1914, Blunt's notorious past meant that wise politicians left a room he was rumoured to be about to enter. Indeed, Pound was attracted to Blunt was not simply because of his aristocratic or political station, but because, in the eyes of London society, he had disgraced them.

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<sup>76</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 18, 1914, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 18, 1914, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 18, 1914, 38.

<sup>79</sup> James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 69.

<sup>80</sup> Longenbach, *Stone Cottage*, 69.



In 'A Box for Wilfrid Blunt', Lucy McDiarmid defines the lunch, with the attendant photographer and the string of articles penned by its participants, as a 'public private event'.<sup>81</sup> That is, an event that is ostensibly private, but actually devised primarily for the purpose of public dissemination. This does certainly seem to have been the case—the ritual award presentation, the panegyric, and the formal speechmaking would have been wildly inappropriate for a private Sunday lunch. Moreover, Pound was keen that the news be alerted to the event, albeit on his own strict terms.

Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory had acted as Pound's allies in the planning and execution of Blunt's celebration. Gregory had her own motives for encouraging proceedings. During the 1880s, Gregory and Blunt had been romantically involved.<sup>82</sup> Though the affair had been brief, the pair remained close friends, continuing to meet and exchange correspondence until Blunt's death. Dismayed by the ostracism that had followed his imprisonment in Galway, Gregory seems to have supposed that Blunt might do worse than reinvent himself as a poet. When she assisted with preparations for the peacock lunch, she did so with the belief that the meal would generate some much needed positive publicity for Blunt.

Of course, Yeats and Gregory were seasoned publicists and had clear ideas about how the meal might be promoted for maximum effect. Pound was more reticent, feeling that the familiar mechanics of publicity risked making the whole enterprise seem grubby. He pushed back against Gregory's recommendations for attracting the attention of the press, refusing to countenance the attendance of a press photographer. Pound felt that it would be better if selected attendees provide their own notices for the newspapers and magazines. In a letter to Gregory, Yeats mentioned Pound's aversion to seeking publicity through the usual channels.

Pound says "tell Lady Gregory we hate the newspaper press as Blunt hates the British Empire[.]" [...] Ferocious Youth does however agree to my sending a report to 'the Times' as this leaves 'a record for posterity[.]' [...] "It concerns the world of letters" he says "& nobody else."<sup>83</sup>

In the end, a private photographer was permitted to record the event, but the photograph was not included in any of the periodical accounts that Pound, Aldington, and Flint provided. It seems 'posterity' was to be best served by the public being well informed about the names of the attendees (including some imaginative additions), the object of their reverence, and the queer rituals that were enacted at the meal, only if there was no chance that an outsider might ruin the spell with an unauthorised commentary. An account of proceedings by, for example, either one of the Chesterton brothers would doubtlessly have highlighted on the absurdity of the occasion, had the event been significant enough to draw their comment.

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<sup>81</sup> Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," *PMLA* 120.1 (Jan. 2005), 165

<sup>82</sup> Michael Faherty, "Defeated But Not Destroyed: the Prison Poems of Ezra Pound and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt," in *Ezra Pound and Poetic Influence: The Official Proceedings of the 17<sup>th</sup> International Ezra Pound Conference*, ed. Helen M. Dennis (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 215.

<sup>83</sup> W. B. Yeats, Letter to Augusta Gregory, January 12, 1914, cited in Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," 166.

Unlike Longenbach, McDiarmid provides an analysis of the ritual elements of the meal, which leads her to conclude that Pound's interest in Blunt had little to do with poetry and a lot to do with philandering. Using as evidence the emblem of the nude woman on the box and details from the poems it contained, she argues that Pound's ambition had been to establish a link between poetic and erotic power. With virility as the focus of the event, the style (and even the quality) of the group members' poetry became less important than their sex.

Blunt's transgressive sexuality offered the perfect opportunity to define a tradition of male poets; their value as writers less important than their maleness.<sup>84</sup>

As such, the lunch was designed to 'construct a poetic genealogy that would give meaning to a distinctly masculine tradition and to make that genealogy visible.'<sup>85</sup> By celebrating Blunt as a symbol of a tradition of virile creativity, Pound was able to imply that the gathered poets were its heirs.

Certainly, Pound had been adamant that the lunch 'would be entirely a men's dinner,' explaining that this would allow it to 'escape the usual air of Hampstead & of literary men's wives.'<sup>86</sup> Apparently overtaken by an attack selective amnesia, Pound had forgotten all about the women who were not poet's wives, but poets in their own right. Aldington's presence makes the absence of Hilda Doolittle particularly conspicuous. Aldington and H. D. had married the previous year and were then living a few doors down from Pound, in Church Walk. The trio are often described as the 'founding' Imagists. Yet Flint, a later addition to the school, was invited to the peacock party in her place. Had H. D.'s omission been circumstantial—if she been unable to attend for some practical reason—Pound would have included her name in the list of absentees he provided in his published report, but the list was also all male, comprising as it did of D. H. Lawrence, Padraic Colum, James Joyce, and Rupert Brooke. Even Gregory, without whose encouragement Blunt would never have agreed to the meal, was not invited. Blunt was dismayed to hear that she would not be attending and protested that he 'should feel it lacked reality' without her.<sup>87</sup> And so it transpired, if Pound really was trying to underline a link between sexual appetite and artistic creativity by implementing a policy of 'no girls allowed.'

Whilst the occasion's constructed maleness is undeniable, it was hardly the strangest thing about the lunch. Moreover, in 1914, Pound's ideas about the nature and origins of creativity were far from fully developed; certainly, he did not testify that sperm and inspiration were basically the same stuff until the early twenties.<sup>88</sup> In a poem published a few months before the lunch, Pound actually laments the fact that his poetry has been applauded for its masculinity.

Oh my fellow sufferers, songs of my youth,  
A lot of asses praise you because you are "virile,"

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<sup>84</sup> Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," 170.

<sup>85</sup> Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," 166.

<sup>86</sup> Pound, quoted by Yeats in a letter to Gregory, ms. letter in the hand of Ezra Pound, November 24, 1913, Berg Collection, New York Public Library, 916 series, box 11, cited Lucy McDiarmid in "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt," 170.

<sup>87</sup> Augusta Gregory, *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory*, ed. Colin Smythe (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 478.

<sup>88</sup> See, in particular, Pound's postscript to his translation of Remy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love*, New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922.

[...]

Our maleness lifts us out of the ruck.

Who'd have foreseen it.<sup>89</sup>

Pound denounces such readings of his early poetry, arguing that he had been 'especial bored with male stupidity' at the time of writing. He does admit that his earlier poems had been more feminine for being more ornately wrought—'for the female is ductile'— and, that according to his gendering of style, his poetry has since become more masculine by being more frank, proclamatory, and according less with regular form. Nevertheless, the poem does support McDiarmid's account, since it continues with a criticism of the exaggerated claims that he imagines critics to be making about his new style—'[w]e are compared to that sort of person/ Who wanders about announcing his own sex/ As if he had just discovered it.' Certainly, he does not sound much like a man who was desperate to align his creative power with virility.

The poetry and critical prose that Pound was producing in 1913-14 can help us to read the lunch in a rather different way. If we rule out Blunt's aristocracy and womanizing, then, presuming that Pound did not admire Blunt as a horse-breeder, only one plausible alternative remains—that Pound wished to publicly connect his art to Blunt in his most famous aspect. First and foremost, Pound was well aware that Blunt's political disobedience was the basis of his fame. In the account of the lunch that he provided for *Poetry*, Pound would note that 'Mr. Blunt is perhaps known in America rather for his various political martyrdoms than for his poems.'<sup>90</sup> The idea that Blunt's philandering preceded him in Chicago, whilst not impossible, seems unlikely, and Pound does not attempt to allude to it in his report. Instead, he returns to Blunt in his political aspect, asserting that he 'has never ceased to protest against the tyrannies and swindles of the Empire.'<sup>91</sup> Having added his list of absent poets to the attendees (a list in which he includes Masfield and Manning, though they did not attend), Pound claims that the group, whilst it represents 'no one clique or style' is 'representative of the present vitality of English verse'.<sup>92</sup> The group, he argues, are linked to Blunt by their 'genuine admiration for the power behind all expression, for the spirit behind the writing.'<sup>93</sup> Given their markedly different attitudes towards poetry, it seems sensible to presume that the 'power' and 'spirit' that, in Pound's eyes, made Blunt an apt symbol for the 'vital' modern poet was principally political, based in Blunt's willingness to be an adversary to the power of those who had been elected by popular vote.

Before we proceed with a discussion of Pound's extra-literary attraction to Blunt, it is necessary to gauge the extent of his genuine respect for Blunt's writing. In the account of the lunch he wrote for *Poetry*, Pound reprinted a poem amid high praise, arguing that Blunt's 'claims upon posterity would [...] be sufficiently established if he had written no more than the double sonnet *With Esther*.'<sup>94</sup> In these sonnets, Blunt develops the idea that a moment of romantic fulfilment can be a lifelong vaccine against the futility of human existence. The sonnet form exists barely, as a framework that is continually enlivened by breaks in rhyme and rhythm. The poem is based in iambic pentameter but, due to the frequency with which its feet

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<sup>89</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Condolence," in "Contemporaria," *Poetry* 2.1 (April, 1913), 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ezra Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," *Poetry* 3.6 (March, 1914), 220.

<sup>91</sup> Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," 222.

<sup>92</sup> Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," 222.

<sup>93</sup> Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," 223.

<sup>94</sup> Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," 220.

are inverted and stresses are added or missed, only seven of its fourteen lines consist of five iambic feet. As such, this poem is an exception within Blunt's body of work, which often throws syntax into great contortions in the pursuit of a uniform metre.

Knowing well Pound's aversion to metronomic verse, it seems obvious why this poem would appeal to him more than Blunt's others. Indeed, the poem seems to have been both the beginning and end of Pound's esteem for Blunt the poet. In May Pound wrote a letter to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry*, to inform her that 'Blunt hasn't sent in his stuff, and I wont much stir him up, if you don't much want him.'<sup>95</sup> The speed with which Pound abandons his attempts to promote Blunt's work in America would seem to suggest that he did not have much enthusiasm for the man's oeuvre. One need only compare the doggedness with which he harassed Monroe for the inclusion of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', to realise that Blunt's work was not really to his taste.

To appreciate fully the stylistic gulf that separated the work of Pound and Blunt by the beginning of 1914, it is helpful to consider the work that Pound was publishing in the months before he arranged the lunch. As might be expected, his most up-to-date works appeared in magazines—in April 1913, *Poetry* published several of his poems under the title 'Contemporania' (a selection from which appeared in the *Egoist* in mid-August) and in November, a second group appeared, entitled 'Poems'.<sup>96</sup> The majority of these works would be republished in Pound's controversial solo volume, *Lustra*, when it came out in 1916. Despite Blunt's reputed philandering, his fondness of Byron, and the slightly ribald nature of the poem he read at the lunch (his translation of the Comte de Gobineau's poem, *Leporello*), he would doubtlessly have been shocked by more than just the 'futurism' of Pound's most recent work. In the atmosphere of caution that persisted in the wake of 1915 trial of Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, the frank sexual references and casual blasphemies that Pound had included in a number of the poems caused its publisher, Elkin Matthews, much concern. Fearing prosecution and censure, he elected to divide the sheets between a small private edition and an expurgated trade version. Four poems did not even make it as far as the private edition because printers had refused to set them and Matthews found it necessary to cut a further eight poems from the trade version.<sup>97</sup>

Among the poems that Matthews considered to be unfit for public consumption were 'Salutation the Second' and 'Commission'. As Pound would protest, both had already been published in the April edition of *Poetry* (though the latter apparently did not go entirely unchallenged by Monroe). The suppression of 'Salutation the Second' goes down in literary history as a supreme irony. 'Ruffle the skirts of prudes,' Pound urges his poem, 'speak of their knees and ankles.'<sup>98</sup> Like the majority of his work from this period, 'Salutation the Second' also concerns Pound's poetic development and reception. His new style, he hopes,

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<sup>95</sup> Ezra Pound letter to Harriet Monroe, dated May 23, 1914, in D. D. Paige, ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, London: Faber and Faber, 1951, 76-77.

<sup>96</sup> Ezra Pound "Contemporania," *Poetry* 2.1 (April, 1913), 1-12; "The Contemporania of Ezra Pound," *The Egoist* 1.5 (August 15, 1913), 87-88; "Poems," *Poetry* 3.2 (November, 1913), 53-60. A number of other poems, which appeared in *The Smart Set* during the same period (September, October, and November issues), will not be considered here, since they date from an earlier moment, having been published in Pound's 1912 volume, *Ripostes*.

<sup>97</sup> Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, 195.

<sup>98</sup> Ezra Pound, "Salutation the Second" in "Contemporania," *Poetry* 2.1 (April, 1913), 6-8.



Britain's claim of sovereignty over the region. As an experienced diplomat with a keen interest in Arabian politics, Blunt established himself as an intermediary between the Egyptian nationalists and the Khedive.

The nationalist movement, led by army colonel Urabi Pasha sought an end to the Khedive's absolutist reign and the establishment of a constitutional government. With the Khedive acting as guarantor of their power over Egypt, the British government staunchly opposed the revolutionaries. The establishment of an independent democratic government in Egypt would inevitably limit British influence in the region and, it was feared, might even cause the country to renege on its European debts. Newspaper coverage in England focused on these potential threats to British interests, without explaining the reasons for the rebellion or mentioning its widespread civil support. Frustrated by the failure of the press to fairly represent the nationalists, Blunt returned to England in 1882 to promote their cause.

His immediate aim was to dissuade the government from using force to quell the revolt. Despite extensive efforts, Blunt was unable to cause a groundswell of public support that was significant enough to influence policy and the British navy attacked the rebel controlled Egyptian ports. With the support of the British, the Khedive was able to crush the rebellion and Urabi Pasha was arrested and put to trial. Blunt refocused his energies into securing Pasha a fair hearing. At much expense, Blunt was able to ensure that Pasha was spared execution and was instead exiled to Ceylon with compensation for his loss of land at home. For his former colleagues at the Foreign Office, Blunt's sustained interference had been irritating and, some suspected, potentially treasonous.

In late 1887, Blunt decided to take a stand against the treatment of Irish peasant farmers. In preceding years there had been sustained civil unrest in Ireland, caused, in part, by the poor treatment of tenant farmers by their landlords. Blunt was deeply concerned with the problems caused by absentee landlords selling property and evicting their tenants, who, with no other method of redress, often retaliated with violence. Blunt's experience of the destructive policies of British Imperialism in Egypt had convinced him that nationalism was the only means to guarantee a government for the people. As a determined supporter of Irish Home Rule, he ran as a political candidate in several constituencies, first as a Conservative and, when he struggled to muster support, as a Liberal. During an attempt to win a seat in Deptford, he grew frustrated and decided to travel to Ireland to provide more direct support.

After attending a meeting of the Irish National League he was elected as a member and began attending protests and speaking at rallies. At an illegal rally at Woodford, which Blunt had arranged in protest against evictions planned in the area, he was arrested for resisting the police. Blunt's social station might have spared him the indignity, had he not goaded the officers engaged in wresting him from the podium by shouting '[a]re you all such cowards that not one of you dares to arrest me?'<sup>100</sup> It is possible that Blunt thought the inevitable press attention might have spared him from a penal sentence, which would surely make him a martyr for the nationalist cause. Instead, the courts viewed the coverage as an opportunity to demonstrate that dissent would not be tolerated, sentencing Blunt to two months imprisonment with hard

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<sup>100</sup> Edith Finch, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: 1840-1922*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1938, 251.

labour. He served out his term 'picking oakum,' a term which referred to the separating out of fibres from old ropes.

A correspondent for the *New York Times* conjectured that 'the fact of his actually being in prison will appeal deeply to popular feeling in England. It ought to make his election for Deptford a certainty'.<sup>101</sup> This turned out not to be the case and Blunt lost this final attempt to win an elected seat, a sign that his actions had not won him the support of eligible voters.<sup>102</sup> There were undoubtedly some who were sympathetic, seeing his interventions as estimable acts of conscience, undertaken in defence of downtrodden victims of British colonialism but this was not the majority's view. If his misguided endangerment of British interests abroad could be forgiven, there remained the stigma associated with his criminal conviction. It was not gentlemanly to go to prison and the picture of Blunt in prison uniform that had appeared on the cover of the *London Illustrated News* had proved regrettably memorable.<sup>103</sup>

[T]o loose caste with his peers offended his pride and vanity, and left him extremely lonely. There were many who were ready to praise him for his Irish adventure, eager to be associated with him, but the majority of these did not belong to his own set.<sup>104</sup>

Among the upper echelons of London society Blunt tumbled from grace. His ostracism would turn out to be a life sentence.

The panegyric that Pound composed for recitation at the lunch is a key piece of evidence for determining what Pound saw in Blunt. Moreover, since Pound uses it to specify the qualities he thought Blunt embodied, the poem provides a template for the temper of the new poet. It is not one of Pound's best works, appearing to be something he had dashed off rather than laboured over. Nevertheless, the poem was printed in all four of the reports that Pound, Flint, and Aldington submitted to periodicals, which would indicate that its content was significant.

Because you have gone your individual gait,  
Written fine verses, made mock of the world,  
Swung the grand style, not made a trade of art,  
Upheld Mazzini and detested institutions;

We, who are little given to respect,  
Respect you, and having no better way to show it  
Bring you this stone to be some record of it.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Unattributed, "Wilfrid Blunt in Jail," *New York Times*, January 8, 1888, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Following the 1884 Representation of the People Act, this included all male constituents who owned property or paid an annual rental of over £10.

<sup>103</sup> Photograph in *London Illustrated News*, November 5, 1887, 1.

<sup>104</sup> Edith Finch, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: 1840-1922*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1938, 257.

<sup>105</sup> Ezra Pound, "Homage to Wilfrid Blunt," 221.

The first stanza of the salutation provides the clearest insight into the nature of Pound's respect for Blunt. Whilst Blunt's poetry is afforded a brief mention, Pound's celebration dwells upon extra-literary qualities—individualism, artistic anti-commercialism, a particular political act ('Upheld Mazzini'), and rebellion against institutional constraints. When he had the opportunity to examine the poem properly, Blunt decided that he did not like it. There are a number of reasons why Blunt might have taken against the poem, not least its shoddy fashioning. The first line was clearly meant to imply that Blunt had cut his own path in life, but the wording made it seem to be in praise of a limp. Moreover, the problematic grammar of line four inadvertently implies that Blunt had supported 'detested institutions', rather than detesting institutions in general, which is surely what Pound meant.

The poem's unintentionally comic deficiencies of expression are paltry problems, however, when compared to its factual errors. It was Algernon Swinburne (Pound's 'only miss'), who had '[u]pheld Mazzini', Blunt's activities had focussed on promoting democracy in countries rather less glamorous than Italy. Moreover, Blunt would doubtlessly have rejected as false a number of Pound's praises. He was an earnest and ethical man, who felt duty-bound to use his inherited power to intercede in the public sphere for the good of the less fortunate. He can hardly be said to have 'made mock of the world'. If he knew that sometimes institutions got things wrong, he also felt that the first recourse should be to fix them from within, which is why he had run for parliament. Finally, if Blunt had 'not made a trade or art', it was not because he felt art should be independent from commerce, but because he neither needed nor wanted a career in poetry.

The second stanza of the salutation refocuses attention upon the group of celebrants. The central '[w]e' makes the address a declaration of the group's values. By transforming his voice into the voice of the group, Pound projects upon the gathered poets the image of a committee united by their respect for the values that he proclaims Blunt to embody, providing the group with an anarchic communal personality. That the poets shared an inclination towards disrespect was an unreliable claim and it did not go uncontested. Moore, who felt he was in many ways a respectful man, was irritated by Pound's ventriloquism.<sup>106</sup> Taking the excessive liberty of pronouncing upon the personalities of the committee could be interpreted as a mere rhetorical flourish, albeit a socially indelicate one. However, since the poem was destined for publication in the reports of the lunch, we must presume Pound's assertions to be much more than hollow bombast.

With the communal personality of disrespect, Pound aligns his group of poets with the internationally significant political acts that had made Blunt an outcast in British society. What is more, by asserting that all the poets present are in agreement with his pronouncements, he establishes himself as the leader of a band of literary outlaws. That there was no truth in his claims about the parallel between himself and Blunt, nor his declarations about the intellectual unity of the group was neither here nor there, as long as the press coverage was carefully managed. As Yeats had mentioned in his speech at the lunch, 'Ezra Pound has a desire to personally insult the world', and association with Blunt was meant to be a slap in the face of

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<sup>106</sup> Yeats in a letter to Gregory, autograph letter, January 31, 1914, Berg Collection, New York Public Library, 916 series, box 12, cited in a letter dated 31 January 1914, cited in McDiarmid "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt", 174.



polite society.<sup>107</sup> Precarious in fact but held earnestly in theory, Pound's claims offer a valuable insight into his developing notion of the new poet. For Pound, a disrespectful nature was symptomatic of the determining trait of the modern male artist—uncompromising individualism.

Nearly all of the qualities praised in Pound's poetic address can be collapsed into the category of individualism. Blunt's 'individual gait' is dependent upon his having remained impervious to the demands of the public world, the commercial market, and all other 'detested institutions.' The act of political disobedience that Pound mentions in the address, though falsely ascribed, functions as an example of Blunt's resistance to institutional powers. Although the allusion is specific, it was clearly intended as a trope for general political independence. The poet Pound praises in his panegyric, who is Blunt in name alone, is a recalcitrant critic of the world, not for specific political injustices, but because the worldly is subordinate to the artistic. Pound admired Blunt as a disobedient man, a detester of institutions, and as an individualist; as a man willing to stand up for his principles regardless of the personal cost.

The cult of individualism that flourished in early twentieth century England was inspired by the popular revival of philosophical egoism. The popularity of Nietzsche's work had whetted the public appetite for theories about the subjective nature of truth. As a consequence, Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* enjoyed a renaissance. American anarchist Benjamin Tucker had commissioned an English translation of Stirner's book, which appeared as *The Ego and His Own* in 1900. By 1929 this translation had run to forty-nine editions.<sup>108</sup> In *A Genealogy of Modernism*, Michael Levenson succinctly summarises Stirner's argument—he 'blithely rejected all previous philosophy, all intellectual system, all political order. They were chimerical—the only reality was the individual ego, whose needs and desires were their own justification'.<sup>109</sup> Stirner's particular brand of anarcho-individualism became a major influence on Dora Marsden and, as a result, on the ethos behind the second and third magazines she founded and edited—*The New Freewoman* (1913), and, of course, *The Egoist* (1914-1919).

When Pound began to work as literary editor on *The New Freewoman* in the spring of 1913, Marsden solicited from him an exposition of what Pound referred to as his 'philosophical credentials'. Bruce Clarke has re-evaluated Pound's place at the paper from autumn 1913 to the summer of 1914. As well as correcting the misconception that Pound managed to wrest control of the paper, he makes a persuasive argument for Marsden's influence upon Pound. Presenting their correspondence as evidence, Clarke shows how Marsden's interrogation of Pound's ideas about art culminated in his three-part apology, "The Serious Artist," which appeared in *The New Freewoman* from October 1913.

'The Serious Artist' was a staunch humanistic defence of art, structured by a series of questions that appear to have come directly from Marsden. Certainly, Pound disowns a number of the questions that are raised in his essay—'[w]e are asked to define the relation of the arts to economics, we are asked what position the

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<sup>107</sup> Richard Aldington, "Presentation to Mr. W. S. Blunt," 57.

<sup>108</sup> Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 66.

<sup>109</sup> Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, 64.

arts are to hold in the ideal republic.<sup>110</sup> The first instalment of 'The Serious Artist' did not simply determine the position that the arts might hold in an 'ideal republic', rather it argued that art would have a fundamental role to play in establishing the ethical framework necessary for the creation of any such society.

[T]he arts give us our best data for determining what sort of creature man is. As our treatment of man must be determined by our knowledge or conception of what man is, the arts provide data for ethics.<sup>111</sup>

Pound's defence was based upon the notion that within any group of humans there was a great deal of variance, with individuals being more like 'leaves upon trees' than 'buttons cut from a machine'.<sup>112</sup> Without the tool of art to parse man, there could be no way of conceiving of a fundamental ethical basis for the operation of any given society, or humanity more broadly.

The 'serious' artist provides data faithful to his individual vision of self, society, and humanity. His work is like that of the scientist, in that his findings, in corroboration with the work of the multitude of other 'serious' artists, are reliable records of 'psychology, of man as to his interiors, as to the ration of his thought and to his emotions'.<sup>113</sup> For Pound, this is the kind of information that should be mined in the pursuit of an 'ideal state', rather than the baseless proclamations of theorists who think, since one man differs little from the next, that ideals are obvious and can be universal.

Pound also asserted the existence of 'immoral' art, but he was not referring to works that included subject matter that conventional morality held to be corruptive. Rather, he argued that 'bad' art was art that made a false report of its subject; art that, through the artist's incompetence, laziness, or avarice, provided inaccurate data for ethics. By Pound's logic, a poem in imitation of Tennyson, which flouted hackneyed hand-me-down ideals, was much more dangerous to society than a sculpted nude, or even a pornographic postcard. Art did not have to pursue purity to be relevant, indeed art which raised salient ethical issues was needed to challenge conventional ideas—'[t]here is an art of diagnosis and there is an art of the cure. They call one the art of ugliness and the other the cult of beauty.'<sup>114</sup> As proficient practitioners of the former, Pound cites Villon, Baudelaire, Corbière and Beardsley, all of whom produced work that had, at one time or another, been considered morally repugnant.

In the second instalment of his essay, Pound extends his hierarchy of artistry. Above the damned 'unserious' artists, come the 'serious' artists and from these emerge a more permanent class of 'major' artists. Rather than simply being of greater genius, the artist who comes to be considered 'major' has had the fortune to be timely.

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<sup>110</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, I-II," *The New Freewoman* 1.9 (October 15, 1913), 161.

<sup>111</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, I-II," 162.

<sup>112</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, I-II" 161.

<sup>113</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, I-II" 163.

<sup>114</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, I-II" 162.

“[M]ajor” is rather a gift to them from Chronos. I mean that they have been born upon the stroke of their hour and that it had been given them to heap together and arrange and harmonize the results of many men’s labour.<sup>115</sup>

The labours of the ‘serious’ artists, many of whom do not become ‘major’, become textbook and clay to the ‘major’ artist who transcends his individual, historical significance with their help.

Pound also uses the essay as an opportunity to provide a cautious definition of ‘good writing’, as ‘perfectly controlled’, with the writer saying ‘just what he means’ with ‘complete clarity and simplicity’ and ‘the smallest possible number of words.’<sup>116</sup> It was not a dictum that Pound cleaved to throughout his essay, particularly in the section about the development of good writing.

The whole thing is an evolution. [...] You begin with the yeowl and the bark, and you develop into the dance and into music, and into music with words, and finally into words with music, and finally into words with a vague adumbration of music, words suggestive of music, words measured, or words in a rhythm that preserves some accurate trait of the emotive impression, or of the sheer character of the fostering or parental emotion.<sup>117</sup>

His meaning is clear enough, though, especially when we place the passage in the context of his peacock lunch. Pound’s poetry, in which he sought to achieve the ‘adumbration of music’, is seen as the apogee of literary achievement. Blunt’s work fits the prior phase—the ‘words with music’—and Pound, if he maintained these views into December, must have considered the peacock lunch to be both celebration and despatch of this former phase of art, in equal parts nostalgic and anticipatory.

Perhaps he did not feel he had made his point effectively enough in the previous issue, or, perhaps, he had just had the chance to read the provocative editorial that Marsden penned in response to the first two instalments of his essay, but Pound decided to make a further definition of good writing in his third instalment. Marsden had asserted that art was an undeveloped science, existing in a ‘subconscious phase’ and providing, as evidence, the shrug of the painter when asked to explain his work. The modern artist was ‘in the position that alchemists and astrologers were, before alchemy became chemistry, and astrology astronomy.’<sup>118</sup> Pound was suddenly overcome with a clarity of purpose.

“[M]aximum efficiency of expression”; I mean that the writer has expressed something interesting in such a way that one cannot re-say it more effectively. [...] The artist must have discovered something—either of life itself or of the means of expression.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ezra Pound, “The Serious Artist, III,” *The New Freewoman* 1.10 (November 1, 1913), 194.

<sup>116</sup> <sup>116</sup> Ezra Pound, “The Serious Artist, III,” 194.

<sup>117</sup> Ezra Pound, “The Serious Artist, III,” 194.

<sup>118</sup> Dora Marsden, “The Art of the Future,” *The New Freewoman* 1.10 (November 1, 1913), 181.

<sup>119</sup> Ezra Pound, “The Serious Artist, IV,” *The New Freewoman* 1.11 (November 15, 1913), 214.

In discussions of Pound's aesthetic aims, this definition has been cited nearly as often as Pound's 'Don'ts', which is surprising, if we consider that Pound stood by it for less than ninety days.

In the space of four months—time he spent fencing with Yeats, reading through the papers of the late Ernest Fenollosa, and planning and executing the peacock lunch—Pound's outlook changed dramatically. The 16 February issue of *The Egoist* contained 'The New Sculpture', a short essay reporting a lecture on sculpture by T. E. Hulme, in which Pound espoused a view of art completely at odds with his extended humanistic defence. He begins by applauding the unintelligibility of Hulme's lecture; in a period in which artists 'are fighting through the obscurities of a new convention' critical 'generalities' are foolish.<sup>120</sup> Artists can be expected to pronounce their tastes, deeming this and that good, but should not be expected to explain the basis for their intuitive judgements. This pronouncement, though it seems to be much in line with the hatred that Pound expresses about 'academic' critics 'who refuse to say what they think', in the final instalment of 'The Serious Artist', proceeds from an entirely different basis.<sup>121</sup>

The artist has for so long been a humanist! [...] He has had sense enough to know that humanity was unbearably stupid and that he must try to disagree with it. But he has also tried to persuade it; to save it from itself. [...] The artist at last has been aroused to the fact that the war between himself and the world is a war without truce. The only remedy is slaughter. This is a mild way to say it.<sup>122</sup>

Quite suddenly, Pound's humanistic explanation of the purpose of art had been replaced by its opposite, an anti-humanistic assertion of art's transcendence of social value.

An art that excludes and opposes society has no reason to explain itself in secondary terms. The layperson is extraneous and, anyway, entirely incapable of understanding the artist's expression. Unable to remain as detached from the lay public as the article suggests he would like, Pound finishes his address to them by recommending they take offence, writing that 'the public will do well to resent these 'new' kinds of art.' New art had become deliberately oppositional and, by that very fact, reflexive and individualist. As such, Pound's new art 'is', it is not 'for' anything. Pound promotes the intrinsic value of the artwork to the detriment of society, in much the same way that Stirner had argued for the precedence of the individual ego.

This sudden change in Pound's aesthetics can, in part, be put down to the influence of Dora Marsden. Marsden would often argue that she was not a follower of the philosopher Max Stirner, as any good Stirnean might. Her leaders for *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*, which frequently attack the significance that society demands we attach to external causes and values, were much influenced by the arguments in *The Ego and His Own*. Stirner's book comprises of three sections: the first equating antiquity with 'realistic' childhood, in which the rule of parents presides over material desires; the second equates

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<sup>120</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The New Sculpture', *The Egoist* 1.4 (February 16, 1914), 67.

<sup>121</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, IV," 214.

<sup>122</sup> Ezra Pound, "The New Sculpture," 68.

the Christian era with 'idealistic' adolescence, in which parental rule has been internalised as morality; the third posits the arrival of adult egoism, in which outside rule, both external and internalised, are thrown off.

Clearly, there are parallels to be drawn between Stirner's egoist and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, a figure he would outline in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1883, forty years after the publication of Stirner's work. The precise relationship between Stirner's 'egoistic adult' and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* has been the subject of extensive and ongoing debate, as has the extent of Stirner's influence upon Nietzsche. It would not be practical to attempt a summary of that extensive critical discussion here. Instead we may simply note Georg Simmel's assessment, that 'Stirner holds that all objective standards and values are imaginary and inessential, ghostly shadows confronting subjective reality', whereas Nietzsche's *Übermenschen* will create new values and enforce them upon the world.<sup>123</sup>

Despite Marsden's influence, Pound's new artist was not straightforwardly Stirnean. He argues that the new artist is both separate and superior to the worldly. Whilst the declaration of separation can be aligned with Stirner's refusal of external standards and values, the idea of the artist as superior to workaday man seems more Nietzschean. The idea of superiority presumes the artist to be part of a hierarchy that involves more than his ego and its own values. Here and there, in 'The New Sculpture', allusions to a future in which humanity is ruled by artists creep in. Although they are at this point little more than rhetoric to demonstrate the new self-possession and confidence of modern artists, their fascistic edge is emboldened by the modern reader's knowledge of Pound's later enthusiasm for Mussolini and the idea of an aristocracy of the arts that he aspired to institute in Italy. In 'The New Sculpture' artists know they are 'born to rule' but 'not by general franchise' or election by a 'system of plural voting'.<sup>124</sup>

What Pound describes is an art transmogrifying to fit a more aggressively egoist age. Romanticism and realism are dead, their analysis of 'the fatty degeneration of life' was 'necessary', but here on out art will be about taking control.<sup>125</sup>

The aristocracy of entail and of title has decayed, the aristocracy of commerce is decaying,  
the aristocracy of the arts is ready again for its service.<sup>126</sup>

'Service' is a misleading word when it is repeated in close quarters to so caustic an analysis of his previous humanistic basis for art; closer to what Pound means, I think, is the kind of 'self-service' that culminates in the production not of a purse, but a gun. The satisfaction of power is that it is over others. You can persuade people to give you power, or you can take it. Whether you decide to be loved or feared—popular or unpopular—you have to care what other people think to be satisfied. That is, you have to conceive of yourself in relation to a public.

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<sup>123</sup> Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein and M. Weinstein, University of Illinois Press, 1991, 162

<sup>124</sup> Ezra Pound, "The New Sculpture," 68.

<sup>125</sup> Ezra Pound, "The New Sculpture," 68.

<sup>126</sup> Ezra Pound, "The New Sculpture," 68.

Within the critical framework of Pound's changing notions of artistry, it is clear that Pound used the celebration of Blunt as an opportunity to announce the arrival of the 'new' poet, a character that he would properly formulate in 'The New Sculpture.' As a result, the timing of his aesthetic radicalisation must be pushed back some months, to mid-December, when preparations for the lunch began. This is extremely surprising, considering the last instalment of 'The Serious Artist' was only published in mid-November. It would suggest that, in the space of a few months, Pound's artistic values were transformed under the Stirnean influence of Dora Marsden. The most surprising thing about Pound's 'new' artist, however, was that he could be popular.

Since we might expect Pound to apply less stringent artistic criteria when selecting companions for a dinner than he might when selecting poets for inclusion in *Des Imagistes*, it would be easy to underestimate the critical significance of his choice of company for the peacock lunch. Nevertheless, its diversity is striking. We are used to thinking of the pre-War London avant-garde as a scene composed of a range of small and independent groups whose uniqueness and solidarity depended upon their members' declared commitment to a particular artistic style. Yet, the group that Pound attempted to form around Blunt prioritised individualism over poetic style and, even, ability. Moreover, Pound's decision to include a number of poets whom he had not even bothered to invite to the lunch in his account of it suggests that he was not producing a simple notice a private celebration. His priority was to inform the public of a new poetic character by linking a representative sample of practising poets with a politically transgressive aristocratic outsider.

To sample the heterogeneity of the 'new' poets' verse, we need look no further than the gift that Pound organised for Blunt, which contained holograph copies of eight poems, one from each of the six visitors and additional contributions by Frederic Manning and John Masefield.<sup>127</sup> The 'new' poems—Aldington's 'In the Via Sestina,' Flint's 'The Swan,' and Pound's 'The Return'—were destined to be reunited in *Des Imagistes*, when it first appeared as a special edition of *The Glebe* in February. As we might expect, their Imagist qualities are mutually reinforcing and they read comfortably together.

Aldington's poem addresses an Italian prostitute, comparing her beauty to ancient sculpture and the Egyptian goddess Isis. His lines deliver an array of impressions, which, instead of reproducing her, reproduces his experience of seeing her. Flint's poem recreates the image of a swan floating on a river as a metaphor for artistic beauty besmirched by the newsprint of modern life. Most of the poem is composed of an entirely visual description, in which a vast palette of colours are name-checked, the small movements of the tranquil scene are noted, and a shape (the arches of a bridge) is mentioned. The last two lines ('the black depth of my sorrow/ [b]ears a white rose of flame') perverts the silent cinematic progress of the poem. The river and the swan are internalised by the gazing poet, as a metaphor for an emotional state. Pound's poem observed the huntsmen returning. Who they are, where they come from, and where they

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<sup>127</sup> The holograph poems were: Yeats "When Helen Lived," in *Responsibilities*, Dublin: The Cuala Press, 1914; Moore "The Dying Swan," in *Modern British Poetry*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920, 66; Plarr, "Epitaphium Citharistriae," in *Book of the Rhymers' Club*, London: Elkin Matthews, 1892, 15; Masefield 'Truth' (*Philip the King and Other Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1914); Manning "Koré," in *Poems*, London: J. Murray, 1910; Pound "The Return," Aldington "In the Via Sestina," and Flint "The Swan", all in *Des Imagistes*, London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1914.

return to, it is impossible to discern. In *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*, Hugh Kenner observes that the poem 'exists primarily in and for itself, a lovely object [...]'.<sup>128</sup> In his poem, Pound seems to treat the prescriptions of Imagism less literally than his colleagues do in their poems, possibly because 'The Return' was written a few years previously. We might presume from Aldington and Flint's poems that they saw something that affected them emotionally and then used their skill as poets to code their emotions into descriptive verse. In 'The Return' Pound seems to begin with an emotional complex and turn it into a vision.

Yeats contributed 'When Helen Lived,' a recent composition that was comfortable in the company of Imagism. The poem comprises a running metaphor in which Helen of Troy represents beauty. The first six lines give a collective voice to the Achaean troops who, having won '[b]eauty.../ [f]rom bitterest hours', are disappointed that men are distracted from their victory by trivialities and 'noisy, insolent sport'. In the second half of the poem the Achaeans imagine the Trojans' experience of Helen/beauty, prior to the sacking of Troy. Had they been in the Trojans' position they would have been able to enjoy beauty light-heartedly, with '[a] word and a jest.' The Achaeans, who worked so hard to 'win' beauty and cannot bear an indifferent reception, are robbed of its pleasure; instead they imagine the pleasure of those who had stolen beauty with ease. The title refers not just to the Achaeans' dream, but also to the poem itself. It is a poem of ease and simplicity, of stolen beauty, and from its composition Yeats implies that he has drawn pleasure.

Yeats's correspondence with Gregory suggests that his involvement in the lunch was largely impersonal, encouraged by his friendship with her and Pound. However, like Pound, Yeats did admire Blunt's political activities and, in particular, his defence of the Irish nationalist cause. Much impressed, Yeats had written an article about his deeds in *United Ireland*. It was, after all, not common for landed Englishmen to challenge British imperialism in Ireland. On the first night of his imprisonment, Blunt had boasted that his was the 'first recorded instance, in all the four hundred years of English oppression, of an Englishman having taken the Celtic Irish side in any conflict, or suffered even the shortest imprisonment for Ireland's sake'.<sup>129</sup> If Yeats was motivated to involve himself in the peacock lunch for purely selfless reasons, then he was certainly inspired more by Blunt's politics than his literature.

Yeats and Blunt also had literary history. Yeats had publicly supported Blunt by sponsoring him as a candidate for the Academic Committee of the Royal Literary Society. Yet, in his private correspondence he reveals a more lukewarm attitude to Blunt's verse. In a letter asking Moore to join him in his sponsorship of Blunt, he expressed a mixed opinion of the man's talent, saying that 'only a small part of his work is good but that is exceedingly fine'.<sup>130</sup> In another letter, one in which he wasn't soliciting an endorsement for Blunt, he describes him as 'mostly an infuriating amateur'.<sup>131</sup> Yeats had also worked with Blunt, commissioning him to write a play for the Abbey Theatre. His disappointment with the resulting verse play was such that he had offered to rewrite it in prose, a suggestion that Blunt found extremely offensive. Whilst the disagreement caused no lasting acrimony between the men, both were left with a less

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<sup>128</sup> Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*. London: Faber & Faber, 1951, 124.

<sup>129</sup> Cited in Lucy McDiarmid, "The Demotic Lady Gregory," in *High and Low Moderns: Literature and Culture, 1889-1939.*, ed. Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 212.

<sup>130</sup> Ursula Bridge, ed. *Yeats, W. B. and T. Sturge Moore. Their Correspondence 1901-1937* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 19.

<sup>131</sup> Yeats in a letter to Professor Grierson (no date), cited in Wade, Allen, ed., *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Octagon Books, 1954), 710.

favourable opinion of the other's artistic sensibilities. Indeed, Blunt felt it necessary to mention the sleight in his peacock lunch speech, making a joke of an insult too keen to be forgotten.

Whilst helping Pound realise his plans, Yeats ensured that he would also personally benefit from the lunch. His correspondence with Gregory confirms his awareness of the promotional benefit that could be reaped from the occasion. Like Gregory, Yeats knew that the planned reportage would be useful for advertising Blunt and the other less high-profile poets. Yet, despite being the most established poet present, with attendant fame and sales, Yeats also had his own promotion in mind. The lunch falls during an interesting period in Yeats's development as a poet. The elaborate metrical conventions and historically redolent vocabulary with which he had embellished his earlier work were gradually being replaced by a clearer and more direct mode of expression. As his biographer, R. F. Foster, puts it, Yeats was determined 'to rid himself of the late Victorian 'embroidery', now debased by imitators'.<sup>132</sup> The lunch offered Yeats a platform for advertising these recent developments in his poetic style.

Given that *Responsibilities*, the volume that Forster argues marks the completion of Yeats's stylistic transformation, was first published in April 1914, it is surprising that he used his congratulatory lunch speech to focus on the similarities between Blunt's verse and his own. After all, as far as Blunt was a poet, he was a poet who embraced a poetry that Yeats was abandoning. Coming at a time when Pound's aesthetic judgements were becoming increasingly exclusionary and Yeats was continuing to prune his style, their announcement of respect for Blunt's florid and archaic verses seems even more peculiar than it otherwise might.

Yet, in his speech at the lunch, which was transcribed by Flint and printed in full in Aldington's *Egoist* article, Yeats was careful to mention the changes in his work.

As the tide of romance recedes I am driven back simply on myself and my thoughts in actual life, and my work becomes more and more like [Blunt's] earlier work, which seems fascinating and wonderful to me.<sup>133</sup>

In response to a broader literary shift, Yeats claims that he has begun to modernise his work by increasing its subjectivity. Of course, Yeats's new style would need new readers to replace those disenchanted by these changes. It was a good advertisement for his name to appear in a list between Imagists and the other, less experimental, poets.

When Pound came to review *Responsibilities for Poetry* in May, he was careful to draw attention to the change in Yeats's style, continuing the line of promotion that Yeats had begun in his lunch speech. Pound praises Yeats's poetry of 'becoming gaunter and 'seeking a greater hardness of outline'.<sup>134</sup> Pound draws the readers' attention to both Yeats's lunch speech and the poem 'A Coat' as proof of Yeats's new intentions. In this short poem, Yeats alludes to the reception of his old poetry through an extended metaphor of dress.

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<sup>132</sup> R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life - The Apprentice Mage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 521.

<sup>133</sup> Aldington, "Presentation," 57.

<sup>134</sup> Ezra Pound, "Responsibilities by W. B. Yeats," *Poetry* 4.2 (May 1914), 64.



I MADE my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world's eyes  
As though they'd wrought it.  
Song, let them take it  
For there's more enterprise  
In walking naked.

Yeats is rejecting the more ornate style of his earlier work because imitative work by infuriating amateurs has debased it. That the poem's self-reflexivity, misanthropy, and praise of poetic nudity are reminiscent of Pound's 'Salutation' series is hardly surprising, given that both poems were written in the months that Yeats and Pound stayed together in Stone Cottage.

After reading Yeats and the Imagists' contributions, Moore's poem, 'The Dying Swan', protrudes. Its embroideries stand out against the lean modernism of Flint's poem, which was also about a Swan floating under a bridge, albeit a healthier one. The four appearances of the Middle English lament, 'O,' are successively lightened by their repetition until, by the end, Moore's lugubrious intention comes to seem comic. If Moore's offering seems outmoded alongside the Imagist poems, then Manning, Plarr and Masfield's poems suffer a similar eclipse. Manning did not become a well-known poet, despite promising early reviews. He is better known for his 1929 novel, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, which was inspired by his experience of active service on the Western Front. The vernacular speech and frequent expletives lend the prose a modern feel but its style is not fresh. A quotation from Shakespeare adorns each chapter, giving the impression of the War 'refracted through an Elizabethan prism.'<sup>135</sup> 'Koré,' the poem he copied out for Blunt, is a lament for the passing of spring, as personified by Persephone. The frequently archaic language is bound into three stanzas, each comprising a heroic quatrain and a couplet in iambic pentameter. The historical form (often referred to as a 'Venus and Adonis' stanza after Shakespeare's poem), classical imagery and rustic theme produces a poem that has little in common with those contributed by Pound, Flint, Aldington, and Yeats.

There is some confusion surrounding Plarr's contribution to the box. Pound's account specifies that it was Plarr's most famous poem, '*Epitaphium Citharistriae*' that went in, but McDiarmid notes '*Ad Cinerarium*.' If McDiarmid was able to secure access to the coffer, which is currently in private hands, her list of the contents is likely to be more reliable than Pound's. If Plarr did contribute '*Epitaphium Citharistriae*', it would not have shocked Blunt. Whilst the sentiments of the poem—that a dead woman's sexual improprieties

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<sup>135</sup> Niall Ferguson, introduction to *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (London: Penguin, 2000), xviii.

should be ignored and that she should be honoured for being ‘wild, and sweet, and witty’—are progressively liberal, there is nothing particularly progressive about their phrasing.

Immediately after the lunch, Pound fell out with Plarr. By 1920 he was lampooning him as Monsieur Verog in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly*.

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,  
Detached from his contemporaries,  
Neglected by the young,  
Because of these reveries<sup>136</sup>

In a letter to Gregory dated 31 January 1914, Yeats mentions that on the journey home from Blunt’s estate ‘the poets kept Plarr out of all conversation—they would not give him the clue to anything—he had become an ordinary person, an enemy, & the next day or the day after Ezra said ‘Plarr has made his last public appearance’.’ His condemnation had been the result a minor *faux pas*—the over eager acceptance of Blunt’s invitation for the poets to make a return visit. The poet’s condemnation of him seems incredibly harsh, especially considering it was actually Pound and Aldington who would make a return visit to New Buildings later that year. However, the mere presence of this largely erstwhile poet and workaday librarian had undermined the professional atmosphere that, much to Blunt’s dismay, Pound had endeavoured to establish. His ordinariness threatened to topple the careful bond that Pound sought to establish between Blunt and the poets, by revealing the true extent of the social difference between the aristocrat and his attendant literati. It may be that Pound ‘reselected’ Plarr’s poem in his account of the lunch because ‘*Ad Cinerarium*,’ a poem that ruminates on the identity of the contents of an urn, had seemed too playful.

Masefield’s contribution, ‘Truth,’ was the least compatible with the Imagist offerings. With its conventional form and subject, archaisms and nautical allegory, Masefield’s poem conformed more to Blunt’s expectations of good poetry. Indeed, in an entry in his journal written a few days before the lunch, Blunt praises both ‘The Everlasting Mercy’ and ‘Salt Water Ballads’, saying that ‘[o]n the strength of these two volumes I would put him first among our living poets.’<sup>137</sup> Yet, overall, Blunt was genuinely shocked by the contents of the coffer, calling it ‘a kind of futuristic verse without rhyme or metre or much reason’.<sup>138</sup> Blunt’s recourse to ridicule was a method of dealing with the poetic challenge that the lunch had implied without engaging with it. In his journal Blunt ridiculed the poets: Yeats hasn’t produced anything in years, Pound ‘makes himself an understudy of Yeats, repeating Yeats’s stories in Yeats’s voice with Yeats’s brogue,’ whilst ‘Aldington more or less copied Pound’.<sup>139</sup> Having collapsed all of modern art into ‘Futurism,’ Blunt continues by collapsing the modern artists into one.

Blunt’s impression of the visiting poets was entirely opposed to the heterogeneous grouping that Pound had intended to muster. However, his opinion would probably have been quite different had Pound’s plan

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<sup>136</sup> Ezra Pound, “‘Sienna Mi Fe’ Disfecemi Maremma’,” in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, London: The Ovid Press, 1920, 15.

<sup>137</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 4, 1914, 34.

<sup>138</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, January 18, 1914, 38.

<sup>139</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975, March 26, 1914, 48.

fully come off. If Blunt was unable, or unwilling, to note the stylistic differences between Flint's 'The Swan' and Moore's less experimental counterpoint, he surely would have noticed the difference between the 'futurist' poems and the laureate's work. The eclectic nature of the grouping that Pound attempted to form demonstrates that his ambitions exceeded the establishment of a promotional framework for experimental poetry. Instead of announcing a new poetry style, Pound attempted to advertise a new ethos to underpin all poetic creation. It was, as such, an attempt to renegotiate the function of poetry, both popular and unpopular, and its relation to the public.

