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A Re-examination of the Work of T. E. Hulme

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Του κύκλου τα γυρίσματα, που ανεβοκατεβαίνου

και του τροχού που ώρες ψηλά κι ώρες στα βάθη πηαίνου,

και του καιρού τ᾽ αλλάματα που αναπαημό δεν έχου,

μα στο καλό κ᾽ εις το κακό περιπατούν και τρέχου

και των αρμάτω οι ταραχές, έχθρητες και τα βάρη,

του Έρωτα η εμπόρεση και της φιλίας η χάρη...

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Library in Hamilton, Ontario, the Hull University Archives, and the Tate Library and Archive.

Abstract

This project challenges a series of common interpretations of Hulme's work: that his arguments are contradictory; that his career can be separated into distinct "phases"; that he endorsed other thinkers' ideas uncritically; and that he promulgated authoritarian politics. Chapter 1 examines the entries in Hulme's notebooks that relate his views on the nature of reality and language. Read through ideas in the works of Bergson, Nietzsche and Ribot, these rudimentary notes present a coherent "anti-intellectualist" philosophical position, consistent with claims made in his later writings. Chapter 2 focuses on "A Lecture on Modern Poetry." Hulme's rejection of nineteenth-century verse was part of a broader campaign by poets in London to find new ways of expression, yet his ideas stand independently of claims made by Flint, Storer and Pound. Hulme's greatest contribution to Imagism is the emphasis he put on the use of images in poetry, a method that follows from the distinction he drew in the notebooks between "direct" and "indirect" language. Chapter 3, which examines Hulme's essays and lectures on Bergson, demonstrates that, although he embraced Bergson's philosophical method, Hulme remained critical of many of Bergson's theories. This discredits the claim that he was simply reiterating Bergson's ideas. Ultimately, Bergson's "intuition" enabled Hulme to develop his earlier description of "modern" poetry and to recast it as "classic" poetry. Chapter 4 investigates Hulme's political essays. Together with Storer, Hulme participated in a debate in the *Commentator* concerning the parliamentary crisis of 1910. It was as part of an attempt to create an efficient propaganda strategy for the Conservative party that Hulme postulated his famous antithesis between Romanticism and Classicism. Hulme's analysis of the process of political conversion shows that in 1910-12 he had not abandoned elements in his thought from Bergson's philosophy. Moreover, far from

sharing the authoritarian political views of the *Action Française*, he can be more accurately described as a "moderate Conservative." Chapter 5 demonstrates that claims Hulme made in his art criticism are consonant with the general reaction in 1913-14 against representational art. While drawing heavily on Worringer's anti-materialist conception of art history, he was using it to defend his contemporaries' experimentation with geometric forms, in a way similar to Fry and Bell. Although, like Worringer and Ludovici, Hulme campaigned for anti-humanism and mixed aesthetics with politics, the model of art he proposed did not carry the authoritarian implications of those of Worringer and Ludovici. Finally, Chapter 6 explores Hulme's war writings. Hulme was not a militarist; rather, he supported Britain's involvement in the war on the grounds that war against Germany would protect the British political institutions. He stayed true to his Conservative principles, using ideas from Sorel and Proudhon to dissociate the "democratic" from the "pacifist" ideology. There is also evidence that, despite his explicit rejection of vitalism in "A Notebook," Hulme continued to value Bergson's method of "intuition" right up to his death in 1917. This project, therefore, argues for a re-interpretation of Hulme's work and shows the value of scrutinising the intellectual and political context in which he was writing in understanding the precise nature of his thought.

Introduction

Re-Examining Hulme's Work

The name of T. E. Hulme reverberates widely across early twentieth-century literary

studies. It is now a commonplace that in his short but prolific career, spanning from about

1908 until his death in 1917, Hulme exerted considerable influence on intellectual thought in

the early modernist period; in the words of T. S. Eliot, Hulme is "the forerunner of a new

attitude of mind" ("A Commentary" 231), a verdict which has been repeated by numerous

other modernist figures throughout the years. In their 1927 *Survey of Modernist Poetry*, for

example, Laura Riding and Robert Graves refer to Hulme as the "Aristotle of modernism,"

while Ezra Pound, despite later protesting that Hulme's importance has been overstated,

claimed in 1932 that Hulme's work was epoch-defining.[1] Likewise, Edwin Muir asserts that

Hulme set the "tone of a great deal" of twentieth-century criticism, Allen Tate wrote in 1927

that Hulme "defined the mood, the out-look of this age," and Richard Curle, from his position

as a central figure in the literary and artistic circles of the early modernist period, recalled in

1937 that Hulme "affected everyone as a man of genius."[2] In later years, influential modernist

critics from Raymond Williams, Frank Kermode, William York Tindall and Wallace Martin

through to Michael Levenson and Jewel Spears Brooker all singled out Hulme's writings as

having a significant impact on intellectual thought in the pre-First World War years in

Britain. Williams presents Hulme as "an extraordinarily stimulating critic," arguing that

Hulme's work "requires recognition and emphasis" (195), while Kermode demonstrates in

Romantic Image that "Hulme was ... the most influential of the *cénacle*" of the modernist

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[1] Riding and Graves 271; Pound, *Profile* 21. Pound made conflicting claims as to the part played by Hulme in
the development of Imagism, arguing in 1939 that Hulme's importance had been over-emphasised ("This Hulme
Business" 15). For a summary of Pound's attempts to diminish Hulme's reputation, see Csengeri, "This Pound
Business" 23-25 and Douglass 23-28.
[2] Muir 166; Tate 50; Curle 276-77.

aesthetes of the early twentieth century (120). Both Tindall and Martin credit Hulme with introducing Henri Bergson's philosophy into the literary circles of the time, arguing that Hulme is the intellectual "father" of Imagism, the movement of poetry usually taken as the "*point de repère*" of literary modernism.[3] For Levenson, Hulme's significance lies in the way he developed an aesthetic of modernism by turning first to Bergson and then to Worringer (39-43). Similarly for Brooker, Hulme "is more than one of the founding fathers of modern poetry; in all the arts, he was a prophet of and an advocate of modernism" (46).

Hulme's work has attracted significant interest in recent years, the appearance of numerous articles and chapters on or about Hulme in the last decade or so prompting Hulme's latest biographer to claim in 2002 that "Hulme's reputation is in the ascendant" (Ferguson xvii). Recent studies include Ronald Schuchard's discussion of Hulme in *The Last Minstrels* (2008), which challenges the received interpretation of Hulme as proto-Imagist, and Roger Kimball's brief interlude on Hulme in *Experiments Against Reality* (2000), in which Kimball urges critics to re-examine Hulme's classicism and his anti-pacifism, without, however, Kimball pursuing this task himself.[4] Furthermore, Hulme's position within modernism is examined by David Trotter in *Paranoid Modernism* (2001), where Hulme's "will-to-abstraction" is read in terms of the broader attempt of modernists to deal with the contingency and friability of their time (3). There is also Louise Blakeney Williams' 2002 study of Hulme as one among a group of modernists – including Yeats, Pound, Ford and Lawrence – who rejected progressive notions of history in favour of cyclic views of the past, as well as Helen Carr's account of the part Hulme played in the development of the Imagist

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[3] Tindall 102-03; Martin, "'The Forgotten School of 1909' and the Origins of Imagism" 7-38 and *The New Age under Orage* 225; The phrase "*point de repère*" is Eliot's. See "American Literature and the American Language" 58. Other critics who take Hulme as Imagism's originator include J. McCormick 116-18, Gillies 42, Brooker 48, Zach 228-42, and Thacker 47-49.

[4] Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels* 256-83; Kimball 45-60. Schuchard's chapter in *The Last Minstrels* is, in fact, a revision of the 1984 essay "'As Regarding Rhythm': Yeats and the Imagists," published in *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* 2 (1984): 209-26.

aesthetic in her impressive group biography of Imagism, *The Verse Revolutionaries* (2009).[5]

Finally, Comentale's and Gasiorek's collection of essays, which according to its editors seeks

to re-examine Hulme's brand of modernism in a way that "offers a unique glimpse into the

wider movement's fundamental contradictions, its productive excesses and complicated

hopes," has charted new territories in Hulme studies.[6]

Even though Hulme's contribution to early twentieth-century literary theory and practice

has received considerable attention, and his reputation as a central figure in the early

modernist period appears warranted, fundamental questions concerning the precise nature of

his thought persist. A brief survey of secondary criticism confirms this. Following the

publication of *Speculations* in 1924, the book which, edited by Herbert Read, brought

together for the first time a selection of Hulme's writings, critics quickly concluded that

Hulme's work, albeit interesting, is essentially contradictory; as his first biographer put it in

1932, Hulme "was an impressionable man [who] sympathized first with one current of

thought and then another."[7] The publication of *Further Speculations* by Samuel Hynes in

1955, which added to the corpus of Hulme's work, did little to change this view of Hulme as

a contradictory thinker. Reviewing *Further Speculations*, Stuart Hampshire argued that

Hulme's arguments are "eccentric"; Richard Huett called his ideas a "potpourri" indicative of

his "erratic" thinking; and Vivienne Koch, shocked by Hulme's "aphoristic and elliptical

skirmishes with linguistic problems," dismissed his work as lacking coherence.[8] Finding

Hulme's thought incoherent and contradictory is part of a well-trodden route in Hulme

studies. To this day, critics are baffled at the little coherence of "A Lecture on Modern

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[5] L. B. Williams 3-4, 23-38 and 74-90; Carr, *Verse Revolutionaries* 133-64.
[6] "On the Significance of a Hulmean Modernism" 5.
[7] Roberts, *T. E. Hulme* 136. Cf. Roberts, "The Categories of T. E. Hulme" 375-85. For similar opinions, see Anon. "The Philosophic Quest" 62-63; King [J. M. Murry] 850-51; Richards 127-38; Read, *A Coat of Many Colours* 294; and Nott 82-104.
[8] Hampshire 458; Koch 154; Huett 246. Although critical of his work, Hampshire, Koch and Huett all stress that Hulme's ideas are exciting, original and ahead of their time.

Poetry" and the way in which Hulme's defence of Bergson's theory of duration in "Bergson's Theory of Art" is at odds with the demand for accuracy he makes in the same lecture. Moreover, they note how, given that Hulme's "classic" poetry is premised on romantic notions of the Imagination, the classicism prescribed in "Romanticism and Classicism" is ambiguous. Thus Harmer and Sherry protest that "A Lecture" is based on opposite aesthetic philosophies, and Sanford Schwartz maintains that Hulme's argument in "Bergson's Theory of Art" constitutes a misreading of Bergson's *durée*. Roberts, Kermode, A. Jones and Hansen have all maintained that Hulme is guilty of practising romanticism while at the same time rallying against it. Richards, Nott, Krieger, Bayley, Hough, Primeau and, most recently, Howarth, have concurred, stressing that Hulme's romanticism is problematic, yet also going a step further by claiming that the conflicts in Hulme's work instruct the broader contradictions of modernism.[9] Similar claims are made by Comentale and Gasiorek, Trotter and Beasley, all of whom are attracted to the way Hulme's contradictory thought, as Comentale and Gasiorek put it, "acts as a template for the clash and play of modernism's idiolects ... testifies to its heterogeneity – its contested intellectual traditions, aesthetic tensions, and varied institutional attachments" (16).[10]

Building on the detective work of Ronald Schuchard and Michael Levenson, who first determined the dates of composition for Hulme's "A Lecture" and "Romanticism and Classicism" respectively, and her own meticulous editorial labour for *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* (1994), Karen Csengeri has demonstrated that much of the early criticism of Hulme as an inconsistent thinker is due to the confusion over the chronology of his writings. According to Csengeri, Hulme's thought can accurately be divided into distinct phases; seen

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[9] See Roberts, "The Categories of T. E. Hulme" 375-85; Kermode, *Romantic Image* 141-63; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 46; Hansen 355-85; Richards' review of *Speculations* 469-70; Nott 238-40; Krieger 300-14; Bayley 49-58; Hough 9, 32-34; Primeau 1104-22; and Howarth 34-44.
[10] See Trotter 225; Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 70.

in their correct chronological order, Csengeri proposes, "The turns and changes that occurred in his thought ... make sense ... They are the natural changes that take place in any acute, enquiring mind as it learns and advances" (ed., xi). Csengeri's argument, therefore, is that Hulme is not an inconsistent thinker, but rather that his thought developed through the years and ideas that might appear contradictory in fact belong to different stages of his career. Beginning from the "nominalism" of the early notebooks, Hulme's ideas changed in 1909 when he became a follower of Bergson. He remained under the influence of Bergson up until 1912, when he began to leave elements of Bergson's philosophy behind him. Finally, by 1914, Csengeri claims, he embraced a rigidly anti-Bergsonian theory of aesthetics and advanced ideas in politics and ethics that were sharply antithetical to the teachings of Bergson. Levenson holds a similar view to Csengeri, arguing years earlier that Hulme's work is best understood as consisting of different phases or periods. Although Levenson agrees with Csengeri that Hulme ended up turning against his early beliefs, he also maintains that another breach occurred in Hulme's thought when, in his post-1914 articles on art and war, he substituted classicism for a more "radical" anti-humanism (83, 99).