### The New Cake of Soap

In 'Modernist Polemic: Ezra Pound v. "the perverters of language"', Matthew Hofer traces Pound's polemical poetry from the poems that were published *BLAST* in 1914 to the Hell Cantos of the 1920s (XIV–XV). During this period, Hofer observes, Pound cultivated a string of public rivalries with 'enemies' against whom he attempted to define his literary work. Hofner argues that Pound's 'model for the unserious artist' and his 'first public enemy in the field of cultural production' was none other than G. K. Chesterton.<sup>140</sup>

Since Pound and Cuming Walters had an enemy in common, it is worth comparing their opinion of Chesterton's villainy. When *BLAST* came out in July, Pound's poetic contribution included a sequence of three two-line poems, which form a dialectic about the state of modern literature.

#### WOMEN BEFORE A SHOP.

The gew-gaws of false amber and false turquoise attract them.  
"Like to like nature." These agglutinous yellows!

#### L'ART.

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,  
Crushed strawberries! Come let us feast our eyes.

#### THE NEW CAKE OF SOAP.

Lo, how it gleams and glistens in the sun  
Like the cheek of a Chesterton.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Matthew Hofer, "Modernist Polemic: Ezra Pound v. "the perverters of language", " *Modernism/Modernity* 9.3 (September 2002), 464.

<sup>141</sup> "Poems, by Ezra Pound", *BLAST* 1 (July 1914): 49.

Their alignment on the page is stepped, emphasising the fact that the poems require synthesis. The shopping woman, attracted by artificial jewellery for its imitation of precious natural materials, represents the consuming public. The pair of repetitions provide an infantile refrain, in admiration of the synthetic—‘false [...] false’, ‘like’ [...] ‘like’. The ‘agglutinous yellows’, which appears at first to be another appreciative murmur from the preoccupied shopper, is an exclamation of condemnation. The public are cowards who stick together in their taste for the cheap and inauthentic.

‘L’Art’ provides a counter-point. We know Pound is talking about serious art here because he resorts to the French language. The painting that is described brings up a potentially lethal string of impressions—a poison on a dining table amidst the debris of a meal that the observer is about to poke into his eyes. Modern art certainly is a dangerous and exciting business. Then comes popular literature, standardised, synthetic, and widely available at the shop next to the one that sells ‘gew-gaws’. The language of the third poem, redolent of the ubiquitous advertisements for Pears’ soap, calls out to the shopping public. Its cleansing properties pose a direct threat to the perilous, contradictory mess of modern art. As a symbol of popular culture, Chesterton is aligned with market pervasion and cultural sterilisation.

For Cuming Walters, Chesterton represented problems in the literary sphere that urgently required remedy. Having become commercialised, literary production had ceased to be a serious matter and a regulatory framework needed to be established to channel energies away from entertainment and towards public edification. At the core of Cuming Walters disagreement with popular literature was its failure to acknowledge the unassailable cultural position of the great dead writers. At the peacock lunch, Pound attempted to extend a similar level of respect to living writers. As he notes in the *Pisan Cantos*, he was attempting to establish a ‘live tradition’.

To have, with decency, knocked  
That a Blunt should open  
    To have gathered from the air a live tradition  
or from a fine old eye the unconquered flame  
This is not vanity.<sup>142</sup>

It was not ‘vanity’. The respect that Pound sought was not style specific but rather one that encompassed all writers who were serious about their art. The category of ‘new’ artists could include Robert Bridges but for a writer like Chesterton, whose contribution to the poetry of 1914 were the comic drinking songs he wrote for *The Flying Inn*, there was no space.

Pound was also keen to see the literary field regulated, though not along the bureaucratic lines that Cuming Walters had proposed. By aligning his new artist with landed power, political rebellion, and the anti-commercialism that Pound had attempted to make Blunt to embody, Pound proposed a regulation enacted by the new artist—‘He knows he is born to rule, but has no intention of ruling by general

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<sup>142</sup> Ezra Pound, “LXXXI,” *The Cantos*, New York: New Directions, 1996, 542.

franchise.' The whole transformation was aimed at achieving broader cultural aims that were similar to Cuming Walters's call for public edification over entertainment.

In discussing Rainey and Morrisson's accounts of modernism's negotiations with the wider literary market, Tim Armstrong has noted that their common ground is 'an understanding that the 'autonomy' often claimed for the modernist text is a strategic illusion, an advertising point rather than a philosophical absolute.'<sup>143</sup> In accordance with Armstrong's indictment, we may note that Pound's cry for autonomy in the 'New Sculpture', his explanation that the artist has given up on explaining art to the public, is delivered as part of a public explanation of art.

In this particular instance, we witness Pound negotiating with a public to whom he only feigns indifference. We do not, as Bennett suspected, see an envy of more popular writers, or, as Huyssen might have expected, even an anti-populist or anti-commercial stance. We have instead an assertion of art's seriousness and the possibility that popular and experimental poets might flourish together as an artistic aristocracy, if only the more media-friendly merchants of entertainment could be weeded out. The divide that emerges, which separates entertainment from education and artistic individualism, does not separate the experimental from the popular writers as neatly as Huyssen's theories would lead us to expect.

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<sup>143</sup> Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History*, Cambridge, Polity: 2005, 48.

## Chapter Two

### Anti- Commercialism in *The Egoist*

In 1930, Pound looked back at the little magazines with which he had been involved in the previous decades and selected some words to define them. *The New Freewoman*, *The Egoist*, *Poetry*, *The Smart Set*, *The Glebe*, and the *Little Review* had been ‘free’, ‘impractical’, and ‘fugitive’.<sup>144</sup> All three qualities relate directly to the relatively weak position that these little magazines had occupied within the literary marketplace.

Little magazines were ‘free’ because their content selection was governed more by cultural aims than by financial imperatives. If an editor accepted that their magazine would only interest a small and specialist readership—meaning that advertising space could only be swapped with similar periodicals, rather than sold to, say, Pears’ soap—they could indeed experience a sense of freedom unparalleled in the commercial sphere. It was a freedom that could be relished right up to the periodical’s inevitable financial collapse, which leads us to Pound’s second label: ‘impractical.’

The impracticality of little magazines has come to be seen as their defining characteristic. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker have noted that the little magazine’s short life span was commonly marked by a stepped decline, with a steady reduction in print run, number of pages, and frequency of issue, preceding the final collapse.<sup>145</sup> However, not all little magazines proved to be ‘impractical’. *Poetry*, for example, is still in print, though it has from time to time owed its financial stability to the generosity of patrons. Nevertheless, the fact that some little magazines have proven themselves to be adaptable enough to survive in the long-term indicates that they, like any other periodical, were obliged to balance their artistic aims against commercial ones.

Pound’s third word, ‘fugitive’, asserts the little magazine’s resistance to the demands of the commercial literary sphere. Certainly, many little magazines ignored the periodical industry’s commercial mandate to: maintain a clear identity with broad appeal, avoid any content that might offend a diverse readership, and to comment upon dominant cultural memes (like the respectability of the tango). However, more than simply indicating the little magazine’s resistance to the commercial literary sphere, Pound means his term ‘fugitive’ to imply that such periodicals operated entirely outside of it, in a way that was both deliberate and illicit. As such, Pound characterises the little magazine as a public enemy, wanted for the crime of promoting and disseminating experimental literature. There is a strong case to be made for the little magazine being an effective public nuisance—after all, they played a key role in promoting experimental literature into the more dominant cultural position it enjoyed in the 1920s—but ‘fugitive’ they were not.

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<sup>144</sup> Ezra Pound, “Small Magazines,” *The English Journal*, 19.9 (November 1930), 689-704.

<sup>145</sup> Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, “General Introduction,” in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume 1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-26.

As an activity reliant upon monetised interpersonal transactions, little magazines operated very much within the commercial literary sphere. In prioritising a cultural agenda over sales, little magazine editors did not divest themselves of the need to pursue solvency. Whilst the staff of little magazines did not aspire to profitability for profitability's sake—an accusation that some of their contributors would sometimes levy at large circulation newspapers—they were keen to increase the magazine's income and circulation. After all, enlarging circulation meant enlarging cultural impact, in terms of both the magazine's reach and longevity. If contributors like Pound preferred to paint themselves as commercial 'fugitives', their assumed exile certainly did nothing to discourage them from making profuse and petulant negotiations with the commercial literary sphere. This chapter will focus upon three ways in which the literary contributors to *The Egoist* advertised their resistance to the dictates of the commercial literary market, discussing Pound's attack upon the integrity of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Harriet Shaw Weaver's attempt to prevent institutionalised standards of decency dismembering Joyce's prose, and John Gould Fletcher's pot-shots at the burgeoning war poetry industry.

### ***The Egoist***

The first issue of *The Egoist* came out in January 1914. In many ways, it was a typical little magazine—it was never able to cover its production costs with sales and advertising revenue and made a steady loss from its first issue to its last. Its failure to create income meant that steps sometimes needed to be taken to reduce its production costs. At the start of 1914 the print run had to be halved to a thousand, a run that was still imprudently optimistic given that subscriptions and single sales averaged fewer than five hundred per issue. Towards the end of the year, issue length was slashed from twenty to sixteen pages. In 1915 the magazine began to issue monthly, rather than fortnightly, and the print run was reduced again, this time to seven hundred and fifty. The magazine's uncommonly lengthy six-year run would have been impossible without the private patronage of Harriet Shaw Weaver.<sup>146</sup>

Part of the problem was the magazine's failure to manufacture a coherent and constant identity. The magazine had begun to issue in the summer of 1913, under the name *The New Freewoman*. This name had been chosen to advertise the periodical's links to *The Freewoman*, an earlier magazine of proto-feminism that had gone bust. The continuation of the name could not conceal the profound shift that had occurred in the magazine's content, which reflected the developing interests of its editor. Dora Marsden had been a militant suffragette but, after severing ties with the WSPU over concerns about its autocratic leadership and singular aim, began *The Freewoman*. By the time the *New Freewoman* came out, she had become more interested in Stirnean egoism than suffrage and her editorial leaders reflected this change. When the magazine became *The Egoist* at the beginning of 1914, the name change advertised a pre-accomplished shift in the focus of the periodical's non-literary content, from proto-feminism to anarcho-egoism.

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<sup>146</sup> More extensive accounts of the material history of *The Egoist* can be found in Les Garner, *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit: Dora Marsden 1882-1960*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1990; Jane Lidderdale and Mary Nicholson, *Dear Miss Weaver: Harriet Shaw Weaver 1876-1961*, London: Faber and Faber, 1970; and Bruce Clarke, *Dora Marsden and Early Modernism: Gender, Individualism, Science*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996.

Like its precursor, *The Egoist* was principally a magazine of its founding editor's philosophy. Marsden's work comprised between a half and a third of the total content of each issue. Each number would begin with one of her incendiary leading articles and it would end with the 'Views and Comments' section, in which Marsden would preside over the furore that had last article had inevitably provoked. At this point, the literary material that was sandwiched between her contributions appeared to be an attempt to provide a bit of light relief between the more important discussions about philosophy and politics. Certainly, the letters page indicates that the subscription base was mainly comprised of proto-feminists and a new guard of anarcho-syndicalists.

In the summer of 1914 a shift in the balance between philosophical and literary content began to occur. When I talk about *The Egoist's* transition into a primarily literary magazine, I do not mean to conjure up the old myth about how Pound wrested control of the paper from Marsden.<sup>147</sup> The change cannot simply be attributed to Pound's influence. Rather, the shifting focus of the magazine should be seen as the result of a number of factors, including the appointment of Richard Aldington as sub-editor in January and the voluntary step back taken by Marsden, which meant Harriet Shaw Weaver took over day-to-day editorial duties from mid-July.

Marsden certainly had no plans to surrender her paper to the cause of Imagism. Even after she had appointed Weaver as her replacement, which she did to free up her time to work on a philosophical monograph, Marsden would continue to micro-manage the magazine from a distance. She also continued to contribute leaders, something she would do until the paper was wound up under T. S. Eliot's editorship in 1919. Indeed, barring the replacement of her name with Weaver's on the magazine's banner, the July 'handover' involved only one other official change—Marsden relinquished her position as 'voice' of the magazine by electing to end her articles with her initials or name.

The signing of Marsden's contributions would not have been so significant, had it not been for an unavoidable leave of absence Marsden had taken before it. One of the reasons why Marsden became convinced that it was necessary to delegate some of her editorial responsibilities on to Weaver, was a period of ill health she suffered in the spring of 1914. As a result of Marsden's illness, the magazine's literary contingent had been called upon to contribute the magazine's leaders for seven issues, from 16 March to 15 June (1.6 – 1.12). It may appear to have been a short-lived moment in the sun for the literary contributors, since Marsden returned to her role as leader-writer as soon as she was well enough to do so, but the promotion of the literary content finally dispensed with the appearance that poetry and criticism were not amongst *The Egoist's* core concerns.

The readers certainly noticed the change. A number of long-held subscriptions were cancelled, precipitating a 'subscription crisis', which was discussed in letters exchanged between members of New Freewoman Company in 1915. In these letters, the blame is squarely levied at the differences between the two types of

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<sup>147</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Pound's influence within the offices of *The Egoist*, see Clarke, 95-98.



content and their failure to appeal to the same readers.<sup>148</sup> It had been fine for the philosophical magazine to carry some literature, but the existing readership did not want something approaching a fifty-fifty split. In 1914, for example, literary content would account for around 38% of the magazine, whereas philosophical content would comprise only 25%, with the remaining 37% being taken up by advertisements for other journals, discussions of music and art, artwork, and correspondence which had begun to centre around the artistic content).

The cultural agenda of Dora Marsden's magazines have been the subject of much discussion, specifically in terms of the magazine's development from a proto-feminist to anarcho-individualist magazine.<sup>149</sup> Whilst interesting comparisons have been drawn between Stirnean egoism and Imagism, the cultural agenda pursued by the literary pages clearly was not commercially harmonious with the agenda pursued by Marsden in her philosophical leaders.<sup>150</sup> It would be a problem that dogged the periodical throughout its life, which, in little magazine terms, was relatively long only because financial collapse was staved off by regular donations from Weaver.

Mark Morrisson has argued that the literary contingent of *The Egoist* appropriated and adapted advertising tactics from the counterpublic political movements with whom they shared the magazine. According to Morrisson, this makes the periodical stand out against its literary competitors, like *The English Review* and *Poetry and Drama*, who relied upon the myth of the public sphere in decline to emphasise the rejuvenating influence of their cultural products.<sup>151</sup> Morrisson's account does not take into consideration the divorce between the anarcho-philosophical and literary content and contributors, which was significant enough that by 1915 Marsden was convinced that either Imagism or egoism needed to go to make the paper saleable.<sup>152</sup>

By focussing on 1914, the year in which the literary content became an appreciable and dividing influence upon the identity of *The Egoist*, a slightly different picture begins to emerge. Finding themselves suddenly to be a controlling majority of a publishing concern, the literary contributors to *The Egoist* were forced to negotiate their position in the wider commercial literary market. In this chapter, I will discuss three instances in which *Egoist's* literary writers embroiled themselves in partial resistances of the demands of the commercial literary sphere. Rather than taking positions that Huyssen might describe as 'modernist', their negotiations reveal a desire to appear resistant as part of a practical campaign of engagement in the commercial market.

Certainly, there is evidence that the literary contingent desired the magazine to be more commercially successful. Richard Aldington was named as a sub-editor of magazine in mid-December 1913, long before the literary content had established itself as a competing interest of the periodical. One of the first

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<sup>148</sup> Garner, 136.

<sup>149</sup> Garner, *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit*, 136.

<sup>150</sup> Robert Von Hallberg provides a detailed discussion of the relationship between Stirnean egoism and Imagism in "Libertarian Imagism," *Modernism/modernity* 2.2 (April 1995), 63-79.

<sup>151</sup> Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001, 84.

<sup>152</sup> Garner, *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit*, 136.

suggestions he made as sub-editor was that the magazine should employ street-sellers in an effort to boost the magazine's visibility and income. Aldington's suggestion resulted in his poems being touted in the street. That he was not determined to enact a hygienic separation between the work of the Imagistes and the commercial practices of newspapers might seem a surprise. Yet, in taking an editorial role in the magazine, Aldington had immediately found himself in a position that the other literary contributors would inhabit in a few months time—he had become an influential force upon a cultural business concern. As such, he had to make up his mind about how far he was willing to concede to commercial mandates to maintain and grow an audience for his cultural agenda.

Aldington's desire to increase the periodical's cultural impact is also evidenced by his frustration at the failure of the magazine to attract the attention of large-circulation periodicals. In mid-1915, he wrote to F. S. Flint, expressing his concern over the magazine's lack of subscribers and precarious financial position, by announcing, rather grandly, that *The Egoist* faced a 'stone wall of opposition from the press and from the commercial booksellers and from the public.'<sup>153</sup> Rather than being anxious about the magazine's involvement with the commercial market, Aldington implies that the commercial market wanted to avoid the contaminating influence of *The Egoist's* politics and experimental literature. The *Egoist* only sold around three hundred copies of each issue in 1915, which can account for its low profile in the press, but in Aldington's paranoid formation we witness his desire to establish a dialogue between experimental literature and the commercial press. In Aldington's mind his little magazine was not 'fugitive'—he felt he was being kept out of the commercial sphere, rather than fleeing from it.

By mid-1914, we might expect Pound to feel differently about the importance of establishing the magazine's commercial aims. In 'The New Sculpture', which had been published in the 16 February issue of *The Egoist*, Pound did not sound like a man interested in attracting readers away from better-selling periodicals. Rather, he had declared that '[t]he artist has no longer any belief or suspicion that the mass, the half-educated simpering general, the semi-connoisseur, the sometimes collector, and still less the readers of the "Spectator" and the "English Review" can in any way share his delights or understand his pleasure in forces.'<sup>154</sup> As Huysen might have explained it, Pound appeared to be moving away from his previous avant-garde aims of subverting arts insulation from the commercial and the public spheres, towards a modernist position in which art isolated itself in disgust. Yet, if Pound's excitable proclamations in 'The New Sculpture' lend some superficial support to a Huysenean reading of his aesthetic development, then his activities on *The Egoist's* other pages suggest otherwise.

### **Pound and *Times Literary Supplement***

There is evidence that Pound spent a great deal of time contemplating and attempting to manipulate *The Egoist's* position in the wider periodicals markets during the summer of 1914, particularly its position

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<sup>153</sup> Aldington in a letter to F. S. Flint dated August 11, 1915. Reproduced in *An Autobiography in Letters*, ed. Norman T. Gates, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992, 16-7.

<sup>154</sup> Pound, "The New Sculpture," *The Egoist* 1.3 (February 16, 1914), 68.

relative to *The Times* and its *Literary Supplement*. When Aldington's review of *BLAST* appeared in the 15 July issue of *The Egoist*, it was accompanied by an illustration of '[t]he Lewis-Brzeska-Pound Troupe'. The men are depicted '[b]lasting their own trumpets before the walls of Jericho', which are played by the years '1837-1900'.<sup>155</sup> When the Victorian age is inevitably toppled by the Vorticist brass section, it is poised to fall onto the unexpected stove-pipe-hatted head of a *Times* reader. Whilst the years '1837-1900' had been 'blasted' in Lewis's famous manifesto, the *Times* had not.<sup>156</sup> Distinguished as much by his cruciform facial features as by his Victorian headwear, the tiny *Times* reader is towered over by the behemoth of the clumped trumpeters. Functioning as a symbol for the paper's ethos, content, and social influence, the *Times* reader is depicted as being old-fashioned and, by virtue of a visual pun, both Christian and cross—a combination that is suggestive of moral outrage. Most of all, though, he is small and unwitting; he is completely ignorant to the fact that he is about to be killed-off by the mighty noise of Vorticism.

*The Times* would have been a suitable target for the Vorticists. After all, virtually everything was—'Beecham', for example, attracts condemnation in three forms: 'Pills, Opera, Thomas'.<sup>157</sup> Yet, it was Pound who had begun to single out the periodical in a series of independent attacks. In *BLAST* the only mention of the newspaper occurs in Pound's poem 'Salutation the Third'.

Let us deride the smugness of "The Times":

GUFFAW!

So much the gagged reviewers,

It will pay them when the worms are wriggling in their vitals;

These were they who objected to newness,

HERE are their TOMB-STONES.<sup>158</sup>

In accordance with Aldington's argument in his letter to Flint, Pound accuses *The Times* of objecting to experimental literature, blaming not the reviewers, but the institution for overlooking writers who contributed to magazines like *The Egoist*. Along with a number of other poems, 'Salutation the Third' did not make it into the trade edition of *Lustra* (1916). Matthew Elkin, the volume's publisher, was doubtlessly concerned by Pound's use of the word 'slut-bellied' and the poems sadomasochistic overtones, but he would also have been aware of the real threat of prosecution posed by Pound's defamation of Northcliffe's newspaper.

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<sup>155</sup> Aldington, "BLAST," *The Egoist* 1.14 (July 15, 1914), 272.

<sup>156</sup> Wyndham Lewis *et al.*, "Manifesto I," *BLAST* 1 (July, 1914), 19.

<sup>157</sup> Lewis *et al.*, "Manifesto I," *BLAST* 1 (July, 1914), 21.

<sup>158</sup> Pound, "Salutation the Third," *BLAST* 1 (July, 1914), 45.



THE LEWIS-BRZESKA-POUND TROUPE.  
Blasting their own trumpets before the walls of Jericho.

2. Illustration by Brodsky, accompanying Richard Aldington's review of *BLAST*. *The Egoist* 1.14 (July 15, 1914), 272.

The attack on *The Times* that appeared in *BLAST* was part of a wider campaign against the company that Pound enacted in the pages of *The Egoist*. During June and July, Pound produced four articles in emulation of the regular *New Age* column, 'Current Cant'.<sup>159</sup> Rather than cherry-picking amusing and ridiculous quotations from a wide range of periodicals, Pound provided excerpts solely from *The Times* and, more frequently, the *Times Literary Supplement*. Owing to the actual power wielded by the respective parties being the reverse of that depicted in the cartoon of the trumpeting Vorticists, the editorial staff of *The Times* do not appear to have been concerned by Pound's sustained smear campaign. Had they been, it would have been *The Egoist* who received a court summons, since Pound's articles were published anonymously. Moreover, Pound was doubtlessly keen to conceal his identity as the attacker of a magazine that had the power to damage his careers. In any case, their lack of a signature made them appear to represent the opinion of the magazine and, for the first time, the 'voice' of the magazine pursued a literary, rather than a philosophical, agenda.

In his history of the *TLS*, Derwent May does not consider the possibility that the compiler of the *Egoist's* anti-*TLS* columns could have been anyone other than Pound. Whilst his conclusion is sound, there are some problems with the reasoning behind it. In part, May's ascription of these columns to Pound relies upon an overestimation of his influence over magazine, which he concludes was 'edited by Harriet Shaw Weaver but of which Pound was the presiding genius'.<sup>160</sup> In effect, he credits Pound with greater editorial power than the editor, implying that Pound should be held responsible for all unsigned or pseudonymous literary-related articles in the first years of *The Egoist*. The idea that Pound held massive sway over the magazine, which derived principally from Pound's own exaggerated accounts, has been revised in recent years. Moreover, during 1914, Pound's involvement shifted from literary procurer to occasional contributor.

May also perceives Pound to have developed a personal grievance against the *TLS* between 1909-12, as a result of their critical review of his translations of Cavalcanti. His reviewer had noted that some of the poems in the volume had been previously translated by Rossetti and had argued that Rossetti's versions had been more poetically accomplished. He concluded by asserting that Pound's more literal translations were interesting only to English-language scholars of Cavalcanti.<sup>161</sup> The review elicited a response from Pound, who contended that it had been his intention to translate the poems literally, as sources from which to better understand their author. That is, the reviewer had simply measured his work against the wrong yardstick. With customary even-handedness, the *TLS* printed Pound's letter, which was uncharacteristically courteous and formal, betraying no ill will.<sup>162</sup> One of Pound's biographers reports that in later life Pound felt aggrieved that Bruce Richmond had never requested any of his criticism for the pages of the *TLS*, but, at this early point, his opposition to the periodical seems to have been of a piece with his attack upon Chesterton.<sup>163</sup> It was not a personal hatred of the magazine, but rather his resistance to the *TLS* was part of

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<sup>159</sup> Unattributed (Ezra Pound), "Revolutionary Maxims," *The Egoist* 1.11 (June 1, 1914), 217-8; "Revelations [I]," *The Egoist* 1.12 (June 15, 1914), 234-5; "Revelations [II]," *The Egoist* 1.13 (July 1, 1914), 256-7; and "Northcliffe's Nice Paper Again," *The Egoist* 1.14 (July 15, 1914), 278-9.

<sup>160</sup> Derwent May, *The History of the Times Literary Supplement*, London: HarperCollins, 2001, 124.

<sup>161</sup> Unattributed (John Cann Bailey), "The Poems of Cavalcanti," *Times Literary Supplement*, November 21, 1912, 527.

<sup>162</sup> Pound, "The Poems of Cavalcanti," *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 December 5, 1912, 562.

<sup>163</sup> Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1970, 315.

an impersonal attempt to negotiate a place for experimental literature in and against the commercial literary sphere.

Richard Aldington is really the only other potential candidate for compositor of the *Egoist's* anti-TLS satires and he can be quickly discounted. Aldington was unmistakably the author of a fifth anti-TLS column which appeared in October 1915. Whilst this later column was constructed on the model of the June-July articles, there are significant differences in their focus and presentation. The 1915 column, entitled 'Inconsiderable Imbecilities', presents the quotations with no quotation marks, individual attributes, nor, more crucially, any commentary. As we shall see, the composition of the earlier articles had been carefully designed to point out a number of problems with the commerciality of the *Times* and its *Supplement*. Without commentary to guide the loathing of the reader, the 1915 column does not enact an argument, it just provides an opportunity for 'two minutes hate'. Unlike the earlier ones, the 1915 column is also introduced and concluded with a sentence by the compiler.

The *Times Literary Supplement* has become duller than ever; even the lush fatuity of sentimental pedantry has now subsided into degenerated dullness; but however curious, as it were, and, true, we thought, as it were, we give a few of these jewels "of purest ray serene," even though, as it were, we cannot explain their origin save haply on the hypothesis that we "'spects they growed.'" You recognize the style? Then, here goes.<sup>164</sup>

Instead of focusing upon the inherent problem of periodical's commercialism, the introduction directly attacks the quality of its content—the increasing dullness of the *TLS*, as well as referencing an established but waning sentimentality, and its characteristically hesitant prose.

Without the subtle arrangement and sparse asides that had been used to construct the 1914 columns, this later composition seems relative aimless, as if someone were aping the format of the earlier contributor to make up copy. This later column can be confidently attributed to Aldington, since it ends with his idiosyncratic ellipsis '&c., &c., &c.' On the rare occasions when they use it, Pound and all the other contributors to the magazine, prefer to use 'etc.' Aldington, however, uses '&c.' almost consistently.<sup>165</sup> As such, the 1914 columns, which prefer 'etc' can be fairly safely assumed to have been the work of Pound.<sup>166</sup> When it came to the 1915 column it appears that Aldington, who struggled to find copy during the war, decided to do what Blunt had accused him of after a return visit to New Buildings in March 1914—he 'more or less copied Pound'.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Unattributed (Aldington), "Inconsiderable Imbecilities," *The Egoist* 2.10 (October 1, 1915), 161. The misquotation, "'spects they growed'", derives from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 bestselling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Upon being asked if she knows 'who made her', the young slave Topsy replies "'I spect I grow'd.'"

<sup>165</sup> See, for example: Aldington, "Two Books", *The Egoist* 1.4 (February 16, 1914), 67; "Modern Poetry and The Imagists," 1.11 (June 1, 1914), 202; "Decadence and Dynamism," 2.4 (April, 1915), 57; "The Poetry of Ezra Pound," 2.5 (May, 1915, 72); and "Laurent Tailhade," 2.10 (October, 1915), 160). I was able to find only found one instance of Aldington using 'etc.', which appeared in "Reviews" 1.13 (July 1, 1914), 248.

<sup>166</sup> Pound, "Revelations [II]," 257 and "Northcliffe's Nice Paper Again," 278.

<sup>167</sup> Wilfrid Scawen Blunt Papers, 26 March 1914, Unpublished Journals, MS13-1975: 48.

A few months before Pound first attempted to flaunt the *Egoist's* superiority as a commercially resistant cultural arbiter, the *TLS* had made a significant transition. From the 19 March, the *TLS* no longer appeared as a supplement to *The Times*, but began to issue as a periodical in its own right. There could no longer be any confusion about the periodical's appeal. It was quickly established that, as an eight to twelve page penny weekly, the *TLS* shifted an average of 41,974 copies each week during 1914.<sup>168</sup> For the *TLS*, these circulation figures were a matter of great pride, providing, as they did, proof of its cultural weight. From 4 June, sales of the previous issue began to be listed by the issue's contents—'[t]he number of copies of "The Times" Literary Supplement SOLD last week was 45,094.'<sup>169</sup> Sales were serious business, so much so that, when they were accidentally misreported, a correction would appear in the subsequent issue.

The number of copies of *The Times Literary Supplement* SOLD last week was 44,909. The number for the preceding week was 45,707, not (as was stated by a miscalculation) 46,320.<sup>170</sup>

In his *Egoist* columns, Pound identified the *TLS's* commercial success as its central deficiency, their large circulation being indicative of their commercial outlook and the compromises he felt that such an outlook entailed.

In the ominously titled third column, 'Revelations', Pound reproduces one of the *TLS's* circulation announcements.

"NET SALES.

(Since we followed *The English Review* and 'came down' to a penny)

The net sales for the ten issues since the change in the price of *The Times* have been as follows:—

Issue of March	19	... ..	35,539
" "	26	... ..	42,942
" "	2	... ..	43,830
" "	9	... ..	43,179

etc."<sup>171</sup>

For the compositor there is no need for commentary to be added to a quotation that reveals the *TLS's* pride in their growing popularity. In the context of the *Egoist*, which had elsewhere espoused its contempt for the commercialisation of literature, the open bragging of the *TLS* condemned itself. That a paper sold more copies because it had got cheaper was nothing to be proud of, rather it was a sign of the *TLS's* growing mediocrity. More than any of the others, this entry, unpacks the wry title that Pound chose to give the

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<sup>168</sup> May, *History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 95.

<sup>169</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, June 4, 1914, 265.

<sup>170</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, June 18, 1914, 289.

<sup>171</sup> Pound, "Revelations [II]," 257.

article. The *TLS* report their swelling figures as if they are a dramatic fact; to Pound the figures and the glee of the *TLS* are harbingers of the end of times.

If, as Morrisson argues, the commercial engagement of little magazines has been underestimated, then Pound makes a cognate mistake in his criticism of the *TLS*'s lack of commitment to cultural aims. Much like the staff of *The Egoist*, the editors of the *TLS* experienced a tension between economic necessity and their cultural goals. The *TLS*'s attempts to resist purely commercial aims were, if anything, more remarkable, given that its editor had to pit himself against the mercenary proprietor of its father periodical, Lord Northcliffe. As informal editor of the *TLS* from its inception, and formal editor from 18 May 1903 to his retirement in 1937, Bruce Richmond had to fight to prevent advertisements encroaching upon article space. For example, in November 1904, Richmond made an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the appearance of a full-page in-house advertisement, proclaiming the advantages of the *TLS* as an advertising medium, on the grounds that it was 'tacky' and would 'annoy readers'.<sup>172</sup>

The protective attitude taken by the editorial staff of *The Times* and *TLS* over the authority and integrity of their papers would often lead them to reject more profitable courses. On 12 December 1912, a few years after Northcliffe had bought a majority share in *The Times*, he wrote to its editor, Geoffrey Robinson, about the *TLS*.

[O]ne thing is certain about the future of the [the *TLS*], and that is, that, without lowering the tone, the appeal is to be a very wide one. Otherwise the circulation will be a very small one, and the Paper will stop.<sup>173</sup>

This would not have been music to the ears of the late Assistant Manager of *The Times* Charles Frederick Moberly Bell, who is said to have observed that 'the better a newspaper is, the fewer people there are to buy it. The more we improve *The Times* the smaller grows the number of readers. If *The Times*, in the interest of the country, is to carry on it must be subsidised.'<sup>174</sup> He was not referring to advertisements, which were reliant upon the growth of newspaper sales, but to other business schemes, like *The Times* Book Club, which could provide income that would allow the newspaper to maintain priorities that were not commercially optimal.

Though Pound was unaware of the friction in the offices of the *TLS*, he zeroed-in on the dumbing-down that he supposed was the result of Northcliffe's acquisitive governance. In his quotation columns, Pound attacks the *TLS* for the blandness of the books chosen for review, their lack of penetrative criticism, and their reviewers' talents for stating the obvious.

"Lucille is a heroine worthy of love."

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<sup>172</sup> May, *The History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 48-9.

<sup>173</sup> Cited in Derwent May, *The History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 90-1.

<sup>174</sup> Cited in Derwent May, *The History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 5.



—Literary Criticism in *The Times*.<sup>175</sup>

Whilst the 1914 columns are filled with examples of *TLS* and *Times* reviewer's asinine comments, this particular quotation is printed in two of the four columns. Whilst it is likely that this was merely a mistake that the quotation appeared twice, the complaint it makes seems an apt summary of the attitude of *The Egoist* towards both the critical capacity of the *Times* and its more popular tastes. Pound also makes examples of the magazine's bad writers, bad copy editing and printer's errors.

“Fortunately, however, it is not necessary to decide what a lyric is or is not in order to appreciate it or to judge it; and although Mr. Lees has not, we think, led off very well, the rest of his volume contains a sound and workmanlike account of the principal German lyrical poets and their work.”

Model of sentence construction from

—*Times* Literary Supplement.<sup>176</sup>

Though it could equally function as an example of their more 'accessible' criticism, Pound here highlights the sentence's torture of grammar. Pound provides examples like these in an attempt to question the quality of the paper, an argument which he also extends to its integrity, by insinuating that the *TLS* were biased towards their paying advertisers.

In 'Revolutionary Maxims', two pairs of quotations are arranged in a way that implies that the *TLS* were more inclined to review books that they had been paid to advertise. The intention of the compiler is clearest in the second example, since he does not use it as an attempt to show any of the supplement's other 'failures.'

“The Life of Charles, Third Earl Stanhope.”

—Adv., idem [*Times Literary Supplement*], p. 236.

“The Life of Charles, Third Earl Stanhope.”

—*Times* Literary Supplement, p. 234.<sup>177</sup>

The quotations are linked self-evidently, by their shared topics and contiguity, rather than explicitly by closer positioning or comment. Given the seriousness of the accusation, the circumspect manner in which it is made is not surprising; to go further than merely insinuating the charge would have put *The Egoist* at risk of prosecution for libel. Pound's accusation does not appear to have had any basis in fact. Indeed, the *TLS* took pride in the impartiality of their reviewers. *The Times* printed and sold the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as another means of subsidising its pursuance of a cultural agenda. When the ninth edition was published the reviews that appeared in *The Times* and *TLS* were signed. This exception to the customary practice of

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<sup>175</sup> Pound, “Revelations [I],” 235 and “Revelations [II],” 257.

<sup>176</sup> Pound, “Revelations [I],” 235.

<sup>177</sup> Pound, “Revolutionary Maxims,” 218.

anonymous reviewing was clearly made in an attempt to reassure readers that the reviewer of the encyclopaedia was not an affiliate of the newspaper.

Indeed, if the relationship between the *TLS* reviews and adverts did sometimes appear to be suspiciously close, it can be put down to the tactics of the periodical's advertisers. In one review of forthcoming novels, Conrad's *Chance* is described as 'a book chiefly of human passion and disaster, though not without its background of the sea.'<sup>178</sup> In the following issue an advert by Conrad's publisher regurgitates text directly from the review, without making a clear reference to the source.

It deals with one of those strange cases of human passion and disaster which he alone of living writers can present. The sea is in the book, but it is not entirely a book of the sea.<sup>179</sup>

The *TLS* clearly felt that this practice was unfavourable. In a message printed by the *TLS* on 3 February 1905, advertisers had been offered advice on the composition of their adverts. The *TLS* recommended that the adverts contain their own blurbs rather than extracts from reviews.<sup>180</sup> Whilst the message did not have produce the desired long-term results, it does indicate that the *TLS* were aware of the potential confusion that could be caused by advertisers' bulking out their adverts with the paper's own reviews.

In railing against the partiality he perceived in the *TLS*'s reviewing practices, Pound expressed dissatisfaction less with the books they did review than with those they passed over. Pound clearly felt that challenging books, like the ones he produced, should be given more attention. As we know, Richmond's hands were somewhat tied by Northcliffe's assertion that intellectualism would cause the paper to 'stop.' Yet, Pound's charge of literary conservatism did not take into account their attempts to bring more challenging works to the notice of their readers. For example, Richmond's decision to print reviews of books that contained passages or themes that could be considered obscene, like *A Portrait of the Artist* and *The Well of Loneliness*, simply because he felt their quality made them noteworthy marked him out as a radical.<sup>181</sup> Compared to Pound, who was not even financially invested in the low-value periodicals through which he announced his anti-commercial position, whenever Bruce Richmond chose to prioritise culture over commercialism in the *TLS*, he bet the farm.

In *The Egoist*, Aldington and Pound had almost complete control over the material they decided to review and print. It was a situation that led to charges of nepotism and a different sort of commercial corruption than that with which Pound had charged the *TLS*. In a letter in the magazine's back pages, one correspondent criticises the circularity of the *Egoist*'s reviewing, rechristening it the 'Pound-Brzeska Ltd. Mutual Admiration Company.'<sup>182</sup> Whilst *The Egoist* was more than a magazine published by and for a small coterie, their contributors' propensity to review their friends could sometimes seem suspicious to

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<sup>178</sup> Unattributed, "Novels for the New Year—A Spring Forecast," *Times Literary Supplement*, January 1, 1914, 6.

<sup>179</sup> Unattributed, "JOSEPH CONRAD [Methuen Advert]," *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 January 8, 1914, 12.

<sup>180</sup> Cited in May, *History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 57-8.

<sup>181</sup> Arthur Clutton-Brock, "Wild Youth," *Times Literary Supplement*, March 1, 1917, 103-4; Orlo Williams, "The Well of Loneliness," in "New Books," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 2, 1928, 566. The review was largely positive, although Williams finished by mentioning his 'regret that the statement of an insoluble problem so passionately presented itself as a theme.'

<sup>182</sup> 'Auceps,' "The New Sculpture" in "Correspondence," *The Egoist* 1.7 (April 1, 1914), 137-8.

outsiders. Indeed, much unlike the *TLS*, it would be impossible to accept that the review choices made by *The Egoist* staff were as commercially disinterested as Pound's anti-*TLS* articles attempted to insinuate.

Having traced the *TLS*'s attempts to resist commercial demands through Pound's assertions to the contrary, it is amusing to note a small material coincidence that established a visual link between the dominant cultural arbiter and the little magazine that nipped at its heels. Partridge & Cooper began printing *The Egoist* from 1 July 1914, the issue in which the third instalment of the anti-*TLS* column appeared. As might be expected, the switch to the new firm was marked by a number of slight typographical changes. In the early months of 1914, a number of different graphics had been used to divide the sections and articles of the magazine—lines, double lines, triple asterisks, multiple dots, and a repeated pen nib design—but upon the appointment of Partridge & Cooper an unmistakably familiar divider began to appear.



3. Above, magnified scanned image of Partridge & Cooper's *Egoist* divider.

Below, scanned image of divider *TLS* divider.

The divider that the printers chose for *The Egoist* was identical to the one that *TLS* used to underline article headings. If we ignore the possibility that the printers who were setting up 'Revelations [II]' were attempting comically to undermine Pound's elitist stance, the explanation that remains is no less amusing. If they were not making a joke at Pound's expense, then the printers must have felt that *The Egoist*'s content could be lent gravity by a presentation that was reminiscent of the *TLS*.

### Joyce and Censorship

The experimental writers of the early twentieth century seemed to have revelled in mentioning the unmentionable. During the serialisation of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in *The Egoist* from February 1914 to September 1915, the magazine's printers took exception to a number of passages, recommending changes and sometimes enforcing excisions. As Rachel Potter has argued, their use of obscene subjects and words was one way in which writers challenged prevailing legal and cultural

limits of propriety.<sup>183</sup> In this chapter I will consider the ways in which obscenity also constituted a challenge to commercially inculcated standards of decency. For reasons purely economic, large-scale periodicals and publishers were inclined towards a stricter sense of decency than that which was likely to be enforceable by law. To remain profitable readers needed to be plentiful and for readers to be plentiful appeal needed to be broad. Self-censorship was a key aspect of keeping appeal 'very wide.' When it came to issues of propriety, little magazines were able to exercise more freedom than their commercial counterparts, sometimes to the extent that they stepped over into the territory of the fugitive.

George Bornstein has argued that 'modernist text are protean, existing in multiple and equally authorized forms,' repudiating earlier editorial endeavours to 'correct' multiple versions of texts into single authorised versions.<sup>184</sup> Behind this editorial practice lurked the idea that the processes through which each historical text was created left marks that could and should be erased. We now consider these marks as valuable evidence for the project of historicising modernity. However, considering all versions of a text as 'equally authorized' can lead to a similar kind of erasure. To deny that some texts are more affected than others by their journey from author to reader would be to overlook the marks left behind by their circumstances of their production. The excisions, gaps, asterisks, and redactions that mark experimental writers' struggle with censorship can tell us much about the determination with which they attempted to resist to populist moral taste. As a violence done to the text, they also represent the failure of these efforts and, ultimately, a commercial compromise.

The 1857 Obscenity Act ensured that any 'obscene' material that had been able to slip past the stringencies of the commercial literary sphere could be suppressed by other means. Book banning, obscenity trials and censorship by printers are known to have affected the production and dissemination of literature that challenged the boundaries of acceptable expression. We are also aware of the various strategies by which a few wily publishers resisted and adapted to these conditions by smuggling contraband texts across borders and producing private and deluxe editions of contentious works. Pound was even willing to resort to scissors and paste to get around the cautiousness of printers. When *The Egoist Press* was established to print the English book edition of *A Portrait*, the company were determined to print an unexpurgated text. Pound wrote to Weaver to suggest a method of achieving that objective.

If all printers refuse [...] I suggest that largish blank spaces be left where the passages are cut out. Then the excisions can be manifolded [...] by typewriter on good paper, and if necessary I will paste them in myself.<sup>185</sup>

As it turned out, the Company was able to procure sheets from the American publisher, who had managed to find a broadminded printer. It is clear, however, that *The Egoist Press* were willing to go to any lengths to print an uncompromising book version of the text.

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<sup>183</sup> Rachel Potter, "Obscene Modernism and the Trade in Salacious Books," *Modernism/Modernity* 16.1 (January, 2009), 87-104.

<sup>184</sup> George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 35.

<sup>185</sup> Ezra Pound in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, March 17, 1916, cited by Jane Lidderdale and Mary Nicholson, *Dear Miss Weaver*, London: Faber and Faber, 1970, 116-7.

Printers, customs offices, and courts frequently intervened to prevent obscene material from reaching the public. We are used to thinking about this type of morally and legally motivated censorship, imposed upon obscene material by external agents. However, a publishing companies sense of indecency was usually determined by commercial, rather than legal or moral concerns. Furthermore, these boundaries of good taste established by commercial concern were often less permissive than limits imposed by external censors. It was this kind of commercially-motivated, self-imposed censorship from which the little magazine was able offer exemption. When their printers would allow, a progressively liberal magazine editor could publish more contentious material because they were not expecting their product to appeal to a large and diverse audience.

As a rule, large-circulation periodicals would not reproduce or review provocative literature. Discussing controversial books would have run the risk of alienating sensitive readers and damaging sales. Having already discussed the exceptions that the *TLS* were willing to make, it is worth noting that they did draw the line at reviewing *Ulysses* (1922), as well as D. H. Lawrence's books *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). However, for a periodical constructed with the aim of directing readers through the over-crowded shelves of the literary market, it would have been impractical for them to review banned books. They were, after all, legally unobtainable—*The Rainbow* had been tried and found to be obscene in 1915, the director of public prosecutions banned *Ulysses* in 1922 (as the work was published in France it was not trialed, but customs and postal authorities were instructed to burn any copies they discovered), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was not officially published in full in the United Kingdom until 1960.<sup>186</sup>

As previously mentioned, the *TLS* did review Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, which was published at the end of July 1928. The review appeared on 2 August 1928 at the head of the 'New Novels' section. By 1928, Radclyffe Hall was a decorated writer whose previous work had sold well. The review was largely positive, although Williams finished by mentioning his 'regret that the statement of an insoluble problem so passionately presented itself as a theme.'<sup>187</sup> Since the book was not banned until a few months after publication and it did not contain any particular passages that presaged its suppression, there seemed to be no reason for the *TLS* not to review it. Interestingly, the *TLS* appear to have made the opposite mistake with Ford Madox Hueffer's *The Good Soldier*. When it was published in 1915, the *TLS* passed it over for review but, as it turned out, it did not cause any moral panic or legal action.

The *TLS*'s response to Hall and Hueffer's novels reveals that their sense of decency did not always line up with that of the courts. This is not surprising, given that the law as applied under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act and 1868 Hicklin test provided an incredibly vague definition of what constituted obscenity. The commercial interests that configured the popular press' attitude towards the obscene, were far removed from the moral scruples that prompted its legal suppression. For example, whilst the *TLS* viewed indecency as a bar to commercial success, improprieties could still be central to artistic worth. In a review of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man*, which appeared in the *TLS* in March 1917, Arthur

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<sup>186</sup> May, *History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 167.

<sup>187</sup> Orlo Williams, "The Well of Loneliness," in "New Books," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 2, 1928, 566.

Clutton-Brock celebrates the book's revulsions.<sup>188</sup> He is careful to mention that some readers may be 'put off by occasional improprieties' that appear in the book, noting without elaboration that 'there is one on the very first page.' This perhaps is a necessary warning, made to the more sensitive readers within the periodical's wide demographic. Yet, despite and, to some extent, because of the 'improprieties' that appear in *A Portrait*, he deems the novel a success.

He has at times a disgust for himself, a kind of mental queasiness, in which the whole universe seems nauseating as it is presented to him through the medium of his own disgusting self. That perhaps is the cause of those improprieties we have mentioned.

Having a high regard for the novel, Clutton-Brock laments the effect these 'improprieties' will have on shrinking its readership. We know that impropriety 'on the very first page,' is an act of urination—he refers to the infant Dedalus's observations on the experience of bed-wetting. We can guess that the others he refers to are Dedalus's sexual experiences and the occasional swear words that appear in the book.

Surprisingly, large-circulation magazines could also be sites in which cultural boundaries were challenged, albeit in less extreme terms. May brings to light an incident when the reticence of the *TLS* brought them into conflict with a regular reviewer. In a diary entry for 19 December 1921, Virginia Woolf records her frustration at the primness of the periodical's editor. Her description of a volume of Henry James's ghost stories as 'lewd' had prompted Bruce Richmond to telephone in a request for revision.

But you know the usual meaning of the word? It is – ah - *dirty* – Now poor dear old Henry James – At any rate, think it over, and ring me up in 20 minutes. [...] So I thought it over & came to the required conclusion in twelve minutes & a half.<sup>189</sup>

Woolf changes the word to 'obscene'. Richmond capitulated in good humour and the review was printed as lead article, in 22 December 1922 issue of the *TLS*. Her argument was that Henry James's ghost stories are at their best when they make us feel something that we do not want to, something that we do not understand.

Some unutterable obscenity has come to the surface. It tries to get in; it tries to get at something. The exquisite little beings who lie innocently asleep must at all costs be protected.<sup>190</sup>

How unfortunate then, was Richmond's call, urging her away from the use of the more overtly sexual term 'lewd.' The presence of that word would have been unsettling in the pages of the *TLS*, demonstrating something of the feeling it described. Moreover, his interference infuriated Woolf and nearly resulting in

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<sup>188</sup> Arthur Clutton-Brock, "Wild Youth," 103-4.

<sup>189</sup> Cited in May, *History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 135.

<sup>190</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Henry James' Ghost Stories," *The Times Literary Supplement*, December 22, 1921, 850.

her quitting the paper altogether, 'now that Richmond rewrites my sentences to suit the mealy mouths of Belgravia'.<sup>191</sup>

The problems that Joyce encountered in finding a publisher willing to bring out an unexpurgated version of *Dubliners* provides another example of commercial censorship in action. Joyce signed two publishing contracts which were subsequently torn up, one with Richards in 1906 and another with Maunsel in 1912. The breakdown of both agreements had been precipitated by the questionable decency of certain words and passages in the book. In the former instance (and quite possibly in the latter) the book was considered 'indecent' only as far as the material in question was likely to have an adverse effect on sales. It was not until 1914, ten years after Joyce began negotiating with publishing houses, that Grant Richards and Joyce were finally able to agree on a version of the book that would satisfy both parties.