As we will see during the course of this project, another common critical assessment is that Hulme is an unoriginal thinker whose importance rests in the way he disseminated the theories of others, such as Kahn, Bergson and Worringer. Thus Read, Roberts and Hynes warn against treating his ideas as original, while Carritt, Martin, A. Jones, Kamerbeek and A. D. Robinson present him as a mediator of ideas that other thinkers express with more clarity. This latter view is also endorsed by less sympathetic critics such as Mason and Hansen, both

of whom dismiss Hulme as a propagandist who, in Hansen's words, "rarely credited [his] sources while watering them down to considerable degree" (355).[11]

Finally, Hulme is also seen as someone who promulgates radically anti-democratic political views. Critics cite his rejection of "Progress" and his mantra that "human nature is limited and imperfect," his idea that political order should be built on the notion of Original Sin, and his very vocal support of Britain's war against Germany in 1914 as evidence that he flirted with the politics of the extreme Right. Watson, S. Schwartz, A. Robinson, Ferrall, Ardis, R. Potter, L. B. Williams, Griffiths and Olsen, all, to varying degrees, postulate that Hulme embraced the radicalism of the proto-fascist *Action Française* halfway through his career, while Read, A. Jones and, more recently, Susser, have traced an ideological trajectory that connects his authoritarian politics with his defence of Britain's involvement in the war.[12] This reading of Hulme's politics as authoritarian forms a central part of Levenson's argument in *A Genealogy of Modernism*, according to which Hulme's "transformation" from advocate of Bergson to proponent of classicism and anti-humanism marks a wider shift in early twentieth century from "individualism" and "anarchism" to "authoritarianism" (79).

Is Hulme a contradictory thinker? Can his work be plausibly separated into distinct periods or phases? Does he repeat other thinkers' ideas uncritically? And is his politics authoritarian? This project starts from the twin premise that it is only by addressing these questions that Hulme's exact significance in the literary and cultural history of the early twentieth century can be assessed and, moreover, that in order to answer these questions it is useful to study his

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[11] See Read, *A Coat of Many Colours* 294; Roberts, "The Categories of T. E. Hulme" 375-85 and *T. E. Hulme* 12; Hynes, ed. xv and *Edwardian Occasions* 123-28; Carritt 273n1; A. Jones, "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer, and the Urge to Abstraction" 1-7; Kamerbeek 193-212; Martin, "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic" 196-204; A. D. Robinson, "New Source for Imagism" 238-40; Mason 215-16.

[12] See Watson 81-82; S. Schwartz, "Bergson and the Politics of Vitalism" 296; Robinson 109-11; Ferrall 17-18; Ardis 7; Potter 67; Williams 25; Griffiths 168; Olsen 98; Read, Introduction to *Speculations* x; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 148.

work comprehensively, in chronological order, and by taking into account the intellectual context in which he developed his ideas. A "classic" in early twentieth-century literary history, Hulme's work, we may say borrowing Kermode's term, remains "patient of interpretation."[13]

Beginning in Chapter 1 with "Cinders" and "Notes on Language and Style," I investigate the rudimentary and often extremely implicit entries included in these texts. These two sets of notes represent Hulme's earliest known writings and, as such, an examination of "Cinders" and "Notes" will inevitably be informative of his thought at the start of his career. Moreover, a detailed study of the notebooks helps determine whether or not Hulme's thought underwent dramatic changes, as many critics claim. As I argue in this chapter, while we must be cautious not to treat either of these texts as finished or complete, the theories of Bergson, Nietzsche and Ribot provide a framework from within which to understand Hulme's fragmentary notes and help answer questions arising from a study of "Cinders" and "Notes."

I proceed in Chapter 2 to examine Hulme's argument in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry." The aim of this chapter is two-fold. On one hand, my intention is to add to our understanding of the part played by Hulme in the development of the early Imagist aesthetic. Given Hulme's leading position in the "School of Images" and the common interpretation of "A Lecture" as proto-Imagist manifesto, it is important to address the claims Hulme makes in it in light of contemporaneous demands made on the part of modern poetry by those most closely associated with early Imagism, namely Flint, Storer and Pound. This will enable us to address the following questions: What are we to make of Hulme's claim in "A Lecture" that a new

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[13] See Kermode's "Local and Provincial Restrictions" 68 and his use of the term in relation to "classic" works of literature in "Survival of the Classic" 173-79. As Kermode explains in "The Patience of Shakespeare" and *The Genesis of Secrecy*, the term is Whitehead's. See 158 and xi respectively. Both Jacqueline Rose and John Sutherland have recently reminded us of the continuing relevance of Kermode's notion for the study of literature. See Rose 10 and Sutherland 16.

poetry is necessitated by the "modern spirit"? In what sense does he intend modern poetry to be "Impressionistic"? What does he mean when he argues that modern poetry will find expression as "free verse"? On the other hand, I seek to assess the critical view of the lecture as containing incoherent ideas and the position that Hulme's description of modern poetry in "A Lecture" is inconsistent with his discussion of poetry in "Romanticism and Classicism." In this way, it becomes possible to shed light on Hulme's position within the Imagist network, but also, and more importantly for the purpose of this project, to assess how Hulme's argument in "A Lecture" relates to the rest of his work.

Chapter 3 focuses on Hulme's essays and lectures on Bergson from 1909-11. Hulme's relationship to Bergson has attracted a great deal of attention from critics who generally conclude that the period between 1909 and 1911 marks a distinct phase in his career, during which Hulme became a mouthpiece for Bergson's philosophy. In order to assess this interpretation of Hulme's writings on Bergson, it is helpful to consider possible reasons why Hulme turned to Bergson in 1909 by examining Bergson's reception in the Britain of the early twentieth century. A brief examination of Bergson's main philosophical tenets then allows for a more informed understanding of the reasons that led Hulme to herald in 1909 Bergson as the most important and exciting living philosopher. Most importantly, the aim of this chapter is to determine whether Hulme repeats Bergson's ideas with approval, or whether he is more critical of the French thinker's theses than critics usually assume. Hulme's interpretation of Bergson is central in understanding his entire work, precisely because, as it will become apparent in later chapters, the ideas Hulme expresses in his writings on Bergson stayed with him right up to his death in 1917.