After Maunsel's refusal to publish, Joyce had sent a circular letter to a number of Irish and English newspapers bemoaning his experience. Two years later, the letter was reprinted in *The Egoist* in an article titled 'A Curious History'.<sup>192</sup> The article was contributed by Pound in lieu of his regular commentary on current books, but only contained three sentences by him, two of which were on an unrelated subject. Pound's few words bracketed Joyce's original 18 August 1911 letter and 30 November 1913 addendum, which filled almost two columns. Joyce came to rely upon this printed article, endorsed by Pound, as testimony to prove the unfairness he had suffered at the hands of both Maunsel and Richards. He requested a copy of the article be sent to Pinker, to inform his literary agent 'in what relations I stand and have stood till now with my publisher'.<sup>193</sup> He requested a copy be sent to someone called Llewelyn Roberts, for reasons unknown.<sup>194</sup> Upon his arrival in Zurich, he requested Weaver send him another because it could be 'useful for me to have a copy'.<sup>195</sup> Even as late as 1920, he wrote to Weaver from Paris requesting three copies so that he could get the article translated.<sup>196</sup>

Despite Joyce's use of his own published account as proof of his experience, 'A Curious History' contains little detail of the early negotiations with Richards. He mentions that the source of their disagreement had been requests to omit 'one of the stories and passages in others which, as he said, his printer refused to set up' (*Egoist* 1.2, 15 January 1914: 26). The printers' refusal to set 'Two Gallants' did begin a process of negotiation that they were ultimately unable to resolve. However, Joyce does not mention the way in which the printers' refusal influenced Grant Richards's decision not to publish. The details of Richards's concerns, recorded in their correspondence about the book, provide an insight into the ways in which issues of literary indecency and commercial viability were intertwined.

When Richards's letters to Joyce were printed in 1963, Robert Scholes's preface argues that the publisher's financial difficulties were an important factor in his decision not to bring out *Dubliners* in 1906. Recently

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<sup>191</sup> Cited in May, *History of the Times Literary Supplement*, 135.

<sup>192</sup> Pound, "A Curious History," *The Egoist* 1.2 (January 15, 1914), 26-7.

<sup>193</sup> Letter from Joyce to Weaver, dated April 30, 1915, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library, 57345, 7 (hereafter cited as Weaver Papers).

<sup>194</sup> Postcard from Joyce to Weaver, dated August 10, 1915, Weaver Papers, 57345, 15.

<sup>195</sup> Postcard from Joyce to Weaver, dated October 28, 1915, Weaver Papers, 57345, 20.

<sup>196</sup> Letter from Joyce to Harriet Weaver, dated July 12, 1920, Weaver Papers, 57346, 9.

bankrupt and operating a new firm under his wife's name, Richards was worried about the commercial prospects of Joyce's book long before he raised any questions about its content. In his first response to Joyce after having read the manuscript Richards declared that the book had none of the 'selling qualities for which a publisher has naturally to look.'<sup>197</sup> He raised concerns about the setting of the stories and the form of the work, complaining that 'it is about Ireland, and it is always said that books about Ireland do not sell; and it is a collection of short stories.' Yet, despite these reservations and his precarious financial position, Richards declared that he was willing to 'take on the risk of its publication' because he admired the work.

When the printers refused to set the type for 'Two Gallants,' the first of the stories they were given, because they felt the story was indecent, Richards began to change his mind. In response to their refusal, Richards's carefully re-read the manuscript and deemed several other parts of the work objectionable. Joyce was disinclined to accept the changes that Richards's felt were necessary before the book could be published. Their protracted negotiations are recorded in the letters exchanged from May to October 1906. In these letters Richards argues that, whilst he has no interest in the scruples of his printer *per se*, he considers the printers' opinion to be of importance because it is likely to be representative of the wider audience.

[I]f a printer takes that view you can be quite sure that the bookseller will take it, that the libraries will take it, and that an inconveniently large section of the general public will take it.<sup>198</sup>

That is, he objects to the indecency on commercial grounds, finally refusing the book because the objectionable content, in combination with its 'Irishness' and short-story format, make the book a too weak financial prospect.

Richards's argument against the commercial viability of distasteful writing can help to reveal some strengths and weaknesses of magazine publication.

You won't get a publisher—a real publisher—to issue it as it stands. I won't say that you won't get somebody to bring it out, but it would be brought out obscurely and in such a way would be certain to do no good to your pocket and would hardly be likely to get into the hands of any but a few people.<sup>199</sup>

Many years later, in 1914, Joyce and Richards were eventually managed to find a workable compromise that resulted in the publication of *Dubliners*. However, the uncompromising English edition of Joyce's second book was not published by a 'real' publisher, as Richards intended the term. *The Egoist* set up their own publishing company to bring out the work and, it could be argued, the relative amateurishness of their operation may not have provided the book with an optimum start. Certainly, their reduced resources and

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<sup>197</sup> Richards in a letter to Joyce, dated February 17, 1906, published in Robert Scholes, "Grant Richards to James Joyce," *Studies in Bibliography XVI* (1963), 143.

<sup>198</sup> Richards in a letter to Joyce, dated May 1, 1906, published in Scholes, "Grant Richards to James Joyce," 145.

<sup>199</sup> Richards in a letter to James Joyce, dated 10 May 1906, published in Scholes, "Grant Richards to James Joyce," 146.



contacts must have limited their abilities as promoters and distributors. It was clearly more important to Joyce and his daring literary associates at *The Egoist* for the book be brought out whole than it was for the book to be successful.

Unlike the Egoist Press book edition, the magazine serialisation of *A Portrait* was not protected from censorship. Having read 'A Curious History,' Weaver was aware that Joyce was reluctant to permit any changes to his work. Weaver would support Joyce's artistic vision for the rest of her life, but as editor of *The Egoist* she was unable to protect the bluer parts of his copy from the printer's blue pencil. During the period of *A Portrait's* serialisation three companies printed *The Egoist*. The first, Robert Johnson & Co. were prone to errors. Their misprints even provoked foreign correspondent Muriel Ciolkowska into ending a column by correcting the errors that they had entered into her previous article.<sup>200</sup> Despite this, Marsden made no attempt to replace the firm because Johnson & Co. were able to offer *The Egoist* something that was more valuable than typographic precision. The firm rarely questioned the seditious or sexually frank material they were asked to print and there is no evidence of their ever having refused to print anything. Whilst there is not much that any printer would have found objectionable in the first two chapters of *A Portrait*, it is worth noting that Johnson & Co. were bold enough to print the word 'piss' at a time when many printers would not have done so. Ten days later, when a satirist offered a pastiche of an issue of *The Egoist* in rival magazine *The New Age*, he included an invented letter responding to Joyce's latest instalment. The letter quotes the 'piss' passage from *A Portrait*, but only after modification. The offending word is replaced by 'stink'.<sup>201</sup>

Johnson & Co. were eventually disengaged when Weaver became editor, but only as a necessary step in a plan to centralise the production of the magazine in London. If the benefits the firm had offered had not been obvious to Weaver, they soon became so. Within a few months of contracting Partridge & Cooper their more cautious policies had resulted in three passages being cut from *A Portrait*. These difficulties eventually led Weaver to disengage the firm, only to find that their replacements were almost as prim. Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., refused to print the word 'fart' (making a nonsense of the subsequent sentences which allude to the smell) and replaced Joyce's 'ballocks' with asterisks. Nevertheless, it was Partridge and Cooper who were responsible for the most drastic changes to the text of *A Portrait*. Their first refusal was the second paragraph of chapter three: Stephen's daydream about a walk through the red-light district. In a letter to Weaver, on the topic of Partridge & Cooper's refusal to print the passage about prostitution in *A Portrait*, Marsden wryly observes that 'Truscott's have far too naughty minds for us: only Heaven can guess at the dark imaginings of their "Directory Board"!'<sup>202</sup> Indeed, their caution is curious considering the previous instalment, in which Stephen had actually visited a prostitute, had gone unchallenged by them. By contrast, the 'unprintable' passage contains only a description of a street scene. Since the 'unprintable' passage did contain the words 'brothel' and 'whore', it appears that Partridge & Cooper were comfortable printing sexual imputation as long as it did not contain filthy words.

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<sup>200</sup> 'Saint Fiacre' (pseud. of Muriel Ciolkowska), "Passig Paris," *The Egoist* 1.8 (April, 151914), 149.

<sup>201</sup> Unattributed, "More Contemporaries," *The New Age* 15.8 (June 25, 1914), 186.

<sup>202</sup> Marsden in a letter to Weaver, dated November 3, 1914, cited by Garner, *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit*, 142.

In a letter to Joyce in July 1915, Weaver reveals that the magazine had split with Partridge & Cooper over their 'stupid censoring' of *A Portrait*.

[T]hey had objected once or twice to things in other parts of the paper, but their behaviour over your novel was the crowning offence. They struck out a passage on Aug. 1st of last year. I could not help it. The rest was set up correctly until they came to the latter part of chapter four where as you have seen some sentences were omitted. I then submitted the whole of chapter five to them. They declined to set it up as it stood & so we left them.<sup>203</sup>

After the 1 August issue, Partridge & Cooper printed the text without deletions for five months. Then for the 1 January 1915 issue, which would become their last, the firm demanded that two fairly innocuous sentences be cut from the beginning of chapter four. The first sentence they objected to was Stephen's own objection to the nudity of his friends:

It was a pain to see them and a swordlike pain to see the signs of adolescence that made repellent their pitiable nakedness.<sup>204</sup>

Stephen's disgust at their naked bodies reminds him of his dread of his own body and its lusts. The passage highlights the pain caused by his vexed relationship with the flesh, moments before the appearance of the 'bird girl' revolutionises this relationship. The removal of the sentence makes Stephen's transformation less magnificent.

The second cut, taken from the 'bird girl' sequence itself, had an even more detrimental impact upon the narrative. They would not print:

[H]er thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down.<sup>205</sup>

As a consequence of the deletion, the narrative blazon skips from the 'bird girl's' crane-like legs to her 'slate-blue skirts.' Without delving into the Freudian implications of the printers' removal of her knickers, it is sufficient to say that the deletion performs the textual equivalent of the placing of a black box upon visual material. It encourages one to imagine what is hidden. Let us hope that *Egoist* readers were clean enough of mind to imagine a pair of feathery 'drawers', otherwise Stephen's pivotal decision to forego the priesthood and devote his life to art and beauty would seem to have been inspired by a bare arse.

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<sup>203</sup> Weaver in a letter to Joyce, dated July 28, 1915, published in John Firth, "Harriet Weaver's Letters to James Joyce 1915-1920," *Studies in Bibliography* 20 (1967), 154.

<sup>204</sup> Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Walter Hettche, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993, 194. For alternative editions, see chapter 4, lines 758-60.

<sup>205</sup> Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Gabler, 197. Chapter 4, lines 859-61.

During the period in which the deletions were made, Joyce was not able to communicate directly with Weaver. Since direct postage was impossible between London and the Austrian city of Trieste after the war had begun, Weaver and Joyce were only able to maintain minimal contact by relying upon intermediaries in neutral countries. Communication by this method was slow and unreliable. Given that issues of *The Egoist* were created within a fifteen-day period, it would have been difficult for Weaver to discuss individual instalments with Joyce—the convoluted route each letter was obliged to travel took eight days at the very least. Under these circumstances, even a single exchange of letters between issues was impossible. This situation lasted from the beginning of August 1914 until Joyce found his first temporary address in Switzerland in July 1915. On 5 March 1915, in one of the few letters they exchanged during this period, Joyce wrote to Weaver to ask whether the serialisation of his novel had been completed. Notes made by Weaver at the bottom of this letter record her reply, in which she informed Joyce that the magazine had become a monthly and that the serialisation would probably continue into September.<sup>206</sup> The discussion is evidence of the infrequency of their contact, given that *The Egoist* had been issuing monthly since the beginning of the year.

There was no way in which Weaver could have involved Joyce in her attempts to defend his prose from the deletions enforced Partridge & Cooper. Nonetheless, it is curious that she does not mention the censorship of the 1 August instalment in the first few letters she sent to Joyce upon his arrival in Switzerland. Joyce had received his customary two copies of 15 July 1914 issue of *The Egoist*, but he did not receive another until Weaver was able to send the June and July 1915 issues on 7 July. Upon receipt of these, Joyce wrote requesting the ‘spring numbers’.<sup>207</sup> From Joyce’s reply of 24 June, Weaver appears to have responded to his request by sending all the remaining 1915 numbers, accompanied by a letter explaining that the deletions made in the January instalment had prompted her to change printers. It is clear from Joyce’s reply, that Weaver did not use the letter as an opportunity to mention the earlier instance of censorship:

I am glad that you have changed your printer. The January number (printed by Messers Partridge and Cooper) was very carelessly read, if read at all, by their reader. From several paragraphs whole sentences have been left out. My MSS are in Trieste but I remember the text and am sending the correct version of these passages to my agent. The instalments printed by Ballantyne, Hanson and Co. (February to July) are of course carefully done. I hope the other printers did not set up the numbers which I have not seen (1 and 15 August, and 15 September and 15 December). When you are sending me the August numbers perhaps you could send me also these numbers.<sup>208</sup>

The postal disruption had also delayed Weaver’s receipt of the fourth and fifth chapters of the novel, resulting in a five issue break in the serialisation, from 15 September to 16 November inclusive. With the 1915 numbers in hand, Joyce needed the 1 and 15 issues of both August and December to complete his set (though he mistakenly requests the 15 September issue, in which *A Portrait* did not appear, instead of the 1

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<sup>206</sup> Letter from Joyce to Weaver, March 5, 1915. Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, 57345, 5. Weaver’s reply is missing.

<sup>207</sup> Letter from Joyce to Weaver, dated 5 March 1915, Weaver Papers, 57345, 10.

<sup>208</sup> Letter from Joyce to Weaver, dated 5 March 1915, Weaver Papers, 57345, 11-12.

December issue). It was not until Weaver replied to Joyce on the 28 July (quoted above) that she finally admitted the full extent of Partridge & Coopers interference with his text.

Joyce's main concern was that Partridge & Cooper's deletions might find their way into a subsequent book edition. Worried that his agent might be submitting the published instalments of *A Portrait* to potential publisher Martin Secker & Co., Joyce immediately sent a postcard to Pound directing him to ensure that Pinker was submitting the uncompromised text. Whilst Joyce thanked Weaver on two occasions for her efforts to protect his work and expressed that he was 'glad' that Partridge & Cooper had been disengaged, he nowhere expresses any regret about the damage done to the serialised text. Pound may have offered to paste the 'unprintable' parts into Joyce's novel, but made no such efforts were made to protect the text of the serialisation (despite their printing more issues than copies of a first edition were likely to run to.) Clearly, Joyce and Pound both placed a higher value on the integrity of the book publication than they did the version which ran in the little magazine.

Since Partridge & Cooper were fired for their interferences, Weaver clearly was concerned about the changes enacted upon the text that appeared in *The Egoist*. Yet, the fact that Weaver submitted to their deletions, despite the serious effect they wrought upon her copy, suggests that the circumstances of magazine production made magazines less able to resist the censorship of printers. It seems likely that the time between issues was not long enough to produce the magazine and enact strategies to work around censorious printers. Even Pound was unwilling to spend a fortnight pasting the word 'ballocks' into seven hundred and fifty issues of *The Egoist*. Despite the exemption that little magazines could offer from the commercial demand to pander to public taste, the necessary rapidity of their production meant that they were rarely able to resist censorship of material that had the potential to provoke a legal challenge.

### ***The Egoist at War***

The ways in which the war affected the commercial literary sphere are well known. In his analysis of publishing trade magazines, Simon Eliot notes that the war kindled greater demands for certain types of literature, a situation that led *Publishers' Circular* to invent the new category of 'Military and Naval' to record the demand.<sup>209</sup> Whilst publishers responded quickly to the sudden public interest in war, Eliot notes that 'the period 1910-19 is marked in all the statistics by a year of peak production followed by the inevitable decline in production consequent on the outbreak of the First World War.'<sup>210</sup> Whatever income could be generated by the swathes of patriotic verse volumes and military encyclopaedias, it was not enough to ameliorate the material difficulties the war had begun to cause, which included rising costs, paper shortages, and the absence of writers, printers, and publishers who had gone to the front. Periodicals suffered the same pressures as the book production and little magazines were likely experience their

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<sup>209</sup> Simon Eliot, "Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing," in series Occasional Papers of the Bibliographical Society, 8 (1994), 53.

<sup>210</sup> Eliot, "Some Patterns and Trends," 14.

effects more acutely. For these small and financially precarious enterprises, a further decline in demand, the absence of key staff, and the increasing price of scarce materials could be crushing.

The severe disruption to the European postal network was, for book publishers, an irritation, slowing the speed at which proof corrections and contractual agreements could be made with writers living in different countries. Little magazines that revelled in the cosmopolitanism of their contributors were liable to suffer more acutely from such problems. Owing to the greater frequency of their issues, weeklies and fortnightly struggled to print suitably up-to-date material from their foreign contributors. *The Egoist* experienced problems getting hold of copy from contributors living abroad. Arch text-corrector Muriel Ciolkowska had contributed a regular cultural digest of Parisian life called 'Passing Paris'. From the first of September her column was renamed 'Fighting Paris', becoming a diary of the effects of war. Its accounts were never less than a month behind the publication date of the issue in which they appeared. Nonetheless, Ciolkowska's belated copy often gave the limited readership of *The Egoist* the kind of detail that did not appear in large-circulation newspapers. An entry written on the 23 September, for example, records a grim scene of men returning from the front. Around a long list of their various incapacities, appears the following summary:

The platform for the train home to-day at the Gare Montparnasse was a sight—Callot and Goya brought to life! Out of ten soldiers nine were hurt [...] They had gone to battle as one goes to the fair, laughing, singing, in brand-new suits: they have come back in tatters, so silent they do not even complain.<sup>211</sup>

Northcliffe was not alone in patriotically commanding his editors to avoid reporting too accurately the conditions at the front, for fear that it would discourage men from signing up.<sup>212</sup> In any case, large-circulation periodicals had their hands tied by the Press Bureau, who would read and, when it felt necessary, re-write copy about the war prior to its publication.

Whilst foreign correspondents to little magazines enjoyed greater freedom of speech than did those in the employ of *Daily Mail*, their copy was still scrutinised by the Press Bureau. Even private correspondence, like Joyce's letters to Weaver, were opened, inspected, and stamped by military censors. Getting manuscripts across borders could be difficult, particularly if they were coming from the 'wrong' side of the front. In the first of December 1914 issue, it was necessary for the editor of *The Egoist* to append an explanatory note to the end of the instalment of Joyce's novel:

By means of the kind help of an intermediary in Switzerland we have succeeded in getting Mr. Joyce's MS. through from Austria. The story will, therefore, now be continued without interruption<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Muriel Ciolkowska, "Fighting Paris," *The Egoist* 1.20 (October 15, 1914), 395-8.

<sup>212</sup> May, *History of The Times Literary Supplement*, 100-2.

<sup>213</sup> Weaver, "Note from the Editor," *The Egoist* 1.23 (December 1, 1914), 439.

When the War broke out Joyce was living in Trieste, then part of the Austrian empire, and Joyce had not been able to send the manuscript of chapter four safely. Chapter three had been used up long before the remaining chapters of the manuscript reached London, resulting in a three-month break in the serialisation, which disrupted the transmission and, therefore, the reception of the text, clouding its expression.

Although it appeared after the three-month break, it would have been impossible for a reader to mistake the first of December instalment for the opening of a work (it was headed with the subtitle 'Chapter Four' and footed with the editor's note) the fourth chapter of *A Portrait* became an opening of sorts. Jean Paul Riquelme has discussed the ways in which narrative recurrences in *A Portrait* mimic the progress of Stephen's experience, creating:

[A] kind of feedback [...] whereby Stephen's later experiences, which are in some ways repetitions of earlier ones, are not in fact exact repetitions, in part because they occur against a background of what has gone before.<sup>214</sup>

At the beginning of chapter four, Stephen's description of the experience of resisting sin as 'a flood slowly advancing towards his naked feet and to be waiting for the first faint timid noiseless wavelet to touch his fevered skin.'<sup>215</sup> This becomes a narrative context that adds significance to the 'bird girl' section at the end of the chapter. When Stephen watches the girl wading in the sea, he expects to be engulfed by a sense of sin. The fact that his conscience is not pricked by his admiration of her beauty elicits a blasphemous exclamation. The meaning of Stephen's exclamation, which is only explained a paragraph later, is already clear because the image of the wading girl is suffused with the earlier parallel drawn between submergence and sin.

The disruption of *A Portrait* damaged Joyce's 'feedback' technique. For example, in the fourth chapter, when we are told that Stephen carries his '[rosary] beads loose in his trousers' pockets that he might tell them as he walked the streets'<sup>216</sup> we realise that his act of atonement evokes the sin. A reader who had become distanced from the previous chapters of the book by the break in serialisation might not realise the significance of Stephen's pocket, where Eileen's hand had lightly touched his, as the site of his sexual awakening. A lack of familiarity with the earlier chapters would also have had an effect upon the readers' broader interpretation of the narrative. His emancipation from guilt through the beauty of the 'bird girl' could easily have seemed the reverse: an entrapment and a fall from grace to material pleasure.

By causing a lengthy interruption in the transmission of *A Portrait*, wartime postal disruption made it difficult for readers to properly follow the text. In this particular instance, the war simply exacerbates the usual consequences of narrative fragmentation that results from novel serialisation. It was usually not the author, but the magazine editors who decided on how the novel would be broken up. Even editors with a keen aesthetic sense were not able to base their choice of instalment breaks purely on their suitability for a

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<sup>214</sup> Jean Paul Riquelme, "Stephen Hero and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: styles of realism and fantasy," in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 118.

<sup>215</sup> Joyce, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," *The Egoist*, 1.23 (December 1, 1914), 439.

<sup>216</sup> Joyce, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," *The Egoist*, 1.23 (December 1, 1914), 438.

good transmission of the text. Periodical length was strictly limited by budget and each issue needed to include a spread of material to satisfy the ranging interests of their readers. As such, serial fiction had to be divided into evenly sized, small chunks, whatever the consequences for the narrative. Whilst a reader with a novel in hand is liable to punctuate their reading in various ways, there is something more significant about the fragmentation that magazine serialisation forces upon its small public. They create a shared public experience of the rhythm of a text that is, to some extent, accidental—the product of financial limitations.

Whilst the war may have had greater effects upon the micro-economies of the little magazines, especially because they were not as willing to adapt their content to suit the broader public's interests, large-circulation periodicals also suffered. Whilst the individual sales never drop below an impressive 33,931 during 1914, the *TLS* figures showed a slight decline that was sharpened by the onset of the war. Unlike little magazines, however, the commercial publishing sphere was quick to adapt its techniques and produce topical content to counteract the pressures of the wartime publishing. In terms of new techniques, experiments to determine good replacements for imported materials used in the book trade began immediately, as documented in an article that appeared in the *TLS* on 20 August, 1914.<sup>217</sup> In terms of content, the *TLS* responded immediately to the sudden growth of public interest in military literature.

When the first wartime issue of the *TLS* came out two days after England had declared war, it led with an article about 'Books on the Crisis' which provided an extensive reading list for readers keen to improve their understanding of the situation in Europe.<sup>218</sup> The unsigned article, which had been composed by historian Walter Alison Phillips, encouraged readers to acquaint themselves with European history from 1814, when the Congress of Vienna met to redraw the European map in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The article then proceeds to list books on each foreign power involved in the conflict. Unlike earlier leaders, which often contained two or three columns of more general discussion before mentioning the work being reviewed, the article only provides notes on the usefulness of each volume for clarifying particular aspects or periods of history. As such, it offers a course for study, rather than opinion, information or critique. In an anticipation of the transformations that would occur in the literary market, much of the rest of the issue was turned over to the review of military-related books.

## War Poetry

The *TLS* were quick to involve themselves in poetry inspired by the outbreak of war. On the cover of the second wartime issue, the *TLS* printed a war poem by the incumbent Poet Laureate. As might be expected, Robert Bridges's poem 'Thou Careless, Awake!' is a call to arms.<sup>219</sup> The verses were not the poet's best, but the message was clear and fierce enough to give it wide appeal. It would subsequently be printed in prime position in nearly all of the volumes of war poetry that publishers raced to produce. Thanks, in part, to such

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<sup>217</sup> Frank Arthur Mumby, "War & the Book Trade," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 20, 1914, 394.

<sup>218</sup> Unattributed, "Books on the Crisis," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 6, 1914, 373.

<sup>219</sup> Robert Bridges, "Thou Careless, Awake!" *Times Literary Supplement*, 656, 381.

poetry volumes, the commercial literary sphere made a rapid recovery. Writing in the *TLS*, Frank Arthur Mumby analysed the figures soon to be published by the *Publishers' Circular*. The trade magazine records a slight drop in the overall number of books published (842 down on 1913, at a total of 11,537), but Mumby argues that much of this can be attributed to the first two months of the war. August lost 276 books (703 instead of 427). September, normally the beginning of the busiest publishing season of the year, lost 350 (853 instead of 1203). October lost 452 (1244 instead of 1696). November was identical at 1106, and December shows an increase (841 against 706). The outlook was good but Mumby was still concerned for one section in the literary field. He argues that 'men of letters' will need help and organisation because 'they are likely to suffer at least as much from patriotic souvenirs and national tributes, with their hundreds and thousands of copies in aid of various war funds, as from the competition of the war itself.'<sup>220</sup> The boom in war publications would result in other parts of the market going bust, taking with it the men who had devoted their lives to their specialisms.

A contrary but no less cynical prediction about the fate of specialist literature appeared in the first reaction to the war to appear in *The Egoist's* literary pages. In the 1 September issue, Richard Aldington presents a series of meditations on the likely effects of the conflict upon art. He observes the way in which war is making the productions of the commercial market more tedious—'for proof of this consult the war poems in the papers'.<sup>221</sup>

Think of the appalling number of tedious periodicals and books which will be produced during the war and after—all on the same subject! [...] we shall have endless sentimental novels, novelettes, stories, pictures and patriotic music, all warlike and all damned.<sup>222</sup>

Whilst Aldington bewails the increase of war-related material as a consumer, he also predicts that the war will have a crushing effect on popular literature trends that are not related to the war, which he considers to be a positive outcome. He argues that the war will render the production of literature an unprofitable industry, discouraging writers who compose for financial gain—'hangers-on of the arts, those dirty little vultures [...] will be done away with'.<sup>223</sup> In this scenario, the starvation of the 'real artist' is judged to be a good trade for a situation in which there is no possibility of people writing for financial gain.

[N]one of use can tell what the art of 1925 will be like. Possibly there will be no art at all—very probably, I should think. Anyway, lots of the cranky stuff of the last few years will be swept away.<sup>224</sup>

Aldington doesn't explain the grounds for his alarmist suggestion that the war could finish off art altogether and what he means by 'cranky stuff' is also far from clear. It is possible that by 'cranky stuff' he means popular works, though it seems unlikely that he would have considered such books them under the

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<sup>220</sup> Mumby, "The War & the Books of 1914," *Times Literary Supplement*, December 31, 1914, 590.

<sup>221</sup> Aldington, "Notes on the Present Situation," *The Egoist* 1.17 (September 1, 1914), 326.

<sup>222</sup> Aldington, "Notes on the Present Situation," 326.

<sup>223</sup> Aldington, "Notes on the Present Situation," 326.

<sup>224</sup> Aldington, "Notes on the Present Situation," 326.



umbrella of 'art'. Indeed, he seems rather to refer to flamboyant experimental art movements like Futurism. Despite this dig, the import of Aldington's article is that war will do a public service by stymieing the growth of the popular literary sphere. Indeed, Aldington is even able to shift blame for the inevitable deaths of talented poets in the war onto popular culture, arguing that France sacrifices its poets because England will not conscript sportsmen—"I'm damned if I'll be killed while there are five hundred professional football teams, with their attendant ministers, unslain".<sup>225</sup> Quite.

A far cry from Aldington's prediction, the war invigorated the public's interest in poetry. In the first of two vitriolic reviews of anthologies of war poetry, John Gould Fletcher takes aim the *TLS*.

"We have called attention from time to time to the immense interest in poetry ... which has sprung up during the past two or three years. Suddenly ... the call of the poet has come, with the noblest of all themes to inspire him. Certainly ... he has not failed the call. Poetry, or at any rate verse, has poured forth." ...

Thus far the oracle of the "Times Literary Supplement."<sup>226</sup>

Whilst Fletcher disapproved of the *TLS*' commitment to publishing war poetry, it should be noted that his general opinion of the periodical was a positive one. In his autobiography he states that, upon arrival in England, his chief aim had been 'to acquire the ability to write prose with the same fluency and ease as employed by the writers for the *Times Literary Supplement*.'<sup>227</sup> Rather than the over-arching disapproval that characterises Pound's attacks on the *TLS*, Fletcher's vitriol is reserved for its failure to condemn the rising tide of jingoistic jingles that had begun to choke up the literary market. In the rest of his article, Fletcher gives a devastating review of two recent volume of patriotic verse.

The first anthology was *Poems of the Great War*, a charitable volume that had been published by Chatto & Windus on behalf of the newly formed Prince of Wales's National Relief Fund. The net profits from the one-shilling cover price would end up supporting people facing financial difficulties during the war, in particular the many who became unemployed as a result of factory closures. Prior to the index, the volume includes a note of the periodicals in which the poems it contained had previously appeared, which seems to function as both an acknowledgement and an advertisement of the importance of the contributions.

Mr. Robert Bridges' opening contributions, Mr. Henry Newbolt's, Mr. Maurice Hewlett's, Mr. R. E. Vernède's, Mr. Binyon's, were all printed in the *Times* during the few days immediately following the declaration of war.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Aldington, "Notes on the Present Situation," 327.

<sup>226</sup> Fletcher, "War Poetry," *The Egoist* 1.21 (November 2, 1914): 410-11.

<sup>227</sup> Fletcher, *The Autobiography of John Gould Fletcher: originally Life is my song*, ed. Lucas Carpenter, Fayetteville & London: University of Arkansas Press, 1988, 44.

<sup>228</sup> Rudyard Kipling, "Note," *Poets of the Great War*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1914, front matter.

The contributors were high profile, with Rudyard Kipling, Sir Owen Seaman (the editor of *Punch*), and both Chesterton brothers, joining those listed above. The Poet Laureate framed the volume, contributing both the first and last poem. It was precisely the kind of book that Frank Mumby feared would bankrupt aspiring men of letters.

Aspiring man of letters, John Gould Fletcher, haughtily dismissed as many of the poems as he could misquote in the limited space of a small article, taking every opportunity to manipulate their lines for comic effect. Maurice Hewlett, for example, is taken to task for the troubling scansion that stretches the enunciation of the word 'Corsican.' Fletcher makes his point by loosening its syllables into a string of germane words—'Of his own vice he cannot ban [...] Let him remember the Corse-sick-can.' It is Robert Bridges, however, who receives the bulk of Fletcher's condemnation. His opening poem 'Come on, England!' is rechristened 'Wake up, England!' and Fletcher wryly asserts that Bridges's place in history is secure, alongside 'Eusden and Pye.' Laurence Eusden and Henry James Pye, both previous Poet Laureates, had been derided by their peers for the work they produced in post. In a final flourish, Fletcher ponders whether it might be the case that 'these verses are not really by Mr. Bridges but are of the Kaiser's own manufacture, and were written to discredit, demoralise, and utterly metragrabilise [*sic*] poor England.'<sup>229</sup> Having pushed home the point, Fletcher sportingly advises that people still buy the book, since '[i]t only costs a shilling, and that shilling goes to the National Relief Fund,' only to add that '[t]hose who are incapacitated by its reading will doubtless obtain this share of this fund later on.'<sup>230</sup>

In the next issue of *The Egoist* Fletcher reviews two more volumes of war poetry. In this article, general complaints about war poetry begin to peep through his specific mockeries. The first review, *Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time*, was a volume of fifty poems selected and published by John Lane. In response a line of Rudyard Kipling's contributions, '[w]ho dies if England live?' He retorts, '[a]ll the poets of England with popular reputation.'<sup>231</sup> Here he makes two points: when the war is over, poets who wrote this kind of war poetry will have their reputations ruined by it, and that only popular poets are writing this kind of verse. Like Aldington, he predicts the war may have a cleansing effect upon art. The second volume he reviewed was *Lord God of Battles*, published by Cope and Fenwick. In this he notes a cultural development—a war poem written by a non-professional.

We have come a long way past popular novelists, "highbrow" novelists, modernist clerics, Jesuit priests, and the rest. But the Bath railway porter makes up for all. "Poem? Yessir. One penny. Thank ye, sir."<sup>232</sup>

Known as the 'Bath Railway Poet,' Henry Chappell had found sudden fame when the *Daily Express* published his poem 'The Day' on 22 August, 1914. An article published in *The New York Times* in 1918, records the enthusiasm with which England (and later Canada and America) took to his poem—'[t]he poem

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<sup>229</sup> Fletcher, "War Poetry," 410.

<sup>230</sup> Fletcher, "War Poetry," 410.

<sup>231</sup> Fletcher, "More War Poetry," *The Egoist* 1.22 (November 16, 1914), 425.

<sup>232</sup> Fletcher, "More War Poetry," 426.

swept through all the counties [...] pasted up in the windows of every little town.<sup>233</sup> What Fletcher implies is that composing popular war poetry is so easy that even a manual worker can knock out a few stanzas as he carries your luggage onto the train.

In the spirit of parody, *The Egoist* offered its own 'original' war poem. 'Song: In War-Time' is ascribed to a pseudonym, 'Herbert Blenheim,' which recalls a Robert Southy poem about the futility of war, 'After Blenheim' (1976).

At the sound of the drum,  
Out of their dens they come, they come,  
The little poets who we hoped were dumb,  
The little poets who we thought were dead,  
The poets who certainly haven't been read[.]<sup>234</sup>

In the guise of a shadow army, untalented, forgotten, and unknown poets heed the percussion of battle as a call to take up their pens. The results are terrifying, with the 'songs they sing' asserted to be 'worse than the bullets' villainous "ping".<sup>235</sup>

In 1914, when the literary content began to equal the significance of *The Egoist's* philosophical material, the magazine was under severe financial strain. The year was bracketed by material changes indicative of the periodical's financial decline—a reduction of the print run in January and a reduction in pages in November. With the arrival of war came the possibility that rising production costs would spell disaster. Attendant to the greater stake they now had in magazine, the literary contributors began to consider and attempt to manipulate *The Egoist's* place in the commercial literary sphere.

With his attacks upon the crassness of the profiteering war poetry industry, Fletcher emphasised the artistic purity of *The Egoist*, even while he provided copy about a dominant cultural meme. When Pound accused the *TLS* of having poor critical judgement, relating their failure to the size of their circulation and advertising income, he suggested that their commercialism was a corrupting force upon their content. By implying that literary periodicals had to make a choice between profitability and integrity, Pound proposed small circulation periodicals, like *The Egoist*, to be superior cultural arbiters because their weak market position allowed them to be more impartial. He had explored the notion that 'new' artists were impervious to external values in 'The New Sculpture'. In his critique of the *TLS*, he extends the Stirnean character to the little magazine literary critic. It was another small bridge built between Marsden's philosophical contributions and the literary content and, therefore, a step towards a clearer, more saleable identity for the magazine. Weaver's attempts to prevent the censorship of *A Portrait of the Artist* were made in protection of Joyce's artistic vision. Yet, like the commercially motivated censorship that originally put Grant Richards off *Dubliners*, the inclusion of content of questionably decency can be seen as a way to tailor

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<sup>233</sup> Lieut. Coningsby Dawson, "England's Porter Poet, Henry Chappell," *The New York Times Book Review*, April 14, 1918, 11.

<sup>234</sup> 'Herbert Blenheim', "Song: In War-Time," *The Egoist* 1.23 (December 1, 1914), 466.

<sup>235</sup> 'Herbert Blenheim', "Song: In War-Time," 466.

a book to a market. The presence of potentially obscene material in a fiction text had the effect of emphasising its status as 'serious' literature, since it asserting that the author had prioritised artistic aims over commercial ones.

There are, of course, other factors that motivated Pound, Weaver, Joyce, and Fletcher to make their stands against the commercial literary sphere that are not discussed here. I am not cynical enough to suppose that Pound secretly admired the criticism of the *TLS*, or that Joyce went through *A Portrait* inserting swearwords to advertise the seriousness of his literary aims. However, the fact remains that little magazines were not 'fugitive'. These periodicals were as invested in balancing commercial and cultural aims as their mass-circulation rivals the *TLS*. For *The Egoist*, taking up an anti-commercial stance made commercial sense.

## Chapter Three

### Mechanical War Stories

'Come on!', the Futurists shouted from the front page of the *Le Figaro* in 1909, '[s]et fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums! [...] Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly!'<sup>236</sup> They spelt out the response they intended to provoke, referring to the document as a 'violently upsetting incendiary manifesto'.<sup>237</sup> Filippo Marinetti's anarchic hyperbole tattooed the Futurist brand into the brain of the British public. Almost immediately, the term 'Futurist' came to be deployed in *The Daily Mail* and *The Times* as a metonymic insult for all avant-garde activity. So comprehensive was the success of Marinetti's advertising campaign, that 'home grown' movements like Vorticism were forced to define their experimentalism against the Futurist brand.

The collapse of all artistic experimentation under the label of 'Futurism' was a situation that Marinetti was keen to preserve. On 7 June 1914, Marinetti and C. R. W. Nevinson, an affiliate of Wyndham Lewis's Rebel Arts Centre, published a manifesto in the *Observer*, which proclaimed an alliance between Futurism and Vorticism. A number of other Vorticist artists were mentioned by name, making it look as if the union had the full support of the Rebel Arts Centre. Of course, it had not even been discussed and, if it had been, Lewis would not have countenanced it. Furious, the Rebel artists arranged for a rebuttal to be printed in *The Egoist*.

We, the undersigned, whose ideals were mentioned or implied, or who might by the opinion of others be implicated, beg to dissociate ourselves from the "futurist" manifesto which appeared in the pages of the "Observer" on Sunday, June 7.

(Signed)

Richard Aldington.

David Bomberg.

Frederick Etchells.

Edward Wadsworth.

Ezra Pound.

Lawrence Atkinson.

Gaudier Brzeska.

Cuthbert Hamilton.

W. Roberts.

Wyndham Lewis.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Umbro Apollonio, ed. *Documents of 20th Century Art: Futurist Manifestos*, trans. Robert Brain, R.W. Flint, J.C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 19-24.

<sup>237</sup> Apollonio, *20th Century Art*, 19-24.

<sup>238</sup> Various, "Futurism," in "Correspondence," *The Egoist* 12.1 (June 15, 1914), 239.

Bomberg, Etchells, Wadsworth, Atkinson, Hamilton, Roberts, and Lewis had all been named by Marinetti and Nevinson, as had Jacob Epstein, who, though his work would appear in *BLAST*, did not put his name to the rebuttal. Brzeska, Aldington, and Pound also signed the refutation, though they had not been individually mentioned in the *Observer* article, unless you count Marinetti's contemptuous allusion to the 'Post-Rosettia' artists who walk about with 'long hair under the sombrero,' a hat that was often sported by Pound.<sup>239</sup>

In their vehement denial of the correspondence that Marinetti and Nevinson's manifesto had implied, the Vorticists demonstrate what might be described as a fear of contamination by Futurism. When *BLAST* was published, just three weeks after the spat, a great deal of its aesthetic argument would comprise of attempts to position the Vorticist movement against Marinetti's more dominant experimentalism. At the core of the hygienic separation from Futurism that the Vorticists attempted to enact in *BLAST*, was the reclamation and repurposing of the trope of the machine. Much of this chapter will trace machines, machine operators, and engineers through the popular fiction of 1914—an interesting slice of literary history in its own right. In what remains, I will argue that the machinery in *BLAST* takes its model from prevalent trends in contemporary popular fiction, putting the Vorticists' willingness to engage with the popular literary sphere at the centre of their attempt to disengage themselves from Futurism. In effect, the antagonisms within the field of experimental art production in London, 1914 presents us with a situation that turns Huyssen's theory of modernism's paranoia about the infectiousness of popular culture inside out.

### **The Machine Age Adventure Hero**

A slightly-built air scout performing a controlled crash-landing, a slim young pilot ramming another aeroplane out of the sky, a boyish mechanic bridging an explosives circuit with his spanner and a woman speeding to the rescue of a regiment in her motorcar. These four heroes have much in common: all bravely risk their lives in modern battlefields; all transcend their own physical weakness by harnessing the power of machines; and all appeared in short stories published in *Strand Magazine* in 1914. Stories that featured machine-driven battle sequences were prolific and popular in the months leading up to the war. Given their ubiquity, distinctive features, and emergence in accordance with a specific historical moment, it is surprising that they have not been considered as a discrete literary phenomenon before. Here, I will consider them as a short-lived trend within the broader genre of adventure fiction. I coin the term 'mechanical war stories' to refer to them collectively.

Mechanical war stories are easily distinguished from other contemporaneous trends within the adventure genre. All present a situation of war specifically referencing, or otherwise analogous to, the war to come, which lent them a predictive edge; all feature machine-driven battle sequences, featuring technology on the cusp of possibility, imagining kinds of fighting that had not yet been seen; and all feature slender and

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<sup>239</sup> Filippo Marinetti and C. R. W. Nevinson, "Futurism and English Art," *Observer*, June 7, 1914, 7.

intellectual protagonists, whose appearance did not conform to the accepted shape of the adventure hero. Stories with these features can be seen to fit within the cross-tradition literary category of 'future war' that has been outlined by I. F. Clarke. More dependent upon theme than form, the category of 'future war' is seen to encompass all forward-looking military fiction, including everything from invasion literature to works of science fiction. With the creation of this capacious umbrella term, Clarke is able to make some interesting observations of the diachronic development of the theme of war prediction in fiction. Yet, the body of work that can be seen to comprise mechanical war fiction drew heavily upon the specific historical conditions in which they were produced and, for this reason, they have little in common with earlier and later literature that explored similar subjects. Earlier in the decade, the literary presentation of mechanised warfare had been the preserve of science fiction writing. In H. G. Wells's 'The Land Ironclads' (1903) and *The War in the Air* (1908) house-sized metal vehicles hulked across battlefields and fluttering ornithopters fired oxygen-filled bullets. These fanciful battle sequences had little in common with the more plausible speculations about military machine use that were depicted in mechanical war stories. Anyone hoping to see much of a similarity between Wells's hundred foot-long reinforced vehicles and the prototype tanks that were deployed at the Somme in 1916 would definitely have needed to squint.

Joseph A. Kestner has suggested the dates 1880 and 1915 as sturdy bookends for a golden age of adventure fiction—from its emergence with novels like *Treasure Island*, through to its displacement by spy fiction, which he considers to have entirely transformed the genre. In accordance with this account, the mechanical war story can be seen as part of the transition from swashbuckling colonial adventures to the furtive activities of espionage. In 1914, adventure fiction in the colonial mold was on the wane. Whilst Edgar Rice Burroughs may have brought out the first of his many Tarzan books in June, its confusion of the traditional colonial hero and the 'savage' can be viewed as an attempt to offer a revitalising twist on a tired formula.<sup>240</sup> By and large, tales of colonial derring-do were yesterday's news.

By 1914, stories that depicted British soldier-heroes, who relied upon strength and endurance to triumph in colonial contexts, were no longer easy to find in the popular magazines. Appearing in the January issue, 'The Soul of the Afridis' is the only story that can be straightforwardly ascribed to the colonial adventure sub-genre to appear in the *Strand* that year.<sup>241</sup> Its author, Lord Edward Herbert Cecil, had first-hand experience as a British soldier, having been *aide de camp* to Lord Kitchener in the 1896 Egyptian Campaign and the Second Boer War. His story is set in the Khyber Pass, an area that had been ceded to the British following their invasion of Afghanistan in 1878-1880, and tells of a British Officer who is discovered to be masquerading as a local tribesman, having gone into hiding after being found guilty of an act of embezzlement of which he is wholly innocent. The hero is cast from a predictable mold, in accordance with the conventions of the colonial adventure genre:

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<sup>240</sup> Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, London: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1914.

<sup>241</sup> Edward Cecil, "The Soul of the Afridis," *Strand Magazine* 47:277 (January, 1914), 55-64.

[P]hysically superb [...] Under the skin the muscles could be seen like fine, strong wires. His bare shoulders would have inspired a sculptor to enthusiasm. And the weapon in his hands, a new model of a famous rifle, was of the very best workmanship.<sup>242</sup>

If the story can be charged with novelty, then it is the hero's reliance upon cutting-edge British engineering that would be the ground. Nevertheless, the hero is identified as a British officer, not by his superior weaponry, but by the dexterity with which he uses it.

Like the soldier in 'The Soul of the Afridis', the previous generation of adventure heroes had been tested by feats of endurance, exposure to wild weather, landscapes, animals, and 'savage' races. These heroes, Kestner argues, made the adventure genre a tool for 'imprinting codes of masculinity: rescue, heroism, survival, courage, duty, isolation, voyaging.'<sup>243</sup> The colonial adventure stories featured heroes that were shaped by the necessity of survival in physically demanding conditions, negotiating terrain in an unmediated fashion. With trains, automobiles, aeroplanes and submarines all awaiting deployment, writers needed to shape the heroes that would steer them to victory. Reflecting real-life archetypes, like the stunt pilots that looped-the-loop at Hendon, the flight-age action hero did not require the muscles of his colonial adventure story predecessors. At first glance, the mechanical war stories may seem to offer little more than a timely plot substitution—the old titillating horse and infantry battle sequences which appeared in earlier military adventure stories, replaced by a modern mechanical analogue—but that is far from the whole story. For one thing, the new mechanical battle sequences were accompanied by a radical refiguring of the hero, which saw the hyper-masculine warrior officer make way for a new generation of slender machinists and engineers. More than just a bodily phenomenon, as the genre adapts, the colonial hero's personable savviness makes way for a detached intellectualism.

By 1914, the cult of muscle that had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century was firmly in decline. The bicep-popping performances of Eugen Sandow, the 'father of modern bodybuilding', had given way to adverts for his patented regime which promised curative rather than beauty-enhancing benefits.<sup>244</sup> In 1913, May Sinclair's novel *The Combined Maze* had questioned the virtues of gymnasium attendance by the urban middle-classes, warning against the development of muscles to the detriment of other faculties. Nevertheless, physical strength continued to command public respect in other cultural arenas.

Carpentier now pulls off his gown and we are permitted to see the long, lithe body that has become famous in Europe. Muscle in clean, pliable layers everywhere; the dark skin is glossy with health—the man is, as he says, fit to fight for his life.<sup>245</sup>

Whilst it remained common for reports of boxing matches to linger over the bodies of sportsmen, elsewhere there was a growing sense that the future of human power lay in harnessing the superior strength of machines. As such, the mechanical war story's refiguring of the adventure hero as a dextrous

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<sup>242</sup> Cecil, "Afridis," 55.

<sup>243</sup> Joseph A. Kestner, *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction, 1880-1915*, London: Ashgate, 2010.

<sup>244</sup> Advert in *The Strand Magazine*, 47.278 (February, 1914), A20-21.

<sup>245</sup> Unattributed, "Carpentier Wins," *Daily Mail*, December 9, 1913, 9.



machinist, intellectual and lean, can be considered to be part of a wholesale revision of the ideals of masculinity in pre-War Britain.

Whilst a cursory glance through the fiction-carrying periodicals of early 1914 demonstrates the ubiquity of mechanical war stories, it is difficult to quantify their popularity with readers, though popular magazine editors certainly thought there was a market for them. From amongst the myriad fiction printed in the *Strand* in 1914, four stories will be singled out for discussion below, based on their accordance with the definition of mechanical war fiction provided above—‘The Air Scout’ by Frederick Britten Austin, ‘Full Back’ by Ole Luk-Oie, ‘The Steel Spanner’ by Frank Verney, and ‘The Despatch Rider’ by Edgar Wallace. That they appeared at all could be seen as indicative of the popularity of mechanical war fiction, given that the *Strand* was one of the highest selling monthly magazines on the market. However, there is also evidence that the *Strand*’s editors considered mechanical war stories to be content that was likely to be particularly popular with their readers. Apart from Wallace and, to a much lesser extent, Austin, these writers were not household names, yet mechanical war stories were usually positioned at the front of the magazine. This prominent and prestigious position would be given over to Conan Doyle’s final Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Valley of Fear*, in the final months of the year. Of the four mechanical war stories discussed here, the only one not to be given ‘top spot’ in the *Strand* appeared in an issue with Holmes, a man whom none could hope to better.

Despite the fact that two of the four stories were published after August, as a writing trend the mechanical war story was largely a pre-engagement phenomenon. It was the practice of the *Strand* to hold material in rick for a minimum of five weeks prior to publication, to allow time for their lengthy editorial and printing processes, so only Wallace’s story, which was printed in the December issue, could have been written after the start of the war.<sup>246</sup> In any case, ‘The Despatch Rider’ is as much a commentary upon the genre as it is a part of it. Not that it would have made much of a difference to the genre if writers had continued to work within it after August, since the changes that machines would bring to warfare did not become apparent in the first few months of fighting. In December the deadly naval bombardment of Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby would hammer home the dangers that the war posed for British civilians, but more modern technologies were yet to pose a credible threat. When a German aeroplane dropped the first bombs on British soil that same month, the only casualties were cabbages in a Kentish vegetable patch.<sup>247</sup> Nothing remotely comparable to the tanks or elaborate aerial dogfights that had been imagined by adventure writers would occur until the middle years of the war. Perhaps due to the shortness of the period between the surge in popularity for such stories and the start of the war, mechanical war fiction was a province explored almost exclusively by short story writers. Mrs Kenneth Combe’s novel *The Chief of the Staff* was an exception, but the novel was not ready for sale until winter 1914. The publishers included a note in the front matter, stating that they had ‘received the complete manuscript of this book in June 1914’ in an attempt to establish the novel’s position as part of the predictive pre-war mechanical fiction trend. The

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<sup>246</sup> Gerladine Beare, “Introduction,” in *Index to the Strand Magazine, 1891-1950* (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), xxii.