In chapter 4, I explore Hulme's essays on politics, focusing on the five articles he published in the *Commentator* between February 1911 and May 1912. Much has been written about Hulme's rejection of romanticism in favour of classicism, with critics usually detecting in his political essays evidence that, under the auspices of Lasserre, in 1912 Hulme abandoned Bergson as it became apparent to him that the French philosopher's theories were are odds with his authoritarian political beliefs. The aim of this chapter is to question this common interpretation of Hulme's politics. In examining Hulme's essays on politics, it is helpful to take into account the context in which Hulme launched his defence of classicism. Seen in light of the debate that broke out in the pages of the *Commentator* following the 1910 General Elections about the need of the Conservative Party to develop a more effective propaganda strategy, Hulme's extensive discussion of the nature of political conversion gains a timely political significance. It is also useful to consider the articles written in the *Commentator* in 1910-12 by Storer. Like Hulme, Storer derides romanticism and advocates classicism in a way that his claims invite comparison with ideas expressed by Hulme during this time. Finally, in order to examine the common interpretation of Hulme's politics as authoritarian, it is necessary that we compare his political beliefs with the social and political programme of Maurras and Lasserre.

Chapter 5 interrogates the critical view of Hulme's art criticism as a turning point in his thought. For many critics, the essays Hulme wrote on art between 1913 and 1914 chart the final stage of his transformation from Bergsonian to someone who embraced objectivism in art; according to Levenson, they also mark the point when Hulme abandoned classicism in favour of a much more "reactionary" anti-humanism. In his art criticism, Hulme directs his attack not on romanticism and Rousseau, but on humanism and the "Renaissance" ethic. In this chapter, I seek to examine Hulme's rejection of the Renaissance *vis-à-vis* the art criticism

of Fry and Bell, two critics who, like Hulme, were rejecting in the early 1900s what they interpreted as the Renaissance conception of art as representation. This allows us to examine Hulme's defence of abstract art in the context of the general shift in the art of the time from representationalism to experimentation with abstract forms. Hulme acknowledges in his art criticism that his defence of abstract art draws heavily on the theories of Worringer. As such, I briefly examine Worringer's discussion in *Abstraction and Empathy* in an effort to demarcate how Hulme's claims compare with the ideas of Worringer. Ultimately, this will enable us to gain a better understanding of what Hulme means by "anti-humanism" and, more importantly, of the political implications of his theory of art.

Finally, Chapter 6 considers Hulme's writings during the First World War. The letters he wrote at the front, published by Hynes in *Further Speculations* under the title "Diary from the Trenches," have been largely overlooked by critics, yet our understanding of Hulme's response to war cannot be complete unless we take into account Hulme's recorded experiences of life at the war front. The specific focus of this chapter is Hulme's argument in favour of the war. By analysing the claims he makes in "War Notes," I seek to unravel the reasons why he supported the war so passionately. I also examine Hulme's heated exchange with Russell in the *Cambridge Magazine* in January-March 1916 in an effort to assess the claim he makes that his disagreement with pacifists of Russell's persuasions was due to an *ethical* difference. Turning to "A Notebook," Hulme's last known piece of work, I, finally, explore Hulme's distinction between "absolute" and "relative" ethical values, looking specifically at how his argument in "A Notebook" may inform his "War Notes." Most importantly, I consider the political implications of the ethical order he describes in "A Notebook." A close study of Hulme's war writings ultimately allows us to assess the

common critical position that Hulme was an authoritarian militarist and the view that the argument he presents in "A Notebook" constitutes a departure from his earlier beliefs.

By returning attention to the intellectual context in which Hulme was writing, and by undertaking a comprehensive survey of Hulme's work that proceeds in chronological order, this project, therefore, aims above all at addressing the key questions that arise from a survey of Hulme criticism. While the thematic focus is Hulme's work, however, a survey of his writings promises to enlighten our understanding of intellectual thought in the early modernist period. This is because Hulme developed his ideas at a time of significant philosophical, political, artistic and historical events, including the introduction of philosophical currents from the Continent into the intellectual circles of Britain, the constitutional crisis of 1910, the Post-Impressionist exhibition of December 1910, and the outbreak of the First World War. All these events had a resounding effect on the intellectual scene of the time and Hulme's contributions to very topical debates in journals that were at the forefront of events, such as the *New Age* and the *Cambridge Magazine*, are informative of the wider intellectual context in the early years of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1

"Cinders" and "Notes on Language and Style": Early Philosophical Concerns

1. Introduction

T. E. Hulme's earliest known work consists of a number of fragmentary notes published as "Cinders" and "Notes on Language and Style."[14] The rudimentary form of these notes has led some critics to describe them as "cryptic" and "spasmodic."[15] Others find them contingent and allegorical, concluding that they deliberately resist interpretation, while the fragmentary nature of the notebooks has also been cited as evidence of Hulme's propensity to draw together ideas from various different sources with little consideration for thematic unity.[16] The notes' formal peculiarities and the fact that they were never intended for publication explain perhaps why they have not so far been studied in detail.[17] There are, however, plenty of reasons why we should not overlook them. First, it is necessary to examine them simply because they exist; that is, any critic who wants to claim to have a comprehensive view of Hulme's work must necessarily take them into account. Secondly, because the notebooks represent Hulme's earliest known writings, it seems plausible to hypothesise that they are

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[14] For a discussion of the chronology of both these texts and the way in which Read's confusing arrangement of "Cinders" in *Speculations* has influenced the notes' reception, see Csengeri, ed. x-xi, 7, 23, Ferguson 31, and Kanetake, "'Cinders' and 'Notes on Language and Style': Twin Manuscripts?" 47.

[15] Richards, [Review of *Speculations*] 470; MacCarthy, "A Militarist" 73.

[16] Critics who argue that the notes resist interpretation included Comentale (*Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-garde* 117-18) and Hansen (377). Read, Roberts, Hynes, and Sieburth maintain that Hulme's notes are a collection of other thinkers' ideas. See Read, Introduction to *Speculations* xv; Roberts 136; Hynes, ed. xi, xii, xv and *Edwardian Occasions* 123-28; and Sieburth 59-63. In recent years, critics have interpreted the notebooks' style of composition in a more positive spirit. Carr suggests that the paratactic form of the notes anticipates Eliot's *The Waste Land* ("T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'" 96); Brown argues that the "collagistic" arrangement of the notes is in line with modernist poetic practices, as well as the works of Derrida and Ong (96-97); Shapiro likens Hulme's "cindery" style to the postmodernist "disruption" of *logos* (74, 246-47); and Murdoch finds Hulme's style akin to Sartre's *nausea* (166).