<sup>247</sup> Unattributed, “First Air Raid,” *Daily Mail*, December 26, 1914, 5.

tactic seems to have worked—the book was sold well enough to justify its reissue as a shilling edition in 1916.

### **‘The Air Scout’**

Frederick Britten Austin’s ‘The Air Scout’ appeared in the October issue of the *Strand*. Whilst his name is no longer familiar and his works are no longer in print, Austin enjoyed some popularity during his lifetime. Although he worked within a variety of genres, Austin wrote several military-themed magazine stories that were later published in the collected volume *Saga of the Sword* (Macmillan, 1929). Not a pioneer in any genre, Austin’s stories relied upon tried and tested themes and plots. His starchy heroes stand rather meekly beside the more sensational offerings of his adventure contemporaries. Perhaps Austin’s sober conventionality can be held responsible for the failure of his works to retain much long-term interest. In any case, the only revival of his work appears to have been the adaptation of one of his stories for an episode of the television series *Orson Welles’ Great Mysteries*, which aired in 1973.<sup>248</sup> As might be expected, it was a comparatively sedate episode, being one of the few that did not revolve around a gruesome murder.

Austin has not inspired a biography and just half a box of (mainly business) letters and typescripts constitute his archive at Princeton University Library.<sup>249</sup> Nonetheless, a superficial understanding of Austin’s position in the field of popular literature may be gleaned through the scant facts and artefacts that are more readily available. Austin’s career appears to have begun with *The Virgin and the Fool by Ellen, or, G. Linne* (1904), a parody of the bestselling novel *The Damsel and the Sage*, by Elinor Glyn. The satirical book would end up being a career anomaly, since Austin would henceforth put his astute observations of genre conventions to more direct use. Soon enough, Austin’s comfortingly familiar plotting began to appear in magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain, he often contributed to the *Strand* and, in America, to *Top-Notch* (1910-37), a bi-monthly magazine of adventure fiction in which some of Jack London’s early work had also appeared. Whilst he never enjoyed anything near London’s level of fame, Austin was popular enough for Faber & Faber to see merit in making him a titular selling-point for their 1947 anthology, *Best Thriller: F Britten Austin and Others*.

He was also enough of a public figure to warrant an obituary in *The Times*, albeit a rather perfunctory one. The article provides a brief biography outline, noting that Austin (1885-1941) was educated at the school of the Grocers’ Company at Hackney Downs; that he served two and a half years with the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War, achieving the rank of captain before being demobilised in 1919; that he was married twice; and that he had died in hospital after suffering a seizure, aged fifty-five.<sup>250</sup> In addition to these bare facts, the obituary offers a rather slanted account of his career—presenting him not as the popular short story writer he undoubtedly was, but rather as a minor author of ‘serious’ novels. Attention is

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<sup>248</sup> “An Affair of Honour,” *Orson Welles’ Great Mysteries*. Anglia Television Productions, broadcast on ITV, December 15, 1973.

<sup>249</sup> F. Britten Austin Collection (1911-1929), C1330, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. The collection includes a short correspondence with literary agent James Pinker, during 1911-12.

<sup>250</sup> Unattributed, “Mr. F. Britten Austin – Author and Playwright,” obituary in *The Times*, March 13, 1941, 7.

drawn to his fictionalisations of Napoleon's life, *The Road to Glory* (1935) and *Forty Centuries Look Down* (1941). Mention is also given to his 'impressionist battle-sketches' in *Studies in War* (1913), his historical novel *The Red Flag* (1932), and his high-society crime play, *The Things That Matter*, which had been performed at the Strand Theatre in 1921.<sup>251</sup>

Whilst the obituarist admits that Austin also wrote popular stories for the *Strand*, no details are provided about this more substantial and successful aspect of his career. Neither does it mention the four films that had been based on his novels and short stories: the piratical swashbuckler *Buried Treasure* (Dir. George D. Baker, 1921); crime films *The Last Witness* (Dir. Fred Paul, 1925) and *A Woman Redeemed* (Dir. Sinclair Hill, 1927); and *The Last Outpost* (Dir. Charles Barton and Louis J. Gasnier, 1935), a World War I adventure-cum-romance, starring Cary Grant and Claude Rains. As we have seen, *The Times*, with its *Literary Supplement* and 'Book of the Month Club', was a newspaper that attempted to maintain a discerning role in the 'serious' literary sphere. Able to use their reputation as a legitimising power, the newspaper seems to have attempted a deathbed conversion of Britten to a higher brow; a well-intentioned action that, in an age that preaches inclusivity over stratification, is now simply misleading. Extrapolating from the admittedly scanty information about him that remains, the picture of Austin that emerges is that of a writer with a profitable career in genre fiction, with pretensions towards a more 'serious' literary career that never quite took off.

The often low-paid activity of magazine writing went hand in hand with speedy composition. There is an apocryphal story about a person telephoning Edgar Wallace and, upon being told that he was writing a story, replying 'I'll wait.' It is not known how Austin compared to Wallace in this respect but, regardless of Austin's speed of writing, 'The Air Scout' is likely to have been a pre-engagement text. Certainly, with the aforementioned five-week delay, the MS must have been sent to the *Strand* by mid-August at the latest. Austin's work does not make any reference to details that would suggest otherwise—his combatant nations and the location of their conflict go unnamed. However, since both sides are equally and well equipped with aeroplanes, the story clearly refers to the war that was, at the probable point of composition, soon to begin.

'The Air Scout' opens with a scene in which mechanics attempting to repair a single-seater monoplane in a front-line aeroplane depot. Their small fleet have been downed by a recent air-ambush, leaving them with no means of effective surveillance. The enemy currently have four functioning machines, providing them with the means to outmanoeuvre the opposing ground troops. Once fixed, the monoplane is readied for flight just as one of the enemy planes is gunned down. Now, it is one versus three. When the eponymous air scout makes his ascent, the monoplane is able to outstrip the range of the enemy's guns with relative ease, sustaining only minor grazes. Avoiding the enemy's aircraft proves more difficult. He is pursued by an enemy biplane and, in the distance, a second enemy craft is seen to be preparing for take-off. Suddenly, the third craft appears on the horizon, blocking his intended path. After narrowly managing to evade the two airborne planes, the pilot is able to observe the enemy's position on the ground. It is evident that they are planning to attack from the flank and the rear. He sees that they have deviously left an 'escape route,'

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<sup>251</sup> Unattributed, "The Thing that Matters," review in *The Times*, December 23, 1921, 6.

which is actually a trap. Next to the road a cavalry division hide in the woods, waiting to ambush the escaping men. The safe conveyance of his observations back to base will be essential for the survival of his fellow soldiers.

After more nifty flying he is able to drop a warning note but, in doing so, is confronted by the aeroplane that he had seen taking off earlier. Rather than risking death from its mounted guns, he determines to crash into it. Luckily, his fellow soldiers are able to destroy it with a shell before he can complete his suicidal descent. The air scout now begins to worry that his message may not be found in time. He decides the only thing for it is to land and deliver the message in person, just as the other enemy planes catch up. His army fires on the planes, despite their dangerous proximity to his own craft. Only by testing his skills to the limit is he able to bring his plane down in a controlled crash. When he regains consciousness, he cannot remember what he must do. A fellow soldier, who is holding him up, informs him that his message was found and that the enemy planes have all been shot down. A sudden explosion announces their counter-attack upon the regiment hiding in the woods. The soldier drops the dazed air scout, so he can get a better look at the damage that has been inflicted on the enemy.

The plotting is familiar adventure fare—the air scout bravely undertakes a mission upon which the lives of others depend, his bravery is proven by his willingness to sacrifice his own life, his skill is proven by his ability save the day, and his redemption is his survival. However, the hero's reliance upon cutting-edge technology brought some new excitement to the comfortably familiar form. During the 1910s that most modern and miraculous of machines—the aeroplane—held the public in thrall, from the richest, who could afford to experience the thrill of flight for themselves, to the massive crowds who paid admittance to aerodromes. It is no surprise then, that aeroplanes' thus far untested military capabilities (wide-ranging and rapid reconnaissance, aerial bombardment, and aeroplane-to-aeroplane combat) seemed to pose a terrible threat and promise a spectacular show. Writers of mechanical war stories prized this particular machine above all. It was evident that the aeroplane would eventually revolutionise warfare, but it was not yet clear how they would perform in the imminent conflict. In 1914, aeroplanes were rudimentary, temperamental, delicate and unwieldy, with little chance of producing successes greater than a few sketched maps, since even aerial photography was difficult given the instability of the early crafts in flight. In mechanical war fiction, aeroplanes were depicted as incredibly dangerous weapons. In reality, it was a good day if the plane stayed up.

Austin's choice to seat his hero in a monoplane is significant. Of course, on a practical level, it extended the range of descriptions that could be used to distinguish the craft of the hero from those of the enemy, allowing the fast-paced adventure plot to flow better. However, the monoplane also signals something about the skills of the hero. In 1913, *The Times* reported that a series of monoplane accidents had led 'the public to imagine that there was something about the construction of a monoplane [...] which rendered it less safe than a biplane.' Engineering experts argued that this was not the case and the navy continued to use them, but Colonel Seely, the Secretary of State for War, banned army officer use of them, a move that

served to confirm public suspicion.<sup>252</sup> Therefore, when Austin pits the Air Scout's inferior monoplane against a trio of biplanes it suggests the hero is both braver and more skilled than the pilots he fights against. The inevitability of variation between machines, even those of the same type, meant that the responsibility for success could no longer rest entirely with the hero who operated them. In an environment where strength and performance are mechanically reliant, Austin is careful to emphasise the exceptionalism of his protagonist. Yet, even on the tipped-field that Austin presents, machines inevitably tug politics behind them. The fact that Britain seemed to be falling behind in preparing its forces for aerial combat was a common cry in press and parliament in the years leading up to the war. If a protagonist is asked to outperform superior machines, readers must wonder why his government has supplied him with an inferior aeroplane in the first place.

Another, more sinister problem of machine use is raised by Austin's story. When Austin describes the enemy in the air, there is no mention of pilots. Aeroplanes explode and crash, but the destruction of the bodies within is kept hidden. The hygienic separation of rival combatants that advanced mechanical warfare would permit raised moral issues. In defence of the new methods of fighting one contributor to *The Times* asked, '[o]n what principle of logic based on "reason," "common sense," and "sanity" can it be shown that it is a greater crime to drop a shell from an aeroplane than to fire it from a gun?'<sup>253</sup> In his portrayal of the friendly infantry, Austin seems to answer this assertion. The air scout's colleagues are willing to risk shooting him down along with the enemy to achieve the tactical draw of an empty sky. Austin presents the moral problems raised by mechanical warfare—the dehumanisation of the enemy, the imprecision of attack, the cheapening of individual human life. In the final moments of the story the injured air scout is dropped by a soldier who is attempting to get a better look at the damage being inflicted on the enemy, an act that is jarringly inhuman.

### **'Full Back'**

The story, 'Full Back', which is ascribed to the pseudonym Ole Luk-Oie—a story-telling creature from a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale—juxtaposes two short narratives. In the first, a rugby game is played out in the drizzle and gloom of a British autumn afternoon. The Whites are beating the Reds by a slim margin. Our hero, the titular 'full back', broods over an earlier moment of play, during which he had failed to prevent a try. Suddenly, a player makes a run with the ball. The full back recognises the runner as the man who had beaten him before. Like before, the full back is the only thing between his adversary and the goal line, but this time the game hangs in the balance. With a spectacularly well-timed tackle, our hero takes his opponent down.

The second half of the story is set in a modern war, opening with a sweeping survey of a military aviation depot, as if it were being described from the air. Nearby, the army have begun to move a flanking battalion

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<sup>252</sup> Unattributed, 'The Safety of Monoplanes', *Times* (4 February 1913): 6.

<sup>253</sup> L. Blin Desbleds, 'Aeroplanes and War', *Times* 10 April 1911: 10.

into position for an attack, unavoidably weakening their defences. If the enemy can be prevented from aerial reconnaissance in the half an hour before darkness falls, then victory is guaranteed; if not, all will be lost. Suddenly, an enemy biplane appears overhead. It falls upon our airman hero to stop them at any cost. Our hero takes to the air in the only operational craft: a monoplane with a malfunctioning gun and radio. By the time the air scout reaches the enemy plane he is too late to prevent them from discovering the manoeuvres of the battalion and he is left with no choice but to intercept them. With no means to shoot them down, he determines to ram his aeroplane into the enemy's craft. The tackle is a success and the planes fall from the sky.

Though the two parts of the story are presented sequentially, linked by the observation that '[t]ime has passed,' the sections are otherwise self-contained vignettes, with the second section replicating the plot structure of the first.<sup>254</sup> In each the protagonist is challenged and, by making a skilful interception, is victorious. The structure impels the reader to compare the sportsman with the aviator, the sporting match with war in the air. In reinforcement of this demand, early on in each section the body language of the protagonist is described in identical terms that are made conspicuous by their employment of the unusual word 'akimbo.' The significance of the heavy-handed doubling is unequivocal: the sportsman and aviator are the same man. The independent sport story provides a familiar setting in which to introduce the hero and, as such, is able to act as a kind of translation tool, helping to present aerial warfare as a less alien proposition.

Clearly the author takes his inspiration from Henry Newbolt's 1892 poem 'Vitaī Lampada', which draws a parallel between a cricket match and the Battle of Abu Klea, which prevented the British from providing relief to General Gordon at Khartoum. This literary reference serves to trace the hero's lineage into the past, whilst also underscoring the unique modernity of the combat situation he faces. Just like Newbolt's schoolboys, here is a hero that has learned his bravery and selflessness on the sports pitch. How, then, do the new conditions of battle change his experience?

The author attempts to reformulate Newbolt's poem about infantry combat into a piece of adventure fiction about aerial warfare makes some differences starkly apparent. In a colonial adventure story we would expect the hero to be plunged into a situation in which he must prove his bravery by sacrificing his own life to save the lives of others. Then, at the last moment, when the brave hero faces seemingly inevitable death, he is redeemed by his own skill in action. The idea that an adventure hero, like any other soldier, is expendable in the pursuit of a team objective is shocking when placed in this new literary context. Newbolt's poem asserts that team-spirit and good gamesmanship can prevent soldiers from conceiving of their death as a catastrophe. Death in action is depicted as a passing of the torch to the men behind: 'And falling fling the host behind --/ 'Play up! play up! and play the game!'. The author of 'Full Back' also returns to sporting allegory when describing the hero's sacrifice. In his own words:

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<sup>254</sup> Ole Luk-Oie, "Full Back," *Strand Magazine* 47.277 (January, 1914), 4.

Three more of the salt of their respective nations are out of play. And though for the rest of the armies “No side” does not yet sound, and the great game goes on, full back has saved again.<sup>255</sup>

Given his reluctance to be graphic, we must surely attribute the killing-off of the hero to something other than an attempt to thrill his readers.

The *Strand* sold itself with the slogan ‘a picture on every page.’ This was an exaggeration but, nonetheless, the high percentage of pictorial content means the *Strand* was a periodical that contained almost as much popular art as it did fiction. Whilst the pictures were nearly always illustrations specifically commissioned to accompany the prose content, they can provide an entirely different sort of illumination. The illustrations for ‘Full Back’ were provided by C. Fleming Williams, an artist whose work accompanied thirteen stories between May 1908 and December 1914, the last being Edgar Wallace’s ‘The Despatch Rider,’ which is discussed below. Four panels are dispersed amongst the text of ‘Full Back.’ Whilst the author intended the reader to be introduced to the hero as a victorious sportsman, a picture of the rugby tackle is submerged within the story. The full-page illustration that prefaces ‘Full Back’ is of the final crash. The illustration of the crash offers a macabre tableau: a disintegrating wreckage of aeroplanes, frozen in mid-air, with the living bodies of the passengers having been thrown free. Our hero is depicted in free-fall, facing away, but an enemy passenger clings to the mangled wreck in terror, as if it could somehow offer him some purchase. The bottom third of the panel is given over to the map of a rural landscape, an eerie picture of calm into which both men and machines will soon smash. The pictures undermine the intentions of the author, who retreats into sports metaphor during the crucial moment of the second vignette, seemingly to avoid the sensationalism of gore. Given his reluctance to be graphic, we must surely attribute this act of killing off the hero to something other than a simple attempt to thrill his readers. Perhaps, then, mechanical war stories feature death because they are predictions and, therefore, channel real anxieties and imagine real dangers. The weak flesh of man, something that is emphasised by the changing shape of the adventure hero, will be no match for the weaponised aeroplanes, or the tanks that were being hypothesised by other fiction writers.

Whilst Britten’s hero was described as ‘slight’ on more than one occasion, the author of ‘Full Back’ makes a more concerted effort to draw attention to the bodily weakness of his hero. The full back is a ‘slim youth’ of ‘no special physique, and blessed with neither great speed nor with phenomenal powers of kicking, he owes his position in the team to two qualities—pluck and coolness. He is a safe tackle.’<sup>256</sup> The loss of muscle that accompanies the adventure hero’s transplantation from battlefield to cock-pit can hardly be considered inevitable. Rather, the act of weakening seems to have served to emphasise the vulnerability of the human frame compared to that of the machine. In its genre-breaking act of hero-sacrifice, ‘Full Back’ refuses the fantastical triumph, preferring to frame its expectations of male performances of courage in a world that is more realistic and more risky. It is a story which expects the code of conduct it lays down to be more than an allegory for the kind of tests its readers will face.

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<sup>255</sup> Luk-Oie, “Full Back,” 12.

<sup>256</sup> Luk-Oie, “Full Back,” 3-4.

Like the air scout, the full back is given a monoplane, but his aging machine is further hampered by disrepair. Rather than being a disadvantage, however, the mechanical faults serve to enliven the bond between man and machine. In contrast to the pilot dehumanisation that happens in 'The Air Scout,' the faultiness of the aeroplanes pushes the mechanics and pilots into tending and taming roles. As a result, their machines are animalised, becoming 'monstrous, winged minnows' and 'gigantic hawk-moth'. Most frequently, though, the monoplane is likened to a horse—an animal born wild and broken for riding.<sup>257</sup>

An expert flyer, he soon feels the mouth of his mount, which he has not recently flown, and his touch on the control becomes as light as that of a good jockey on the mouth of a horse.<sup>258</sup>

It is difficult not to see the transmutation of aeroplane into a horse as an attempt to translate the operations of flying into more familiar terms. Nevertheless, there is something undeniably regressive in the animalisation of the aeroplanes. More than descriptive aids, the animal metaphors seem an attempt to check the progress of technological modernity, to call a halt to the process of mechanisation before war can arrive.

### 'The Steel Spanner'

'The Steel Spanner' was given prime position in the March issue of the *Strand*. Like 'Full Back,' the story was undoubtedly promoted because of the popularity of its theme, rather than its author. Frank Edwin Verney was never a well-known writer, publishing just ten short stories and one unsuccessful novel between 1910 and 1940.<sup>259</sup> Nevertheless, the stories he did write were often well placed, appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *The Argosy*, *The Blue Book*, and *Top-Notch*. 'The Steel Spanner' was the penultimate of his four contributions to the *Strand*, all of which appeared between 1911 and 1914.<sup>260</sup> Despite appearing in a range of periodicals that would have been the envy of any aspiring popular writer, he did not see his stories republished as a collection, which can be taken as a sign that there was no enduring public demand for his work. Verney's work has attracted no interest from literary critics and almost no biographical detail about him now remains. Even his date of birth has not come to light, though a newspaper notice, which identifies him as an army Major and the editor of the *British Legion Journal*, records his death in 1941.<sup>261</sup>

'The Steel Spanner' narrates the experience of a modern hero in a conservative cavalry unit. Staffield, a sensitive and bookish young subaltern in Britain's 'hardest riding cavalry regiment', disappoints his fellow officers by pulling up his horse before a fence during a riding display.<sup>262</sup> His actions are considered to be cowardly by the other officers and, already suspicious of his intellectualism, they question his mettle for

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<sup>257</sup> Luk-Oie, "Full Back," 5, 10.

<sup>258</sup> Luk-Oie, "Full Back," 7.

<sup>259</sup> *The Man with the Black Patch* (London: Tiptree Press, 1931) is the only novel under the name of Frank Verney to appear in the index of the copyright deposit library of the University of Cambridge.

<sup>260</sup> The others being: 'The Dividing Line' (June, 1913: 653-665), 'A Prisoner of Providence' (March, 1911: 354-361), and 'The Ranker' (August, 1914: 123-132).

<sup>261</sup> Death Notice of Major Frank Edwin Verney in *The Times*, March 31, 1941, 1.

<sup>262</sup> Frank E. Verney, "The Steel Spanner," *Strand Magazine* 47.279 (March 1914), 244.



battle. Even Edwards, Staffield's only friend in the regiment, thinks that soldiers who are reckless in training are better in the field. Soon after the shameful incident, it transpires that the Colonel has decided to leave Staffield behind when the other officers are sent on active duty. His sweetheart, the Colonel's daughter, reproaches him for his cowardice in the trophy room, amidst the memorabilia celebrating the regiment's historic victories. By the time the regiment are due to depart, Staffield has deserted. The second part of the story is set in battle. The enemy's guns are to be destroyed by blowing up a hill, but the wire connected to the explosives has become disconnected in the middle of no man's land. A mechanic offers to fix it, but is told to mind his own business. He disobeys, driving a train out into the field and jumping off to dig up the wire on the tracks. He uses his spanner to make the connection, winning the day. However, in the process of making the circuit the mechanic is killed. The corpse of the engineer is subsequently identified as Staffield. The Colonel, senior subaltern, and Edwards are all devastated, but proud. Staffield is realised to have been the bravest man in the regiment and his spanner is put in the regiment's trophy room.

First and foremost, 'The Steel Spanner' is a story about a group of equestriennes overcoming their suspicions about an engineer. The difference between Staffield and the rest of his division is spelt out in the decoration of his room, which, instead of being adorned with the customary horse tack, includes books and an 'engineering model'.<sup>263</sup> The suspicions raised by these differences are compounded by Staffield's refusal to risk his life in training. They pay no heed to Staffield's counter-argument, that his 'horse was unreliable' and, therefore, pulling up was pragmatic.<sup>264</sup> Where there is little chance of a hero's skill being able to compensate for the shortcomings of his steed, be it equine or mechanical, traditional bravery becomes suicide. The Regiment's verdict is damning: pragmatism is not compatible with bravery and, therefore, Staffield must be a coward. In their view, Staffield's cowardice is unacceptable within a number of contexts: publicly, since it shames the entire regiment, of which he is a representative; historically, since it undermines the regiment's hallowed traditions of reckless bravery and willing self-sacrifice; and, practically, since it intimates that Staffield will be a dangerously unreliable brother in arms.

Staffield makes no attempt to apologise for the damage that his act of 'cowardice' has done to the public image and private traditions of the group. Whilst it may appear that Staffield puts on grime and overalls to trick his way to the front, it is clear that it is the Regimental dress that was Staffield's true disguise. The engineer is a forward thinker who is tasked with building the traditions of a new generation. As 'The Air Scout' and 'Full Back' have shown, it is difficult to align the machine user with the traditionally bravery of the adventure hero. In 'The Steel Spanner', Verney presents a different way back. By making his hero an engineer, Verney is able to side step some of the issues relating to the varying reliability of machines. When the act of engineering itself becomes the act of heroism, the protagonist regains full responsibility for his actions and is able to become once more brave in the traditional adventure story sense, albeit more reliant on his brains than his brawn.

'The Steel Spanner' was illustrated by Christopher Clark, a painter specialising in military scenes who had exhibited work at the Royal Institution and the Royal Academy. The first full-page illustration depicts the

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<sup>263</sup> Verney, "The Steel Spanner," 245.

<sup>264</sup> Verney, "The Steel Spanner," 244.

redemptive tableau, with Staffield stretched out between the railway lines. Like C. Fleming Williams illustrations for 'The Full Back,' the early placement of Clark's picture prefigures the text. Yet, here the sensationalism of the artist does not upstage the descriptions of the author.

They found Staffield on his back between the iron rails, his dark eyes staring sightlessly up at the brazen sky, his right hand gripping a gleaming steel spanner that reflected the sunlight like a heliograph.<sup>265</sup>

The flashing spanner makes a grotesque spectacle of the corpse, animating it, making it seem to be attempting to communicate. Indeed, it does communicate—the spanner, which has come to symbolise Staffield's more pragmatic form of bravery, is installed in the regimental memorabilia room where, as well as becoming an indelible part of the cavalry's history, it reforms the regimental code of conduct. When it becomes a regimental trophy, the spanner completes the process of modernisation that began with Staffield's refusal of the cavalry's definition of bravery. Staffield's previously maverick pragmatic approach has become part of the orthodox expression of heroism.

### **'The Despatch Rider'**

Edgar Wallace's 'The Despatch Rider' appeared in the December issue of the *Strand*. It did not occupy the prime position, since it was in competition with an instalment of *The Valley of Fear*. While Edgar Wallace's name remains reasonably well known, his works have fallen out of fashion and are no longer widely read. Indeed, his most substantial contribution to popular culture has been an indirect one, as the author of the short story on which the cult film *King Kong* (1933) was based. Nonetheless, during his productive years Wallace was a literary celebrity, enjoying a high level of public attention and wealth. In an article that remembers the important place Wallace's work once occupied in the popular market, David Glover pinpoints the height of Wallace's success as the decade 1923-1933, during which approximately 25,000 Wallace books were sold each year in America.<sup>266</sup>

Wallace's variegated career had begun as a Boer war correspondent for the *Daily Mail*. By the time he started screenwriting for Hollywood studios in the 1930's, he had worked as a newspaper editor, a publisher, a playwright, a poet, a magazine serial writer, and a novelist. In 1914, Wallace's literary star was still in the ascendant. Just four years earlier he had sold the rights to his first novel, *The Four Just Men* (1909), to *Strand* magazine's publisher George Newnes. It was a massive hit and, though it was Newnes who reaped the financial rewards, Wallace became a household name and magazines began to offer him more generous terms for his stories. Despite the diversity of his literary output, Wallace's name is now associated chiefly with crime fiction. Whilst crime fiction does form a substantial part of his total work, Wallace also wrote a great deal of colonial adventure stories, set in Africa, as well as stories of war. It is not surprising that his colonial stories and novels are less well remembered—as with much British adventure

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<sup>265</sup> Verney, "The Steel Spanner," 250.

<sup>266</sup> David Glover, "Looking for Edgar Wallace: the Author as Consumer," *History Workshop Journal* 37.1 (1994): 144.

fiction of this period, the racial prejudices that underpin these works have made them unpalatable to a modern audience. His war fiction, which is of most interest here, was inspired by his experience of serving in the medical and press corps of the British army. 'The Despatch Rider' can be seen to fall into this category of his work, albeit none too comfortably.

The story begins in the home of Miss Josephine Gresham. Captain George Mestrell has arrived with the intention of proposing marriage. Instead, their relationship is brought to an abrupt halt when George scorns a local society woman's brainwave—to start a 'Mounted [motorcycle] Nurse and Despatch-Rider Corps'—complaining of the ridiculousness of 'attractive young women gallivanting over a modern battlefield.'<sup>267</sup> As he utters the rebuke, Jo emerges from her dressing room in the uniform of the corps. Unable to forgive George and unwilling to continue with her plans after hearing his criticisms, Jo decides to take a long vacation in France. During her holiday, the war begins. She is determined to leave the continent from Ostend for reasons of thrift (she wants to use her return ferry ticket) and curiosity. Upon discovering that George's regiment is based near Ostend she decides to go and reconcile with him, anxious that he should not perish whilst they are estranged. Passing by the front, she chances to overhear a French General being told that all attempts to get an important message to a Captain Mestrell have failed. Naturally, the message is a matter of his life or death. When Jo sees two men shot from their motorbikes in an attempt to deliver the letter, she decides she has no choice but to deliver it herself. Driving around the dead men, she proceeds through a hail of bullets, which shatter her windscreen and cause its glass to wound her hand. Despite her injury, she manages to rescue George's entire regiment, guiding them along the only safe path of retreat. Once the immediate danger has passed, George and Jo reconcile but they do not entirely settle their differences.

In accordance with his bold decision to cast a female in the heroic role, Wallace destabilises conventional notions of gender on a number of occasions in the story. From the outset, George is presented as a man 'feminised' by his own desire. We are told that his promotion 'made all the difference in the world, because matrimony was not encouraged amongst subaltern officers.'<sup>268</sup> In failing to view the promotion as an end in itself and, instead, valuing it for its potential to further his romantic ambitions, George is distanced from the 'masculine' characters of the adventure fiction. His character is presented as something much closer to the emotionally devoted 'feminised' heroes of romance fiction. Even in the less central parts of the plot, presumptions about gender roles are subject to reversal. The (male) gardener, for instance, is revealed to have the mind of a seamstress: when Jo gives him her unwanted Despatch-Rider Corps uniform he is able to plan a new use for the material. Moreover, the new use will involve yet another act of gender-switching, seeing as he does the 'possibilities for little boys' breeches in the voluminous riding skirt.'<sup>269</sup> Whilst gender reform is often a source of whimsical entertainment in Wallace's text, observations of the confusion and suspicion with which patriarchal western societies greeted challenges to the gender norms lies shallowly beneath the surface, threatening to bubble up between the lines.

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<sup>267</sup> Edgar Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," *Strand Magazine* 48.288 (December, 1914), 717.

<sup>268</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 716.

<sup>269</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 718.

As a tale of a woman's bravery on the Western front, 'The Despatch Rider' is a curious addition to the body of war literature, especially given the timing of its composition and publication. Of the four mechanical war stories under discussion in this chapter, 'The Despatch Rider' is the only one likely to have been composed after Britain had joined the war. Whilst the story only appeared in *Strand* in December, the war it detailed, which included a German invasion of Belgium, was too accurate to have been a prediction. As mentioned previously, Wallace wrote quickly. His output was likened to that of a newspaper office in a cartoon that appeared in *Punch* in 1928. Given the *Strand's* five-week delay, it seems likely that the story was composed in early September. The German invasion of Belgium had made England's entry into the war seem to many a moral duty. By using the battlefields of Belgium as his backdrop, Wallace prevents the romantic comedy element of his story overpowering the adventure, providing the gender 'war' that pits Jo and George against one and other with a deadly serious counterpoint. Wallace does not attempt to shy away from the gory realities of the war, describing the horrors with which Jo is faced—'she slowed down before a cottage where a bare-armed surgeon was busy with the wreck of a man that lay stretched out on a kitchen table.'<sup>270</sup> The image is evocative of the wider narrative, muddling the domesticity of the kitchen table with the entrails of a dying soldier.

Questions about the status and role of women in society loomed large in the first decades of the twentieth century. In a world where machines made light work of heavy work, older concepts of women as chattel, char, and caregiver were giving way to concepts of woman as typist, shop assistant, telephonist, and so forth. Women's place was being renegotiated at every level, from the highly publicised militancy of suffrage organisations like the WSPU, to the many smaller encroachments of women into traditionally masculine spaces, like the boxing auditorium. When the war did arrive, its effects upon gender reform were actually quite mixed. Whilst it forestalled the attacks of the Pankhurst's militia and, in all probability, set back the arrival of the vote for women, it also pushed women into what had previously been exclusively male centres of industry and activity. Indeed, in the case of one real-life counterpart, Lady Galligay's Mounted Nurse and Despatch-Rider Corp turned out to be a too modest proposition. Having grown tired of the London typist's life, Flora Sandes joined St John's Ambulance and travelled to Serbia. Over the course of the war, she ended up serving, fighting, and being wounded as a soldier in the Serbian army. Her brave actions were rewarded with a Kara George Star, the highest honour for bravery in the field. She ended her career with them long after the war, having attained the rank of Captain.<sup>271</sup>

Wallace presents the war as a viable context in which long-disputed questions about gender roles might find some resolution. Yet, in the process of putting the mettle of his 'new women' to the test, Wallace often muddies the water around the proto-feminist argument that his plot seems to propose. In her role as an ultra-modern female hero, Jo is frequently made to look ridiculous, unnatural, and wanton. When Jo takes up a defiant posture in the drawing room, she is described as 'a slim, heroic figure, her rebellious chin tilted up, her fine brows set in menace.'<sup>272</sup> Wallace's description emphasises the contortions involved in fitting Jo's body to the traditional heroic form—head tilted for height and beetle-browed, one can only presume

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<sup>270</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 720.

<sup>271</sup> Sandes provides an interesting account of her experiences in *Autobiography of a Woman Soldier. A Brief Record of Adventure with the Serbian Army 1916-1919*. London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1927.

<sup>272</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 717.

that she is also standing on tip-toe. Whilst the description does not directly sexualise Jo, it draws attention to Jo's body at a moment when she is attempting to forcefully express an intellectual position. By putting Jo's body in the way of this intention, Wallace reflects George's assumptions about the effect that women will have upon the battlefield. For George, women can never exceed their 'principal' role as objects of male desire, whatever the context that surrounds them. Despite Jo's exhortations—" [y]ou don't realize how women's positions have changed, how their capacities have enlarged"—George retains an unequivocal view about the place of women.<sup>273</sup> At the end of the story, when a surgeon who dresses a bullet wound in George's leg asks Jo what capacity she is serving in, she answers "'Lady Galligay's corps has been mobilized'." Whether out of anger or shame it is not clear, but her answer causes George to wince. Despite owing his life (not to mention the life of his regiment) to the 'manliness' of his fiancée, George remains entirely unreconstructed.

Wallace's descriptive language frequently reflects George's objectification of women. Throughout the story, the narrative voice menaces Jo's heroic identity, threatening to undermine her through its repeated recourse to sexual descriptions; for example, when she cannot make up her mind, she finds herself in an 'orgy of inconsistency'.<sup>274</sup> Whilst the process of sexualising the heroine does sometimes tip into farce, as happens when a discussion with a priest includes a description of her mouth as 'small but full—parted now in excitement', a more pernicious kind of prejudice permeates the fabric of the narrative.<sup>275</sup> As if struggling for vocabulary to express female heroism, Wallace becomes reliant upon the prefix 'un-', which he uses to maintain that Jo's actions are beyond the bounds of reasonable female behaviour: she is 'unreasonably' angry with George; she shows 'unnatural patience'; she bites her lips with 'unnecessary vehemence,' *et cetera*. Instead of portraying Jo as a female hero, Wallace begins to create an inverted damsel with heroic qualities that extend only so far as the negation of her femininity.

Like those that had appeared alongside 'The Air Scout,' the C. Fleming Williams illustrations that accompany 'The Despatch Rider' do not accord well with the text. His second illustration takes up the entire penultimate page of the story. In the background a battle is being fought—the brushwork makes the silhouettes of armed soldiers merge with smoke and bramble. Some corpses are suggested. The enemy is not included in the frame, but the other soldiers' aim suggests they lie beyond the top right of the panel. The centre of the picture contains the heroine passing George in her motorcar, her mouth agape, apparently speaking the picture's caption: "'You've got to retire at once. The General says so.'" George stands upright, sabre drawn in one hand and a revolver in the other. His look is not one of surprise, nor is it gratitude; he looks like a man who has been interrupted at work and is somewhat annoyed about it. The scene bears little relation to the narrative. Indeed, on many points it appears to be in direct contradiction. For example, by the time Jo reaches George in the story, he is 'unshaven and grimy' and wounded in the leg.<sup>276</sup> Though there is a bandage on the leg of the lightly perspiring and neatly moustachioed figure in the illustration, he stands firmly despite being described as 'limping painfully' in the story.<sup>277</sup> As with the earlier

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<sup>273</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 717.

<sup>274</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 717.

<sup>275</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 718.

<sup>276</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 721.

<sup>277</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 721.

story, there seems to be a dissonance between the tone of the illustrations and the content of the narrative. Williams' simple pictures of brave soldier George are anachronisms, entirely out of place alongside Wallace's complex exploration of the boundaries of contemporary gender fluidity.

As might be expected, narrative moments also appear to have been selected for illustration on the basis of their suitability for dramatic visual representation, rather than their centrality in the plot. The first picture takes up the first third of the first page. In the far distance a few brushstrokes pick out the minute figures of the French General and his men. Even farther back, merging with the horizon, the silhouette of Jo's automobile is just discernable. A road sweeps towards the reader, perspective broadening it so that its edges finally exceed the width of the panel. In the foreground, a soldier tumbles dramatically from a motorcycle, as bullets throw up clouds of dust before him. The soldier is upside-down, about to crumple head first into the road. He is grimacing, but catastrophe has hit so quickly that his body still maintains a riding stance. Of the two motorcyclists who are killed in unsuccessful attempts to take a message to George's regiment, the second is described by Wallace in the most graphic terms and this rider seems to be the one depicted by Fleming Williams: 'without warning, he went tumbling over and over till at last he lay an inert little bundle of humanity under his broken machine.'<sup>278</sup> Though less sensationalist, Wallace's image is by far the more startling one: it is not a single motorcyclist, but all humanity's fleshy vulnerability to the power of machines that Wallace skids across the mind of the reader. Unfortunate then, that his illustrator decides the story is mostly about a brave chap being shot from a motorbike.

Whilst machines could be dangerous to operate, they were also powerful weapons capable of undermining the advantage of physical strength and endurance; as such, they were enmeshed with the process of women's emancipation. In 1914, it was still unusual for a woman to be sole owner and driver of a motor vehicle, so the act of driving unaccompanied on the continent already marks Jo out as a gender rebel, in much the same way as did Flora Sandes' ownership of an 'old French racing car.'<sup>279</sup> It is as a driver that Jo is shown to be at the height of her power. Like the pilot's aeroplane in 'Full Back,' Jo's car also takes on animal qualities. In this case, however, the vehicle does not become a wild animal to be tamed, but a companion to be commanded—'[t]he wheel on which her hand rested shivered at intervals, as though it were part of a living, reasoning organism, dreading the ordeal ahead.'<sup>280</sup> The relationship that Jo has with her car is characterised by rational interaction that provides a stark contrast to her emotional and turbulent relationship with George.

Wallace's choice of a female hero for a war story would have seemed odd to many readers—at least as ridiculous as George considers the notion of female despatch riders to be. However, though it might have seemed surprising, amusing, and even titillating to some, Wallace's choice of a female protagonist was not out of step with the broader programme of hero emasculation that was being enacted across the mechanical war sub-genre. Certainly the text is amusing; such a register would be hard to avoid entirely, since the literary history of 'gender-swapping' is, by and large, a history of comedies. Yet, Jo's heroic

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<sup>278</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 721.

<sup>279</sup> Unattributed, "Obituary—Miss Flora Sandes—Combatant in the Serbian Army," *The Times*, December 1, 1956, 8.

<sup>280</sup> Wallace, "The Despatch Rider," 721.

intervention in the war is narrated with earnestness. When the action sequences begin in the final third of the story, the narrative issues from the heroine's perspective—Jo's interest in seeing fighting and the success of her brave act are no longer marked as un-usual, un-appealing, or un-feminine. As a result, Wallace's cross-examination of modern notions of gender remains multi-layered and, at times, extremely serious. Whilst it seems to provide a comic commentary on the future possibilities of adventure fiction heroism in the wake of machines, the text also implies that the programme of hero emasculation that was enacted in mechanical war stories may have been inspired, not just by the prospect of increasing machine-use, but also by the greater gender fluidity that seemed to be a natural by-product of the emancipation of women.

### **'Danger!'**

The July issue of the *Strand* opened with 'Danger!', a story about the murky future of submarine warfare from the pen of the magazine's most popular author, Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1891 the magazine had published Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes short story, 'A Scandal in Bohemia', and, in the intervening years, author and periodical had enjoyed a mutually beneficial association, seeing *Strand* sales grow in step with Conan Doyle's literary celebrity. Whilst 'Danger!' incorporates many of the key features of mechanical war fiction, it does not fit straightforwardly within the category. Far from an attempt to extend his renown into a new literary genre, Conan Doyle had political aims in mind when he wrote 'Danger!'

Drawing upon the waxing and waning trends of adventure fiction, the author crafted a vehicle for his arguments in favour of the construction of tunnels under the Channel. Considering the creation of such tunnels to be imperative to British security in the event of war, Conan Doyle was aghast when the Government deemed them not to be a priority. 'Danger!' was Conan Doyle's last ditch attempt to turn the decision around, hoping that the popular medium of adventure writing might rally the support of a broad enough section of the voting public to change the Prime Minister Asquith's mind. The story that resulted was a cautionary hybrid of mechanical war and old-fashioned invasion fiction that was notably light on thrills. Yet, precisely because 'Danger!' borrowed from adventure writing without attempting to provide a popular thrill, it is able to shed light upon an issue which entertainment-focussed mechanical war fiction did not dare to broach.

Conan Doyle's stories have enjoyed continuing cult success, with prints, re-prints, and dramatic productions continuing to appear for over a century, up to the present day. Yet, in spite of Conan Doyle's long-term popularity, 'Danger!' has not been re-visited. Given its relative obscurity, a brief plot synopsis is necessary here. The story begins in the wake of a colonial boundary dispute, which results in the small country of Norland refusing an ultimatum and finding itself pitched into war against Britain. Norland's government realise themselves to be no match for the British military, predicting that their combined sea and land forces will be annihilated within a week. Luckily for them, Captain Sirius of the weak Norlandish navy has a plucky plan for victory. By operating in secret, out of a sea-front villa rather than a port, Sirius will wreak

covert havoc on the food supply to the British Isles with a fleet of eight submarines. By torpedoing unarmed merchant vessels in the Channel and Irish Sea, Sirius will lay siege to Britain. As starvation begins to cause civil unrest, Britain is forced to seek an unfavourable peace. Reasoning that England will regain strength and find solutions to the weaknesses highlighted by the conflict, Norland chooses not to press its advantage further for fear of future reprisals. The story concludes with a fictional extract from the *Times*, which argues that Britain is lucky that their enemy had not been a more powerful nation, or such a war would have resulted in an occupation. The article then reports on the new measures that have been adopted to guard against future sieges by sea: domestic agriculture has been increased and two double-lined railways now run through a tunnel under the Channel, linking Britain to the European continent.

'Danger!' shares two key features with mechanical war fiction. First and foremost, Doyle's hero is only able to secure victory through the skilful use of machines. No description of Sirius' body is provided in the text, but it could be argued that his lack of a corporeal form only serves to remove him a step further from the brawny colonial adventure hero. Moreover, Sirius acts as the representative of a country that certainly is weak, a condition that is emphasised by the comparative strength of the enemy it vanquishes. 'Danger!' also shares its machinery with mechanical war fiction, in that both depict technology slightly in advance of what was then possible in the real world. Conan Doyle's submarines are able to stay submerged longer, carry more torpedoes and travel both further and faster than any models in existence at the time of composition. Just as he extends the weakness of his hero, Conan Doyle embellishes his machines further than those that usually appeared in mechanical war fiction. Dogfights and aeroplane reconnaissance would soon come to play a part in the First World War, but it would be many more decades before submarines would become capable of the feats he ascribes to them.

In one respect, however, 'Danger!' diverges entirely from mechanical war fiction. Mechanical war fiction was concerned with anticipating continental battles, but 'Danger!' puts England under direct attack. Instead of a facing a foe analogous to the Germans, we are led to assume that Norland occupies Norway's space on the European map—a fact that is suggested by its name and confirmed by the directions its submarines take to get to the Channel. In focussing attention away from the realistic threat of a continental war against the Prussian military, Conan Doyle is able to make a stronger case for his tunnels. The literary consequence of describing a situation of war in which England is besieged is that the story harks back to the earlier adventure trend of invasion fiction.

Invasion fiction is generally considered to have begun with the publication of George Tomkyns Chesney's phenomenally successful story 'The Battle of Dorking' in May 1871. Appearing in *Blackwood's Magazine* in the final months of the Franco-Prussian war, Chesney's story proved so popular that the issue ran to an unprecedented seven editions, after which *Blackwood's* continued to publish the story as a pamphlet which sold in excess of 10,000 copies.<sup>281</sup> From the start, invasion stories were first and foremost a politically motivated literature. 'The Battle of Dorking' was composed in an effort to show the public how British

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<sup>281</sup> A full account of the history of 'The Battle of Dorking' can be found in I. F. Clarke's article, 'The Battle of Dorking, 1871-1914,' *Victorian Studies* 8.4 (June, 1965), 309-328.



colonial and trade concerns, along with a relatively small volunteer army at home, was making Britain weak enough to be overpowered. Building upon the large number of non-fictional pamphlets and articles that decried Britain's unpreparedness for the tactics and technology of modern war (in particular, the screw-propelled steamboat), Chesney translated the concerns into a form that would have an easy and wide reach amongst the middle-classes—the magazine short story. As such, it was an argument for conscription in a form that was able to make a more wide-ranging impact. Upon publication, a rash of imitators emerged, producing new visions of invasion and positioning themselves *pro* and *contra* Chesney's original argument. Meanwhile, the original story gathered international success in a range of translations, prompting Prime Minister William Gladstone to publicly denounce the story for its 'alarmism' and the likelihood that it would besmirch Britain's profile abroad. Whilst Gladstone's apprehension now seems disproportionate, Chesney's scenario of British invasion had clearly hit a raw and profitable nerve.

The hymns to British bravery, strength, and resourcefulness that were sung in colonial adventure fiction had presented the Empire as an unequivocal source of adventure and triumph. In reality, the spoils of Imperialism were tempered by anxiety about Britain's ability to manage and protect its extensive foreign properties. The events of the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War increased the stakes, raising concerns about domestic weakness whilst British military force was spread so thinly around the globe. These competing accounts of British Imperialism were well represented in short fiction at the end of the nineteenth century, where, alongside tales of colonial derring-do, stories depicting the invasion of Britain abounded. As such, the colonial adventure story and the invasion story can be seen as two sides of the same coin: a sanguine response to the global dominance of British Imperial power and its neurotic reverse. In the time that elapsed between the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the start of the First World War, the national anxiety about an invasion of Britain had segued into anxiety about the more robust threat of a war on the continent. Whilst the violability of Britain's borders continued to be a concern, this only increased the likelihood of British involvement in a war fought first and, if possible, only, on continental soil. As might be expected, trends within military adventure fiction reflect the changing terms of prospective war.

By the time 'Danger!' was published, invasion fiction had become a subject for satire. In P. G. Wodehouse's novel *The Swoop!, or How Clarence Saved England* (1914) Britain is invaded by several foreign armies at once, having been inspired by a popular invasion fiction novel (*The Swoop of the Vulture* by James Blyth, an bestselling invasion fiction novel in 1909). Further evidence that the public were no longer interested in the old invasion model can be seen in a publishing venture undertaken by Grant Richards in September 1914. Evidently trying to capitalise upon the rumbles of the new war, Richards rushed out a new edition of 'The Battle of Dorking'. The edition appeared as a sixpence paperback with striking orange covers, decorated with a relief block-print of a soldier in black ink. The soldier is pictured in field dress, with boots and puttees, wearing a revolver, with ammunition strapped around his waist. He is not every bit a modern soldier though, since he also wears a sword and even a pith helmet—an item that had been reserved for dress, since the adoption of khaki in 1903.<sup>282</sup> His figure is imposing; his chiselled cheekbones and square jaw

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<sup>282</sup> A.E. Haswell Miller, *Vanished Armies: A Record of Military Uniform Observed And Drawn in Various European Countries During the Years 1907 to 1914*, Oxford: Osprey, 2009, 55.

suggest he is a hero in the mould of a colonial adventurer. An anachronism amidst the profusion of new war-related material, the book was a flop.

The invasion fiction elements in 'Danger!'—both the attack on Britain and its heavy-handed political message—must have seemed distinctly old-fashioned and, most likely, a bit disappointing to the Holmes-loving *Strand* readers. Whilst depictions of machine use in mechanical war fiction may have emphasised the importance of Britain's technological preparations, their primary purpose was to entertain, not to lobby. Conan Doyle is recognised as having been a writer who was able to flex and remould the conventions of genre, without entirely breaking with them. Peter McDonald gives an interesting account of the way in which Conan Doyle purges his detective fiction of sensational violence and gore as part of an attempt to negotiate a more esteemed position in the literary field for work within that genre.<sup>283</sup> However, far from an attempt to reformulate the mechanical war fiction, the 'odd' plot and 'poor timing' of Conan Doyle's was the result of him prioritising his political aims over the satisfaction of his publishers and readers.

Whilst 'Danger!' appears to be the only time in which Conan Doyle used his fiction to pursue a non-literary agenda, he had often used his literary fame to bolster interventions in the political and legal spheres, setting himself up as 'a progressive champion of Divorce Law Reform, an outspoken critic of Belgian atrocities in the Congo, a patriotic defender of national honour in the aftermath of the Boer War, and a spiritualist missionary'.<sup>284</sup> No doubt encouraged by his public defence of the Boer War, the British government invited Conan Doyle to make a contribution to the official war effort. When the activities of the War Propaganda Bureau (W.P.B.) were made public in the mid-1930s, he was revealed to be one of a core of writers who had been co-opted to encourage enlistment—a list that included John Masefield, Henry Newbolt, Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, G. K. Chesterton, Ford Madox Hueffer, and H. G. Wells. Conan Doyle penned a number of pamphlets for the W.P.B., including his most well known offering *To Arms!* in 1914. Unlike many of the writers who made their pens available to the W.P.B., Conan Doyle has a personal interest in the nitty gritty of warfare. In addition to his W. P. B. pamphleteering, he produced a six-volume history of the conflict, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, which was first published as a series of articles in *The Strand* from May 1916. Neither had Conan Doyle waited for an invitation to involve himself in matters of pressing national importance. In the months leading up to the start of the war, Conan Doyle had occupied himself with a campaign to influence British war preparations that had culminated in the composition of 'Danger!'

In contrast to the slew of mechanical war fiction that focussed upon the changes that the aeroplane would bring to war, 'Danger!' warns that whatever naval, aerial, and ironclad preparations are made by England, such activity will be futile in the face of an active submarine threat. He was not alone in thinking that the dangers of being an island nation during a pan-European war outweighed the benefits. Conan Doyle's belief that the submarine had made the construction of a Channel tunnel a necessity led him to become involved with a group of politicians who had been charged with exploring the matter. The possibility of building a tunnel had been mooted on a number of occasions throughout the previous century, but the last serious

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<sup>283</sup> Peter McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

<sup>284</sup> McDonald, *British Literary Culture*, 119.

attempt to weigh up the matter in parliament had been in 1907, when arguments made by the Defence Committee and, in particular, Field Marshall Lord Garnet Wolseley, had convinced Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Government that such a tunnel would effectively constitute a land frontier, bringing with it all the attendant dangers.<sup>285</sup> The advantages and disadvantages of building a tunnel to link Britain to the Continent had again become a controversial topic by the start of 1914. In August 1913 Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith had promised that the issue would be properly investigated, after the need for a discussion was pressed by a number of Conservative MPs.<sup>286</sup> In the ensuing months, the extra-parliamentary discussions about the tunnel made by the reportedly one hundred-strong House of Commons Channel Tunnel Committee, were heavily reported in *The Times*. The newspaper took a firmly critical line, arguing in favour of Lord Wolseley's earlier conclusions in the strongest terms—'preserve intact our priceless and most enviable insularity'.<sup>287</sup> Despite the pressure of the Committee, Asquith remained convinced that the earlier decision against the construction of Channel tunnels had been the right one.

As few years previously, Conan Doyle had run for election as an MP but had been unsuccessful. As a result, he was not able to be a formal member of the House of Commons Channel Tunnel Committee. Nevertheless, he attended their meetings and even presented a speech at the Committee's widely publicised meeting at the Cannon-Street Hotel, on 26 February. The structure of the meeting was reported in *The Times*.

GENERAL SIR ALFRED TURNER (on the commercial, economic, and military aspects of the case), BARON D'ERLANGER (on the soundness of its financial proposals), SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE (on the danger to our food supplies from submarines in the case of invasion), SIR WILLIAM BULL, who thinks that the Tunnel might be used to bring a supply of oil fuel to this country, and MR. FELL, the chairman of the meeting, and the House of Commons Committee, who based his contentions in favour of the proposal on the friendliness of our present relations with France.<sup>288</sup>

In other words, speeches were made by: an experienced British Army Officer, a railway magnate and the Chairman of the Channel Tunnel Company, a popular crime fiction writer, the Conservative MP for Hammersmith, and the Conservative MP for Great Yarmouth. We may, at the very least, say that Conan Doyle seems a curious addition to the list of assembled speakers.

Having been unsuccessful in his attempt to influence the policy makers by attaching his famous name to the cause, Conan Doyle decided to change tactics and attempt to procure grassroots support. As a great literary celebrity, Conan Doyle had a unique opportunity to influence public opinion. His ability to attract a massive readership meant he could expect any fiction he wrote to fetch a high-price, be printed in a large-run, be widely sold and read, and warmly received. This meant that Conan Doyle was able to use his fiction directly, as a powerful lobbying tool. The only thing more surprising than his attempt to personally intervene in the

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<sup>285</sup> Unattributed, "The Channel Tunnel," *The Times*, January 3, 1914, 9.

<sup>286</sup> Unattributed, "The Channel Tunnel Scheme," *The Times* February 24, 1914, 13.

<sup>287</sup> Unattributed, "A Channel Tunnel in Time of War," *The Times*, February 27, 1914, 9.

<sup>288</sup> Unattributed, "A Channel Tunnel in Time of War," 9.

political sphere was the felicity with which it was received by prominent members of the navy and by the public at large. As the title brazenly implies, 'Danger!' was treated more as prediction than fiction by the editorial staff at *The Strand*, who followed the story 'What the Naval Experts Think. Being Opinions on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Story, "Danger!"'

Proofs of this striking piece of fiction were submitted to a number of naval experts, who were invited to state their views on the points raised in the story. As a result we are able to give the opinions of several well-known admirals, as well as a number of writers recognized as authorities on naval subjects, with notes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.<sup>289</sup>

Amongst those canvassed on the question of whether the situation predicted by Conan Doyle's story was actually possible, were Admirals Lord Charles Beresford, Sir Algernon De Horsey, Sir Compton Domville, C. C. Penrose Fitzgerald, an M.P. named B. Eyres Monsell, a writer and lecturer on naval subjects named Mr. Douglas Owen, and Frank T. Bullen a 'well-known writer of sea stories.'

The inclusion of the opinion of a fiction writer recalls the list of attendees to the Channel Tunnel meeting, except that in this new list Doyle is not interloper but ring-master, obliging the exotic creatures of the Navy to disprove his thesis before a jury of *Strand* readers. Frank T. Bullen's positive opinion comes across like promotional puff, the kind of thing that might today appear on the back cover of a novel—'[y]ou ask me if this could come true. I should certainly say yes—not only could it, but it is eminently probable.'<sup>290</sup> Perhaps by a collective fault of imagination, the responses of the Admiralty are, to a man, critical of Conan Doyle's prediction. They contend that submarines simply are not capable of the feats afforded to them by Conan Doyle and, besides, they could just as easily destroy an underwater tunnel as a fleet of cargo vessels. Furthermore, the torpedoing of cargo vessels is unlikely as it would be considered an act of piracy under international law, which would doubtlessly involve more countries in the conflict, especially those that were home to the civilians sunk on the cargo ships. They agree that the inflow of food during the war is a problem that needs consideration and congratulate Conan Doyle on bringing that matter to the public's attention. Unfortunately, they also agree that a Channel tunnel is the wrong answer, arguing that what is needed is for farmers to keep domestically grown food in rick for a year, to increase national grain cultivation, and for a tax to be levied on imported food.

Whilst expert opinion prevailed in the case of the Channel tunnel, Admiral C. C. Penrose Fitzgerald recognised the power over the public wielded by the popular author—'Sir A. Conan Doyle's clever story of the exploits of a few submarines in starving the British Isles into surrender may prove to be a useful argument in favour of a Channel Tunnel and of Tariff Reform, as the British public will not recognize the extreme improbability of the technicalities with which he deals.'<sup>291</sup> To sum up, 'Danger!' is judged to be compelling as fiction, but unreliable in fact and dangerous as policy. Conan Doyle remained unconvinced by

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<sup>289</sup> Various, "What the Naval Experts Think. Being Opinions on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Story, 'Danger!'," *Strand Magazine* 48.28 (July, 1914), 20.

<sup>290</sup> Various, "What the Naval Experts Think," 20.

<sup>291</sup> Various, "What the Naval Experts Think," 20.

the strong arguments of experts and, as late as 1918, he continued to pursue the matter in the preface to his anthology *Danger! and Other Stories*.

In some unfortunate way subjects of national welfare are in this country continuously subordinated to party politics, so that a self-evident proposition, such as the danger of a nation being fed from without, is waived aside and ignored, because it will not fit with some general political shibboleth.<sup>292</sup>

Whilst he does concede that Channel tunnels would not have helped in the war as it occurred, he labels the continued opposition to the project ‘insane’ and ‘an example of national stupidity.’<sup>293</sup> Yet so far as the Channel tunnel proposition was a ‘political shibboleth’, it was a Conservative one, designed to unsettle public approval of Asquith’s Liberal Government’s preparations for war by ignoring the weight of expert opinion.

In the other mechanical war stories discussed in this chapter, the relationship between hero and machine has been found to be somewhat complex—neither straightforwardly positive, nor clearly defined. Whilst the human heroes are recommended by their bravery, the importance of their skill relative to the capabilities of their machines has often been ambiguous. ‘Danger!’ can be seen to take a step further, in this respect. Here, the capabilities of the machines are permitted to completely supplant the skill of their operators. In an early exchange between Sirius and the sovereign of Norland, Sirius’ conviction in his own essential replaceability is mistaken for cowardice.

“Sire, I would never go near an English battleship.”

“And why not?”

“Because they might injure me, Sire.”

“What, a sailor and afraid?”

“My life belongs to the country, Sire. It is nothing. But those eight ships [his submarines]—everything depends upon them. I could not risk them. Nothing would induce me to fight.”<sup>294</sup>

In Conan Doyle’s story, the machines are fragile tools without which a war cannot be won but their operators are expendable—the old ones can be discarded and new ones can be slotted in their place, like batteries. This less palatable version of the potential relationship between man and machine is rarely explored in mechanical war stories and, when it is raised, it becomes a source of great tension. In ‘The Air Scout’ the hero may be exceptional in terms of his bravery and skill but, just as machine use depersonalises the enemy pilots, it seems it must devalue his own life. A fact echoed in the carelessness with which the hero’s injured body is treated by his colleague in the final moments of the story.

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<sup>292</sup> Conan Doyle, ‘Introduction,’ in *Danger! and Other Stories* (London: John Murray, 1918), vi.

<sup>293</sup> Conan Doyle, ‘Introduction,’ in *Danger! and Other Stories*, vii.

<sup>294</sup> Conan Doyle, “Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius,” *Strand Magazine* 48.283 (July, 1914), 4.

As well as making Sirius replaceable, Conan Doyle also brings his bravery into dispute. When a British destroyer spots the periscope of Sirius' boat, Sirius remarks that the captain 'would very gladly have rammed us, even if it had meant his own destruction, but that was not part of our programme at all.'<sup>295</sup> On a narrative level, it is not part of his 'programme' because he needs to assure the survival of the submarine fleet to secure victory. On a metatextual level, the comment refers to the author's refusal to conform to literary genre formulas at the expense of his political agenda. 'Danger!' presents no action of the kind the title seems to promise, since Conan Doyle's central aim was to demonstrate the ease with which Britain could be defeated. Unsurprisingly, Sirius' attacks upon unarmed merchant ships do not test the hero's mettle and, later on in the story, Sirius is made to deal with the subject of his lack of bravery directly.

[British navy men] thought us cowardly to attack naval ships and avoid the warships. It is like the Arab who thinks a flank attack is a mean, unmanly device. War is not a big game, my English friends. It is a desperate business to gain the upper hand, and one must use one's brain in order to find the weak spot of one's enemy. It is not fair to blame me if I have found yours. It was my duty.<sup>296</sup>

Here, 'Danger!' unintentionally hits upon the ultimate fate of the military adventure hero in the age of mechanised warfare. Having already lightened and simplified the heroic act, machines have the potential to tip the playing field to such an extent that notions of 'fair play' have no place. Without 'fair play' opportunities for bravery become scarce, instead of heroic acts mechanical war narratives offer moments of pitiless execution or suicide. This was not a conclusion that mechanical war fiction had been able to countenance. In 'Full Back' and 'The Air Scout' the poorer quality of the heroes' machines provides the reader with assurance that the odds are stacked against the hero. In 'Full Back' the situation results in a suicide that, whilst brave, does not deliver the unmitigated heroic triumph characteristic of earlier adventure fiction. In 'The Air Scout' the hero escapes with injury, but the trade off is the pervasive sense that machines have dehumanised the soldiers on both sides. The hero of the least traditional mechanical war story, 'The Despatch Rider', does not seem to appreciate the dangers involved in her jaunt to the front, which complicates the validity of her heroism.

The two-part fall and redemption structure of the 'Steel Spanner' dealt directly with the problem of machine age heroism. It concludes with the revision of the Regiment's notion of bravery, which is also the notion of bravery central to earlier works in the adventure genre. Yet, whilst the new model allows pragmatism to enter bravery, the story does not properly solve the issues that are thrown up by hero machine use. Whilst he accomplishes his heroic act with a symbolic spanner, Stafffield's heroism is of a traditional sort, not one mediated by a machine. Yet, the figure of the engineer can offer a solution of sorts. If the hero is the designer of the machine then it becomes an extension of him, remaining something for which he is wholly responsible. If the playing field tips, it is he who has tipped it. Captain Sirius achieves his victory only by becoming a human battery and dispensing with the notion of bravery. Nevertheless,

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<sup>295</sup> Conan Doyle, "Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius," 18.

<sup>296</sup> Conan Doyle, "Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius," 44-5.

'Danger!' does surreptitiously offer up a hero: the engineer who designs the highly advanced submarines and connives their effective use is the writer.

### ***The World Set Free***

H. G. Wells's novel *The World Set Free* (1914) provided a science fiction take on the mechanical war narrative, in much the same way that *The War of the Worlds* (1898) had adapted invasion fiction. Yet, unlike his earlier book, the composition of *The World Set Free* predates the height of the adventure trend it shares a focus with, having been largely completed by the end of 1913. Nonetheless, like the war fiction stories that were popular at the time of its publication, Wells's novel is also a prediction of the changes that technological advances might make to warfare. The fact that Wells predicted a war that would arrive in the 1950s and involve the dropping of atomic bombs complicates, but does not entirely hinder the comparison.

Whilst the hyperopic gaze of science fiction may seem to overlook the contemporary—fixing far beyond the technologically possible and any immediate future events—even the most far-fetched science fiction work cannot help but maintain a fundamental connection to the cultural and historical conditions in which it is produced and *The World Set Free* was certainly no exception. In a preface that was added to later editions of the book, Wells confirms that his more futuristic account was as much a product of the tense pre-war culture in which it was written as mechanical war fiction had been.

THE WORLD SET FREE was written under the immediate shadow of the Great War. Every intelligent person in the world felt that disaster was impending and knew no way of averting it, but few of us realised in the earlier half of 1914 how near the crash was to us. The reader will be amused to find that here it is put off until the year 1956.<sup>297</sup>

Wells goes on to congratulate himself for predicting the shape of the conflict correctly. The novel describes a war which arises when a belligerent Central European power suddenly attacks the Slav Confederacy, and England and France ally themselves in protection of the Slavs. The novel provides a fresh perspective and, as one that does not attempt to make peace with the traditional hero-centric narratives of adventure fiction, it can highlight the restrictions that the traditions of that genre imposed. Notably, the fact that Wells is able to tackle an issue that no mechanical war story would directly broach: the destruction that machines will rain down upon the bodies of man.

The long-term accuracy of Wells's munitions predictions may be attributed to the fact that he had whetted his imagination upon the speculative writings of radiochemist Frederick Soddy. Indeed, the novel is dedicated to Soddy and it names his book, *Interpretation of Radium* (1909), as the factual source from whence the science fiction proceeds. Soddy was one of a number of scientists who had recently shown

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<sup>297</sup> H. G. Wells, "Preface," in *The World Set Free*, London: Ernest Benn, 1927, i.

radioactivity to be the product of the transmutation of elements. Wells's novel describes a future in which the possibilities of harnessing that radioactivity as an energy source have been fully exploited and the world irrevocably transformed in the process. Bringing its position in the history of science full-circle, *The World Set Free* would later have the dubious honour of inspiring Leo Szilard, the physicist who led the Manhattan Project that developed the uranium-based atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Although Wells's novel makes some predictions about atomic weapons that proved relatively accurate in the long term, it should not be forgotten that *The World Set Free* is, in truth, inspired by the concerns that circulated in the pre-atomic period in which the book was conceived and written.

In the book's opening section Wells rehearses a history of mankind's will to power as a litany of technological milestones—tools, fire, steam, electricity, and, finally, radiation—the first chapter, entitled 'The New Source of Energy,' describes the period from 1930 to the start of a war in the mid-1950s. In 1933 a scientist had developed a process to induce the atomic disintegration of bismuth into gold, in a reaction that produced a small explosion of gas. The process is gradually refined and, in 1953, radioactivity begins to be used to power industrial engines. Oil and coal quickly become worthless, as does the formerly precious metal that is the reaction's by-product. The collapse in value of the key commodities of capitalism only serves to produce a more oppressive variant upon that economic system. Though the means of production are still owned by the few, atomic energy requires just a fraction of the labour that was required for excavating fossil fuels. The redundant former labouring class joins the bankrupted fossil fuel tycoons to form a massive unemployed and starving vagrant class.

A nuanced but, broadly speaking, accurate history of mankind is seen to diverge from reality with the discovery of the means to tap the energy of radioactive decay in 1930. The narrative is voiced like a textbook, until the dispassionate scholarly account segues into material attributed to an autobiographical novel that is said to have been published in the 1970s. Through synopsis and direct quotation, *Wander Jahre* provides a personal insight into the life of Frederick Barnet, the heir to a ruined coal-dealing family. When the war erupts, Barnet is conscripted into the army. The terrible conditions under which the impoverished majority now live makes active service a prospect that will at least get them fed. Ending with England on the brink of mobilisation, the first chapter invites the reader to make comparisons between the plot and the tensions then bubbling in Europe.

Wells portrays capitalism as close to indestructible: when the gold bullion that underpins the system is devalued, radioactive energy is able to replace it. The problem, Wells suggests, is division. Only in a world driven by co-operation and undivided by nationalism, can a new and peaceful existence possible. In this bleak economic dystopia Wells sows the germ of an argument for the creation of a 'world state'. The second chapter, 'The Last War,' returns to the direct voice of the future scholar, who speaks from within 'a sane and ambitious future order.'<sup>298</sup> By the middle of the twentieth century, the national political and judicial systems have lagged far behind developments in technology, are no longer sufficient to check the power of weaponised individuals. The annihilation of the allied War Office in Paris, in what transpires to be

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<sup>298</sup> Wells, *The World Set Free*, London: Macmillan, 1914, 82.



the first explosion of an atomic bomb, marks the point at which the war begins to spiral out of control. Lacking orders, a pugnacious aviator decides to avenge the attack by dropping atomic bombs upon Berlin. The chapter continues by following Barnet as bombardment begets bombardment and Europe is transformed into a hellish landscape, punctuated with the volcano-like craters. Once it finally becomes clear to all nations that continuing to fight with the powerful new weapons is untenable, an exhausted truce is declared.

In his attempt to show how technology might ramp up the destruction of international war, Wells needs no heroes. The fighting he describes is direct and more brutal. Barnet delivers a lengthy description of his first kill.

“‘Got you,’ I whispered, and pulled the trigger. [...] In the first instance when I felt that I had hit him I was irradiated with joy and pride [...] Then I saw the corn tops waving and had glimpses of him flapping about. Suddenly I felt sick. [...] In some way he was disabled and smashed up and yet able to struggle about. [...] For nearly two hours that Prussian was agonizing in the corn. [...] Then he jumped up [...] and then he fell like a sack and lay quite still and never moved again. He had been unendurable, and I believe someone had shot him dead.”<sup>299</sup>

As the ellipses suggest, Wells draws out the enemy soldier’s agonising death for much longer than is reproduced here and the extended suffering of the Prussian soldier provides counsel against acts of violence. The fact that a clean kill that would have caused no qualms, would instead have maintained in Barnet a sense of satisfaction links the act to other, less direct, forms of violence, like aerial bombardment—a link which Wells’s use of the verb ‘irradiated’ hammers home. In a subsequent section, Barnet witnesses a British soldier’s hand ‘smashed to a pulp’ by a German bullet.<sup>300</sup> The soldier’s reaction—‘cursing,’ ‘violent rage,’ ‘frantic [...] indignation’—is recorded at length. He is also attributed a realisation of ‘the evil silliness of war,’ a fact which hits him with the bullet that destroys his chance of ever rebuilding his livelihood. The proximity of the non-fatal woundings brings together the different nations of soldiers through their human vulnerability and suffering. The act ensures that, unlike the majority of mechanical war stories, the casual reader is not able to overlook the suffering of the ‘enemy’ or even to think of them as an ‘enemy’ in any traditional sense.

The dropping of atomic bombs ultimately culminates in a global end game that is seen to destroy not just human life and limb, but the very structure of human society. The final result is that all nationality is rescinded as part of an attempt to avoid future wars, resulting in the creation of a borderless world state. The world state recurs in H. G. Wells’s work, notably in his less literary writings *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Wells felt that the creation of a world state would be a positive remodelling of human affairs. In a preface to *The World Set Free*, he notes that the novel dramatises his argument that scientific knowledge will

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<sup>299</sup> Wells, *The World Set Free*, Macmillan, 110.

<sup>300</sup> Wells, *The World Set Free*, Macmillan, 110.

develop to the point at which 'separate sovereign states and separate sovereign empires are no longer possible in the world, that to attempt to keep on with the old system is to heap disaster upon disaster for mankind and perhaps to destroy our race altogether.'<sup>301</sup> From the erasure of nationality will arise the end of war because opposition can be managed within the system of government. By 1914, the hypothesis that technological advances might ultimately put an end to war had been circulating for many years. For example, in *Is War Now Impossible?* (1899) Ivan Bloch had argued that the growing power of machines could only lead to indefensible catastrophes or tedious periods of pointless entrenchment. Unfortunately, history would see Bloch proved right on both counts.

Despite the forty year time-shift Wells enacts, Barnet's experience of warfare as an infantryman is more in line with battles which would characterise the First World War than any of the battle-sequences that were depicted in mechanical war fiction. Around the bombs, Wells imagines large standing armies marching and entrenched. In one chillingly prescient line, Barnet is recorded as musing:

"'From Holland to the Alps this day,' I thought, 'there must be crouching and lying between half a million of men, trying to inflict irreparable damage upon one and other. The thing is idiotic to the pitch of impossibility. It is a dream. Presently I shall wake up.'"<sup>302</sup>

Unlike the mechanical war stories, Wells's more overarching vision of a technologically advanced war does not underestimate the human cost. The trouble mechanical war writers took to avoid broaching this issue is most obvious in the fact that all avoid descriptions of aerial bombardment, even though it was obvious that this would form a large part of aeroplane use in the coming war. The more or less indiscriminate attack upon an unprepared enemy by aerial bombardment offered little room for narratives of heroism. Whilst mechanical war fiction could not deal directly with situations in which machines are turned on bodies, the anxiety underwrites the entire trend. The refiguring of the hero, that most fundamental characteristic of the mechanical war stories, emphasises the weakness of man and the strength of machine. After all, a hero may not need to be strong to operate machinery, but neither do they have to be 'slim', 'boyish', or 'weak'.

## **BLAST**

*BLAST* appeared at a moment when machines were captivating the imagination of the British public. Despite a prediction of 'fair and warm' weather, which had appeared in the previous day's *Times*, Saturday 20 June began gloomily in north London. The unseasonable fog carried with it a threat of widespread disappointment, for, at Hendon airfield, crowds were gathering to witness the start of the second annual London–Manchester–London Air Race. As cancellation began to seem inevitable, the 'thick mist' which 'rendered it impossible to see further than half a mile or so away' cleared and, to the spectators' delight,

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<sup>301</sup> Wells, "Preface," in *The World Set Free*, London: Ernest Benn, ii.

<sup>302</sup> Wells, *The World Set Free*, Macmillan, 110-11. The speech marks in the quotation frame a phrased thought in the mind of a fictional character, which is then quoted by the narrator of Wells's novel.

the competing airmen launched their machines into the sky.<sup>303</sup> With their eyes fixed on the northern horizon, the excited crowd can be forgiven not noticing the 'steam-calliope pink' tornado that was touching down behind them in Vigo Street, Mayfair. *BLAST* had arrived.

Only, it hadn't quite. The Bodley Head's printers had noticed the references to ejaculation in Pound's poem 'Fratres Minores.' The copies would need to be opened, one by one, and redacted by hand.<sup>304</sup> The magazine would not be available to the public until early July. Nevertheless, the notion that *BLAST* was to be published on the same day as the London-Manchester-London Air Race is an irresistible 'opener' because the magazine is packed with condemnations of machine worship. The efforts that the Vorticists made to disassociate themselves from Futurism centred around a critique of the latter movement's avowed love for speeding lumps of polished metal. Yet, instead of simply throwing out the trope, the Vorticists stole and re-wired it.

Returning to the manifesto that Marinetti and Nevinson printed in the *Observer* can provide an explanation for their motives. More than simply asserting the support of the Vorticists, the manifesto appropriated the structure of the as yet unpublished *BLAST*. The column was divided up into two lists: things which the Futurists are '[f]or' and things which they are '[a]gainst'. The latter column includes a condemnation that, barring its conjunctions, could have been lifted directly out of the pages of the Vorticists' manifesto.

The pessimistic, sceptical and narrow veins of the English public, who stupidly adore the pretty-pretty, the commonplace, the soft, sweet, and mediocre, the sickly revivals of medievalism, the Garden Cities with their curfews and artificial battlements, the Maypole Morris dances, Aestheticism, Oscar Wilde, the Pre-Raphaelites, Neo-primitives and Paris.<sup>305</sup>

Marinetti was an arch-publicist and the *Observer* manifesto was a work of evil genius. Of course the Vorticists he named would protest about being called Futurists, but who would hear them in the pages of their little magazines? Moreover, given the content of the manifesto, any attempts they made to distance themselves from Futurism would be a repudiation of the Vorticist aesthetic that he had reflected back at them. Finally, by printing a Futurist manifesto that imitated the structure and aesthetic of *BLAST* before it even came out, who would ever believe that the Vorticists were not Futurists? Whether it preceded or was precipitated by Marinetti's publicity coup, the appropriation and refashioning of the Futurist's central trope that was enacted in *BLAST* functioned as a reply in kind.

Before the Futurist's trope of the machine could be re-built along Vorticist lines, it needed to be dismantled. Lewis got to work in the first section of *BLAST*, 'Great Preliminary Vortex.'

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<sup>303</sup> "Æolus", "London-Manchester-London Air Race," *Flight* 26.6 (June 26, 1914), 681.

<sup>304</sup> "Poems by Ezra Pound," *BLAST*, 48.

<sup>305</sup> Marinetti and Nevinson, "Futurism and English Art," 7.

AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism) bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes.<sup>306</sup>

The Futurist attachment to machinery is labelled 'sentimental' and 'melodramatic.' It is, according to Lewis, merely a romanticism of urbanity. Furthermore, he points out that machine worship was actually old-fashioned.

Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing, in his romantic delight with modern lodging houses was Futurist in this sense.

The Futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870.<sup>307</sup>

If his purpose had been merely to discredit the Futurists by disparaging their treatment of the machine, Lewis might have stopped there. Instead, by seeking instead to redefine the machine in Vorticist terms, he enacted the kind of overwriting that Marinetti had sought to achieve with his pre-emptive *Observer* manifesto. Moreover, the repurposing of the machine would be an attack, not just upon Futurism, but the continental roots of abstract art. In his review of *BLAST*, Richard Aldington argued that Vorticism was first and foremost an 'effort to look at art from an Anglo-Saxon point of view instead of from a borrowed foreign standpoint.'<sup>308</sup> From Lewis's point of view, the machine is an English thing, recalling the country's industrial history. Indeed, in Manifesto I, England is blessed for being an 'Industrial island machine.'<sup>309</sup> Of the litany of blessings directed at England, a great deal focus on its shipping industry. Here too machinery creeps in. The blessing of England begins at 'ITS SHIPS' and 'ALL PORTS', but the ports themselves are referred to as 'RESTLESS MACHINES' that teem with 'heavy insect dredgers' and 'monotonous cranes'.<sup>310</sup> Even the motors of the smallest vessels are singled out for praise.

BLESS these MACHINES that work the little boats across clean liquid space, in beelines.<sup>311</sup>

Lewis's references to machinery form a synchronistic tableau, a panning out from motorboats, to dredgers and cranes, to English ports, to all of Britain. Neither does it stop there. The global weather system that provides the British climate, from the Gulf Stream to the mountain ranges that direct the winds, is described as 'VAST MACHINERY.'<sup>312</sup> The mental picture Lewis creates is of Britain as the centre of a mechanised world. Moreover, the synchrony that the running machine metaphor provides ensures that its modernity cannot be mistaken for Futurism. The Vorticist machine stands for 'the Reality of the Present—not the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past.'<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> "Great Preliminary Vortex," *BLAST*, 8.

<sup>307</sup> "Great Preliminary Vortex," *BLAST*, 8.

<sup>308</sup> Aldington, "Blast," *Egoist* 1.14 (July 15, 1914), 272.

<sup>309</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 23.

<sup>310</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 22-3.

<sup>311</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 22.

<sup>312</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 11.

<sup>313</sup> "Great Preliminary Vortex," *BLAST*, 7.

The blasts and blesses of Manifesto I perform one the first principles of the Vorticist aesthetic laid out in Manifesto II.

We start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set up violent structures of adolescent clearness between two extremes.<sup>314</sup>

The array of directions in which the Vorticists' judgements are aimed results in a cacophony of condemnation and approbation that often seems arbitrary and sometimes absurd. Yet Lewis takes aim at those who would 'hang over this Manifesto with SILLY CANINES exposed.'<sup>315</sup>The 'violent structure' that divides people, institutions, and objects into the categories of superlatively good and bad seems to defy resolution, making the 'adolescent clearness' at the centre of the vortex appear to be a reference not to clarity, but to vacancy. However, within the selected objects (the 'chosen world') a good many of the blasts and blesses can be paired up. For example, the argument against 'codliver oil' [*sic*] and the argument for 'castor oil' are not as random as they might first seem. Cod liver oil is a lubricant for the human body. Castor oil, whilst it had medicinal applications as a laxative and unguent, was more widely used in the lubrication of rotary engines and, in particular, those that powered aeroplanes. Within this dialectic is contained an argument for the importance of maintaining the machine motor over the human body. When Lewis argues that '[d]ehumanization is the chief diagnostic of the Modern World', he refers to the influence of the machine upon humanity in a way that parallels the anxieties that underpin mechanical war stories like 'The Air Scout.'<sup>316</sup>

In accordance with the synthetic principle at the core of the Vortex, *BLAST* presents a dualistic account of the machine's relationship to the body. On the one hand, the machine is indirectly portrayed as the heir to human form. In the 'The New Egos' section of 'Vortices and Notes By Wyndham Lewis's, Lewis asserts that 'THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY.'<sup>317</sup> This statement brings to mind the other anxiety that drives mechanical war fiction, namely, the potential machines have to devalue human life, by turning men into disposable batteries. Like the visions in these stories, Lewis's statement points to the future, describing an ongoing progression of technology that imperils the bodily survival of humankind. Unlike the mechanical war fiction, the Vorticists' metaphorical account considers this to be a good thing. Reverence of the human body, human life, and nature are the motivations behind a mimetic art of the past. This kind of art, Lewis argues, is not a pure form of creation, as Vorticism will be, because it relies on the world for its inspiration.

In the same section, Lewis presents an alternative view of the machine in a scenario that also has a mirror in mechanical war narratives. Here the machine is prey.

We are proud, handsome and predatory.

We hunt machines, they are our favourite game.

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<sup>314</sup> "Manifesto II," *BLAST*, 30.

<sup>315</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 17.

<sup>316</sup> Lewis, "The New Egos," in "Vortices and Notes," *BLAST*, 141.

<sup>317</sup> Lewis, "The New Egos," in "Vortices and Notes," *BLAST*, 141.

We invent them and then hunt them down.<sup>318</sup>

In their most literal sense, Lewis's words describe a scenario of mechanical war—the creation and destruction of mechanical forms. The phrases appear in one of the more arcane sections of the *BLAST* manifesto. However, in its refusal of chivalric values ('we are not Templars') and European morality ('We have no verbotens'), Vorticist creation is positioned beyond the restrictions of historical and modern Western moral values. Of course, this was not a direct answer to questions about the nature of heroism in the machine age that mechanical war fiction was posing. Nonetheless, both tap into public anxiety about the damage that machines were soon to cause to human bodies. From a post-moral position, the Vorticist response is to reverse the terms of that anxiety, separating themselves from the concerns of humanity and aggrandising their art in the process.

*BLAST* roundly condemns the legitimate and experimental art worlds and, in particular, the Royal Academy of Arts and Futurist movements which are made to act as their representatives. The relationship between Vorticism and popular culture, however, is more complicated. Sometimes blasted and sometimes blessed, popular culture references pepper the manifestos—London Coliseum, Daly's Musical Comedy, the Gaiety Chorus Girl, clowns, itinerant performers, and the famous music hall performer Tonks. Even 'MASTERLY PORNOGRAPHY' gets a mention.<sup>319</sup> Pound's description of the cover being 'steam-calliope pink' was another attempt to bind *BLAST* to popular culture, describing, as it did, the colour of the organs that entertained audiences on showboats and at travelling fairs.

In the 'Great Preliminary Vortex', Lewis argues that 'Blast will be popular.'<sup>320</sup> Lewis was not averse to blowing his own trumpet. However, as well as suggesting that *BLAST* would sell a lot of copies, Lewis seems to have been suggesting that *BLAST* should be seen as a product of popular culture, and rather than emerging from the legitimate or experimental cultural spheres. The trumpet was something of a leitmotif for the belligerent and self-promoting aspects of vorticism. The stage arrangements for *Enemy of the Stars* detail costumes that involve 'MASKS FITTED WITH TRUMPETS', which are depicted in the only illustration of the play.<sup>321</sup> Moreover, the Brodsky cartoon from the *Egoist* (reproduced in the previous chapter) would show Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, and Pound trumpeting down a Jericho of established taste, represented by a top-hatted man reading a copy of *The Times*. As well as being a weapon in the Bible and a military signalling instrument, the trumpet might have been considered an appropriate symbol for Vorticism because it was also at the forefront of two popular music trends: community brass bands and ragtime, the latter having only come into prominence in Britain in 1912.<sup>322</sup> In his review of *BLAST*, Aldington supportively notes that, '[o]n two occasions I have seen copies of "Blast" brought into crowded rooms—full of ordinary sort of people—and from that moment "Blast" has been the sole topic of conversation.'<sup>323</sup> However, I expect we can presume that the 'crowded rooms' that Aldington frequented were not working men's clubs or East End pubs.

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<sup>318</sup> Lewis, "Our Vortex," in "Vortices and Notes," *BLAST*, 148.

<sup>319</sup> "Manifesto I," *BLAST*, 17.

<sup>320</sup> "Long Live the Vortex!," *BLAST*, 7.

<sup>321</sup> Lewis, "Enemy of the Stars," *BLAST*, 60, viiia.

<sup>322</sup> Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

<sup>323</sup> Richard Aldington. 'Blast.' *Egoist* 1.14 (July 15, 1914): 272.

In laying out the terms by in which *BLAST* would be a popular, Lewis was careful to strip out the word's associations with a particular social demographic.

It will not appeal to any particular class but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL. The moment a man feels or realizes himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time. Blast is created for this timeless, fundamental Artist that exists in everybody.

The Man in the Street and the Gentleman are equally ignored.

Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of individuals.<sup>324</sup>

In aligning Vorticism with the 'INDIVIDUAL', timeless and classless, he actually aligns it with the Stirnean ego, answerable to no higher cause or tradition.

I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything. [...] What's good, what's bad? Why, I myself am my concern, and I am neither good or bad.<sup>325</sup>

In 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work' Lewis returns to the machine as a metaphor for artistic creation. He describes Picasso's sculptures as being like children's imitations of machines, imagining that, on a much grander scale, they would appear to be works of engineering. However, for Lewis, the problem with Picasso's sculptures is that they are 'machines without a purpose.'<sup>326</sup> His argument that Picasso's machinery has no purpose is not, then, because they do not transport goods or manufacture matchsticks, but because he does not perceive them to generate their own meaning. Instead of taking building blocks from 'life', the Vorticists will forge their own materials and use them to build their own self-contained circuits of meaning.

Mechanical war fiction had been a last ditch attempt to rescue the base structure of the adventure story, the test and triumph of the hero protagonist. As the man who built machines, the engineer was able to be responsible for his own success or failure in an age where technology had begun to undermine the grand narrative of individual heroic endeavour. All the while, his unnecessary bodily weakness underlined the potential horror of mechanical destruction and, therefore, the moral problems that lurked beneath the surface of his exploits. These problems could only haunt the genre, since highlighting them, as Wells did in *The World Set Free*, left no place for the heroism that was adventure fiction's core. Soon afterwards, the moral ambiguities and twisting plotlines of spy fiction would arrive—narratives in which protagonists were usually flawed, sometimes even turned out to be double agents, and anyway part of a machine-like network of international intrigue. When Lewis suggested that '[e]ngineer or artist might conceivably become transposable terms, or one, at least, imply the other', he did not imply that the artist would be

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<sup>324</sup> "Long Live the Vortex!," *BLAST*, 7.

<sup>325</sup> Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington. London: A. C. Fifield, 1912.

<sup>326</sup> Lewis, "Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work," in "Vortices and Notes," *BLAST*, 140.

awkwardly enmeshed into crumbling structures of value.<sup>327</sup> He referred to the associated qualities of the engineer that war mechanical war fiction could not entirely banish. Lewis meant the engineer who creates independently functioning dynamisms that are in strength and capacity man's superior, who creates without care for morals and other pre-existing values, a man who is dehumanised by his determination to better the natural world.

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<sup>327</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "Futurism, Magic and Life," in "Vortices and Notes," *BLAST*, 135.



## Chapter Four

### An Anthology of Exceptional Poets, 1914

The years leading up to the war were a perilous time for poets in want of prestige. The market for solo volumes of verse by unestablished writers was virtually non-existent. Even a poet of some renown, like Pound, could not expect to shift more than a few hundred copies of their latest work. The obvious answer to the problem of visibility was collaboration, which in practice meant forming a movement, clubbing together with other poets in the production of an anthology, or both. Thus was a public without the 'leisure or zeal to investigate each volume as it appears' induced to purchase over nine thousand copies of *Georgian Poetry, 1911-12*, making its contributors a tidy profit both directly and indirectly, by the expansion of their fan-bases.<sup>328</sup>

Yet, if appearances in anthologies often resulted in increasing immediate public and critical attention, in the longer term, fortune could be fickle. The professional affiliations that were made during the pre-war period, both tacit (by appearing between the same book covers) and explicit (by pledging allegiance in manifestos), would turn out to be binding. Edward Marsh's preface to the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* suggested that the poets it contained were united solely by the fact that 'within the chosen period their work seemed to have gained some accession of power.'<sup>329</sup> Yet, when the second volume came out, reviewers began to speculate about the contributors' shared aesthetic aims and group style. Similarly, whilst Pound had explained the methods of Imagiste composition before *Des Imagistes* was published, many of its contributors would never have considered themselves to be part of the movement.

History has been unkind to a number of poets for a variety of reasons. As the new modernist scholars who are currently engaged in broadening the geographic scope of the field might tell you, not being a well-connected white Anglophone male could be a distinct disadvantage for an early twentieth century poet desirous of a literary legacy. In this chapter I am going to consider the role that anthologies played in shaping the career trajectories and literary legacy of three poets: the stalwart *Georgian Anthology* poet W. H. Davies, anthology abstainer Rose Macaulay, and one-poem-Imagiste Skipwith Cannell. The first made the mistake of involving himself with an experimentalism that would be disincorporated from modernist literature during the process of its legitimisation. The second rejected assimilation into any particular brand of experimentalism, ensuring that her poetry became invisible to literary critical accounts of the pre-war period that orientated themselves by 'isms'—which turned out to be most of them. The third gave Imagisme a moment's consideration and ended up being remembered as a mysterious footnote in the history of *Des Imagistes*.

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<sup>328</sup> Edward Marsh, "Prefatory Note to First Edition," *Georgian Poetry, 1911-12*, London: Poetry Bookshop, 1912.

<sup>329</sup> Marsh, "Prefatory Note to the First Edition."

In 1914, Edward Marsh, Ezra Pound, and Amy Lowell became commercial rivals by virtue of their interests in the anthology market. Through the publication of their anthologies—the *Georgian Poetry* series (1912-22); *Des Imagistes* (1914) and *Catholic Anthology, 1914-15* (1915); and *Some Imagist Poets* (1915-17)—they hoped to whet the public appetite for modern poetry and, particularly in the case of Pound and Lowell, to lay claim to the authority of arbiters within that field. It is accepted that the competition between the Georgians' and the Imagists was, at this early point, not fierce. Pound was invited to contribute to the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* and decided against it, not out of principle, but because his poems were tied up in other publishing concerns. The hard opposition between the readily comprehensible lyrical Georgian poetry and the 'difficult' poetry that descended from the Imagist line, which many feel continues to divide British poetry to this day, is widely seen to be the result of the sustained attack on Georgian poetics that was waged by later commentators, like T. S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell. Recently, Peter Howarth has argued that, though history has seen them divided, there are many correspondences between the Georgians and the Imagists. Furthermore, rather than a parallel and more moderate revision of preceding Edwardian poetics, Georgian poetry can be seen as developing partly in reaction to the more wholesale revisions of form and metre conducted by the Imagists.<sup>330</sup>

Accepting the more involved relationship between Georgian and Imagist poetics that Howarth proposes, I wish to argue that a division between Georgian and Imagist poets was nonetheless begun on the contents pages of their respective anthologies. This fracture, which was prized apart by later commentators, like Eliot and Edith Sitwell, has had a marked influence upon the long-term critical treatment of a number of poets. What began as casual affiliations with the Georgian or Imagist groups went on, in many cases, to have a definitive impact upon contributors' careers and literary legacies. Moreover, critical accounts have continued to insulate the Georgian and Imagists poets, which has had the effect of reinforcing the received narrative of Georgians *versus* Imagists, so that those poets who chose to involve themselves with neither group continue to be overlooked.

Davies, Macaulay, and Cannell were all resident in London for at least part of 1914, when the arrival of *Des Imagistes* first asserted a soft division between the more moderate and more extreme developments in modern poetry. Davies was a high-profile poet before he became a core contributor to the *Georgian Poetry* series. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement: Davies's inclusion was a sales boost for the series, which, in turn, provided the 'tramp poet' with literary legitimation and a significant portion of his financial income. Yet, by becoming enmeshed within the *Georgian Poetry* series, his popularity took a direct hit when the anthology ceased to be fashionable, leading to a situation in which his poetry spent a number of years out of print. Rose Macaulay resisted assimilation into the Georgian fold, emphasising her separatist position in the form and content of her first volume of verse. Whilst Macaulay has been remembered as a novelist, few are familiar with her poetical works, neither of which have ever been reprinted. Skipwith Cannell contributed one poem to *Des Imagistes*. Over the years, as critical interest in the anthology grew, he became known as the poet of 'Nocturnes', a minor Imagist only fit to appear in a list of *Des Imagiste* also-

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<sup>330</sup> Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

rans. His other work, highly varied in form and sometimes exceptional in quality, has been forgotten—never republished, never criticised, and hardly ever read.

### W. H. Davies

Before becoming a poet, W. H. Davies spent six years travelling in America and Canada, with little in the way of income, reliant upon the kindness of strangers and the inattentiveness of railway workers. If we are to believe the autobiographical accounts provided by the self-professed ‘Super-Tramp’, he found his itinerant life to be sweet and uncomplicated. Were it not for a major misadventure, he might never have returned to London and begun a literary career. As it was, his travels came to an abrupt end, when a failed leap onto a moving train resulted in a crushed foot that necessitated a below-knee amputation. A small family endowment, which had previously mitigated his circumstances on the road, financed his return to Britain. In 1905, whilst living in a grotty London hostel, he scraped together the funds to self-publish his first volume of verse, *The Soul’s Destroyer*, and therewith began his literary career.

Davies’s earliest reviewers celebrated the innocence and simplicity of his poetry. These qualities were seen to emerge from his pen naturally, as if they were stylistic by-products of the poet’s unusual life. Without the benefits of a university education and the wider exposure to poetry it implied, Davies was seen to have circumambulated the stale influence of rhetoric and, by doing so, had achieved the driving aim of modern poetry quite by chance. His fresh and direct voice was admired by modern British poets of all stripes—contributors to *Georgian Poetry*, *Des Imagistes*, and poets who contributed to neither anthology.

In recent years, critics have begun to question this longstanding account of Davies’s work, which conflates Davies the Nature poet and Davies the ‘natural’ poet. Belief in divine, natural, or reflex poetic talent has so waned that contrary assertions by artists are interrogated as a confidence trick. This is the legacy of modernist aesthetics and criticism, which was, and is so keen to manifest the wizard behind the workings that ‘difficulty’ has become its *appellation d’origine contrôlée*. Whether we see the decline of belief in the reflex poet as a condition which encouraged stylistically challenging writing, or *vice versa*, we accept that reading through ten or twelve Wordsworth poems is not an academic background that will produce a formally traditional but fresh poetic voice. The claims that reviewers made about Davies, claims which Davies embraced and developed, are dubious. Howarth touches upon the issue when he notes the longstanding difficulty with ‘identifying a single ‘real’ Davies, a figure who would unite the contrary evidences of simple innocent and skilful artist’.<sup>331</sup>

To connect up these two sides to Davies, it may be that we need to seek in his work a poetic sophistication with which he has rarely been credited. I would argue that Davies’s ‘simplicity’ and ‘innocence’—qualities that, having arisen from his lack of formal education, provided his Nature poetry with a much admired

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<sup>331</sup> Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 141.

spontaneity and sincerity—were a literary construct. In other words, Davies’s ‘natural poet’ persona, which provided such a perfectly complementary context for his textual products, was no less a product of the poets’ creative brain than were his poems.

If Davies was not a ‘natural’ poet, then it would stand to reason that his relationship with Nature would be less straightforward than his poetry suggests. Unlike the kingfisher, or the many other birds that appear in his poetry, the countryside was not Davies’s natural habitat. Certainly, the poet’s childhood had presented more opportunities for shoplifting than scrumpling. He had grown up in Newport in the 1870s, a town that had a population in excess of 25,000. As one of the poet’s many biographers notes, ‘[b]y 1888, when Davies was seventeen, Newport was the sixth busiest port in Britain, on a par with Glasgow’.<sup>332</sup> He was raised in his grandparents’ pub, which was centrally located, in view of the old town dock. During his years in America, he habitually sought urbanity, seeking paid work on ships and ranches until he had enough money to indulge in the intemperate delights of large cities. If a genuine exultation in nature underpins his pastoral lyrics, his nodding acquaintance with sheep and meadows developed later in life. Most likely, his interest in matters pastoral was stirred during his occasional hikes and daily constitutional walks around the small cottage in Kent that Edward Thomas rented from him in 1907. In any case, his passion for nature was not so fond that it prevented him moving back to London in 1914.

If Davies was less keen ‘to stand beneath the boughs’ than his fervent lyric voice had encouraged readers to suppose, it was a misconception that proved advantageous.<sup>333</sup> In Davies’s early solo volumes and anthology appearances, we can trace the poet’s attempts to develop and promote work which fused the reviewer’s conception of him as a ‘natural’ poet with exultations of nature. Indeed, it seems likely that, had the poetic voice been created by a university educated, middle-class writer, contemporary readers would never have unquestioningly supposed it to be a sincere and straightforward expression of the poet’s experience. Rather, they would have praised the poet for his powers of creative construction, as a skilled poetic dramatist. Yet, it was all the better for Davies that no such claims were made about his work. Quaint public preconceptions about the incompatibility of poverty and erudition, the level of rural exposure experienced by tramps, and the possibility of spontaneous poetic talent, allowed Davies to forge an ‘authentic’ and alluring poetic package.

There is certainly evidence that Davies possessed enough artistic skill and business acumen to realise, in both senses of the word, the creation and concealment of a ‘non-natural’ poetic. After an unsuccessful attempt at selling individual, privately published sheets of his poetry, Davies decided that the best course of action would be to put together a volume of verse. He soon found a publisher in C. A. Watts and Co., but they required a hefty subvention towards the publishing costs. Davies was able to arrange a loan from the trustee of his estate, but only on the proviso that he ‘save’ the first portion of it by forgoing his income for six months. Having enduring this period of extreme privation, the publishers were paid and the volume was printed. Watts and Co. then forwarded copies to a number of critics, but, much to Davies’s disappointment,

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<sup>332</sup> Lawrence Normand, *W. H. Davies*, Bridgend: Seren, 2003, 8.

<sup>333</sup> W. H. Davies, ‘Leisure’, *Songs of Joy and Other Poems*, London: A. C. Fifield, 1911, 15.

the book was nowhere reviewed. Finding himself saddled with two hundred unsold volumes, he decided he must find his own way to market them.