[17] It is baffling, for example, that scholars such as Hynes, A. Jones and Levenson have all disregarded "Cinders."

revealing of his concerns at this early stage of his career. Finally, and perhaps most

importantly, despite not elaborating on their claims in detail, many critics have shown that

"Cinders" and "Notes" contain ideas that we also find in his later writings. For Glenn

Hughes, Tindall, Abraham Edel and Delmore Schwartz, for example, various entries in the

notebooks anticipate some of Hulme's claims in his lectures on poetry, while Roberts,

Csengeri, Rae, and Gasiorek all find that ideas expressed in "Cinders" and "Notes" are

informative of claims Hulme makes in his essays on politics and ethics.[18] As such, it is

reasonable to assume that a study of the early notebooks will contribute to our understanding

of Hulme's thought and that, moreover, it will help us determine any connections that might

exist between "Cinders" and "Notes" and the rest of his work.

The aim of this chapter is to return attention to Hulme's notebooks and study them in

detail. Rather than resign to the fact that Hulme's notebooks are entirely incoherent, I start

from the hypothesis that the notes lend themselves to interpretation; and instead of

concentrating on tracing possible original "sources" for the ideas expressed in them, I explore

possible ways in which, through the ideas of other thinkers, Hulme's remarks in the

notebooks can be understood.[19] Focusing specifically on the entries that relate his views on

reality and on the nature of language, I argue that the notes present a coherent philosophical

position that is consistent with claims made elsewhere in his writings. I begin by discussing

the view expressed in various entries in "Cinders" that there is no unity in the world and that

it is wrong to try and impose such unity on it. This idea can be understood from the

perspective of Bergson's critique of "intellectualist" philosophical methods. Hulme openly

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[18] See Hughes 21; Tindall 103; Edel 264; Schwartz 21-22; Roberts 138-38; Csengeri, ed. xii-xiv; Rae, *Practical Muse* 68; Gasiorek 164. Similar claims have been made by Comentale, *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-garde* 118, 131, J. McCormick 117, Thacker 45-46, and Carr 97.

[19] For many years, it has been a common practice to try and locate Hulme's unacknowledged "sources of influence." See, for example, Martin, "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic" 196-204; A. D. Robinson 238-40; Csengeri, "T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from the French" 16-27; and Rae, "Hulme's French Sources" 69-99.

embraces Bergson's anti-intellectualist philosophy in a series of essays written between 1909 and 1911; seeing that in "Cinders" he holds similar ideas to his writings on Bergson proves that his thought is much more coherent than Martin, Csengeri and Edwards suggest, all of whom argue that Bergson is "absent" from "Cinders."[20] I move on to discuss another recurring view in "Cinders," namely that language is an illusion, this time through the perspective of Nietzsche's remarks about the nature of language in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." Nietzsche's essay provides an interesting framework from within which to understand several of Hulme's reflections on language, while the view of language advanced by Nietzsche is similar in many ways to Bergson's mistrust of conceptual language, a connection which suggests further continuity between the periods of "Cinders" and the writings on Bergson. In the final section, I examine the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" language that runs throughout "Notes" by turning to the theories of language of Nietzsche, Bergson and, especially, Ribot. Read through the psychological theories of Ribot, Hulme's notion of "direct" language is seen as a response to the problem of language gradually losing its effect. It is important to examine in detail the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" language presented in the "Notes," for, as we will see in the following chapter, it forms the basis of Hulme's discussions of poetry in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry" and "Romanticism and Classicism."

2. Reality as "cinders"

A recurring theme in "Cinders" is the idea that it is wrong to reduce the world into a system or ultimate laws. It is stated, for example, that the "World is indescribable", that it is "impossible to include it under one large counter such as 'God' or 'Truth'" (9), and that "The truth is that there are no ultimate principles" (16). Moreover, the "desire to introduce a unity

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[20] Martin, "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic" 199n18 and *New Age under Orage* 172, Csengeri, ed. xvi, and Edwards 25.

in the world" is described as an "old fallacy" that "persists," while the "unity of Nature" is depicted as "an extremely artificial and fragile bridge, a garden net" (11; cf. 13). The idea behind these statements appears to be that human intellect cannot decipher the world by appealing to a unifying principle and must therefore give up trying to rationalise it. We thus read in "Cinders" that "The truth remains that the world is not any unity (11); that "Just as no common purpose can be aimed at for the conflicting purposes of real people, *so* there is no common purpose in the world;" and that "There is a difficulty in finding a comprehensive scheme of the cosmos because there is none" (9; emphasis in original). Rather than reducing the world of experience into artificial laws we must accept, it is suggested, that "The world is a plurality." "This plurality," according to one fragment, "consists in the nature of an ... ash-pit of cinders" (9), a metaphoric image which recurs throughout "Cinders" (cf. 11-12, 13, 17, 22).

Hulme does not elaborate on which specific philosophers or philosophical attitudes he thought were committing the "old fallacy" of introducing unity in the world. In "Cinders," we find one fragment referring to "Hegelians" as philosophers who "triumphantly explain the world as a mixture of 'good' and 'beauty' and 'truth'," with Hulme protesting that these are simply "symbols ... picked out and believed to be realities" (8). Another fragment states that "absolute philosophy" is an "absurd" invention designed to "reconcile conflicting purposes ... by artificial gymnastics" (13). The "true purpose" of "absolute philosophy," we read elsewhere, is that of "reducing everything to number," this being the "only rational and logical solution from the point of view that dares to conceive relation as of more importance than the persons related" (12). Finally, Hulme writes in a fragment that "The absolute is to be described not as perfect, but if existent as essentially imperfect, chaotic, and cinder-like,"

adding that "Even this view is not ultimate, but merely designed to satisfy temporary human analogies and wants" (9).