Davies's unique campaign of promotion involved scouring *Who's Who* for likely purchasers and reviewers. Copies found their way onto the desks of Edward Thomas and George Bernard Shaw. Their accounts of reading *The Soul's Destroyer* are parallel, with both describing the act of lifting Davies's work from an undifferentiated pile of amateurish slush and being immediately struck by its genius. The men became Davies's influential allies. Thomas would provide a number of positive reviews, set the poet up in the cottage in Kent, and assist Davies's in securing a Civil List pension. Shaw, who had received his copy with a letter requesting sale or return, wrote back to warn Davies that there wasn't a living to be made in verse, but included the price of a further eight copies. These, he instructed Davies, should be sent to literary critics. As a first step, Davies's promotional methods, unusual though they were, had been a great success. Davies had placed his work in influential hands and, by dint of the unusual method of its delivery, he had also highlighted his 'outsider' status—something his career would come to rely upon.

Uncommonly large for a solo volume, the poet's own edition of *The Soul's Destroyer* contained thirty-nine poems. When the trade edition appeared two years later, it would contain just fourteen of the original poems. It was, as such, an abridgement for the commercial market, containing a selection of the pieces that had appeared in the longer version but maintaining the original order. Though Davies received advice from the publishing house and from Thomas, he had the final say about which poems were selected for inclusion. The choice of poems can reveal much about Davies's first concerted attempt to negotiate a place in that market. Of the twenty-five poems that were excluded, twenty-two disappeared for good and, since the surviving three were only rescued posthumously, in Jonathan Barker's edition of Davies's selected works, we can presume that Davies meant for them to be stricken from the record.

Of the discarded poems, two were condemnations of man's cruelty to animals ('Unholy Meat' and 'The Devil's Guest'), another was a personification allegory along medieval lines, which included 'Fame', 'Regret', and 'Curiosity' as characters ('Fortune'), and another was a poem about a woman who gathers up the parts that drop off her thieving son's hanged corpse, so she can eventually bury him ('The Nightwalker'). These omissions indicate Davies's decision to refocus his poetic interests. Contrived forms and thorny castigations of animal cruelty were dispensed of, in favour of his shorter, celebratory nature lyrics. Grisly dramatic poems made way for dramatic poems that treated less disturbing topics. Simplicity and innocence, those qualities that Thomas and other reviewers of the first edition of *The Soul's Destroyer* had identified as Davies's greatest strengths, seem to have become the poet's selection criteria for the trade edition. This narrowing of range directly resulted in a widening of appeal, making Davies's work readily identifiable and reliable. It is not often we can align good poetry with the qualities of popular fiction, but the consistency with which Davies pursued his poetic formula in these early years bears comparison to the genre reliance that underpinned that work of writers like Arthur Conan Doyle, Ethel M. Dell, and Edgar Wallace.

Yet, as Davies was doubtlessly aware, sincerity was essential for the moderately progressive poets of the Georgian period. In the nature lyric, Davies hit upon a form in which he could integrate the most positive

aspects of his 'tramp' identity. When composing *New Poems* (1907), Davies continued the project he had begun with slimming down the original *The Soul's Destroyer*. He threw out the variation, metrical and thematic, and determinedly left behind professions of universal human truths and literary allusions, in favour of a poetry that emanates from subjective experience of a man much simpler, in every sense of the word, than Davies was. At this early point, the essential paradox of Davies's poetic life was established. He became a poet of poems about a naïve poet's experience of the world and, if he hoped that people would accept the naïve persona as the source of the poetry, he was not disappointed.

Using the skills he displayed in the composition of his dramatic poems of *The Soul's Destroyer*, Davies began the long-term project of constructing a poetic voice that indulged the public's expectations of his tramp-like sensibilities. As a creature of the outdoors, the tramp must have a direct and uncomplicated connection with nature. Who better to sentimentalise all that we are missing out on, as we trundle towards suburbia on the train? It is this primary process of self-fashioning that Davies's refers to when he writes '[...] it is quite certain that my fame will last. If I am not immortal as a poet, I shall be immortal as the greatest literary fraud of the twentieth century.'<sup>334</sup> It is not my intention to demean Davies's poetry by challenging the sincerity of his voice. For the experimental stylists, sincerity was not highly prized. What Davies's work demonstrates is an all-encompassing coherency of creative expression, akin to the self-mythologisation and autobiographical embellishment that underpins the work of writers like Pound, Lewis, and, in particular, Joyce.

In a chapter devoted to the form of W. H. Davies's poetry, Howarth writes from a position broadly in agreement with Shaw and Thomas' assessment of Davies's poetics.<sup>335</sup> However, for Howarth, Davies's simplicity was not the result of writing 'about sheep and cows, but because his lack of proportion, his blithe mixture of the inappropriate as well as the inspired, indicates that his poetry's beauty comes despite its author's intentions.'<sup>336</sup> The poem's lack of proportion, which he compares with the 'unified field perspective of naïve art',<sup>337</sup> makes it difficult to intuit a single unifying view behind it. Moreover, 'the utter identification of the poet with the poem makes the sheer obviousness of Davies's poems quite impersonal'.<sup>338</sup> Combined with the 'recycling' of images, Howarth notes as an aside, 'the poems seem cooked up according to formula rather than experience'.<sup>339</sup> Whilst Howarth's assessment of Davies's form is incisive, the formulaic aspect of Davies's nature lyrics warrants further exploration, particularly because Davies's first volume did not exhibit a 'lack of perspective'.

Like the majority of the poems that appeared in the trade edition of *The Soul's Destroyer*, the titular poem is not of a piece with Davies's later nature lyrics.

London! What an utterance the mind finds here!  
In its academy of art, more rich

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<sup>334</sup> Davies, *Later Days*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1925, 32.

<sup>335</sup> Howarth, "The Simplicity of W. H. Davies," *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 129-46.

<sup>336</sup> Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 130.

<sup>337</sup> Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 145.

<sup>338</sup> Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 31.

<sup>339</sup> Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, 133.

Than that proud temple which made Ophir poor,  
And the resources famed of Sheba's Queen.  
And its museums, hoarding up the past,  
With their rare bones of animals extinct;  
And woven stuffs embroidered by the East  
Ere other hemispheres could know that Peace  
Had trophies pleasanter to win than war;<sup>340</sup>

These lines meet few of the criteria that we have come to think of as characteristic of a Davies poem. The urban focus, the highbrow allusions, and the complex and subtle form are an ill fit with accounts that paint Davies as a natural poet. At several points in the poem, Davies even undertakes what Eliot would later refer to as 'approximating' to a metre. In line seven for example, a sudden line of perfect iambics punch through the less regular verse. Elsewhere, the rhyme provides the rhythm, quickening the tempo with a half-rhyme between the ends of line seven and eight, before providing a conclusive pause with the arrival of the first full rhyme at the end of the section's end ('poor' with 'war'). Certainly, there is no lack of proportion to be found in the narrative, which remains focused and well paced throughout.

Given its diversity and worldliness, it seems strange that Thomas appreciated *The Soul's Destroyer* principally for its 'simple, lucid expression of beauty and joy'. In Thomas' eyes, Davies's poems were 'of such astonishing purity that I could scarcely endure the stale sight of half the things that met my eyes in the street after reading the book.'<sup>341</sup> Yet, of the fourteen poems that Thomas helped Davies select for the trade volume, half were about alcohol, tramps, hostels, and death—hardly the kind of subjects that might lead one to balk at a few shop signs and advertisements. It was a review that better fits the kind of verses that Davies had only recently begun writing and, given the pair's proximity, with both of them writing in rooms of the Kent cottage, it could be that newer poems were at the forefront of Thomas' mind as he composed his review.

Indeed, Davies's second volume of verse, *New Poems*, was composed so quickly that it came out shortly before the trade edition of *The Soul's Destroyer*. In this volume, Davies makes his first attempts at the kind of poetry that has come to define him.

When I came forth this morn I saw  
Quite twenty cloudlets in the air;  
And then I saw a flock of sheep,  
Which told me how those clouds came  
there.

[...]

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<sup>340</sup> Davies, "The Soul's Destroyer," *The Soul's Destroyer*, London: Alston Rivers, 1907, vii.

<sup>341</sup> Edward Thomas, "A Poet by Birth," *Daily Chronicle*, 21 October 1905, 3.

I gazed me up, I gazed me down,  
And swore, though good the likeness was,  
'Twas a long way from justice done  
To such white wool, such sparkling grass.<sup>342</sup>

Here we find a rigorous but uninspiring metre, obvious end rhymes, and repetition of imagery—all of which, are designed to insinuate an unsophisticated author. Davies adopts a vocabulary that is bucolic and child-like ('cloudlets' and "'Twas"). There had occasionally been grammatical errors in his earlier work, but the mismatch in 'came there' and the pronoun repetition that begins the final stanza seem deliberate solecisms. This poem and the many others like it that appeared in *New Poems*, are Davies's first attempts at a new kind of poetry. There was, as yet, something off in their balance; *New Poems* was not successful and its reviewers offered more moderate praise than they had to the original *Soul's Destroyer*. Too much Nature poet and not enough natural poet, the marriage of simplicity and profundity was, at this early point, still something of a work in progress.

Nearly every review of Davies's third solo volume, *Farewell to Poesy* (1910), worried that the poet meant the title to be taken literally. This is hardly surprising, given the subject and tone of the poems with which it opens, which offer such lines as 'The poet in my soul is dying' and 'An overpowering staleness holds'.<sup>343</sup> Davies's first poems allude to reveal depression and writers' block, but the theme is not continued across the volume. If the depression it details is sincere, a fact that is difficult to verify given the unreliable, sanitised accounts provided by Davies in his autobiographies, then the poor reception of his previous volume may have been a contributing factor. Certainly, *Farewell to Poesy* pursues the nature lyric less single-mindedly than *New Poems* had. Here and there, more complicated and darker poems appear, like 'The Idiot and the Child', which concerns the unaccountable nature of death and maternal love.<sup>344</sup> There is even a brief return to the theme of animal cruelty in 'The Dumb World'.<sup>345</sup> Nevertheless, more familiar Nature poems still dominate, like 'The Green Tent' which compares the comfortable shelter the natural world offers beggars to the hardships of the life of men who esteem riches, or 'No Master', in which the poetic voice decries the 'slavery' of waged work.<sup>346</sup>

In the long, penultimate poem, 'The Philosophical Beggar', Davies provides some insight into the poetic voice of his nature lyrics. Here, the poetic voice is that of a beggar. He describes a meeting with an old man in the forest, whose only pleasure is to work.<sup>347</sup> His occupation, which makes rest and socialising a loathsome obstruction, is not explicitly stated, but poetic composition is suggested.

Then with a pencil and a book he went  
Mumbling and writing, into the deep woods.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Davies, "The Likeness," *New Poems*, London: Elkin Matthews, 1905, 12.

<sup>343</sup> Davies, "Farewell to Poesy," and "The Dark Hour", *Farewell to Poesy*, London: A. C. Fifield, 1910, 9-10.

<sup>344</sup> Davies, "The Idiot and the Child," *Farewell to Poesy*, 12.

<sup>345</sup> Davies, "The Dumb World," *Farewell to Poesy*, 19-20.

<sup>346</sup> Davies, "The Green Tent," and "No Master," *Farewell to Poesy*, 16, 19.

<sup>347</sup> Davies, "The Philosophical Beggar," *Farewell to Poesy*, 40-46.

<sup>348</sup> Davies, "The Philosophical Beggar," *Farewell to Poesy*, 41.



Whilst the busyness of ants might provide the old man with some inspiration, nature has become principally a means of seclusion for this unsympathetic misanthrope. Left behind, the tramp waxes about the lot of the idle man, comparing the beggar's life to that of those born rich. His opinions about the comfort of nature and the tyranny of employment are familiar from the nature poems which appear earlier in the volume. Then, lest there should be any confusion between the poetic voice and Davies, the idler reveals an acquaintanceship with the 'poet-tramp'.

I knew Will Davies well; a beggar once,  
Till he went mad and started writing books.  
Nature, I swear, did ne'er commit worse crime  
Than when she gives out genius to the poor;  
He is a leper every man would shun;  
A lighthouse upon the rocks of Want,  
To warn men, with his light, to keep away;<sup>349</sup>

In his 'Want' for 'Respect', poor 'Will Davies's has lost the capacity for simple joys. He positions himself stranded between the fictitious personalities of the poem.

Whilst unwrapping a gift of bread, the poetic voice finds a magazine page on which a poem by Davies is printed, which is then 'pasted' into the poem. This sub-poem, which is given no title, continues the theme and form of the poem 'Selfish Hearts', that had appeared earlier in the book. In 'Selfish Hearts', the rich man and the beggar are compared: 'O selfish pair!/ I know not which/ Is happiest—/ So poor, or rich.'<sup>350</sup> Linked by their iambic dimeter, a verse form that appears nowhere else in the volume, and their simply rhymed quatrains, Davies's lyric in 'The Philosophical Beggar' concludes the argument that the first poem begins. The 'beggar [...] of all men,/ Enjoys most life', because rich men simply develop more ostentatious desires which they must then struggle to satisfy. 'The Philosophical Beggar' provides a rare example of Davies being open about the affectedness of his simple voice. By surrounding the more simple verse that is attributed to 'Will Davies's with the more elaborate poetry he attributes to the tramp, Davies reveals the complexity of his position *qua* sincerity. Further, by linking the embedded poem with an earlier poem in the volume, he underlines the constructed nature of his other, seemingly more direct works. Though he maintains that his poetic talent is a gift from nature, he tacitly admits that his personal perspective is irreducible to the poetic voice of his nature poems.

Though he produced a large number of solo volumes, anthology appearances were the backbone of the poet's career. His first anthological contribution came early, when he appeared in Edward Thomas' *The Pocket Book of Poems and Songs for the Open Air* in 1907—the year that Davies's career took off. Excluding periodicals and the many volumes of his own selected, collected, and complete works, Davies's poetry has since appeared in over two hundred anthologies. Through a programme of careful selection, Davies was

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<sup>349</sup> Davies, "The Philosophical Beggar," *Farewell to Poesy*, 45.

<sup>350</sup> Davies, "Selfish Hearts," *Farewell to Poesy*, 18.

able to use his earliest anthology appearances to promote the parts of his oeuvre that most reinforced the identity that reviewers and the public marvelled at—the tramp savant, able to tap pure poetry from nature like sap. He did not shrink from poems that reminded readers of his years as a tramp, but other works, particularly those which meditate upon the construction of his literary persona, were not deemed appropriate for anthologies and the broader, less specialised readership they sought to procure.

In the first few years of publication, when the co-ordinates of his literary future were being set, Davies kept a tight reign on his anthologists. He used his strong anthological presence to reinforce a definite public image, pushing forward those poems that seemed to emanate from the ‘simple and innocent’ perspective. He only agreed to appear in *Georgian Poetry*—an anthology series that would provide him with a sizeable proportion of his early exposure and income—on the condition that he retained the right to select the poems that would appear there. His self-determination was such that one of his favourite poems, ‘The Kingfisher’, was included in the first volume of the series, even though its publication date meant it did not fit the book’s chronological remit, which was otherwise strictly enforced. So, whilst it is certainly true that anthologies have tended to republish a small canon of Davies’s nature lyrics in the seventy years since the poet’s death, the focus and, to a large extent, the precise selection was determined by Davies’s own choice of anthology pieces.<sup>351</sup>

If Davies’s role in establishing his anthological legacy has been underestimated, so too has his influence upon the *Georgian Anthology* series. Over a period of eleven years, a fluid forty-strong army of poets contributed to *Georgian Poetry*. Critics have made various attempts to break this number down into a series of more manageable sub-groups, usually based on the scale, timing, and qualities of the poets’ contributions. Robert Ross divided the contributors into two main camps—the original, generative Georgians and the later neo-Georgian contributors who appeared to mimic their style. The latter group have subsequently come to be known as the ‘Squirearchy’—a testament to the influential position that J. C. Squire enjoyed within their ranks. Amongst Ross’ original Georgians are a core of poets who contributed to four or more of the volumes and, by virtue of this fact, were amongst the largest contributors to the series. Davies was the sixth largest contributor, committing forty-one pages (4.6%) of the series’ total content, with Abercrombie (8.8%), Gordon Bottomley (6.9%), Gibson (6.4%), Drinkwater (5.5%), Walter de la Mare (5.1%) contributing more and Monro (4.2%) providing slightly less. Some allowance can be made for the fact that Abercrombie and Bottomley were interested in verse dramas, meaning that their contributions were often much longer than most. To this group should be added Brooke (3.2%) who was able to amass his sizeable contribution in the first two issues. Given his close friendship with Edward Marsh, it is likely that he would have continued to contribute to the series, had he not died in 1915.

The first volume was an instant commercial success, selling an estimated 9,000 copies by the end of 1913. By Marsh’s estimate, sales for the volume would eventually total 15,000 copies. By early 1914, Marsh had begun putting together the next volume of the anthology. By August, selections had been made and publication was planned for November. The arrival of war postponed the volume, which eventually

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<sup>351</sup> ‘The Kingfisher’, for example, has appeared in more than twenty anthologies and ‘Leisure’, in more than thirty.

appeared a year later, as *Georgian Poetry 1913-15*. Barring a few additions, like the late Brooke's celebrated war sonnet, *The Soldier*, the volume followed the plans laid down during 1914. For this reason, Ross argued that both volumes should be conceived of as 'pre-war' texts.<sup>352</sup> As such, the volume can be considered contemporaneous with *Des Imagistes*. Marsh estimated that 19,000 copies of the second volume were sold, outselling the next three volumes. To put these sales in perspective, Pound would expect to shift between 250 and 500 copies of a solo volume.<sup>353</sup> Only two contemporary poets are known to have exceeded the sales of *Georgian Poetry*.<sup>354</sup> John Masefield, author of *The Everlasting Mercy*, would become one of them—his *Collected Poems* (1923) would go on to sell an estimated 200,000 copies.<sup>355</sup> The late Rupert Brooke was to become the other market giant. The first edition of his *Poems* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1911) would run to thirty-seven impressions—twenty-two of which were made before the end of the war—and eventually sold in excess of 100,000 copies. Christopher Hassall estimates that Brooke's works had sold a combined total of 300,000 copies by 1923.<sup>356</sup>

Whilst Davies's inclusion in the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* was a key selling point, there were a number of others. Brooke, Masefield, and T. S. Moore also brought with them strong public followings. As well as the pull exerted by individual poets, a book that promised to deliver a cheap but thorough introduction to the modern scene was able to appeal to a wide pool of non-specialist readers. Sales of the anthology quickly outstripped those of Davies's solo works. For the first time, he found himself in a position in which his anthological exposure had a greater influence upon his public image than his own books. Whatever Davies had expected from the first volume of *Georgian Poetry*—and we must presume that all involved were pleasantly astonished by the volume's sales—his push for the ineligible *Kingfisher* was worth the trouble. Many biographers have mentioned Davies's fondness for this particular poem, in which the beauty of the kingfisher is likened to the peacock and its preference for lonely nooks over king's lawns is questioned. In the final stanza, Davies answers for the bird, finding his own preferences to be parallel.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;  
                                   Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind;  
 I also love a quiet place  
                                   That's green, away from all mankind;  
 A lonely pool, and let a tree  
 Sigh with her bosom over me.<sup>357</sup>

The poem is arguably the first instance in which Davies was able to convincingly balance the simplistic perspective of the 'tramp' with the sonorous poetic abilities he had displayed in his earlier poetry. Like the *Kingfisher*, the poet is unambitious and prefers to produce beauty unobserved. Of course, publishing the

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<sup>352</sup> Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-22*, Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967, 136.

<sup>353</sup> A. Walton Litz and Lawrence Rainey, "Ezra Pound," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, VII, *Modernism and the New Criticism*, eds A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 73

<sup>354</sup> Timothy Rogers, ed., *Georgian Poetry 1911-12, The Critical Heritage*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 9.

<sup>355</sup> Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, 128.

<sup>356</sup> Christopher Hassall, *Rupert Brooke: A Biography*, London: Faber and Faber, 1964, 528.

<sup>357</sup> Davies, "The Kingfisher," *Georgian Poetry, 1911-12*, 63.

poem undermines the poem's central argument, which *de facto* asserts the poet's lack of self-reflection and, in line with my argument so far, I see design rather than accident in this paradox.

Thomas called Davies's career a 'fortunate accident', Walter de la Mare implies much the same when he calls his work 'naïf and fresh' and wonders at the possibility of his composition being intuitive.<sup>358</sup> The trend is kept up in the work of modern biographers, although they seem to focus upon the fortune of his emergence at a point where market conditions were good for his work. Lawrence Normand argues that if 'Edward Thomas was the first lucky break of Davies's career then the volumes of *Georgian Poetry* were the second,' adding that he was particularly lucky to be writing at the moment when the *Georgian Anthology* came out because 'he fitted their requirements so well.'<sup>359</sup> Normand's view presumes that the *Georgian Anthology* arrived with a readymade aesthetic, into which Davies happened to fit. However, as Ross has noted, *Georgian Poetry* developed its aesthetic unity organically, as the contributors influenced and were influenced by their involvement with the anthology series. Davies was instrumental in the development of the Georgian aesthetic.

In a review of the first volume of *Georgian Poetry*, Henry Newbolt raised the question of whether the book is 'merely an agreeable and various anthology, or [...] something more? Has it the force of accumulated evidence? and if so, what does it prove?'<sup>360</sup> Reviewers with no direct connection to the volume—though most were acquainted with Marsh and Brooke and, often, had been prodded to put pen to paper—disagreed over the degree to which the volume had contrived to define and direct a movement in modern poetry. Lawrence was more ambitious, arguing that the Georgian movement represented an awakening from the nihilistic lie of Nietzsche, Hardy, Flaubert, and Ibsen, towards a joyful and bodily vitality. In phrases that emphasise his own artistic aims—'I look at my hands as I write [...] I am full of awe for the flesh and blood that holds this pen.'—Lawrence posits a revolt from revolt, towards an embodied subjectivity. But Lawrence was the exception. Most reviewers did not attempt to define any overarching aesthetic principles by which the poets of *Georgian Poetry* could be linked.

Equating the volume with age-representative anthologies, like Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (1912), John Buchan suspected no choreography. He felt that the formulation of correspondences between the Georgian poets was a matter for posterity—'[i]s there any special quality which is to mark this new Georgian era? Perhaps it is too early to say.'<sup>361</sup> Newbolt did not agree that it was too early to speculate. In answer to his own question—whether or not *Georgian Poetry* had 'the force of accumulated evidence'—Newbolt wryly notes that 'two entirely opposite answers will be given by two classes of people.' Those who consider the 'poem apart from the poet', as a work of 'skilled craftsmanship, an external or decorative scheme with a possible perfection of its own', will see no unity, only 'chaos, if not a discord'.<sup>362</sup> In sum, those concentrating on the craft of poetic form will see variety in the anthology. The other group, those who 'look rather to the essential elements of poetry than to its external form' will see the poems

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<sup>358</sup> Rogers, *Georgian Poetry 1911-12, The Critical Heritage*, 91, 112.

<sup>359</sup> Normand, *W. H. Davies*, 93.

<sup>360</sup> Henry Newbolt, "Georgian Poetry," *Poetry and Drama*, March 1913, 45-52.

<sup>361</sup> Unattributed (John Buchan), "Georgian Poetry," *The Spectator*, January 18, 1913, 107.

<sup>362</sup> Newbolt, "Georgian Poetry," 45-52.

linked by three qualities: 'poetic imagination' (the act of transfiguring experience into poetry); 'constructive power' (the creation of an apposite form); and 'truth of diction' (plain-speaking, a quality inherited from the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge).

The position that Howarth takes in *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* is in line with the propositions Newbolt makes in his review. Georgian poets consider form to be an intrinsic feature of poetic expression, they must avoid rhetoric in favour of the vocabulary of everyday speech, and they must seek to poeticise lived experience. The first two points are fundamental to Davies's work, but, on the third point, the test of sincerity, Davies's best known poetry falls down. All the earlier positive reviews of Davies's work had dwelt upon the poet's personality.

The happiest poetry gains from its readers not only admiration but a warm and familiar regard for its writer. So it is with Mr. Davies's work. It is naïf and fresh with a winning personality. Its art seems to be (yet how can it be?) purest intuition.<sup>363</sup>

A poet's style tells us how he feels, and Mr Davies's words and images make us think two things about him; we say, only quite a simple man would have wanted to say that, and only a delicate mind could have found that way of saying it. [...] in the place of a charming convention we feel rather the influence of a definite personality.<sup>364</sup>

Celebrating Davies's work as though it were evidence of his naïve, intuitive, and simple personality, permitted zero separation between poet and poem. In such a way, the reviewers praised the 'truth of diction' that they thought they had found in Davies's work. Yet, as evidence to the contrary amassed in his more complicated and less anthologised poetry, reviewers and *Georgian Poetry* co-contributors began to question their initial conclusions.

Soon after receiving a copy of *Foliage*, which was published in September 1913, Lawrence wrote to Marsh about Davies. Davies was 'like a linnet that's got a wee sweet song, but it only sings when it's wild', lamenting that 'he's made himself a tame bird – poor little devil.'<sup>365</sup> In Lawrence's opinion, Davies was losing his vitality and his spontaneity—the key ingredients of praiseworthy poetry. Like his other *Georgian Poetry* contemporaries, Lawrence is guilty of accepting as genuine the counterfeit earnestness of Davies's early nature lyrics. As such, he interprets the formulaic aspect of Davies's third volume of verse, in which, according to Lawrence, he rolls out lyric after lyric like 'Birmingham tin-ware', as a falling off in the poet's ability to express himself.<sup>366</sup> Yet, however much he had been praised for it in the past, sincere spontaneity and vitality were not central to Davies's artistic programme.

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<sup>363</sup> Walter De la Mare, "An Elizabethan Poet and Modern Poetry," *The Edinburgh Review*, (April 1913), 377-86.

<sup>364</sup> Unattributed, "Some Poets of To-Day," *The Nation*, March 8, 1913, 934, 936.

<sup>365</sup> A letter from D. H. Lawrence to Edward Marsh, dated October 28, 1913, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Aldous Huxley (The Viking Press: New York, 1932), 153-4.

<sup>366</sup> A letter from D. H. Lawrence to Edward Marsh, dated 28 October 1913, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 153-4.

As Davies's work lost favour with his *Georgian Poetry* contemporaries, his popularity with the public was reaching its high-water mark. By the time that 'Wasted Hours' appeared in the final volume of *Georgian Poetry* in November 1922, it had already been published twice. It had first appeared as 'How Many Buds', in large-circulation American monthly, *Harper's Magazine*, in March 1922. After that, it had been published in Davies's twelfth volume of poetry, *The Hour of Magic*, in October 1922. There is no record of the print run for the first edition of the volume but, based on other volumes of his work in the early twenties, we can assume it was around 1,500.<sup>367</sup> An American edition by Harper & Brothers and a 'special large paper edition' of 110 copies were brought out at the same time. It seems that supply outstripped demand, however, since there appears to have been no second impression (nor subsequent editions) of this volume. This was an unprecedented predicament for Davies. Nevertheless, by the time it appeared in *Georgian Poetry*, the poem had already been printed in excess of 55,000 times, with its appearance in *Harper's* ensuring that more than 50,000 of the copies had already been sold. Subsequently, the poem would be republished a further five times in sundry of Davies's collected, selected, and complete works, adding up to about another 22,000 copies. By comparison, the benefits brought by the poem's appearance in *Georgian Poetry 1920-22* would be paltry. The series had been experiencing its own decline and the final volume would sell just 8,000 copies.

As the *Georgian Poetry* series came to an ignoble end, critics first began to argue that Davies's anthological presence had become a burden upon his wider career.

When you are a poet more than usually intolerant of rose-spectacled Arcady and cunning in your craft as any diamond-cutter, it is hard to be condemned to a perpetual diet of grass in the unrelieved company of sheep and cows. Yet it is so much more convenient to convert a poet into an *idée fixe* than to apprehend his intimations or observe his growth. He is docketed safely in his pigeon-hole and is only produced to give light relief or heavy substance (according to the part allotted to him) when the next anthology makes its appearance.<sup>368</sup>

This view that Davies had become entrapped by his reputation as a simple nature poet is fundamentally sound, though it denies Davies's agency in the development of his early public persona. This quotation appeared in a review of *The Hour of Magic*, a volume in which Davies makes a clear attempt to begin a new poetic endeavour—only the poem 'Pastures' recalls his earlier work. Previously, Davies's uncomplicated use of the first-person had lent credence to the idea that the poet was sincere, united with the poetic voice, and indivisible from the poem. Whilst this mode is not entirely dispensed with in *The Hour of Magic*, it occurs less frequently and its legitimising effect is much complicated by the appearance of poems in which the 'I' is dramatic. In 'Two Women', for example, Davies gives this personal poetic voice to 'The Wife'. Though it is certainly true that Davies was attempting to develop his work in a new direction, he continued

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<sup>367</sup> Jonathan Cape had taken over publishing rights to Davies's works in 1921 and the usual print run for comparable volumes of Davies's verse they printed during this period was 1,500, e.g. *Secrets* (1924) and *A Poet's Alphabet* (1925). See Sylvia Harlow, *W. H. Davies: A Bibliography*, Winchester: St Paul's Biographies, 1993, 74-80.

<sup>368</sup> Unattributed, "The Mysticism of W. H. Davies," *The Saturday Review* 134 (October 28, 1922), 638.

to place his nature lyrics in anthologies and, in 1922, when compiling the Poetry Bookshop's *Shorter Lyrics of the Twentieth Century, 1900-1922*, he selected just one poem to represent his career—'The Kingfisher'.

At around the same time that the final volume of *Georgian Poetry* came out, Davies was trying his hand at editorial work, rekindling the magazine *Form*. This project occupied him from October 1921 to January 1922, after which Davies was forced to admit defeat due to poor sales. In *Form*, he prints a number of his poems under false names. Then, apparently unable to suppress his much reported vanity, Davies finally offers an oblique explanation for the half-hearted attempts to anonymise his work. In his third editorial, as part of an introduction to a poem ascribed to the entirely plausible pseudonym Ebenezer Winkle, Davies complains about his position in the market.

If this poem were written by Thomas Hardy, it would find its admirers; but if W. B. Yeats wrote it, the world would think he had gone mad. Which means that we expect certain authors to do certain kinds of work, and, when they depart from that rule, we see no merit in their efforts: which shows how foolish we are.<sup>369</sup>

The poem in question was 'A Woman's History', which would be included in *The Hour of Magic* when it came out later that year.

In 'A Woman's History', Davies chronicles the tragic life of Mary Price in a series of vignettes: Mary Price mourns the death of a bird, aged five; shortly before her fifteenth birthday, she is forced into marriage with the man who took her virginity; at thirty-five, when her husband dies, she scandalises her neighbours by turning to a lover for comfort; the poem leaves her at seventy-five, skinning live eels and beating a fish-stealing cat to death. This is subject matter, he implies, that is acceptable from Hardy, but not from Davies. It is an idea that he expands upon in *Later Days*.

Now if I sent this poem ['Come Away, Death'] to an editor it would probably be returned, and another, whose subject was a butterfly or bird, a daisy or a tree, would be accepted. The reason for this is that I have been labelled as a Nature poet, whom the deeper problems of life do not concern.<sup>370</sup>

If, in the 1920s, Davies had found himself at the mercy of magazine editors and anthologists, only able to get his nature lyrics into print, he must be considered a victim of his own early success. Though critics like Edith Sitwell attempted to disassociate Davies from the Georgian group that had, to a large extent, been re-created in his image, he could never quite escape from the circularity of his early poetic. The public belief that he had artfully engendered in 'Will Davies—the natural Nature poet' was too strong. As a result, he was unable to pursue successfully new avenues in poetic development after public interest in the Georgian nature lyric had waned.

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<sup>369</sup> Davies, *Form* 3.1 (January 1922), 177-92.

<sup>370</sup> Davies, *Later Days*, 104-5.

Most interesting is the fact that, in the years since critics like Ross revived *Georgian Poetry* as a legitimate topic for scholarly enquiry, nobody has commented upon the constructed nature of Davies's Nature poet persona. This is despite the appearance of a wealth of poetry and commentary in which Davies demonstrates that there is more to him than 'simple' nature lyrics.

## Rose Macaulay

Pity poor Eddy Oliver for his earnest enthusiasm for everything. The hero of Rose Macaulay's novel *The Making of a Bigot* is 'for': Conservatism, Liberalism, and socialism; home rule and unionism; High Church and Low Church; classical art and post-impressionism; poetic realism and the Poetry Society. The vigour with which he pursues each of these causes wins him friendship and respect, until, that is, his competing commitments come to light. He becomes a professional failure—he fails as a lay churchman, as a temporary overseer of a socialist club, as a literary critic, and as a little magazine editor. His social life lurches from disaster to disaster, as the people that Eddy brings together antagonise each other. Unable to abide the unconventional morals of his circle of bohemian friends, Eddy's prim childhood sweetheart breaks off their engagement. When Eddy takes his cynical and outspoken university friend to a labour strike, his comments provoke a mob brawl that ends in his friend's murder. At his lowest ebb, Eddy is visited by his most disapproved of bohemian friend, the 'adulterous' violinist Eileen. Realising that their friendship is the main obstacle to Eddy's marriage, Eileen selflessly resigns it. Sitting up on the night before his wedding, Eddy compiles a catalogue of the societies and causes to which he belongs, then sets about thinning his commitments into a small and complementary list. Thus, he fashions himself into a bigot—the only type of personality that is acceptable within the increasingly compartmentalised framework of modern society.

Within Macaulay's seriocomic satire of English propriety, the literary and artistic community is posited as a protective bubble into which society's demands for conformism are unable to penetrate. One such set eagerly accepts the unreconstructed Eddy as a non-practicing member. When he laments the fact that the 'common person' must choose between 'truth and life', the unworldly young poet Billy Raymond offers some advice.<sup>371</sup>

"You'd better become one [...] if it would solve your difficulties. [...] Anyone can be a poet; in fact, practically all Cambridge people are, except you."<sup>372</sup>

If talent is no bar to becoming a modern poet, as Macaulay irreverently quips, then Eddy's chances seem no better for it. To win acceptance as a practitioner within his artistic set would still require a narrowing of horizons, cognate to the bigotry required for acceptance by society at large. You see, Billy is not just a poet; he is a Georgian poet. He writes poetry that is modern, but not too modern. Within his artistic set, to be

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<sup>371</sup> Rose Macaulay, *The Making of a Bigot*, (London, New York and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 293.

<sup>372</sup> Macaulay, *The Making of a Bigot*, 295.



'Edwardian' is a crime only moderately less grave than being 'late-Victorian.'<sup>373</sup> As an affiliate of the Georgian poetry group, Billy's work is praised by critics, read to large Poetry Bookshop audiences, and published in lucrative anthologies. Just as Eddy's refusal to prioritise certain kinds of work had led to his dismissal as a literary critic, Macaulay suggests that a refusal to buy into a recognisable brand of modern poetry would result in public neglect and penury.

Macaulay wrote *The Making of a Bigot* in 1913, a year in which she was making regular visits to London. As a novel inspired by her first-hand experiences of literary society, the assertions that Macaulay makes about the city's artistic stratum seem all the more pointed. Much like the wider society that contains it, Macaulay argues, London literary society demands effective self-definition from its members, a bigotry that is achievable only via a considered programme of stylistic exclusions and a renunciation of sympathy for the hollow cod-Tennysonian lyrics of the Edwardian period and those poets, like Alfred Austin, Arthur Symonds and Rudyard Kipling, who continued to produce them.

The novel's action takes place over a period of two years, from Trinity Sunday, to Midsummer's Eve. Though Macaulay makes no mention of years in the book, early references to the Poetry Bookshop pinpoint the action to between 2 June 1912 and 21 June 1914. When the novel was published in March 1914, the final scenes of the narrative reached some months into the future. History would considerably outstrip it. Leaving aside the fact that the final month it describes would, in actuality, be dominated by concerns about the imminent threat of war in Europe, the modern poetry scene that Macaulay depicts had become an anachronism even before the ink had dried upon her novel's pages. On 2 March, the Poetry Bookshop brought out Pound's *Des Imagistes*, an anthology that posed a public challenge to the supremacy of meek Georgian modernism.

Previously, Imagisme had referred to a loose poetic approach—a number of stylistic exclusions, which Pound had labelled 'Don'ts'. The arrival of *Des Imagistes* realised Imagism as a poetic movement; the contents pages of the anthology delineated the new poetic set, in much the same way that the contents pages of *Georgian Poetry* had established the first 'new generation' of modern poets in 1912. Thenceforth, a modern poet could be Georgian, by disdaining the phoniness of Edwardian and late-Victorian verse, or Imagiste, by lacking sympathy for the less daring poetics on display in *Georgian Poetry*. This development, though it may have dated Macaulay's book, only served to strengthen its conclusions. Indeed, Macaulay's own poetic career would demonstrate the price of shunning the cliques. By the time *The Making of a Bigot* came out, Macaulay had already won some commercial success and critical acclaim as a novelist. Her sixth novel, *The Lee Shore* (1912), had won a publisher's prize of £1000, had garnered positive and prominent reviews, and had sold well. Yet, despite success in the fiction market, Macaulay was not able to achieve equivalent success as a poet. In this chapter, I will argue that Macaulay's failure to take a seat upon either of the modern poetry bandwagons has contributed to the lack of critical interest that has been taken in her poetic work.

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<sup>373</sup> Macaulay, *The Making of a Bigot*, 59.

Macaulay's poetic career began auspiciously, with a number of her poems winning poetry competitions in the *Saturday Westminster*.

Of the seven named contributors who had five or more prize-winning poems in the first *Saturday Westminster* compilation in 1908, one was Rupert Brooke, with five poems, and another was Rose Macaulay, with six.<sup>374</sup>

Behind their professional rivalry in the pages of the *Saturday Westminster*, the private lives of Macaulay and Brooke were much intertwined. They had known each other since childhood, when the Macaulays and Brookes had been neighbours in Rugby. When Macaulay's father took up a Fellowship at King's College, Cambridge in 1909, he moved his family to Great Shelford. In his capacity as Brooke's English tutor, he recommended that the poet move to Granchester, to distance himself from the distractions of the city. Living now just a few miles apart, Rose and Rupert socialised often. He even invited her to go caravanning with him, though her father forbade it.<sup>375</sup> When Macaulay took a flat in London in 1914, it was Brooke who managed her introduction to the London literati.

Macaulay's most recent biographer, Sarah LeFanu, has commented that the poet's absence from *Georgian Poetry 1911-12* has 'always seemed odd.'<sup>376</sup> Here as elsewhere, Macaulay's absence is attributed to the series' notorious under-representation of women. Verse by forty poets was included across the five volumes, only two of whom were women.<sup>377</sup> The most commented upon absences have been those female poets whose social and professional lives most overlapped with the male poets who contributed the bulk of the material to the *Georgian Poetry* series. By this logic, the absence of poems by Charlotte Mew, Anna Wickham, and Edith Sitwell is surprising, but the omission of Rose Macaulay's work is extraordinary. Macaulay's commentary about the exclusionary nature of modern poetry groups in *The Making of a Bigot* could be viewed as a reaction formation, arising out of Marsh's failure to invite her to contribute to *Georgian Poetry* in 1912. Yet, those delving into her two volumes of verse would be likely to draw a different conclusion.

Macaulay's first volume of verse, *The Two Blind Countries*, came out in 1914. It was published by Sidgwick and Jackson, a company that is now chiefly remembered for publishing the work of Brooke. Nearly all of the poems that appear in *The Two Blind Countries* contribute to an explication of the volume's title. Macaulay revisits well-worn binaries of poetic imagery—life/death, light/darkness, waking/sleep—to subvert their prescribed values and dispute the security of their borders. The subject of the poem 'The Alien' is stranded on the threshold of a 'blind land'. On his side of the boundary 'shadows and droll shapes' throng about, but on the other side he can hear 'the muffled/ speech/ Of a world of folk.' There is a doorway through which he can listen and grope, but the door permits no communication and his hand is empty when it returns. The final lines of the poem, which are partitioned off by a border of asterisks, offer this summary:

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<sup>374</sup> Sarah LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay* (London: Virago, 2003), 79-80

<sup>375</sup> LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, 93.

<sup>376</sup> LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, 87.

<sup>377</sup> Fredegond Shove contributed seven pages of material to *Georgian Poetry, 1918-19* and Vita Sackville West contributed eleven pages to *Georgian Poetry, 1920-22*.

On either side of a gray barrier  
The two blind countries lie;  
But he knew not which held him prisoner,  
Nor yet know I.<sup>378</sup>

Whether the barrier is one between sleep and waking, life and death, literary acceptance and obscurity, or any number of other 'oppositions', the separate realms are not imbued with the polarised values that we might expect. Indeed, they are not even appreciably distinct, since the other realm is not available to provide a contrast by which to define the first.

Sometimes fearful, sometimes ecstatic, Macaulay's poems focus attention upon realms that appear to lie beyond lived experience—the otherworldly planes of dream and fantasy. In 'The Door' a bonfire lit by the poetic voice and a companion becomes a portal in time.<sup>379</sup> The fire separates the two figures, making it appear that the companion stands in the flames. This feat of perspective, which creates an apparition of the fate of the condemned witch and heretic of centuries past, conjures up a link between history and the present.

The hazel leaves had a stir and thrill  
As if they watched men die;  
And the centuries tumbled at a shrill,  
Sharp, long-forgotten cry.

[...]

The great drops hurrying through the trees  
Were like the noise of feet,  
As if back through the centuries  
A strayed hour beat retreat.

\* \* \* \* \*

I heard you speak from miles away—  
A strange, far, hollow sound.  
You said it was no use to stay,  
The bonfire was quite drowned.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Macaulay, "The Alien," *The Two Blind Countries*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1914, 1-2.

<sup>379</sup> As Macaulay's interest in dramatic monologue and duologue makes it difficult to presume an overlap between poet and poetic voice, it has proven necessary to maintain a firm separation in my readings.

<sup>380</sup> Macaulay, "The Door," *The Two Blind Countries*, 1914, 13-14.

The poem gives equal footing to the physical act of fire-setting and the vision of immolation, presenting the observation and the fantasy in overlap. This method, which underpins the majority of poems in the volume, is Macaulay's attempt to render the experience of consciousness directly, as the interplay of sensory input and imagination. The thoughts, the dreams, the fantasies of witch burning, are, in Macaulay's work, as solid and real as the earth upon which one might stand.

The sonnet 'Cards' describes a game played outdoors at night, during which the poetic voice wages a mental battle against intruding malevolent forces. The poem begins with incantatory repetition, recasting a relaxing pastime as a ritual of ceremonial magic. In the poem's opening three lines, which begin 'Four candle flames', 'Four moths', 'Four players', danger is readily implied by the alignment of the players with the flame-drawn moths. In the final lines of the opening octet, a supernatural peril is confirmed.

And you smiled, innocent of the furtive rout  
Of shadowy things sliding behind your chair.<sup>381</sup>

The other players—even the one on whose behalf the poetic voice does battle—are not privy to these extrasensory dangers. The supernatural predators exist solely in the poetic voice's mind, yet they are far from toothless figments. They stalk the external reality the poem posits as nightmares made flesh, able to engage the poetic voice in a swordfight. The poem presents a retreat into fantasy during a mundane moment, enlivening the evening with imagined peril, bravery, and victory. The poetic voice daydreams, allowing the reader to be spectators to a moment of wish fulfilment.

The overlay of sensory and psychological experiences that Macaulay's poetry so frequently enacts fits more comfortably in the company of 1920s 'modernist' texts than it ever could in either the Georgian or Imagist camps. As the author of *Finnegans Wake* would famously put it, much of 'human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wideawake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot.'<sup>382</sup> In Macaulay's work, where fantasy and fact intermingle, the 'goahead plot' becomes a hybrid—the dialectical product of conflicting layers of sensory perception, dreams, and thought.

Given that Macaulay aimed to achieve psychological realism, it is interesting that she takes relatively little interest in stylistic experimentation. *The Two Blind Countries* is, formally speaking, 'cutanddry', Macaulay rarely forsook regular rhythm and maintained a dogmatic reliance upon end rhyme. Formally, the poems range from the rigidly observed pair of rondeaux that finish the book ('The New Year' and 'The Old Year', pp. 57-8), to invented, but no less tight, forms, like the paired ABA BAB rhymed tercets in 'Hands', which integrate the poem's title into the structure. In 'Cards' the closeness of the relationship between the poetic voice and the 'threatened' beloved, is underlined by its historically romantic sonnet form. The ten quatrains that compose 'The Door' maintain a rigid alternate end rhyme, which corresponds with an alternation between lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter. *Vers libre* does not get a look in. The *Georgian Anthology*

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<sup>381</sup> Macaulay, "Cards," *The Two Blind Countries*, 17.

<sup>382</sup> Joyce in a letter to Weaver, dated November 24, 1926, in Richard Ellmann, ed., *James Joyce, Letters*, Vol. 3 (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 141.

poets have often been characterised by their less innovative approach to poetic form, yet, despite the Imagists' loud championship of *vers libre*, poets associated with both the Georgian and Imagist camps experimented with a range of verse forms, both rigorous and irregular. Pound, for example, composed traditional poems often, just as Gibson produced a great many *vers libres*.

Whether or not Macaulay had read and enjoyed the *vers libre* works of Pound, or Gibson—and she certainly did develop a taste for formally experimental poetry in later years—she chose to work with a limited set of received verse structures. It was a decision that was central to her artistic programme. Though the meticulously constructed nature of her verse sometimes ran the risk of inelegance, her rigid observance of form had the benefit of knitting together the layers of reality she presented. The 'furtive rout' of the psychological beasts in 'Cards', for example, are wedded by rhyme to the physically act of dealing the 'cards about'. With the great fluidity between seen, intuited, and imagined perspectives that Macaulay's poetry provides, the rigid formalism can also serve to remind us of the poet's obsession with boundaries and borders.

Walls appear so often in the book that a flick through gives the impression of a maze (a related symbol, to which Macaulay also frequently returns). In 'The Alien', for example, it is a wall which divides the realities so efficiently that neither the 'alien' nor the poetic voice are able to contextualise their experience with knowledge of the other side. Yet, as we might expect, Macaulay's walls are not often so solid as we might presume. In 'The Thief', 'the walls that ring this world about' quiver 'like gossamer', as the family who own the orchard awaken, breaking the quiet moment of exultation being enjoyed by a scrumper.<sup>383</sup> As the intruder is intruded upon, the orchard walls lose their solidity—a reminder of the public world and the consequences that lay beyond them. In 'Turning Back (A Duologue)', walls are the site of challenges to the solidity of experience.

"But yesterday a door swung wide, and we  
Striking thereon, did push it wider still,  
[...] so sweet a mystery  
Lurked beyond walls, to be disclosed at will."<sup>384</sup>

Walls can supernaturally quiver, can crumble, can have doors: they are, in a word, breachable.

In Macaulay's war poetry, which appears in her second volume *Three Days* (1919), walls become a metaphor for psychological barriers. In 'Picnic, July 1917', a poem detailing an emotional state that would later be described as 'compassion fatigue', mental walls are built around memories and images too painful to revisit.

We are shut about by guarding walls:  
(We have built them lest we run

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<sup>383</sup> Macaulay, "The Thief," *The Two Blind Countries*, 10.

<sup>384</sup> Macaulay, "Turning Back (A Duologue)," *The Two Blind Countries*, 48.

Mad from dreaming or naked fear  
And of black things done.)<sup>385</sup>

The psychological protection offered by repression does not go unquestioned, however. In 'Sanity', when the structures of the world are toppled by the horrors of war, the walls that replace them are those of asylums.

WHEN the world's rims crumbled, and its walls fell  
down,  
So raked were they, so beaten, by hell's long guns,  
And the new walls that rose were as walls round asylums,  
Pressing, bald and blind, about the moon's mad sons,<sup>386</sup>

As well as keeping chaos out, the act of shoring up defences against mental anguish is a process may also keep madness in, the poet warns.

Macaulay's interest in psychology will be no surprise to keen readers of her fiction. In 1922, when her novel *Dangerous Ages* (1921) was reviewed in the *American Journal of Psychology*, her reviewer claimed that the books had 'a unique psychological scope and importance [...]. The style of the book and the author's interpretation of psychoanalysis are remarkable.'<sup>387</sup> James Strachey, who would become Freud's English translator and champion, was a close friend of Brooke's and later became a member of the Bloomsbury set, in which Macaulay often socialised. Whilst the pair may have met and discussed Freud's work in the years after the war, Macaulay's interest in Freud predates any possible influence from Strachey. He did not become Freud's pupil until a few years after Macaulay had written the poems that were published in *The Two Blind Countries*, many of which bear the hallmarks of Freudian thought. Certainly, it would be surprising if the poet who wrote 'Keyless' had not read Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (1899).<sup>388</sup> Though Macaulay was an Italian, rather than a German, linguist, she would have had an opportunity to read the work before publishing her first volume of verse, since an American psychoanalyst had published a translation, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in 1913.<sup>389</sup> There is evidence that Macaulay read the book at some point, since a child character in *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928) decides to become a nun, rather than become entangled in the sexual world that she glimpses in a furtive reading of Freud's book.<sup>390</sup>

In 'Keyless', Macaulay investigates the border between sleep and waking. In an inversion of popular logic that accords with the revelatory properties that Freud ascribes to his patient's dreams, Macaulay describes the clarity of sleep as compared with the confusion of waking. The title provides the first word of the poem—a practice more in keeping with experimental poetry than Georgian. The subject is 'Keyless/ Like a lost child', moving from a position of clear-sightedness—'lit, intelligible ways'—into befuddlement.