The critique of "Hegelians" and "absolute philosophy" suggests that Hulme was sceptical of Idealism, specifically Hegel's version of Idealism. "Idealism" is mentioned in name on two occasions in "Cinders." In the first, it is defined as the view that "assumes that there is nothing but a fixed number of persons, and without them nothing" (11). This is the definition Hulme gives to "Hegelian" philosophy in his article on Balford Bax, published in the *New Age* for July 1909: that, as he puts it in this essay, the "Hegelian" view ignores the existence of "the flux of phenomena" by postulating that "only the concept is real; positive significance only attaches to thought or relational elements" (90; cf. 94). In the immediately preceding fragment in "Cinders," it is stated that "There is an *objective* world ... a chaos, a cinder-heap" (11; cf. 16). If we take this as a tacit objection to Hegelian Idealism, then, as in the article on Bax, the idea would be that it is not possible to comprehend the world without paying attention to the experiential "chaos" which the intellect cannot grasp. Thus understood, Hulme could be siding against the "neo-Hegelian" view held by British Idealist philosophers such as F. H. Bradley, J. M. E. MacTaggart and Bernard Bosanquet, all of whom, despite their many differences, regard reality as a single indivisible whole, constituted of internal relations – in short, an all-encompassing Hegelian absolute.[21] As MacTaggart argues in *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, it is possible starting with minimal presumptions about experiential concepts to come to conclusions about the structure of experience and that which it reveals – reality – by simply transcending ordinary experience (cf. 58). The second mention occurs in an entry entitled "*Space*," which states that "The idealists analyse space into a mode

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[21] It is likely that Hulme was familiar with the works of these philosophers. He reportedly attended MacTaggart's lectures when a student at Cambridge in 1907 (Ferguson 35), acknowledged Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* as "one of the most important books on philosophy" in "Bax on Bergson" (118), and discussed Bosanquet's Idealist theory of the State, which features in Bosanquet's *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899), in "War Notes" (369).

of arranging sensations," the problem for Hulme being that "this gives an unimaginable world existing all at a point" (19). This could be read as an objection to the common Idealist view that space is "a form of sensibility." In "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World," Kant describes space as "*not something objective and real*, nor ... a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation," but rather as "subjective and ideal"; space, Kant argues, "issues from the nature of the mind in accordance to a stable law as a scheme ... for co-ordinating everything which it senses externally" (397; emphasis in original). Kantian objects or bodies, therefore, do not exist in and of themselves, but depend on the mind, which is the source of spatial order; external bodies are mere appearances of an underlying reality that eludes human senses. When Hulme writes that "The idealists analyse space into a mode of arranging sensations," he may well be referring to Kant's view of space as a condition that the mind imposes on our senses to allow them to be ordered in relations, so that they can be grasped by our intellect as representations of objects. This hypothesis, which is the basis of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, was shared by many British Idealists, among them R. B. Haldane.[22] In *Pathway to Reality*, a book that Hulme reviewed for the *New Age* in 1909, Haldane defines space as a "mode in which the mind presents phenomena" and "as one among a multitude of other relations in reality"; "forms of space and time," Haldane maintains, "are merely stages or aspects in the mode of self-comprehension by the mind within which the whole of reality falls" (64-65). In remarking in "Cinders" that the "idealist" conception of space "gives us an unimaginable world existing all at a point" (19), Hulme is objecting, as he does in his previous mention of Idealism, to what in his article on Haldane he describes as Idealism's emphasis on the "order and organisation" of experience and its neglect of the "flux of sensation" (93).

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[22] Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason* par. 4-5.

As well as making references to "idealism" and "absolute philosophy," several entries in "Cinders" mention "science" and "mathematics" as systems that "impose" unity on the world. In one fragment, for instance, we read that "The aim of science and of all thought is to reduce the complex and inevitably disconnected world of grit and cinders to a few ideal counters," a method which gives an account of reality that, Hulme goes on to claim in this entry, is not accurate, but only "flattering to our sense of power over the world" (11). "This is true too of mathematics," the fragment concludes, which "is deducible from numbers, which are nothing but counters"; or, as he puts it differently in another entry, "Mathematics takes one group of counters, abstracts them and makes them absolute" (11, 17). Here, Hulme is rejecting what in his *New Age* articles he defines as "rationalism" or "intellectualism," two terms used interchangeably by Hulme to refer to the positivist idea that all epistemological enquiries must begin with scientific analysis (cf. 106, 99-100).[23] Turning briefly to the essays Hulme published in the *New Age* in 1909-12, sheds light on some of the undeveloped ideas expressed in "Cinders."

In "The New Philosophy," his first published article from July 1909, Hulme defines "rationalism" or "intellectualism" as "the abuse of the power of translating the flux of immediate experience into a conceptual order" and as the view that "asserts that the apparently rough contradictory constituents of the flux are in reality of the nature of logical concepts" (86). For many years, Hulme argues, philosophers have tried to rationalise the world by appealing to science. He describes the process in the following way: "One takes a little part of known reality and asserts dogmatically that it alone is the true analogy by which

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[23] Bergson described "intellectualism" as the view that is only through the *intellect*, as opposed to *intuition*, that we could we gain sufficient knowledge of reality, a view he ultimately associated with the tendency of thinking of metaphysics as science. See *Creative Evolution* 194. A definition of intellectualism in the sense that Hulme and his contemporaries used it is given by William James, who states that intellectualism is the "notion that logic is an adequate measure of what can or cannot be" (*Pluralistic Universe* 225). A detailed discussion of Bergson's and James' critique of intellectualism follows in ch. 3.

the cosmos is to be described" (90). According to Hulme, the problem with this approach is that it "takes a bad analogy, logic and the geometric sciences ... and asserts that the flux of phenomena which apparently contradicts this is not real, and can really be resolved into logical concepts" (90). Because the intellect could never capture the "flux" of life, he postulates that an account of reality based on purely intellectual means is insufficient. Hulme's objection to rationalism and intellectualism in "The New Philosophy," therefore, is that they fail to explain the true nature of consciousness, or to give an accurate picture of the world.

In "The New Philosophy," intellectualism as a philosophical method is traced back to Socrates and Plato, for whom, Hulme claims, "reality consisted of 'essences' or ideas, which could be discovered by definition" (86; cf. 111), while in "Notes of Bergson," a series of articles published in the *New Age* between October 1911 and February 1912, he mentions as examples of intellectualist philosophers Spinoza, Laplace, Huxley and Spencer (140). Hulme also argues in "The New Philosophy" that the idea that reality can be rationalised in terms of easily definable propositions lies at the heart of Kant's philosophy, which "slightly curtailed its pretensions to define reality 'an sich', but only partly" (86), as well as in "Hegelian panlogism" (90); in modern times, it "survives ... in science" (86). In "Cinders," Hulme directs his criticism at an equally broad spectrum of philosophers and philosophical attitudes, with "Hegelians," "absolute philosophy," "idealists," "moralists" and "capital letterists," "science" and "mathematics" all coming under attack (cf. 10-11, 17). The explanation for this is that, as in his *New Age* articles, in "Cinders" Hulme is not dismissing one specific philosophical school in particular, but, rather, the entire philosophical tradition that he claims runs from Socrates and Plato through to positivists such as Laplace; what all of these philosophers have in common is that they all turned to science in search for an adequate

philosophical method. Despite their pronounced antipathy, Hulme seems to be saying, both Idealism and Positivism are based on the same presupposition: that the world can be analysed through rational or intellectual means. The difference is that Positivism focuses on analysing antecedent conditions in order to deduce what he calls in "Cinders" the "unifying principles" of the world, whereas Idealism is predicated on the belief that the world can be understood by reference to a pre-arranged teleology. To use his own metaphor from "Cinders," what all systems of thought – Idealist or Positivist – have in common, is that they try to "find a framework outside the flux, a solid bank for the river, a pier rather than a raft" (10).