<sup>385</sup> Macaulay, "Picnic, July 1917," *Three Days*, London: Chiswick Press, 1919: 12.

<sup>386</sup> Macaulay, "Sanity," *Three Days*, 24.

<sup>387</sup> G. Stanley Hall, "Dangerous Ages. By Rose Macaulay," *The American Journal of Psychology*, 33.2 (April, 1922), 289.

<sup>388</sup> Rose Macaulay, "Keyless," *The Two Blind Countries*, 5-6.

<sup>389</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tans. A. A. Brill, New York Macmillan, 1913.

<sup>390</sup> LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, 45.

Into the old, dim, environing maze  
Where remote passions and shadows shifted.

In a reversal that is characteristic of Macaulay's poetry, the second stanza reveals that the unintelligible world that the subject approaches is not, as we might assume, the state of sleep, but the state of waking. As the subject comes to, a disembodied and faintly sexual hallucination intrudes.

My clear though shrivelled, and shudderingly curled  
Back from the gray, inexplicable world  
That thrust a soft hand through the casements, blurring  
The dark and the dream;

The experience which Macaulay describes seems to have its basis in Freud's tripartite mediation of wishes: the dangerous unconscious to which (in fidelity to Freud) the subject seems to have no access; the conscious world, into which the act of dreaming has let wishes emerge; and the mediating pre-conscious—the vivid symbolism of dreams.

Suffice to say, the complex interrogations of psychological experience that Macaulay develops would have been out of place in *Georgian Poetry*. The structure of *The Two Blind Countries*, in which the majority of poems contribute to and elaborate upon the book's central theme, could not have been better designed to repel the selective eye of the anthologist. Moreover, the book throngs with outsiders: tramps, wanderers, and sailors; murderers and thieves; the sleeping, the dead, and their ghosts. The sustained discussion of liminality and exclusion that the book provides is often fearful, often fraught, but firm in its ambivalence about the lot of the outsider. This ambivalence relies upon the idea that, whatever walls there may be, 'inside' and 'outside' are interchangeable and indistinguishable; are different parts of the same psychological whole. There is no outside the subject. By form and theme, Macaulay's work actively resists the possibility of its being sublimated into the wider body of Georgian work. As such, Macaulay's estrangement from *Georgian Poetry* must be considered more exile than exclusion.

Though Macaulay is undeniably less sophisticated in her execution of it, the aesthetic that underlies *The Two Countries* has much in common with Eliot's, at that point unpublished, verse. Though her work was most often compared to Walter de la Mare for the fantasyland imagery both share, her evocation of different dimensions is chiefly an attempt to render the pluralism of psychological experience. As such, Macaulay's extra-dimensions are put to quite different work than de la Mare's—where he posits realities that are singular, alternative, and solid, Macaulay offers multiple dimensions that overlay, interplay, and interrupt. The result is a disorientating layering of realities that are prone to sudden ruptures. As would soon be the case in Eliot's 'The Waste Land', it is not always clear who is present and who is past, who is living and who is dead. The realist descriptions of central Cambridge in 'Trinity Sunday' seem to offer a break from the psychological wildernesses of the surrounding poems, until that 'reality' tears, allowing the nightmarish creatures of the land's fenny past to leer through. Neither the city (made of thoughts in 'the

world's live brain'), nor the fen (made of dreams of 'a race long dead') is accepted as the dominant reality. Instead, reality is 'veil beyond veil illimitably lifted'—the interplay of all such worlds.

The similarity between Macaulay's poetic aspirations and Eliot's are confirmed by her response to 'The Waste Land'.

Here was the landscape one knew, had always known, sometimes without knowing it; here were the ruins of the soul; the shadowy dreams that lurked tenebriously in the cellars of the consciousness; in the mysterious corridors and arcades of dreams, the wilderness that stretches not without but within [...]<sup>391</sup>

Her interest in depicting the 'wilderness [...] within' distances Macaulay's work, not just from the poets who appeared in *Georgian Poetry*, but also from the Imagist movement. Macaulay's work has more in common with the psychologically refracted narratives of the quintessential 'modernist' novels, like *Ulysses* and *As I Lay Dying*. Later, Macaulay would investigate further the correspondence between Eliot's work and her own. As epigraph to her 1950 novel *The World My Wilderness*, Macaulay quotes twenty lines from 'The Waste Land' (lines 379-389, from 'And bats with baby faces' to 'It has no windows, and the door swings').<sup>392</sup> Above it, appear three lines of another poem from which the novel draws its title.

*The world my wilderness, its caves my home,  
Its weedy wastes the garden where I roam,  
Its chasm'd cliffs my castle and my tomb...*  
ANON

The lines, as Macaulay later admitted, were her own.<sup>393</sup> Though she was modest about it, her decision to juxtapose an excerpt from 'The Waste Land' beside her own poetic work suggests that she felt there was a correspondence between Eliot's poetics and her own.

In *The World My Wilderness*, Macaulay explores themes of identity, belonging, and civilisation in post-Second World War Europe. The book follows the difficult adolescence of Barbary, a girl who has grown up in Southern France during the Second World War, running wild with the children of the Maquis. After a mysterious and terrible transgression causes Barbary to lose the affection of her mother, she is uprooted to London, to live with her mother's ex-husband, an eminent lawyer, who wrongly supposes he is the girl's father. Unable and unwilling to adapt to 'civilised' society, Barbary finds sanctuary in a bombed-out commercial district of the city; a wilderness that is able to offer her the freedom and danger to which she has grown acclimatised. Barbary's uncivilised behaviour gradually becomes more extreme, until an episode of shoplifting ends with her being pursued across the ruins by the police. During the chase, Barbary suffers

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<sup>391</sup> Cited in LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, 145.

<sup>392</sup> T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," *T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962*, London: Faber and Faber, 1963, 78.

<sup>393</sup> LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, 248.



a near fatal fall. Her injury briefly reunites her extended family and restores her into the guardianship and affections of her mother.

The novel is no Bildungsroman—Barbary remains unreconstructed and unreflective throughout. A number of opinions circulate about her, concerning the reasons for her unusual personality and the necessity and possibility of her adaptation, but none of these questions are satisfactorily resolved. Beneath the action and discussions that form the narrative, stretches the complicated problem of Barbary's roots: the familial issue of her parental origin; the confusion about her nationality; and the influence of the social and concrete ruptures that have outlasted the war. The 'wilderness' is the key symbol of the book; to outsiders it is the site of Barbary's sanctuary or ruination and, for Barbary, it is both. For Macaulay, the term 'wilderness' has a symbolic value that exceeds the book, one that remains bound up with the idea of roots and cultivability. 'Wilderness' is the term she chooses to describe the psychological reality that she attempted to capture in her poetic work—the kind of reality that she recognised in Eliot's masterwork.

Always scrupulous in her choice of words, Macaulay's preference of the term 'wilderness' over 'wasteland' is significant. Their definitions in the *OED* offer up a principal distinction. 'Wilderness' is 'wild or uncultivated land', an expanse that is distinguished from 'desert' by its vegetation and, therefore, its potential for cultivation. It is not dead land, but lilacs may break it. By comparison, a 'waste of land', 'waste land', or 'wasteland' (the term has been compacted through history, as though it were a plot pushed in upon by eager urban sprawl) refers to land uncultivated and unfit for cultivation; earth both bare and barren.

The title of Eliot's poem makes the growth described in its opening lines suspicious, a position which he develops in later lines.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, [...] <sup>394</sup>

These lines are quoted in the middle of Macaulay's novel, at a moment when Barbary is alone in the ruins.<sup>395</sup> It is not a reference that we would expect Barbary's mind to offer up. Rather, the quotation seems to emanate from the ruins themselves.

"Where [*sic*] are the roots that clutch, what branches grow, out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, you cannot say, or guess..." But you can say, you can guess, that it is you yourself, your own roots, that clutch the stony rubbish, the branches of your own being that grow from it and nowhere else.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Eliot, "The Waste Land," 63.

<sup>395</sup> There are minor errors in Macaulay's quotations of Eliot, both here and in the epigraph. None appear to be purposive or significant, so do not warrant further discussion.

<sup>396</sup> Macaulay, *The World My Wilderness*, London: The Book Club, 1950: 88.

The naively resolute reply is undoubtedly Barbary's own. Ignorant of the ontological complexity of Eliot's question and the religio-mythic basis of its answer, the question becomes a personal call-and-response, in which Barbary accepts the ruins' claim to her. By clipping off the end of Eliot's answer, which asserts the limitations of individual human knowledge ('[...] for you know only/ A heap of broken images'), Macaulay suggests that the cultural crisis that underpins 'The Waste Land' has grown more acute by the beginning of the fifties.<sup>397</sup> The children of the Second World War have no grip upon culture, no means of contextualizing their experience, no understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and have no means of protecting themselves from the claims their environment makes upon them. In culture and society, the chasms between the fragments have widened to the point that the fragments no longer appear to be part of a recoverable whole.

Given that Macaulay continued to pursue the themes that had driven her poetry into the fifties, it is curious that she did not publish another poetic volume after 1918. When, in October 1934, Macaulay compiled *The Minor Pleasures of Life*, the anthology contained a wide range of material: short extracts from letters, anecdotes, essays, biographies, novels, plays, and poems, from authors across history. The texts date from the classical to the contemporary; though, as Macaulay admits in her short preface, seventeenth century writers predominate—a reflection of the literary interests of the anthologist.<sup>398</sup> The material is arranged under one hundred and four alphabetised sub-headings, each outlining a category of minor pleasure. As we might expect in a light-hearted miscellany, the categories are often contrary and comic. 'Being Sent Down', 'Deploring the Decadence of the Age', 'Lunatic', 'Prison', 'Taking Umbrage', and 'Xenophobic' appear, tucked between other, more sensible minor pleasures, like 'Taverns', 'Snacks Between Meals', and 'Smoking'.

Even taking into account the anthologist's self-professed bias towards seventeenth century literature—John Aubrey, Robert Burton, and John Milton are heavily represented—two particular deficiencies are noteworthy. Macaulay includes relatively little poetry and few extracts of any kind that date from after 1900. The book contains over six hundred short extracts, of which just seventeen are taken from texts printed after 1900. Of these snippets, eight were provided by Logan Pearsall Smith, an American-born essayist and critic, and Macaulay's close friend.<sup>399</sup> Macaulay mines two of his books—*Trivia* (1918) and *More Trivia* (1922)—for anecdotes on topics as diverse as self-absorption, the banality of small talk, and drunken regret.<sup>400</sup> One short piece about the parallel mental life of fantasy seems likely to have appealed to the poet of *The Two Blind Countries*.

I sometimes feel a little uneasy about that imagined self of mine—the Me of my daydreams—who leads a melodramatic life of his own, quite unrelated to my real existence. I shadowed him down the street. He loitered along for a while, and then stood

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<sup>397</sup> Eliot, "The Waste Land," 63.

<sup>398</sup> Macaulay, ed., *The Minor Pleasures of Life*, London: Gollancz, 1932, 7.

<sup>399</sup> Logan Pearsall Smith was much enmeshed within the Bloomsbury Set. His sister Alys was married to Bertrand Russell, his niece Ray to Oliver Strachey, and his other niece, Karin, to Adrian Stephen. For more detail, see Michael H. Whitworth, "Logan Pearsall Smith and Orlando," *Review of English Studies* 55.22 (September, 2004), 598. Whole article is 598-604.

<sup>400</sup> See: "A Melodramatic Life" (169); "A Wretched Age" (185); "The Garden Party" (199); "Above the Clouds" (263-4); "Enjoying Things" (312-13); "Social Success" (487); "If I Were A Clergyman" (589-90); and "Mammon" (709-10) in Macaulay, ed., *The Minor Pleasures of Life*.

at a shop-window and dressed himself out in a gaudy tie and yellow waistcoat. Then he bought a great sponge and two stuffed birds and took them to lodgings, where he led for a while a shady existence. Next he moved to a big house in Mayfair, and gave grand dinner-parties, with splendid service and costly wines. His amorous adventures in this region I pass over. He soon sold his house and horses, dismissed his retinue of servants, and went—saving two young ladies from being run over on the way—to live a life of heroic self-sacrifice among the poor. I was beginning to feel encouraged about him, when in passing a fishmongers, he pointed with his stick at a great salmon and said, “I caught that fish.”<sup>401</sup>

The absence of contemporary work could have a financial explanation. As we know from Yeats’s wry prefatory comments about the under-representation of Pound in *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), successful modern writers could become too expensive for anthologisation, whereas Homer and Milton will appear for free. Yet, poetry from any age would have been a rich source of quotation about human pleasure and, many would argue, demanding of a sub-heading in itself. The absence of poetry is symptomatic of the course that Macaulay’s career had taken. No longer publishing verse, Macaulay’s position as a famous author gave her authority as an arbiter of prose.

As a mode in which she struggled to make herself heard, Macaulay’s ultimate abandonment of poetry seems somewhat inevitable, especially considering the avidity with which reviewers and the public followed her prose writings. The lack of interest that has subsequently been shown in the poetic volumes that she did produce is more surprising. Perhaps, just as the booming of *Georgian Poetry* drowned out the work of unaffiliated contemporary poets, the subsequent critical interest in *Des Imagistes* has contributed to their more prolonged inaudibility.

### Skipwith Cannell

Skipwith Cannell’s name may ring a bell, but its tintinnabulation is unlikely to summon much knowledge of his life and work. Cannell is remembered exclusively as the poet of ‘Nocturnes’, one of the least read poems in *Des Imagistes*. Just two of the poem’s six stanzas were reproduced in Peter Jones’ well-selling *Imagist Poetry* anthology (1972) and it was a decision that the editor did not feel the need to mention, let alone justify. Had he provided a rationale for his abridgement, he might well have cited Richard Aldington’s argument: that Cournos, Hueffer, Upward, Joyce, and Cannell were not really Imagists at all.<sup>402</sup> After all, Aldington’s assessment of Cannell was spot on. There is no evidence that Cannell ever considered himself to be an Imagist and only once, at Pound’s instigation, did he set out to write an Imagist poem. Yet, by appearing once in *Des Imagistes*, Cannell has been critically miscast and his considerable body of work has

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<sup>401</sup> Logan Pearsall Smith, extract from *Trivia* (1918), republished as “A Melodramatic Life,” in Macaulay, ed., *The Minor Pleasures of Life*, 169-70.

<sup>402</sup> Aldington, “Modern Poetry and the Imagistes,” *The Egoist* 1.11 (June 1, 1914), 201-3.

been overlooked. In this discussion, which will be the first time that critical attention has been squarely aimed at Cannell, I will attempt to show that there are more profitable ways to conceive of Cannell than as a minor contributor to an anthology in which he was really only making up the numbers.

Cannell had a short but successful career as an experimental poet, all the while remaining unaffiliated with any particular school or movement. In other words, he appears to have occupied precisely the position that Macaulay argued was impossible in *The Making of a Bigot*—a position that her fate as a poet confirmed. Though Cannell did not manage to usher a solo volume into print, thirty-one of his poems were published in English and American magazines and anthologies between 1913 and 1917. With the exception of 'Nocturnes', none of these poems have been republished. My account of Cannell's contribution to the American and English experimental poetry scenes will be focussed by two main questions. Firstly, if Cannell was not an Imagist, what were his developing poetic aims? A close reading of his neglected works will help to provide an answer to this. Secondly, what circumstances led to his being remembered as a minor Imagist? As was the case with Davies and Macaulay, the anthologies will be shown to have played a key role in shaping his literary legacy.

Humberston Skipwith Cannell was born in Philadelphia in 1887. As a member of a prosperous family, Cannell was sent to prepare for college at the Gymnase Scientifique in Lausanne in Switzerland and at Lehigh University. He then spent three years at the University of Virginia, where he majored in chemistry but left without taking his degree. In 1911, Cannell went to live in Paris to prepare for a career as an artist, subsisting on a \$30 monthly allowance provided by his family. The allowance would continue if, after three years, he was able to demonstrate reasonable success. At this early point, the nature of his attempted artistry is vague, but there is some evidence that his chosen field was singing. Whilst in Paris, he met Kathleen Eaton, a fellow American who was studying French at the Sorbonne whilst training as a dancer. The pair married in February 1913 and, soon after, with encouragement from his friend, John Gould Fletcher, Cannell began to write poetry.<sup>403</sup>

The following spring, Fletcher and Cannell were introduced to Pound during his sojourn in Paris. It seems that Pound decided to make Cannell his project. In the following years, Cannell's work would appear in nearly all of the little magazines that Pound was connected with: *The New Freewoman*, *The Egoist*, *The Little Review*, and *The Glebe*, as well as *Others*, *Poetry* and their associated anthologies. For a few years his name was a fixture of the experimental poetry scenes on both sides of the Atlantic, before he made his final print appearance in Alfred Kreyborg's second *Others*, *An Anthology* (October 1917). Before the end of the year, Cannell had disappeared in circumstances that were, to many who had worked closely with him, sudden and mysterious. Writing in 1930, Harriet Monroe, the editor of the magazine that published more of his work than any other, remained puzzled by his vanishing act.

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<sup>403</sup> Peter Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," *American Poets 1880-1945, Dictionary of Literary Biography* Vol. 45, 80. Quartermain's chapter is the only reliable source of biographical information about Cannell. It relies upon the poet's archives (eighty items, in two boxes, held at the Library of Congress). All the biographical information that underpins my discussion will be drawn from Quartermain.

Skipwith Cannell's disappearance, apparently final, remains a dark unsolved mystery. Sponsored by Ezra Pound, he started a brave march behind the imagistic band-wagon. And today his early friends hardly know whether he is dead or alive.<sup>404</sup>

The truth might well have shocked Monroe. In 1930, Cannell was alive and well, and working as a Singer sewing-machine salesman in St. Petersburg, Florida. Cannell had done the unthinkable—he had given up on poetry.

Cannell's career had begun in August 1913, when four of his poems appeared in *Poetry*. His work took up six pages, which, if he was paid at the magazine's usual rate of \$10 a page, would have provided him with the equivalent of a cool two months' income—an encouraging start for any new poet and a concrete indication of success with which to shore up his family allowance. In addition to an early version of 'Nocturnes', *Poetry* printed a second vers libre poem, 'A Sequence', and two prose poems, 'Nocturne in Pastels' and 'Nocturne Triste'.<sup>405</sup> The latter is short enough to quote in full.

#### NOCTURNE TRISTE

The iridescence of sunrise over the ocean gleams on the wings of a fly; and on the cheeks of a girl blooms the delicate flush of a peach: but the fly hovers above the refuse of the world, and at the heart of the peach gnaws a worm.

The night wind is cold like the fingers of death, the sky purple like a cup of Tyrian poison, the gleam of the moon white like the flesh of a leper, and the sea dark like the wings of a bat.

My Beloved looks at me, and her eyes are hard and cold, her slender fingers cold and limp, and her parted lips turning from mine bring forth no word.

4. "Nocturne Triste," as it appeared in *Poetry*.

The poem sets up the reader to expect a love poem, before subverting the stock romantic images with the sudden introduction of the corruption unto death that lies beneath. However, since the arrival of decay is so sudden, the effect is sardonic, and the melancholy cut short. The irreverent tone devalues the narrative content, demonstrating that the purpose of the poem is not to make serious pronouncements about love and death but, rather, to say something about poetry.

Though we might not expect layout to matter much in a prose poem that appears to be presented in the haphazard medium of justified text, the enjambment here increases the effectiveness of the bathos Cannell

<sup>404</sup> Harriet Monroe, "They Come and Go," *Poetry* 36.6 (September, 1930), 328.

<sup>405</sup> Skipwith Cannell, "Poems in Prose and Verse, A Sequence," *Poetry* 2.5 (August, 1913), 171-176.

employs. Decay is introduced only with the drop down into the second line, when the 'iridescence' of morning sunshine on the sea becomes, when seen from a different angle, light refracted in the wings of a carrion insect. The rest of the line sets up another love poem cliché, which ends, awaiting modification, with 'blooms'... The canny reader, who should, by now, expect a second gross subversion to begin line three, is again disappointed, albeit momentarily. By dint of their juxtaposition, the 'refuse of the world' over which the fly hovers is the peachy-cheeked girl and, like Blake's sick rose, her beauty is the host of a parasite. The poem creates expectations with the purpose of defying them, all the while cloaking itself in the language of predictable poetry. Narrative is important in Cannell's poem, though not the facile surface narrative about love and death. Rather, it is the linear manipulation of reader expectations that is the true subject of the poem, the poem itself standing in for the poetic tradition. Like so many others in the new wave, the poem is concerned with the modernisation of poetry. Time and time again, a familiar image is modified by the word or line that follows, becoming something ridiculous, overblown, or, simply, old-fashioned.

In the final clause of the poem, Cannell evokes 'Porphyria's Lover', recalling the silence of God in Browning's poem. Cannell's references to Blake and Browning evidence his interest in the most widely anthologised works, those totems of public reverence. More than that, the poet is interested in how such material has, through years of imitation, formed a poetic lexicon that became predictable, restrictive, and deathly tired. In the middle paragraph, which transports the reader from the opening sunrise to that other most poetically congenial of settings, night, we find a string of similes that incrementally escalate from trite, to beyond the bounds of all seriousness. A reader accustomed to some of *Poetry's* more hackneyed offerings might accept a writer earnestly providing deathly fingers as a metaphor for a keen wind, but, by the time the darkness of the sea is likened to the wings of a bat, sincerity is a spell long since broken. Cannell's game of poetic-cliché bingo takes the side of experimentalism *contra* the gradual revision of the poetic tradition.

In the first two years of his career Cannell wrote four prose poems. In addition to the appearance of 'Nocturne Triste' and 'Nocturne in Pastels' in *Poetry*, 'The Tidings' and 'The Butterfly' were printed in *The Little Review* in October 1914.<sup>406</sup> At this point, the prose poem was a highly unusual form. Cannell was the first to use it in *Poetry*— indeed, the only material that had born any parallel to the form had been the prose translations of Rabindranath Tagore's poems that had appeared there in December 1912.<sup>407</sup> However, as Pound gushes in an accompanying article, in the original Tagore's poems were composed in metres that were 'perhaps the most finished and most subtle of any known to us.'<sup>408</sup> The prose form had been imposed during translation.

As well as being a first for the pages of *Poetry*, Cannell's prose poems had few stylistic precursors outside of it. Poe's final major work, *Eureka: A Prose Poem* (1848), is often cited as a progenitor of prose poetry but, even if readers were meant to take the work in earnest (about which there is much doubt), the form has little in common with the short and punchy offerings provided by Cannell. Like the English Decadents who

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<sup>406</sup> "Nocturne in Pastels" was also reprinted in *The New Freewoman* 1.8 (October 1, 1913), 150.

<sup>407</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Poems," *Poetry* 1.3 (December, 1912), 84-6.

<sup>408</sup> Ezra Pound, "Tagore's Poems," *Poetry* 1.3 (December, 1912): 92.

had first employed the form in English, there is evidence that Cannell wrote under the influence of Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869).<sup>409</sup> Oscar Wilde's six 'Poems in Prose', which had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in July 1894, provides one of the few earlier examples of the form to be published in England. Similarly, Cannell's work can be seen to be the first of a wave of attempts to revive the form in the early twentieth century.

In reviving the English prose poem, Cannell attempts to formally distinguish his work from that of his Anglophone contemporaries. His insistence upon working outside of the dominant forms of experimental poetry can be seen as either a conscious act of resistance, or as an accident borne of his resistive working practices. In a letter to Iris Barry, dated 27 July 1916, Pound expresses frustration about Cannell's methods, accusing the poet of being 'afraid to read anything for fear it would destroy his 'individuality'!!!!!!!!!!!!'<sup>410</sup> Yet, as the allusions in 'Nocturne Triste' demonstrate, Cannell was not afraid to read 'anything'. We must presume, rather, that Pound was annoyed by Cannell's refusal to undertake his recommended reading, and by extension, that Cannell had attempted to insulate himself from the influence of Pound and his Imagist circle. Whilst Cannell's career was short, his poetry went through a number of phases: prose poems, short figurative *vers libres*, lyrics, and modern epics. He was, evidently, a poet seeking a fresh voice and fresh forms, while studiously avoiding direction.

Cannell's experiments with the prose poetry were limited to the earliest months of his career. Yet, despite their rudimentary nature, Cannell's prose poems appear as the first examples of a substantial Anglophone revival of the form. A few months after the publication of 'Nocturne Triste' and 'Nocturne in Pastels', Gertrude Stein would provide her own, more accomplished, improvements to the prose poem, with the publication of *Tender Buttons* (1914). In many of the poems it contains, she finds a more interesting way to accomplish what Cannell had attempted in 'Nocturne Triste', by making 'familiar words seem almost like strangers.'<sup>411</sup> In the following years, a slew of poets would produce prose poetry: Lowell would write a great deal, beginning with 'The Forsaken'; Eliot would write 'Hysteria'; H. D. would produce 'Strophe', 'Antistrophe', and 'Epode'; and, like Baudelaire, William Carlos Williams would dedicate a whole book to the form, with *Kora in Hell*.<sup>412</sup> As a pioneer of prose poetry, Cannell reveals himself to be a poet aspiring to do a lot more than, to return to Monroe's phrase, 'march behind the imagistic band-wagon'.

In September 1913, Cannell made his English debut in *The New Freewoman*. His poem, 'The Dance', was sandwiched between contributions by Aldington, H. D., Lowell, Flint, and Williams.<sup>413</sup> By Pound's arrangement, the poems are seated under the title 'The Newer School,' a group that he does not further define. Given that Pound had already published his treatise on Imagism in *Poetry* some months before, it is

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<sup>409</sup> It should be noted that Baudelaire's prose poetry was inspired by Louis "Aloysius" Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1842), a work that is not well known outside of France and was not translated into English until 1994. Baudelaire acknowledges this debt in "Arsène Houssaye", a prose poem that appears in *Le Spleen de Paris*. Cannell's interest in the label 'nocturne' may derive from Baudelaire, who occasionally used it to refer to poetry. For more detail, see Sonya Stephens, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2.

<sup>410</sup> D. D. Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, London: Faber and Faber, 1951, 139. Exclamation points, the poet's own.

<sup>411</sup> A quotation of Sherwood Anderson's brother, which he records in "The Works of Gertrude Stein," his introduction to Gertrude Stein, *Geography and Plays*, Boston: Four Seas Company, 1922, 5.

<sup>412</sup> Amy Lowell, "The Forsaken," *Poetry* 4.1 (April, 1914), 6; T. S. Eliot, "Hysteria," *Catholic Anthology, 1914-15*, ed. Ezra Pound, London: Elkin Mathews, 1915, 16; H. D. "Strophe," "Antistrophe," and "Epode," in *Blues, A Magazine of New Rhythms* 6 (1929), 138-9; William Carlos Williams, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*, Boston: The Four Seasons Company, 1920.

<sup>413</sup> Ezra Pound, ed., "The Newer School," *The New Freewoman* 1.6 (September 1, 1913), 114.

surprising that he did not take the opportunity to further promote the term. After all, works by each of the contributors to the *New Freewoman* page would appear in *Des Imagistes* when it came out the following March; a fact of which Pound would have been aware since the arrangement of the anthology was, by this point, set. Indeed, all of the poems on the page except 'The Dance' were ear-marked for the volume: Aldington's 'To Atthis', a loose translation from Sappho; H. D.'s 'Sitalkas', a paean to the erotic potential of human beauty, contrasted with the less satisfying beauty of classical gods; Williams' 'Postlude', which brings classical allusions into the privacy of the marriage bed; Flint's 'Hallucination', which provides a narrative that pulses between waking and dreaming, blurring the two states; and Lowell's 'In a Garden'.

Whilst Pound's refusal of the term Imagism is curiously timed, given that he was working towards the publication of the anthology, his reluctance to define the similarities between the poems, as they lay starkly juxtaposed upon the *New Freewoman* page, is less surprising. Laid out thus, they threaten to dispel the coherence of any term you might care to place above them. Certainly, it is difficult to consider the page Imagist in accordance with Pound's published definition. Lowell's poem, for example, breaches the third 'don't' of Imagism—'compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not [...] a metronome'—by pursuing a regular metre with an improper vigour. In places, Lowell even resorts to inversions of word order, for example, 'Damp smell the ferns' and 'Falls, the water'.<sup>414</sup> In a letter to Monroe in 1915, Pound would argue that good poetry must have 'no hindside-beforeness, no straddled adjectives (as 'addled mosses dank'), a pronouncement phrased in terms that much recall the climate of Lowell's poem.<sup>415</sup>

Indeed, the only poem on the page not to appear in *Des Imagistes* was the poem that best fit the Imagist rubric, as Pound had outlined it in *Poetry*—although, if it was a recent composition, then timing alone may have precluded its inclusion in the anthology. The poem, which links dancing with sorrow and grinning with aggression, attempts to capture the primitive and animal aspects of deep emotion. It could easily be accused of presenting 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', its rhythm is not metrical, and there is little superfluity in the lines.<sup>416</sup> The final simile, which might be mistaken for a move from concreteness to abstraction, is actually the denouement of the second image. It is not one of Cannell's best works, but it represents a second form in which the poet developed an interest—the short figurative vers libre.

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<sup>414</sup> F. S. Flint, "Imagisme," *Poetry* 1.5 (March 1913), 199.

<sup>415</sup> Pound in a letter to Monroe, January 1915, in *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige, 91-2.

<sup>416</sup> Pound, "A Few Don'ts," *Poetry* 1.5 (March, 1913): 200.



#### IV.—THE DANCE.

With wide flung arms  
With feet clinging to the earth  
I will dance.  
My breath sobs in my belly  
For an old sorrow that has put out the sun;  
An old, furious sorrow. . . .  
I will grin,  
I will bare my gums and grin  
Like a grey wolf who has come upon a bear.  
SKIPWITH CANNELL.

5. "The Dance," as it appeared in *The New Freewoman*.

In October, Cannell was given a bigger outing in *The New Freewoman*, when they republished 'Nocturnes' and 'Nocturne in Pastels', alongside a new prose poem, 'The Ship of Dead Dreams'. Barring some minor differences in pagination, the version of 'Nocturne in Pastels' that appeared in *The New Freewoman* is identical to the version that had appeared in *Poetry*. To 'Nocturnes', however, a number of small, but significant revisions had been made. Pound had been discussing the *Des Imagistes* anthology with Kreymborg since spring 1913 and, though there are no extant letters that pinpoint Pound's decision to squeeze Cannell's work into the anthology, changes between the published versions indicate a rough timeline. The draft that had appeared in *Poetry* appears to have been the first. The version that appears in *Des Imagistes* revises the *Poetry* version, making some to the lay-out, deleting three words, and replacing the archaic preposition 'o' with 'of' in the line 'Thou Dove of the Golden Eyes'. Since the version that appears in *The New Freewoman* replicates these changes, but also contains some further revisions, it is this, rather than the *Des Imagistes* version, which must have been a later and, as it turned out, the final version of the poem.

Pound was much inclined to provide poets with advice on how they might improve their work, whether they be his own 'discoveries', or well-established, celebrated writers, like Yeats. Whether or not Pound had any direct influence upon the changes that Cannell made to 'Nocturnes', the revisions did bring the poem closer to Pound's statement of Imagist poetics, by according with the rules he had outlined in his 'Don't's' a few months before. The modernisation of 'o', for example, is a move away from a self-consciously poetic vocabulary, towards the plainer language of everyday speech. It is surprising to note that the word 'Holdeth' appears in the *Des Imagistes* version of 'Nocturnes', but, by the *New Freewoman* version, it too had been modernised, to 'Holds'. Yet, if this is evidence of Cannell becoming more Imagist, it should be remembered that the influence extended only to a few minor word changes.

In *The New Freewoman* the poet's name is printed with an acute accent over the 'e', an affectation designed to promote correct pronunciation (*i.e.* emphasis upon the second syllable).<sup>417</sup> The first appearance of the false diacritic, which Cannell would apply sporadically throughout the rest of his career, is an indication of the poet's growing renown—those who knew his name only from print had evidently been mispronouncing it. That Cannell took this step, rather than risk it being mispronounced by members of the public, suggests two things: that the poet was already anxious about public misapprehension and that, at this early moment, he was planning to continue his career in poetry.

If he was keen to expand his readership, then Cannell's next step was a smart move. *The Smart Set* held a unique position in the market. In 1913-14, under the editorship of Willard Huntington Wright (with Pound as an overseas talent scout) and, afterwards, under H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan, *The Smart Set* had become an important publisher of experimental authors and poets. Founded in 1900, *The Smart Set* had originally published fantasies of upper-class decadence to the aspiring middle-classes, becoming a kind of fictional analogue for its proprietor's already well-established gossip magazine, *Town Talk*. As a moderately successful popular magazine, its sales had peaked in 1905 at 165,000. Then, as a magazine in slow decline, it was sold to a man who sought to raise its intellectual tone. Seizing the opportunity, Wright had turned the magazine into a platform for experimental writing—a move that hastened the decline in readers enough to see him sacked within a year. Nevertheless, the magazine managed to maintain a sizeable minority of its readership. In 1913-14, *The Smart Set* could expect to sell 30,000 to 40,000 copies, a world apart from the few hundred that *Poetry* and *The Egoist* might manage.<sup>418</sup> *The Smart Set* printed three of Cannell's figurative *vers libres*, with 'Love' appearing in October 1913, 'A Moon Song' in January 1914, and 'Wild Swans' in May 1914.<sup>419</sup> In this way, Cannell became one of very few early experimental poets to come before an audience of tens of thousands, though many of his potential readership may have only glimpsed his work as, purple-faced, they searched for an address to which to send their subscription cancellation.

Meanwhile, Cannell attempted to secure his position in England. After his work had appeared twice in *The New Freewoman*, Cannell made a concerted effort to increase his visibility within the magazine. In January 1914, Cannell contributed a review of the activities of *Le Theatre du Vieux Colombier*, in Paris.<sup>420</sup> Two issues previously, when the magazine was still publishing under the name *The New Freewoman*, F. S. Flint had contributed an article in praise of the dedicated professionalism and anti-commercialism of the theatre troupe that would soon make the venue its home.<sup>421</sup> Cannell describes the problematic interior design of the theatre and reports on an over-subscribed conference on modern French Poetry given by André Gide, for which the Vieux Colombier troupe had provided supporting recitations. He also contributes a review of a production of Heywood's play *Killed With Kindness*, lamenting the play's dullness but enjoying the production and, in particular, the utilitarian set design. Though his critical debut is innocuous, a letter in the

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<sup>417</sup> The quotations and citations that appear in this essay will replicate the spelling preferred by the periodical in each particular instance.

<sup>418</sup> For a full account see Sharon Hamilton's "The First New Yorker? *The Smart Set* Magazine, 1900-1924," *The Serials Librarian*, 37.2 (1999), 89-104.

<sup>419</sup> Cannell, "Love," *The Smart Set* 41 (October, 1913), 140; "A Moon Song," *The Smart Set*, 42 (January, 1914), 95; "Wild Swans," *The Smart Set* 43 (May, 1914), 141.

<sup>420</sup> Cannell ('H. S. C. '), "Le Theatre du Vieux Colombier", *The Egoist* 1.1 (January 1, 1914), 18.

<sup>421</sup> Flint, "Le Theatre du Vieux Colombier," *The New Freewoman*, 1.12 (December 1, 1913) 221-2.

next issue castigates him for having called Heywood's play dull, arguing that his opinion goes against the views of a number of eminent critics.<sup>422</sup> Cannell answers his critic in the next number, also attacking the editor, evidently piqued by Marsden's decision to print the letter.<sup>423</sup> He argues that *The Egoist* is an 'Individualist Review' and that he was giving his individual opinion and that, moreover, his article had been considerably shortened. That he never wrote a critical article again speaks to his dissatisfaction with the situation as it played out.

Instead of writing more reviews, Cannell decamped to the magazine's correspondence pages. Upon reading Marsden's scathing appraisal of Christabel Pankhurst's 'The Hidden Scourge and How to End it,' Cannell submitted a letter that agreed and elaborated upon Marsden's conclusions.<sup>424</sup> In her book, Pankhurst had proposed that women demand 'chastity' from their fiancés, as it is demanded of them; a solution that would provide an end to venereal disease, as well as greater equality between the sexes. Marsden interrogates the presumed merits of chastity from a number of angles, attacking it as an unhealthy fixation upon sex and arguing that, because women do have sexual desire, they cannot choose their partners based upon their morals or politics. Cannell's letter more baldly emphasises the 'naturalness' of female desire. Unsatisfactory sex, he argues, is the result of a deficiency in the technique of the woman's partner, or else, the result of a medical or psychological problem in one or both spouses.

In February 1914, when Cannell's letter appeared, *The Egoist* had only recently shed its proto-feminist title. The majority of its readers still were politically minded women, who were much interested in debating 'the sex question'. Marsden, having acted out her usual role as agent provocateur, did not enter into the comments page teacup-storm that her article had provoked. Unsurprisingly, Cannell's more passionate defence of female sexual desire drew a number of responses, both positive and negative, to which he found himself writing in reply.<sup>425</sup> Writing as a 'married couple', Beeban and Noel Teulon Porter praise the material of a letter by 'H. S. C.', but are disdainful of his decision to issue the article under the partial anonymity of initials.<sup>426</sup> A number of other correspondents were soon involved, writing replies in refusal and expansion, resulting in a multi-letter pile up with complicated inter-referenced arguments. The debate, whilst interesting, is not important here. What is significant is the fact that Cannell was the only poet to cross the magazine's invisible dividing line, by involving himself in Marsden's non-literary material. At a point when Pound and Aldington were growing increasingly disdainful about Marsden's content, considering it responsible for holding back the literary half of the magazine, Cannell's engagement with it was a transgression. By becoming an enthusiastic participant in the discussions of the correspondence pages, Cannell began to involve himself in the magazine in a way that by-passed the helping hands of Pound and Aldington.

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<sup>422</sup> 'Viator', "A Dull Play", *The Egoist* 1.2 (January 15, 1914), 38.

<sup>423</sup> Cannell ('H. S. C.') "A Dull Play," *The Egoist* 1.3 (February 2, 1914), 59.

<sup>424</sup> Marsden, "Views and Comments," *The Egoist* 1.3 (February 2, 1914, 44-46; Cannell ('H. S. C. '), "Passion v. The Suffragettes, or 'Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense'", *The Egoist* 1.4 (February 16, 1914), 78.

<sup>425</sup> Those not separately referenced before or after are: Beeban and Noel Teulon Porter, "Marriage," *The Egoist* 1.5 (March 2, 1914), 98-99; Cannell ('H. S. C. '), "Marriage," 1.6 (March 16, 1914), 119-120; R. R. W. "Low Pleasures," 1.6, 120; 'Signal', "'Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense'," 1.6: 120; Cannell ('H. S. C. '), "An Answer," 1.8 (April 15, 1914), 158; R. R. W., "Marriage," 1.8, 158-9; Cannell ('C. S. H'), "Marriage and the Roman Catholic Church," 1.9 (May 1, 1914), 179; and Caldwell Harpur, "Marriage and its Rivals," 1.9, 179.

<sup>426</sup> Beeban and Noel Teulon Porter, "Marriage," *The Egoist* 1.7 (April 1, 1914), 139.

His poetry would never appear in the *Egoist* again. Yet, rather bizarrely, his name would continue to appear there often—crammed into a list of contributing poets in an advertisement for back copies of *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*, alongside Aldington, H.D., Fletcher, F. S. Flint, Robert Frost, Paul Fort, D. H. Lawrence, Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, J. Rodker, May Sinclair, W. C. Williams, ‘and others’. The notice was printed in seven issues of *The Egoist*, from June 1915 to February 1916.<sup>427</sup> The dates make his inclusion especially puzzling, given the fact that his poetry had only appeared in two issues of *The New Freewoman*, the last of which had appeared some twenty months previously.<sup>428</sup> Indeed, even his non-poetical contributions to the debate on sex and marriage had come to an end over a year before the advertisement first appeared. It is difficult to conceive of any reason for this, except a presumption on the part of Aldington that Cannell’s name had saleable appeal.

Yet, if Cannell’s name was known to the American magazine reading members of the English poetry scene, then he did not exploit this potential market. The last appearance of Cannell’s poetry to be published in England would be in Pound’s transatlantic anthology, *Des Imagistes*, in early 1914. In his mischievously unreliable autobiography, *Troubadour*, Alfred Kreymborg comically construes his experiences of the experimental art scene in early twentieth century New York, describing the circumstances in which he came to dedicate an issue of the magazine to publishing *Des Imagistes*. Like many others who had professional interests in experimental literature, Kreymborg was sensitive to the derisive arguments and snide comments that often appeared in the mainstream newspapers.

Vituperation and ridicule joined in denouncing the group [poets of *Des Imagistes*] in general and Pound in particular. Nowhere was his name held up to greater derision than in the columns of the New York press and the chambers of The Poetry Society. Fortunately for many folk seriously concerned in the future of American poetry, he had found a haven in the paper edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin.<sup>429</sup>

It was, perhaps, his admiration of the good work being done by Monroe and Corbin that inspired him to found his first magazine, *The Glebe* (September 1913 - November 1914). In any case, he saw the importance of promoting innovative poetry in America and, to that end, he promised the first issue to Pound and his Imagist colleagues.

When the printing press that he had bought was broken by the delivery men, who dropped it on the pavement outside his office, Kreymborg turned to seasoned publishers Albert and Charles Boni for help. Seeing the promise in his project, the brothers agreed to finance and print the magazine, retaining Kreymborg as editor.<sup>430</sup> Their kindness, he recounts, obliged him to use the first issue to print some material that the brothers had already agreed to publish and, as it turned out, *Des Imagistes* would fill issue five. The Bonis bound a few hundred sets of the sheets as books, selling them for a dollar each, and shipped

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<sup>427</sup> The advertisement appears in *The Egoist*, issues: 2.6 (June, 1915), 99; 2.7 (July, 1915), 115; 2.8 (August, 1915), 132; 2.10 (October, 1915), 163, 2.11 (November, 1915), 168, 3.1 (January, 1916), 15, and 3.2 (February, 1916), 31.

<sup>428</sup> See issue 1.8 (1 October, 2013).

<sup>429</sup> Alfred Kreymborg, *Troubadour, An Autobiography*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925: 203.

<sup>430</sup> Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, 205-10.

further sheets for an English edition. Though the *Georgian Anthology* may have encouraged Pound to view anthologies as a useful promotional tool, Pound seemed to be resigned to the fact that the potential readership for *Des Imagistes* would be small and select. He did not include an introduction, which suggests he expected to sell the book only to those already familiar with the movement, which would have been those who had read his explanatory essays in *Poetry*, or the discussions of Imagism in the *Egoist*. Discounting the likely crossover in their subscription lists, the two magazines offered a small pool of about 2,000 readers, two-thirds of them *Poetry*'s.<sup>431</sup>

The *Georgian Anthology* set did not get wind of *Des Imagistes* until June 1913. In a letter written on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Marsh informs Brooke that 'Wilfrid [William Gibson] tells me there's a movement for a "Post-Georgian" Anthology, of the Pound-Flint-Hulme school, who don't like being out of *GP*, but I don't think it will come off.'<sup>432</sup> It must have been a shock to Marsh that, not only did *Des Imagistes* 'come off', it came off under the imprint of the Poetry Bookshop. Harold Monro strove always to remain even-handed, as the honest (and none too favourable) pronouncements on Imagism, which he contributed to the special Imagist number of *The Egoist*, show.<sup>433</sup> For Monro, publishing *Des Imagistes* was an opportunity to reassert his professional impartiality about the minor artistic disagreements that would later become, with careful tending, the 'poetry wars'.

When Charles Ashleigh reviewed *Des Imagistes* issue of *The Glebe* for *The Little Review*, he had before him Aldington's *Egoist* review of the textually identical Poetry Bookshop *Des Imagistes*.<sup>434</sup> It was in this review that Aldington had argued that Cournos, Hueffer, Upward, Joyce, and Cannell did not meet the technical criteria of Imagism, though he allowed that their poems were beautiful, nonetheless. Charles Ashleigh misinterprets Aldington's observation as a complaint and perceives it to be an indication that the exclusivity of the Imagiste clique has given way under external editorial pressure from *The Glebe*.

I agree that the poems of these five men are beautiful, especially the *I hear an army* of James Joyce and the *Nocturnes* of Skipwith Cannell; and I also maintain that, all unconsciously, the publishers of *The Glebe* have dealt a deadly blow to sectarian Imagism by including these non-Imagist poems in their anthology.<sup>435</sup>

Of course, *Glebe* editor Alfred Kreymborg was not responsible for selecting the poems that appeared in his Imagiste number, only for the final decision to print it.

Pound had selected and arranged the poems and, as usual, he was pre-emptively aggressive about any possible editorial 'interference'. Kreymborg relates the arrival of the manuscript of *Des Imagistes* in his autobiography:

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<sup>431</sup> Circulation figures for *Poetry* (actual 1912-13: 1065; average 1912-1922: 1827; actual 1921-22: 1891) have been calculated by Ellen Williams in *Harriet Monro and the Poetry Renaissance: The First Ten Years of Poetry, 1912-22*, University of Illinois Press, 1977, 296.

<sup>432</sup> Christopher Hassall, *Edward Marsh, A Biography*, London: Longmans, 1959, 229.

<sup>433</sup> Harold Monro, "The Imagists Discussed," *Egoist* 2.5 (May, 1915), 77.

<sup>434</sup> Aldington, "Modern Poetry and the Imagistes," *The Egoist* 1.11 (June 1, 1914), 201-3.

<sup>435</sup> Charles Ashleigh, "'DES IMAGISTES'," *The Little Review* 1.5 (July 1914), 16.

One day, shortly before the printing press was due, a bizarre, special-delivery package, post-marked London, arrived in Grantwood. The cover resembles the stout paper butchers use for wrapping meat. Krimmie untied the parcel, and a sheaf of manuscripts of various dimensions, edited with bold, marginal notes and caustic instructions, emerged. A vigorous letter, in a large confident scrawl, warned Krimmie “that unless you’re another American ass, you’ll set this up just as it stands!”<sup>436</sup>

Certainly, Ashleigh was also wrong in his assumption that the inclusion of five poets who were, in Aldington’s view, less Imagist was a sign that the movement was becoming less exclusive. Rather, it was evidence that Pound had not attempted to create an exclusive movement in the first place. After all, as Pound later admitted, ‘Imagisme was invented to launch H. D. and Aldington before either had enough stuff for a volume.’<sup>437</sup>

In *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group, 1910-1914*, Milton Cohen provides the following account of Pound’s reasons for assembling *Des Imagistes*:

[T]o fill out a *book-length* anthology of “Imagist” poets—a medium he felt essential to make the group more visible—Pound recruited several other poets whose Imagist credentials (or even knowledge of the movement’s aesthetics) were questionable at best: Flint, Skipwith Cannell, John Cournos, Ford Madox Hueffer, Pound’s old university friend William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Amy Lowell, and Allan Upward. Immediately, he faced a resistance in his core group: Aldington recalls that he and Hilda Doolittle “objected to Allen Upward, Skipwith Cannell, and Amy Lowell.”<sup>438</sup>

Interestingly, it is Lowell, rather than the five poets that Aldington had excepted in his *Egoist* review, that Aldington and H. D. were most keen to keep out. As Aldington reveals in his memoir *Life for Life’s Sake* (1941), when *Des Imagistes* was compiled, Lowell had only published one volume and this was ‘the fluid, fruity, facile stuff [they] most wanted to avoid.’<sup>439</sup> It was only after Aldington and, later, Lowell took the reins of Imagism that the scope of the anthologies narrowed, from then on providing a platform for just five regular contributors.

In the May 1915 ‘SPECIAL IMAGIST NUMBER’ of *The Egoist*, Cannell is mentioned once, in F. S. Flint’s list of contributors to *Des Imagistes*.<sup>440</sup> Along with Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Ford Madox Hueffer, and Allan Upward, Cannell’s absence in the number marks his departure from the Imagist fold. Cannell’s friend John Gould Fletcher makes his entrance, along with D. H. Lawrence, Marianne Moore, and May Sinclair. Moore and Sinclair would not develop closer ties with the movement, even though Sinclair would write a rebuff to Monro’s evaluation of Imagism and, particularly, his criticism of H. D., in the next

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<sup>436</sup> Kreymsborg, *Troubadour*, 204.

<sup>437</sup> London, October 1912, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. II.

<sup>438</sup> Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group, 1910-1914*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004, 69.

<sup>439</sup> Aldington, *Life for Life’s Sake*, New York: The Viking Press, 1941, 136-67.

<sup>440</sup> Flint, “The History of Imagism,” *The Egoist* 2.5 (May 1, 1915), 71.

issue. Here, Sinclair chides his even-handed approach to modern poetry and, in particular, to his support of *Georgian Poetry*.

[i]t is always interesting to watch a man on a sharp fence trying to preserve a sane and dignified equilibrium. He is so sincerely anxious to appear balanced before he slithers irrevocably down into the field where Imagists are not [...].<sup>441</sup>

Barring Flint's article on Pound, only poets who would appear in *Some Imagist Poets*—H.D., Flint, Lawrence, Lowell, and John Gould Fletcher—get an essay on their work included in the issue. Indeed, only Richard Aldington is missed, out of propriety perhaps, since he was the assistant editor of the magazine at this time. There is an article addressing the poetry of Fletcher, written by literary advisor and director of the Houghton Mifflin Co. publishing firm, Ferris Greenslet. It seems likely that this arrangement was made by Lowell, given her links with the company. Indeed, Fletcher returns the favour, by providing a review of Amy Lowell's poetry in the same issue.

Given their close working relationship in Paris in 1913 and early 1914, Cannell might have been a more obvious choice as a reviewer of Fletcher's work. However, by 1915, not only had Cannell become estranged from the Imagist movement, but he had also fallen out with Fletcher. There is no way of knowing whether Fletcher and Cannell had already exchanged words in private but, in March 1914, assisted by Aldington, Fletcher decided to exercise his consternation in public, by dedicating a poem to him in *The Egoist*.

#### EPILOGUE

To Skipwith Cannell.

The barking of little dogs in the night is more  
remembered than the shining of stars;

Only those who watch for long may see the sun rise.

And they are mad ever after and go with blind eyes,

Nosing hungrily in the gutter for scraps that are  
thrown to dogs;

Few heed their babblings.<sup>442</sup>

The poem differs markedly in style from the other poems that Fletcher was producing at this time. Its form mimics the short figurative *vers libre* poems that Cannell had recently published in *The New Freewoman* and *The Smart Set*. Fletcher's poem predicts the fate of two different types of poet. The yapping 'little dogs' represent the controversialist poets, determined to draw public attention, and putting their work second to their efforts at self-promotion. The other type of poet is portrayed by his interest in beauty. He will notice the stars and patiently wait up to see the sunrise, and the worthy public attention that it represents in Fletcher's poem. Yet, as Fletcher warns, the pleasure of being in the sun will reduce the aesthete to hunting

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<sup>441</sup> See Harold Monro, "The Imagists Discussed," *The Egoist* 2.5 (May 1, 1915), 77-80, and May Sinclair, "Two Notes," *The Egoist* 2.6 (June 1, 1915), 88-9.

<sup>442</sup> Fletcher, "Epilogue," *The Egoist* 1.5 (March 2, 1914), 90.

about for any praise, even ‘scraps that are thrown to the dogs’. Thereafter, the humbled poet of beauty will be ignored and, in any case, unintelligible.

The poem is not jocular career advice. Fletcher considers himself, rather than Cannell, to be the imperilled aesthete. Despite spending the previous year sharing unpublished work, dinners, and café tables with Cannell, Fletcher’s autobiography, *Life is my Song* (1937), reveals a simmering contempt for the man and his work.

[Cannell was] writing short poems of which he was inordinately vain. These poems had been, in the first instance, profusely strewn with rhymes as those of my early idol, Edgar Allan Poe. But hearing from me that I [...] was now writing other verses that laid no claim to metrical constancy, nor to regularity in rhyme scheme, he promptly tore up the bulk of his own early work and declared that he too was done with academic rhymes and meters. He then proceeded to grace our next meeting with a new poem which was entirely rhymeless, and written in cadences closely resembling those of the Psalms in King James Bible. So early was I equipped, not with a literary comrade, but with a disciple!<sup>443</sup>

Since the Imagists were the only poetic group to be making as much fuss about poetry in England at this point, they are unmistakably the ‘little dogs’ to which Fletcher refers.<sup>444</sup> In addition to his secret disdain for Cannell, Fletcher’s biography reveals a deep hatred of Pound. Though Fletcher would become involved in the second wave of Imagism, appearing in all volumes of *Some Imagist Poets*, none of his work had been included in *Des Imagistes*. Fed by professional jealousy, Fletcher’s dislike of Cannell is evidenced by his attempt to lump Cannell and Pound together as the ‘little dogs’ of poetry. Someone who he perceived to be his mimic was beginning to outstrip him; the poem is his riposte—an open mockery of Cannell’s style and his willingness to appear in Pound’s silly anthology.

It was a cruel poem for Fletcher to write, and it was crueller still for Aldington to print it. Yet, if Cannell took offence, he hid it well. He and Kitty accompanied Fletcher on holiday to London only a few months later, in July. Fletcher paints the trip darkly:

Cannell came [...] on two weeks visit, to borrow my money, attempt to cut a swath through London’s literary society, and to depart as grimly and ungraciously as he came.<sup>445</sup>

If Cannell continued his friendship with Fletcher for purely mercenary reasons, then he need not have done so for long. Pound provided the Cannells with a warm reception in London, convincing them to extend their stay for a further month and installing them in the flat below his in Church Walk, Kensington. During their stay the Cannells were introduced to a number of writers, including Ford Madox Hueffer, Yeats, F. S. Flint, May Sinclair, and H. G. Wells. Around this time, Robert Frost recalls Pound ‘encouraging [Cannell] in his

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<sup>443</sup> Fletcher, *The Autobiography of John Gould Fletcher*, ed. Lucas Carpenter, (1937, originally *Life is My Song*; rpt. Fayetteville, 1988), 60.

<sup>444</sup> The Futurists gave lectures in England in 1914, but theirs was, like Vorticism, a broader movement, encompassing a range of arts.

<sup>445</sup> Fletcher, *Life is My Song*, 87.



efforts to “show results” of his artistic studies to his family, setting him the exercise in the writing of an Imagist poem, and offering to help him place the result of this exercise.’<sup>446</sup> Quartermain guesses that ‘Wild Swans’ was the poem that resulted from Pound’s challenge, but ‘On A London Tennis Court’ seems a more likely candidate; it was unlikely to have been an exercise that Cannell took seriously, and the second stanza reads like a J. C. Squire parody of H. D.’s ‘Oread’.<sup>447</sup>

#### ON A LONDON TENNIS COURT

The land is new to me,  
And the people too; and the speech  
Is strange to me  
As words  
Spoken from another star.

The trees  
Are green, and the birds  
Whistle and chirp  
As at home,  
As at home . . .

Certainly, tennis would have been an apt subject for the poet to choose, since it is likely that he and Kitty would have played a great deal of tennis with the Pounds, Hueffer, and Violet Hunt during that hot and sunny summer. Months previously, Pound had clocked the courts in the communal gardens nearby Hueffer and Hunt’s home, and had persuaded them to indulge him in regular games.<sup>448</sup>

As idyllic as the month seems to have been, at some point afterwards Pound and Cannell fell out.

New interests and Amy Lowell’s aggressive and well-funded presence turned Pound away from Imagism and to a rather single-minded sponsorship of T. S. Eliot as a major poet, and Cannell nursed some offence, real or imagined, which Pound had committed against him.<sup>449</sup>

The reasons for their quarrel may never be known but, given that both men were highly accomplished at giving and receiving offence, it was a predictable ending to their friendship. The argument between Pound and Cannell cannot be precisely dated, but it seems to have happened before July 1916, when Pound disparaged Cannell for his priggishness (!!!!!!!!!!!) in the letter to Iris Barry. Pound was still nursing a

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<sup>446</sup> Quartermain, “Skipwith Cannell,” 80-81.

<sup>447</sup> Cannell, “To England,” *Others* 1.2 (August, 1915), 27; “On a London Tennis Court,” *Others* 3.1 (July, 1916), 9

<sup>448</sup> A. David Moody, *The Young Genius 1885-1920*, Vol. 1 of *Ezra Pound: Poet*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 112.

<sup>449</sup> Quartermain, “Skipwith Cannell,” 82.

grievance as late as 1919, when he chastised their mutual friend William Carlos Williams for stewing over a different argument—‘really this ‘old friend’ hurt feeling business is too Skipwithcannéllish; it is *pe u vous*.’<sup>450</sup>

In 1915, concomitant with the growing power of Richard Aldington and Amy Lowell over the Imagist brand, Pound published a new anthology. His main purpose was to provide a vehicle for the promotion of his newest ‘discovery’, T. S. Eliot. The title he selected—*Catholic Anthology, 1914-15*—evidences a secondary aim: to pose a challenge to the clique-driven anthology series, both Georgian and Imagist. Whatever ‘imagined’ offences Pound may not have committed against Cannell, his decision to keep the poet out of the *Catholic Anthology* drew a definitive line under the poet’s English career. Pound’s ‘single-minded sponsorship’ of Eliot saw him abandon his attempts to promote Cannell and, since Aldington had already decided that Cannell was no Imagist, the poet found himself out of luck.

At the same time as Cannell’s career in England was becoming untenable, his American profile was rising. In June 1914, a poem named ‘Fragment’ was printed in a periodical called *Poetry Journal*.<sup>451</sup> Cannell also made a further two appearances in *Poetry*, publishing ‘Ikons’, ‘The Blind Man’, ‘The Dwarf Speaks’, and ‘Epilogue to the Crows’ in May 1914, and a further set of poems, ‘The Prayer’, ‘The Red Bridge’, and ‘The King’ appeared in September.<sup>452</sup> The biographical notes included in the back of these issues refer to a soon to be published solo volume of work, entitled ‘Monoliths’. Unfortunately, the book did not come out because the prospective publisher, Elkin Matthews, withdrew his offer when the war threatened to shrink his business.<sup>453</sup> In 1916, Cannell would make a second attempt to get a solo volume published, this time with John Marshall of The Little Bookshop Around the Corner. Alas, for reasons unknown, this attempt also fell flat.<sup>454</sup> Despite these set backs, Cannell’s poetry continued to appear in more and more magazines.

For the June issue of *Les Soirées de Paris*, Guillaume Apollinaire provided French translations of two of Cannell’s poems.<sup>455</sup> In October 1914, Cannell made his debut in the *Little Review*, when they printed a short figurative *vers libre*, ‘The Silver Ship’, and two prose poems, ‘The Butterfly’, and ‘The Tidings’.<sup>456</sup> The works that appeared in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry* represented a major transformation of his style, albeit a fleeting one.<sup>457</sup> In the same issue in which Harriet Monroe finally printed ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, after much cajoling from Pound, Cannell’s ‘The Crown, the Plate and the Bowl’, ‘The Temple of Hunger’, ‘A Riddle’, and ‘The Lean Gray Rats’ appear. The poems, which are a great deal less sophisticated than his previous works, are rigidly metrical and end-rhymed; a fact that is underlined by his decision to label them ‘Songs’. Recalling Fletcher’s complaint that Cannell had abandoned experiments in traditional verse forms after seeing his work, these poems seem likely to have been old work dug up to satisfy a demand that was outstripping his rate of composition. Certainly, the poems are a true low point in Cannell’s career, which otherwise illustrates a gradual refinement of his poetic skills. These would be the last poems of Cannell’s to appear in *Poetry*, though two of his earlier contributions would later make the cut for

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<sup>450</sup> Pound to Williams, 10 November 1919, in *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige, 181.

<sup>451</sup> Quartermain provides the reference: ‘Fragment’ in *Poetry Journal* 2 (June, 1914): 246-48 in “Skipwith Cannell,” 79.

<sup>452</sup> Cannell, “Poems,” *Poetry* 4.2 (May, 1914), 50-1; Cannell, “Monoliths,” *Poetry* 4.6 (September, 1914), 207-10.

<sup>453</sup> Quartermain, “Skipwith Cannell,” 81.

<sup>454</sup> Quartermain, “Skipwith Cannell,” 82.

<sup>455</sup> Quartermain, “Skipwith Cannell,” 81.

<sup>456</sup> Cannell, “The Silver Ship,” “The Butterfly,” and “The Tidings,” *The Little Review* 1.7 (October, 1914), 20-21.

<sup>457</sup> Cannell, “Songs of Hunger,” *Poetry* 6.3 (June, 1915), 127-29.

Monroe and Alice Henderson Corbin's massive anthology, *The New Poetry*, when it was published in February 1917.<sup>458</sup>

Cannell's final magazine appearance would be in the June-July 1916 issue of the *Little Review*, where three poems—'Wonder Song', 'Scorn', and 'The Deeper Scorn'—appeared under the heading 'A Dypitch'.<sup>459</sup> These poems did not involve any significant developments in the poet's style and do not warrant much discussion here. Indeed, the poems published immediately before these 'final' poems (particularly 'Ikons'), suggests that 'Wonder Song', 'Scorn', and 'The Deeper Scorn' were also early compositions. Certainly, it is not surprising that these poems were passed over by the American anthologists who oversaw the final setting of Cannell's work into type.

After moving to New York in summer 1915, Cannell had become friends with Kreymborg. Having wrapped up the *Glebe* in September, Kreymborg would soon found the magazine *Others*. In addition to attending Kreymborg's parties, hobnobbing with the likes of Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, Cannell became involved with the new magazine and the artistic community that surrounded it. At this time, Cannell also began working for marketing pioneer John Wanamaker, though in what capacity is not clear.<sup>460</sup> In *Troubadour*, Kreymborg recounts his first meeting with the Cannells.

[He had a] sepulchral roundhead with round glasses who looked and talked like a Buddhist monk and wore the exotic name, Skipwith Cannell. Skip brought a fair-haired, blue-eyed lady, the dancer, Kathleen Cannell, and among her impromptu performances, nothing gave greater pleasure than her exquisite mimicry of Ezra Pound. Skip and Kitty had just returned from London and Paris, where they had been in touch with the latest art movements, including the birth of Imagism, and the stay-at-homes revelled in their stories and pantomime and plied them for more.<sup>461</sup>

Four of Cannell's poems appeared in *Others*, with 'The Coming of Night' and 'To England' appearing in August 1915, 'Ikons' in February, and the aforementioned imagist attempt, 'On a London Tennis Court' in February 1916.<sup>462</sup>

'Ikons' and 'The Coming of Night' are Cannell's two most sophisticated works. There is a masterful simplicity to these poems, which exude a confidence that is absent in Cannell's earlier work. The caution that led him to peep out from behind floral poetic language and worn narratives (albeit with the intention of subverting them) has gone, replaced by a modern vocabulary, a speech-like rhythm, and an overtly personal perspective. Cannell starts 'The Coming of Night' by describing the New York skyline,

The sun is near set

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<sup>458</sup> Cannell's "The Red Bridge" and "The King" were one of 431 poems, by 101 poets. Both poems were slightly revised prior to republication.

<sup>459</sup> Cannell, "A Dypitch," *The Little Review* 3.4 (June-July, 1916), 17-19.

<sup>460</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 82.

<sup>461</sup> Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, 239-40.

<sup>462</sup> Cannell, "The Coming of Night," and "To England," *Others* 1.2 (August, 1915), 26-7; "Ikons," *Others* 2.2 (February, 1916), 156-66. The latter was an entirely new poem and should not be confused with a poem of the same name that Cannell published in *Poetry* 4.2 (May, 1914), 50.

And the tall buildings  
Become teeth  
Tearing bloodily at the sky's throat [...] <sup>463</sup>

The gritty realism, the urbanity, the violence are a sudden departure from the poet's previous work.

Whilst Cannell had written poetry about poetry before, he had never done it so directly. 'The Coming of Night' concerns its own composition. It relates an attempt to write up a different poem, which the tired and distracted poet abandons to write *'this.'* The abandoned poem, we are told, would have concerned the forsaken love of a woman who 'died/ A thousand years ago'. In other words, it would have been a poem in the vein of Cannell's former work. *'This'* arises out of the distractions that thwart the earlier poem. The poet's drab surroundings, which had proved too engrossing to permit the imagining of ancient longings, are recorded—his 'cracked cup [...] With dregs of tea in it'. The poet's fatigue, which earlier had sapped his creative power, becomes a refrain as tiredness is stated, restated, and, finally, given its own one-line stanza: 'I am tired.' Here and there, natural imagery creeps in and undermines the bald, realist account—'marshes', 'fishes', 'a yellow moth', a 'great plane'. In these moments, we are party to the wandering of the poet's somnolent mind. In presenting the view from the window, the detritus of the writing desk, his undone poem, and sudden plunges into near sleep, Cannell's poem articulates the interplay of thought and stimuli that constitute the poet's composing mind. The effect would be intimate, even if the poem were not, throughout, addressed to an intended recipient by the pronoun 'you'.

The impulse that drives 'The Coming of Night', the shaking off of contrived form and content, is explained in 'Ikons':

I have been all  
                        wrong from the beginning.  
I will re-create myself.  
I will be right. <sup>464</sup>

More structured than 'The Coming of Night', 'Ikons' is divided into five sections, each of which is divided into three sub-sections, numbered 1–3. The linear demands of the writing and reading are undermined by the repetitious numbering: the five sub-section ones, twos, and threes call to each other across the intervening type, demanding simultaneous consideration or, at the least, mental juxtaposition.

The poem begins with a trumpeting of the poet's mastery.

I broke a savage bitch  
                        who has two tails.  
I named her 'Beauty'

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<sup>463</sup> Cannell, "The Coming of Night," 26-27.

<sup>464</sup> Cannell, "Ikons," 156-7.

from a beast  
in Mythology.

We cannot live  
in the houses of other men,  
We cannot breathe  
air from their sick bellies;  
I will travel into lonely places  
To laugh and think new thoughts.

Today, Cannell's 'bitch' is a ubiquitous corporate logo. The Starbucks' mermaid—with her tails akimbo and each fin hoicked up, behind her head, like a too exotic dancer—derives from a Christian era reinterpretation of the Siren. In Greek mythology, the Sirens had been half-bird but, over time, they became mermaids, a fishy form seeming better suited to their coastal habitat. Despite the changing of their zoomorphic trousers, Sirens continued to be held accountable for luring sailors onto the rocks with their songs. For Cannell, the Siren represents the poetic tradition, the call of certain words, forms, and topics, which the strong modern poet must overmaster.

Presented in a series of aphorisms and thematising the ideas delineated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—the übermensch, the will to power, eternal recurrence—Cannell's poem owes much to Nietzsche; a fact which he admits, whilst underlying the controversial nature of his admission of historical indebtedness.

I have owed much to older people.  
Why should I deny it?  
To Nietzsche and Mrs. Eddy and Blake and Whit-  
man and Gauguin and those old Egyptians  
who cut for eternity.

I shall pass over some of these.  
I shall crush them.  
But  
I owe much to older people.  
Why should I deny it?<sup>465</sup>

The idea of passing over and crushing past influences is, of course, itself Nietzschean, being the course of the übermensch.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had argued that Dionysian festivity played an important role in the creation of art, as a counterbalance to the order provided by Apollonian drives. At one infinitely quotable

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<sup>465</sup> Cannell, "Ikons," section I, iii, in *Others, An Anthology of New Verse*, ed Alfred Kreymborg (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1916), 17-18. 'Mrs. Eddy', or Mary Baker Eddy, was the founder of the Christian Science movement.

moment, Cannell praises intoxication—‘A fool once said to me,/ “How strange it is that you are/ Glad and drunken.” On a number of occasions in the poem, intoxication is linked with artistic creation. Contributing to an extended expression of disdain for rank and file humanity, which already risked the poet being mistaken for Zarathustra, Cannell develops ‘pot-men’ as an epithet for non-aspirational man. As an aspirer, as an übermensch, Cannell is a drinker and the rest of the world fetch and clear his glasses. As the poem slews forth one grandiloquent non sequitur after another, it is easy to imagine the words emerging slurred and misted with an alcohol-scented spittle. Yet, in accordance with Nietzsche’s conditions for nihilism-crushing art, the feverish garrulity of the poetic voice is balanced by the short, clipped lines, the punctilious punctuation, the subdivision into meaningful sections, or, in short, by a formal Apollonianism.

Cannell pronounces upon the noteworthiness of his creative activity.

I am tired of old colors  
and old sounds,  
I will make new sounds with my mouth  
and they shall be music.

I will make new sounds  
and new jumps and gestures.<sup>466</sup>

There is nothing particularly fresh about these claims, or the act of claiming them. If the sophistication of ‘Ikons’ permits us to presume it to be one of Cannell’s latest compositions from his early period of productivity, then we can date its composition to late 1915. He is likely to have been exposed, however unwillingly, to Pound’s similarly declarative poems. After all, a few of them had appeared in *Blast*, copies of which were probably littering Pound’s flat during the Cannell’s visit, given that the magazine was published on 2 July 1914.<sup>467</sup>

In stanzas that follow shortly after his proclamation of artistic immaculacy, Cannell goes on to marry artistic creation with sex.

Women are green and barrelled like guns,  
Men are red and primed cartridges.  
I despise everything that is not  
Green or red.

We are red, they green; their greenness  
Give our red value and violence.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Cannell, “Ikons,” section V, iii, *Others, An Anthology of New Verse*, 22.

<sup>467</sup> See, for example, Ezra Pound’s “Come my Cantilations” [*sic*], *Blast* 1 (July, 1914), 46.

<sup>468</sup> Cannell, ‘Ikons’, section V, iii, *Others, An Anthology of New Verse*, 22.

The lines recall the Post-Impressionist sub-division of Cloisonnism, a form of painting in which areas of pure colour are separated by bold outlines.<sup>469</sup> Gauguin had been an important innovator within the Cloisonnist movement—a man who Cannell had name-checked in his list of influences. In Cannell's lines, colours become symbolic of sex difference, as if they encapsulated an essential difference in the energy and purpose of men and women. Pound is known for using sperm as a metaphor for human creativity, even going so far as proposing a physiological connection between the two in his rambling postscript to his translation of Remy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love* (1922). There has always been an inherent flaw with notions of creativity that celebrate the creative potential of the spermatozoa, since without an ovum there can be no zygote. Cannell, who, we will recall, was enthusiastic about women's rights and, in particular, their right to be sexually desirous, in the pages of *The Egoist*, finds a place for women in his reformulation of the sex/art creation metaphor. Yet, before we roll out the ticker-tape parade, in Cannell's account, women are merely a counter-point, by which the 'value and violence' of men can be made more visible.

In a section that recalls the theory of evolutionary Darwinism, Cannell describes the progress of art as an endless cycle of revolution, in which the weak are beaten down by the strong.

We young men come up from our beginnings crying,

"Way! Make way for us!"

The old ones stand against us

Like lions who are old and angry.

[...]

Some day the young men

Will come upon me

Crying, "Down with him! Down with him!"

I long for the day when the young men

Come against me.

To try our strength.<sup>470</sup>

Though at first, it appears that Cannell proposes something suggestive of eternal recurrence, the circumstances of his overthrowing and the attempts at his overthrow are subtly different. As part of the first troop of 'young men', Cannell's cry is for space in the literary world for his work. Older, less relevant, poetic practitioners need to be swept aside so that the space they occupy on magazine pages and bookshelves can be made available to the young. Yet, when he imagines himself to be an older practitioner, the cry has changed. The call is no longer a pragmatic request for old poets to step aside, but a vicious call

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<sup>469</sup> The term derives from cloisonné, the technique of baking powdered glass in a framework of wire compartments.

<sup>470</sup> Cannell, "Ikons," II, ii-iii, *Others: An Anthology of New Verse*, 15-23.

for their destruction. Furthermore, the suggestion that the old men will find satisfaction in trying their strength, suggests that the assault made upon them will not necessarily be so successful.

Cannell's exploration of the iconic nature of the artist is arguably his most interesting work, which makes it all the more surprising to think it was among the last poems he composed before he 'disappeared'. It is unfortunate that the poem is so rarely read, since 'Ikons', shows Cannell's true poetic potential. Yet, more than anything, it is surprising, since 'Ikons' also became an anthology piece. As had been the case with his magazine career, Cannell's most important anthological outings were American. His appearance in the transatlantic *Des Imagistes* would have brought 'Nocturnes' to the attention of a few hundred English readers at most. His subsequent exclusion from the *Some Imagist Poets* and *Catholic Anthology*, is indicative of the failure of his career in that country. His inability to find a suitable niche within the competing poetic groups that were operating in London at that time effectively precluded the possibility of amassing more than a meagre readership. In America, however, his good working relationship with the editors of *Poetry* and *Others* enabled him to significantly increase the reach of his work with appearances in their magazine's affiliated anthologies.

In January 1916, 'Ikons' was republished in Kreymborg's *Others, An Anthology*.<sup>471</sup> The wider audience that this publication was expected to reach forced a change in the poem—with the word 'privates' being replaced by 'body'.<sup>472</sup> In February 1917, Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson's anthology *The New Poetry* included Cannell's poems 'The King' and 'The Red Bridge', both of which had previously appeared in *Poetry*. Publication of the anthology had been planned for autumn of 1916, but was delayed by editing workloads until 28 February 1917.<sup>473</sup> As Craig S. Abbot has pointed out, *The New Poetry, An Anthology* was much more wide reaching than the magazine itself.

Macmillan were sufficiently impressed with the list [of prospective contributors to the first *New Poetry* anthology, 1917] to offer a contract with royalties of ten percent of the retail price on the first 5,000 copies and of fifteen percent after 2,500 copies, Monroe accepted the terms and demanded that the editors have "absolute authority to include or reject" the poems for the anthology.<sup>474</sup> By comparison, Elkin Matthews produced just 500 copies of Pound's *Catholic Anthology, 1914-15* in November 1915—a run commensurate with Pound's solo volumes at that point.

In a review of Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson's *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (Macmillan, 1917), T. S. Eliot comments briefly upon Cannell's two pieces—"Skipwith Cannell is represented by what I believe are his two best poems, the "Red Bridge" and the "King," brilliant *tours de force*, perhaps in their success a definition of the author's talent."<sup>475</sup> Other reviewers were disappointed with the editors' selections. During 1914, when her selection of British poets was otherwise much under the influence of

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<sup>471</sup> Cannell, "Ikons," *Others: An Anthology of New Verse*, 15-23.

<sup>472</sup> Cannell, "Ikons," *Others: An Anthology of New Verse*, 16.

<sup>473</sup> Craig S. Abbot, "Publishing the New Poetry: Harriet Monroe's Anthology," *Journal of Modern Literature* 11.1 (March, 1984), 94-5.

<sup>474</sup> Abbot, 'Publishing the New Poetry: Harriet Monroe's Anthology', 92.

<sup>475</sup> Eliot, "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry," *The Egoist* 4.10 (November, 1917), 151.



Pound, a number of poets who had been included in *Georgian Poetry* appeared in Monroe's magazine.<sup>476</sup> Yet, when Monroe discussed her plans for *The New Poetry* with Edward C. Marsh, a representative of the Macmillan publishing company (not to be confused with the editor of *Georgian Poetry*), he was critical of her bias towards more experimental poets.<sup>477</sup> He felt that poets like Masefield and Wilfred Gibson (both of whom published under the Macmillan imprint) were underrepresented, compared to Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Pound. A small shift in the balance was agreed upon.<sup>478</sup> Yet, despite the intimidating size of the volume (which contained 431 poems, by 101 poets) some reviewers were critical of the underrepresentation of *Georgian Anthology* poets.<sup>479</sup> In Aiken's review of *The New Poetry* (1917) in the *Dial*, he notes the absence of Abercrombie, Elroy Flecker, and W. H. Davies, as well as the modest coverage of Masefield, Brooke, Gibson, and Hodgson.<sup>480</sup>

In October 1917, Kreymborg brought out a second volume of his anthology, *Others*, in which he included three poems by Cannell: 'The King' was given its third outing, having previously appeared in *Poetry* magazine and *The New Poetry*; 'The Coming of Night', which had appeared in *Others* two years previously, was reprinted; and 'Fragment – from "The Song of Creation' is published for what may be the first time.<sup>481</sup> Pound provided a review of the anthology for the *Little Review*, managing to condense a promotion of his new pet poet and a disparagement of Cannell into the same sentence.

Kreymborg's anthology contains poems by Eliot; by Cannell, who manages to get still a drop more poetry from that worn subject, the deity (monotheist) [...]<sup>482</sup>

Pound's insinuation that Cannell's work has become tired, is not a view that is echoed by John Rodker in his review of the book, which, rather curiously, also appeared in the *Little Review*, just a few months later. Though he provides no discussion of the poet's work, he mentions in passing his view that Cannell 'is extremely good', referencing the 'The Coming of the Night' as evidence.<sup>483</sup>

In his 1918 review of Monroe's *The New Poetry*, Kreymborg mentions that Cannell 'has not been writing for the past three or four years'.<sup>484</sup> By Kreymborg's estimation, this dates the composition of Cannell's final poems to some point between July 1914 and July 1915, meaning he finished with poetry concomitant with the end of his visit to London, or else soon after he had met Kreymborg and prior to the founding of *Others*. These dates seem too early to be convincing—it is too difficult to believe that a poet could have

<sup>476</sup> William Wilfred Gibson, "The Tram," "On Hampstead Heath," "A Catch for Singing," *Poetry* 4.3 (June, 1914), 102-104 and "In the Orchestra," *Poetry* 6.1 (April, 1915), 24-8; James Stephens, "The Waste Places," "Hawks," "The Liar," *Poetry* 4.5 (August, 1914), 189-194; Rupert Brooke, "Retrospect," *Poetry* 5.1 (October, 1914), 27-28.

<sup>477</sup> Letters from Monroe to Marsh, dated 25 April and 22 May 1915, are cited by Abbot in 'Publishing the New Poetry: Harriet Monroe's Anthology'. Abbot notes that letters are contained in the Personal Papers of Harriet Monroe and the *Poetry Magazine Papers*, 1912-22, held at the University of Chicago, but provides no further details.

<sup>478</sup> Abbot, 'Publishing the New Poetry: Harriet Monroe's Anthology', 94.

<sup>479</sup> Cannell, "The Red Bridge" and "The King," in *The New Poetry, An Anthology*, eds Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 40-2.

<sup>480</sup> Aiken, *Dial* LXII (May 3, 1917), 389-90.

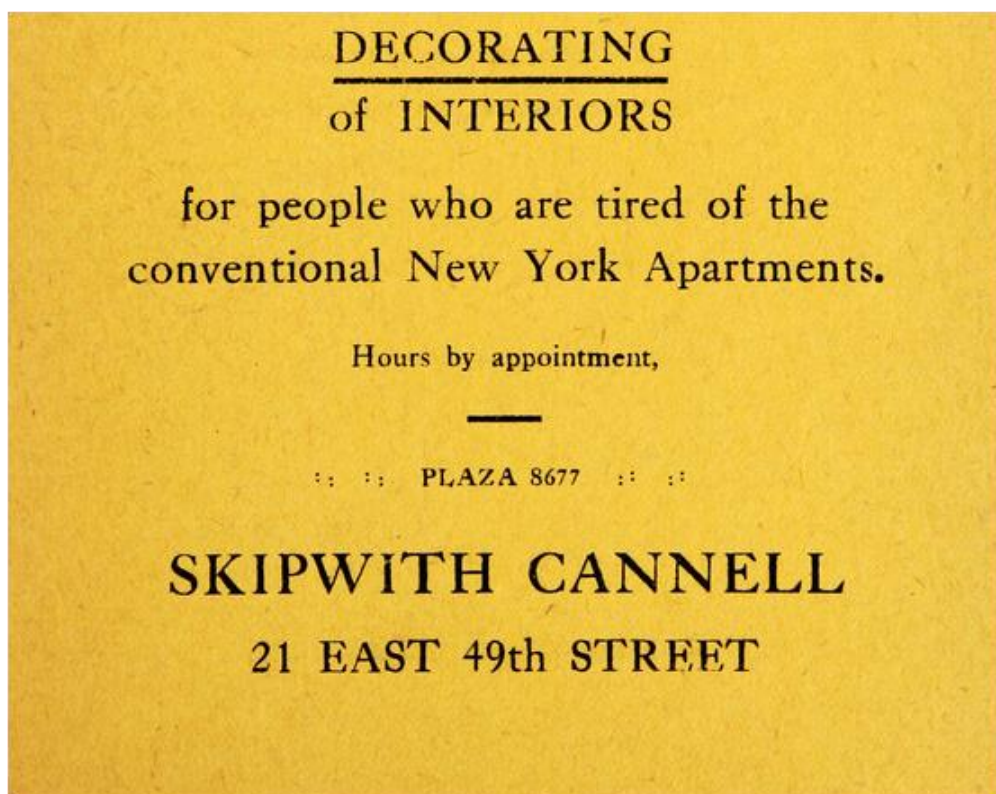
<sup>481</sup> Cannell had previously published a poem called "Fragment" in a magazine called *Poetry Journal* (June 1914), which I have been unable to track down. However, the poet recycles the title "Ikons" and, besides, 'fragment' denotes a form, meaning the poet might use it in his titles as freely as he uses 'song' or 'nocturne'.

<sup>482</sup> Ezra Pound, Review of *Others, An Anthology* (1917) in 'A List of Books', *The Little Review* 4.11 (March, 1918): 58. (57-8).

<sup>483</sup> John Rodker, Review of *Others, An Anthology* (1917) in "List of Books," *The Little Review* 5.7 (November, 1918), 32.

<sup>484</sup> Kreymborg, "The New Poetry, An Anthology" by Harriet Monroe; Alice Corbin Henderson, *Poetry* 12.4 (July, 1918), 217.

experimented so extensively with a range of different new forms within a period of twenty-four months. The maturity of 'Ikons', when compared to the rudimentary 'Songs of Hunger' lyrics, which I suspect were his earliest work, seems a too astonishing leap for a year or two's practice. However, by the spring of 1916 there is clear evidence that Cannell had become distracted by a new occupation. In the March and April issues of *Others*, Cannell's name makes an appearance in two advertisements, in which he offers readers his assistance as a designer of interiors.



6. Advertisement on inside cover of *Others* 2.4 (April, 1916).

Quartermain attributes Cannell's abandonment of his poetry career to a number of factors, stating that 'Skipwith was, presumably, embittered by the war and by what he perceived to be the disloyalties of Pound, Kitty, and the *Others* crowd.'<sup>485</sup> Certainly, by 1917, the life that Cannell had lived for the last four years had begun to unravel—he separated from his bohemian wife, renounced his artistic friends, resigned from his literary life, and joined the army. He was deployed to France in May, 1917, where he worked as Military Intelligence Police, doing a good enough job to be promoted to Sergeant. In Paris, in 1918 Cannell fell in love with Marie Juliette Del Grange, a bookkeeper for the Dunlop Tyre Company. Though still married to Kitty, he proposed before he returned to America in 1919 and promised to return once he had wound up his affairs. In April, he took a beekeeping course at Cornell and, when he returned to France, he settled in the south with Del Grange. When he finally secured a divorce from Kitty in 1921, he married Del Grange and, soon after, fathered a daughter.<sup>486</sup>

<sup>485</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 83.

<sup>486</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 82-3.

In 1923, the Cannells had sold their bees and bought a confectionary and cheese shop in Beaulieu. The business was not a success and, by the end of February 1925, the family had moved back to New York, where, soon afterwards, Cannell's second daughter was born. Around this point, Cannell lost touch with William Carlos Williams, who had become his last friend from his literary days. Life would prove as difficult for the Cannell family during the next decades. Cannell moved from job to job, working variously as a car park watchman, real estate salesman, bridge tutor, and a Singer sewing-machine salesman. In 1932, Cannell lost his inheritance in the stock market, barely a few months after he had received it. Presumably, with some relief, Cannell managed to secure a bureaucratic job in a government department which provided him with a comfortable long-term income.<sup>487</sup> The job would also see to it that Cannell's name would appear on the cover of two books, though his co-author credits on *Regional Shifts in Postwar Traffic of Class I Railroads* and *Postwar Earnings of Class I Railroads* are far removed from his youthful literary dreams.<sup>488</sup>

Cannell often attempted to make a poetic return. Early on, progress was thwarted by the loss of his manuscripts and drafts, which he had left with a friend when he joined the army. Many years later, the poems found their way back to Kitty but, by then, she had no way of contacting Cannell. Later, in the mid-thirties, Cannell produced a group of poems, which he signed with the pseudonym 'David Ruth' and sent to William Carlos Williams.

Williams, who made a point of always answering his mail, responded to his unrecognized correspondent with care and tact; he admired some of the love lyrics but was put off by the biblical analogies. Cannell replies with a defence and to his correspondent revealed his identity.<sup>489</sup>

Their friendship renewed, Cannell would send Williams the manuscript of a long dramatic poem, 'By the Rivers of Babylon', on 18 November 1936. Working with Williams' suggestions, Cannell had completed a revised draft by 14 February 1939. Cannell revised the poem through four different drafts and Williams wrote an introduction. The typescript of the introduction and poem were sent to Coley Taylor's publishing business, Gotham House, but the company failed before the book was printed. Another publisher was never found and the poem remains unpublished.<sup>490</sup>

By the late thirties Skipwith and Juliette's marriage was ailing. Cannell had fallen in love with Catherine Pettigrew, the woman he had employed to type up 'By the Rivers of Babylon'. In 1941, Cannell's second marriage was dissolved and he married Pettigrew. During the next decade, Cannell fathered a further five children. In the mid-1950s, Cannell was diagnosed with cancer and retired from government service. As Quartermain recounts, the prospect of death compelled Cannell to make a final attempt at poetry,

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<sup>487</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 84-5.

<sup>488</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 79.

<sup>489</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 85.

<sup>490</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 85.

beginning a third book-length poem, this time using the pseudonym 'Jonathan Small'.<sup>491</sup> Unfortunately, by the time he died on 15 June, 1957, the poem was still little more than an outline.

In England, Cannell was never able to secure the diverse and relatively high profile exposure that he enjoyed in America. There were a variety of reasons for this. Firstly, his residence in Paris and, later, New York meant that his relationship with the English experimental poetry scene was a long-distance one, which put him at the mercy of his operator—Pound. London was an important centre of literary activity during the years in which Cannell was developing his career, but a lot of its activity was engendered by personal contact—the readings, the introductions, the dinners, the nepotism—and many poets struggled to get on *in absentia*. Before their disagreement, Pound connected Cannell to *The New Freewoman* and, by extension, *The Egoist*. Cannell appears to have made some effort to become more involved, by writing a review and becoming a regular presence on the correspondence pages, but, ultimately, he made little impact in the paper.

By the time Cannell began to publish, publication opportunities for experimental poets in England were scarce. Commentators in *Poetry* would often lament America's failure to recognise and value young talented poets, arguing that the easiest way to find a publisher and public in America was to find one in England first. However, the situation in England was not as rosy as their accounts made out. Yes, there were sympathetic publishers, like Elkin Mathews and Harold Monroe, but by 1914, periodical publication required poets to win favour in one of two camps. After the winding up of *The Blue Review* in 1913, experimental poets could either appear in the Imagist dominated *New Freewoman* or the Georgian dominated *New Numbers*, neither of which had a circulation that rewarded the effort. Monroe's *Poetry and Drama* had, for a time, provided a platform for both moderate and extremist poetry reformers, but a growing antagonism between the groups meant that an appearance there was likely to damage the image of more experimental poets.

Although Cannell's work was promoted in England and America by appearances in anthologies, his work slowly slipped into obscurity. His contribution to *Des Imagistes* has provided him with an afterlife, but the small and uncharacteristic contribution he made to the most picked over anthology of the twentieth century made it a something of a limbo. With so little of his work presented amongst poets who went on to become canonical giants, he developed his reputation as a minor Imagist; a reputation which has chronically misrepresented his range and ability, as well as his contemporary fame.

## Afterword

In Ross' *The Georgian Revolt*, as in the swathe of criticism that was influenced by his work, the work of the *Georgian Poetry* contributors is positioned in the field through political analogy. The left is occupied by

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<sup>491</sup> Quartermain, "Skipwith Cannell," 88.

rebellious poets, who seek to present new matter in a new manner; the right, by traditionalists, like Watson and Philips, who see no need for revision. In this neat configuration, the Georgian poets are centralised.

The Centrist tried to walk the razor's edge between the poets of the old guard, who refused to recognize the fact of revolt, and those of the *avant-garde*, who refused to recognize anything except revolt.<sup>492</sup>

This is the view that Howarth proceeds from, when he investigates the influence of the left upon the centre (and *vice versa*) in *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*. The approach, which arises out of the usual prioritisation of *Georgian Poetry* and *Des Imagistes*, provides an oversimplification of the poetry scene.

*Georgian Poetry* and the Imagist anthology series have long been prioritised by critics; the former, principally for its unique commercial success and the latter, for its stylistic innovation and the canonical status that was subsequently awarded to many of its contributors. These books, which were published in an attempt to modify the poetic field *via* promotion and exclusion, have come to stand in for the historical field. The level of critical interest that these books have generated has meant that other anthologies have not been given much consideration. A cursory look at other anthologies suggests that the landscape of early twentieth century was more complicated than Ross' political analogy suggests. Certainly, the right to determine the 'best' twentieth century poetry in pre- and immediately post-war England was more hotly and variously contested than received accounts suggest.

Of the great number of lesser-known attempts to triage English poetry that were made in and around the First World War, two are particularly relevant here. In May 1914, Galloway Kyle, the founder and director of the stolid *Poetry Society*—and, following a dispute over the rights to a journal name in 1913, Monro's sworn enemy—brought out *A Cluster of Grapes, A Book of Twentieth Century Poetry*. Arriving a few months after the Poetry Bookshop had brought out *Des Imagistes*, Kyle's competing account of the 'representative of poetry today' was critical of the Georgian and Imagists attempts to divide and rule. In his preface, Kyle belittles the poetic divisions and disputes that were playing out in the anthology market.

[I]t is not intended to show that any poet, deliberately or otherwise, is a Neo-Symbolist or Paroxyst or is afflicted with any other 'ist or 'ism; it is not compiled to assert that any one group of poets is superior to any other group of poets [...].<sup>493</sup>

Though Kyle was the founder-director of the Poetry Society and, from 1916 to 1947, the editor of its *Poetry Review*, his significance and influence upon English poetry has been consistently downplayed on account of his conservatism. Yet, the poets who selected poems for inclusion in his anthology, standing behind his declaration that the united field of poetry was being divided by self-interested strategists, are diverse. De la Mare, Ralph Hodgson, Eva Gore-Booth, A. E., Dora Sigerson Shorter, John Galsworthy, Eden Phillpots,

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<sup>492</sup> Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, 47.

<sup>493</sup> Galloway Kyle, ed, "Preface," *A Cluster of Grapes: A Book of Twentieth Century Poetry*, London: Erskine Macdonald, 1914.

Arthur Christopher Benson, Thomas Hardy, Lawrence Houseman, and Alice Meynell all contributed to the volume.

In 1918, *New Paths: Verse - Prose - Pictures, 1917-18* was published. This anthology raises further questions about the neat compartmentalisation of the poetic field during this period. The anthologists, M. T. H. Sadler and C. W. Beaumont, bring separate and specific expertise to the mixed-mode volume. Sadler, who had been responsible for selecting and arranging the 'pictures' section of the book, had published a translation of Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning The Spiritual in Art* in 1914.<sup>494</sup> Though little detail about C. W. Beaumont's life has come to light, as the London-based publisher of this and other volumes of poetry, we can presume that he had an interest and knowledge in the field of literature. Though this anthology that was published in wartime and dedicated to fallen writers and artists (including Brooke, Thomas, and Gaudier Brzeska), it suggests an unexpected peace in a different area entirely. The alphabetical poetry selection mixes early *Georgian Anthology* poets (Davies, De la Mare, Drinkwater, Gibson, Lawrence and Monro) with *Des Imagistes* poets (Aldington, Fletcher, Flint, and Lawrence), later *Georgian Anthology* poets (J. C. Squire, W. J. Turner, and John Freeman), *Wheels* poets (including Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell), and a host of other poets with no link to any of these anthologies. Even Macaulay appears, represented by two new poems, 'Pic-nic' and 'Baffled', which she would later include in her second solo volume *Three Days* (1919).

In these anthologies, which are just two among many, we find different delineations of the contemporary poetry field. An attentiveness to these different formulations, which is anyway recommended by the material turn in modernist studies, suggests that the importance we attach to 'isms' might reflect the prefatory comments of anthologists more than it does the more nuanced historical reality. Certainly, whether a poet was assimilated into *Georgian Poetry*, *Des Imagistes*, or neither, has inflected readings of not just the poet's place in history but sometimes, as was the case with Davies, the poetry itself.

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<sup>494</sup> A translation of Kandinsky's book appears in the first issue of *Blast*, 'by permission of Messrs. Constable, who have recently published a translation of the book by M. T. H. Sadler'. Though, rather insultingly, Edward Wadsworth provides his own translation of the text, instead of relying upon Sadler's. See "Inner Necessity," *Blast* 1 (July, 1914), 119-125.

## Conclusion

Having discussed some of the ways in which experimental and popular culture intersected in 1914, we have new evidence with which to test Huyssen's claim that modernism was a conglomerate reaction formation against commercialised popular culture. Certainly, many of the qualities that Huyssen associates with modernism—anti-commercialism, elitism, rupture from historical forms and values, and an emphasis upon the autonomy of the artwork—are evident in the thought and practice of the experimental writers and artists of 1914. For example, when Pound installed Blunt as the figurehead for his group of 'new' poets, he sought to secure poetry as an elite artform, styling its transformation as a rebellion against established humanistic aims. He argued that poetry should not be concerned with the interests of the public—it should not seek to educate, nor should it aspire to entertain. Instead, poetry should have value in itself, existing as an autonomous work of art.

Nevertheless, the similarities between Pound's poetics and Huyssen's definition of modernism are superficial. Pound did not prioritise elite and autonomous poetry as part of a broader attempt to create a division between popular and experimental composition. In contrast to Huyssen's formulation, which viewed modernism's desire for autonomy of the artwork as a symptom of its paranoid fear of contamination by popular culture, the demand that Pound makes for poetic autonomy only excludes poetry that makes popularity and commercial success its principal aim, welcoming poets for whom fame and riches were contingent outcomes. He does not seek to take poetry out of the marketplace, but to take the concerns of the marketplace out of poetry—a subtle but significant difference.

Huyssen's theory rests upon earnest anti-commercialism being a guiding principle of modernism, which, like the received accounts of W. H. Davies's poetic talent, suggests a naivety in its practitioners is difficult to square with the sophistication of their cultural output. *The Egoist* only appeared to be anti-commercial. Like the large-circulation rival at which it took aim, the magazine's staff were mindful that their cultural objectives needed to be balanced against commercial imperatives. By attacking the popularity of the *Times Literary Supplement* and suggesting that its critical opinions were unintelligent and financially biased, *The Egoist* was able to imply that the smaller scale of their operation permitted greater discernment and integrity. In its direct attacks and ironic reviews, *The Egoist* was even able to involve itself in discussions of dominant popular cultural memes which their assumed elitism should have placed well beyond their remit; for example, discussions of popular war poetry. As such, the periodical's assumption of an anti-commercial stance can be viewed as a savvy commercial tactic, proclaiming their superiority to the commercial market as a way to compete for a better position within it.

If *The Egoist* resisted censorship to preserve the artistic autonomy of their contributors, rather than to advertise their 'edginess' (and, as I have argued, that is by no means a foregone conclusion), their success was limited because they were not, as Pound would later proclaim, 'fugitive' from the market. Unlike large

publishing houses who needed their material to be acceptable to a wide range of sensibilities, *The Egoist* could swear, blaspheme and discuss sex with little risk of offending their small, liberal demographic. Yet, the need to contract printing out to legally-liable firms, meant that this freedom was often checked. In other words, the magazine's reliance upon the institutions of the commercial literary market meant that the artworks it published were held to standards of decency that fell safely within the limits of legality, even if the more rigorous standards necessary for popular commercial success could sometimes be overstepped.

If modernist writers were convinced that there were no plausible alternatives to the institutions of the commercial literary market, then it is difficult to accept Huyssen's assertion that fantasies of hygienically separating the experimental from the popular could have inspired their aesthetic choices. Indeed, in the Vorticist manifesto, the paranoid fear of popular culture that constitutes Huyssen's definition of modernism is turned entirely on its head. Instead of anxiety at the prospect of being contaminated by popular culture, we see early modernist practitioners embracing adventure fiction as part of an attempt to distance themselves from the contaminating influence of the more dominant experimental movement of Futurism.

From these narratives emerges a modernism that was primarily concerned with protecting the autonomy of artwork, as it circulated within the existing market. A modernism that was sometimes frustrated by the products, methods, and machinations of the popular literary sphere, but not reluctant to engage with it materially, critically, and aesthetically. Indeed, as we have seen, negotiations with popular literary producers—writers like Chesterton, periodicals like the *TLS*, publishers like Grant Richards, and printers like Partridge & Cooper—helped to shape modernist ideas and to position modernist products within the marketplace.

Following the trajectories laid down by the earliest practitioner critics, like Eliot and Sitwell, the first decades of modernist criticism focussed attention upon a select list of artists, embedding them as a modernist canon. In my study, modernism has acted as shorthand for this critically constructed canon of works and historical attempts to theorise their distinction. In recent years, critics have made a concerted effort to recontextualise canonical modernism, alongside a reconsideration of the range of works to which that term should refer. To understand the modernism of 1914—its embeddedness within the literary market and its entanglements with popular writing—is to question the exclusive way in which the label has been applied.

My study, which benefits from the arbitrary frame of a year in much the same way that a biodiversity study utilises a quadrat, has noted a number of connections that research which focusses on a literary trend, a person, or a group might easily overlook. Critical navigation by 'isms' has ensured that the significance of Cannell and Macaulay's poetry has been entirely overlooked. In the case of Davies, the sense that he belonged to a 'non-modernist' experimentalism has obscured the similarities between his poetic project and that of the self-mythologising modernist writers. My work has built upon and, I hope, extended the idea that studies of modernity—of experimental work that seeks to promote the autonomy of the artwork—can be used to critique the boundaries put in place by older, more exclusive and under-evidenced definitions of modernism.



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