Hulme's sweeping dismissal of "idealism," "science" and "mathematics" as "rationalist" or "intellectualist" philosophies in equal measure is undoubtedly problematic. Not only is his definition of rationalism and intellectualism so broad it runs the risk of being empty, but, more crucially, he fails to discriminate between the different approaches to logic of Idealists like Bax and Haldane and the Cambridge analytics philosophers who were using logic "therapeutically."[24] Nevertheless, his position appears to be fairly consistent, especially when read through Bergson's critique of "intellectualism," an all-encompassing term used by Bergson to describe the entire philosophical tradition that precedes him. Bergson's "anti-intellectualist" metaphysics is examined in more detail in Chapter 3, but it is worth pointing out here that, like Hulme in "Cinders," Bergson dismisses a series of philosophical views, including Realism, Idealism and Mechanism, on the grounds that they are based on a common axiom, namely that philosophical problems can be solved through intellectual means, as opposed to via intuition, Bergson's trademark philosophical method. Hulme endorses Bergson's critique of intellectualism in the *New Age* articles, where he praises the way the French philosopher has delivered the final blow to rationalist philosophies. By

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[24] For three enlightening accounts of how the analytic philosophers took an alternative approach to their Idealist counterparts by using language as a guide to reality, see Hylton 171-269, Dummett 4-14, and Baker and Hacker, *Language, Sense and Nonsense* 19-39.

contrast to what in his article on Gaultier he describes as "critics of science" (101), Bergson's

metaphysical theory, Hulme argues in "The New Philosophy," does not impose an artificial

unity on the world, but offers an accurate picture of the world by taking into account the

experiential flux which the intellect could not grasp (87). Seen in this way, Bergson's two

key ideas – that it is wrong to attempt to impose an artificial order on the "flux" of life and

that the confusion of artifice with reality leads to a fallacious picture of reality – form the

unifying theme of "Cinders."

Even though Bergson is not mentioned by name in any of the notes, the ideas repeatedly

articulated in "Cinders" – that the true world of experience resembles a "cinder-heap," that

notions of unity and truth are "artificial," and that the flux of experience cannot be

rationalised – are the very tenets of Bergson's philosophy which Hulme endorses in the *New

Age* articles. As in "Cinders," for example, in "The New Philosophy" Hulme sets the

"constructions of the logical intellect" against Bergson's view of reality as a "complicated,

intertwined, inextricable flux of reality" and "a chaotic cinder heap" (86). Indeed, Bergson

describes reality in similar terms to Hulme, comparing in *Creative Evolution* the movement

of the creating *élan vital* to what Arthur Mitchell translates as "an action that is unmaking

itself ... like the fiery path torn by the last rocket of a fireworks display through the black

cinders of the spent rockets that are falling dead" (251).[25] In "The New Philosophy," Hulme

also insists that Bergson's great lesson is that "Logic has use in real life, but it has not that of

making us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality" (87), an idea that runs

throughout "Cinders" – we read, for instance, that "Symbols" exist "for the convenience of

men," that "science" and "all thought" serves only to give a false "ungritlike [*sic*] picture of

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[25] This point is made by Rae in *Practical Muse* 61.

reality," and that despite the best attempts of "logic," there can be "no unity" (8, 11, 17).[26]
Finally, according to the argument Hulme puts forward in "The New Philosophy," "Reality
has a fullness of content that no conceptual description can equal" and the "'immédiatement
donnée' ... is the only absolute with which philosophy can legitimately deal" (87); both these
claims chime perfectly with the views expressed in "Cinders," according to which the world
is "indescribable" (9) and the only reality that exists is the "flux" of experience (cf. 10). That
Hulme's representations of the world in "Cinders" and in his essays on Bergson overlap
shows that, understood from the perspective of Hulme's interpretation of Bergson, "Cinders"
presents a fairly coherent picture of reality; more importantly, it attests to the fact that
Hulme's campaign against intellectualism was under way since the days of "Cinders."

3. Language as "gossamer web"

In addition to remarks about the nature of reality as experiential "flux," in "Cinders" there
are also a number of entries that are specifically concerned with language – its role and its
function in human lives. Language is described as a communicative tool, a human construct
created solely to enable communication. It is also stated that gradually all words lose their
meaning, a process that results in what Hulme terms the "disease of language," whereby we
use words whose meaning has been exhausted (cf. 8). Finally, various fragments express the
view that language is misleading and that we must therefore be cautious not to take words as
"realities," as one fragment in "Cinders" explains (8). This idea is also present in "Notes,"
where, however, as we will see later on in this chapter, the emphasis is on ways through
which language can be made to be more "real." Hulme's reflections on language in "Cinders"
and "Notes" are best understood from the perspective of Nietzsche's argument in "On Truth
and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." As far as I know, no critic has approached the notebooks

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[26] Cf. the fragment in "Notes" that describes logic "only an analogy to *counter-pushing*" (35).

from such angle, yet Nietzsche is the most mentioned philosopher in the notebooks, while he is also a philosopher whom Hulme regarded as an intellectual ally, crediting him in "The New Philosophy" for launching the "first radical attack" against rationalism and praising him for paving the way for Bergson's "defeat of the old intellectualist philosophy" (85-86).

One of the fragments that appear early on in "Cinders" states:

> There is a kind of gossamer web, woven between the real things, and by this means the animals communicate. For purposes of communication they invent a symbolic language. Afterwards this language, used to excess, becomes a disease, and we get the curious phenomena of men explaining themselves by means of the gossamer web that connects them. Language becomes a disease in the hands of the counter-word mongers. It must constantly be remembered that it is an invention for the convenience of men ... Symbols are picked out and believed to be realities ... words are merely counters representing vague groups of things, to be moved about on a board for the convenience of the players. (8)

The syllogism here is that humans understand the world filtered through language; moreover, because language is "symbolic," humans' understanding of reality is removed from the "real things" that language claims to represent. According to the evolutionary process of language suggested in this entry, words, initially conceived as communicative tools, end up being mistakenly taken to mirror reality – hence the phenomenon of the "disease of language." We encounter a similar idea in "Notes," where Hulme writes that, for purposes of communication, "real things are replaced by symbols" in a way similar to substitutions of variables with their values in algebra (23; cf. 24). It is also stated in "Notes" that it is a

"fallacy" to think that language is logical – for, "Phrases have meaning for no reason" (28), and language is a "Large clumsy instrument" that "does not naturally come with meaning" (29; cf. 32). As I will discuss in chapter 2, this view of language found its way in Hulme's discussion of poetry in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," where conventional language is described as a series of "figures of speech" (55), as well as in "Romanticism and Classicism," where Hulme argues that "language is by its very nature a communal thing ... it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise" (68; cf. 70).

Hulme's account of language in "Cinders" echoes Nietzsche's argument in his 1873 essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." This essay, which remained unpublished throughout Nietzsche's life, but which sums up nicely Nietzsche's early view of language, illuminates the following ideas expressed in "Cinders" and "Notes": that language is invented for "purposes of communication"; that it gradually loses its capacity to represent – as Hulme puts it, "language, used to excess, becomes a disease, and we get the curious phenomena of men explaining themselves by means of the gossamer web that connects them"; and, finally, that words such as "truth" or "beauty" resemble empty tokens – or as Hulme phrases it, "merely counters representing vague groups of things" (8).[27] A brief outline of the argument in "On Truth and Lies" highlights the proximity of Hulme's ideas regarding language to Nietzsche's view of language.

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[27] A version of this essay was made available after Nietzsche's death, together with other drafts and notes, in *Nietzsches Werke* (*Grossoktavausgabe*), during 1894-1904 (10: 189-215). A more complete version appeared in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe* in 1967 (1: 873-91). For a discussion of the essay's textual history, see Breazeale, ed. lx and Kaufman 485-87. While Clark and, to a lesser degree, Nehamas hold that the ideas expressed in the essay contradict his later writings, Klein maintains that Nietzsche's analysis of language in the essay is in line with his more mature philosophy and that, in fact, it underlies his entire work. See Clark 105; Nehamas 246n6; and Klein 57-62. For other critics who share Klein's opinion that the argument in "On Truth and Lies" underpins the entire of Nietzsche's philosophy, see Lacoue-Labarthe 15; de Man 103-04; Schrift 124-43; and Hillis Miller 41-54.

For Nietzsche, language consists of arbitrary signs designating abstract entities that do not correspond to reality but whose structure is entirely tropological. According to the genealogy presented in "On Truth and Lies," their first contact with the physical world initiated in humans a nerve stimulus, which they then transferred onto an image and, ultimately, imitated in sound (116). Gradually, these noises were developed into a more advanced system of language, as "from boredom and necessity" humans wished to participate in a community. They thus assigned commonly agreed conceptions and meanings to words and, in this way, language was invented (115, 118). Unfortunately, Nietzsche argues, somewhere during this process we forgot that language is simply a system of metaphors and the consequence of this is that language became truth; as he puts it in his essay, from this moment on, "that which shall count as 'truth' ... is established … a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language … establishes the first laws of truth" (115).

The view of language as originating in a process of instantiation and forgetting is not unique to Nietzsche. It is shared, for instance, by Descartes, Locke and Kant, as well as by Lange, Hartmann, Gerber, all of whom endorse the view that an inevitable and irreversible separation or difference exists between the "thing in itself," the originary subjective experience of the world, and its conceptualisation or abstraction.[28] Moreover, as Nietzsche recognised himself, it dates at least as far back as Plato's distinction between *eidē* and *ideai*, specifically, to the way that for Plato the exchange of effect and cause is indicative of the

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[28] For an account of the dominant philosophical views of language in Nietzsche's time, see Klein 66-74. On the similarities between Nietzsche's view of language and those of Kant, Lange and Hartman, see Crawford 97-100. For Nietzsche's relation to Gerber, see Liebscher 247-49 and Crawford 199-219. As Bruns shows, the idea that there is an image behind words is a motif that runs from Plato through to William of Ockham in the fourteenth century (16-17, 34). According to Baker and Hacker, a similar view of language has dominated post-Cartesian philosophy thereafter. See *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* 6-7 and *Language, Sense and Nonsense* 19.

metonymic exchange of perceptions with ideas.[29] According to Crawford, however, more than any other philosopher, Nietzsche is indebted to Schopenhauer, whose influence on his work Nietzsche acknowledged early in his career.[30] Turning briefly to Schopenhauer's view of language helps understand the precise nature of Nietzsche's argument and, therefore, allows us to compare Nietzsche's and Hulme's arguments in an informed manner.

Schopenhauer holds that it is impossible to know the "thing in itself," that which exists outside the subject: for the subject can only know his own perception and what he conceptualises about these perceptions as objects. Yet, Schopenhauer allows that first perception enables a more direct relationship with the "thing in itself" than abstraction and, thus, also language, which, according to Schopenhauer, is a product of abstraction. Starting from intuitive, complete and empirical representations, humans, Schopenhauer argues, perceive the world by reducing first impressions into component parts, "in order to think each of these parts as different qualities of, or relations between, things" (*On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* 115-16). Language plays a detrimental part in this metaphoric process, as words are understood as signs used to aid the reduction of knowledge that is gathered through perception. We thus move successively from the "thing in itself" to sensation and the image it gives rise to in perception to, finally, abstraction and words, where the image or impression is "fixed" in a concept through language. This process creates a scheme whereby direct impressions gathered through perception possess a closer affinity to the "thing in itself" than concepts and words gathered in the process of abstraction. Hence perception for Schopenhauer is, as he states in *World as Will and Representation*, "the *source* of all knowledge" and "itself knowledge 'par excellence,'" as "it alone is the unconditionally

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[29] Cf. "Description of Ancient Rhetoric" 59, qtd. in Klein 6-7.

[30] Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as "my first and only educator" in *Human, All Too Human* 209. For fuller discussion of the similarities between Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's accounts of language, see Crawford 22-36.

true genuine knowledge [that] imparts *insight* proper" (2: 77; emphasis in original). By contrast, concepts are "phantasms" or "representations of representations" that "cling" to the subject; they are "abstract" and "discursive," "attainable and intelligible" by those who possess "the faculty of reason."[31] It thus follows that language, in existing solely to help reduce knowledge gathered through perception, "does not … bring anything new to light" (*On the Fourfold Root* 123); worse, "since it forces the infinitely shaded, mobile, and modifiable idea into certain rigid, permanent forms … fixing the idea it at the same time fetters it" (*World as Will and Representation* 2: 64).

Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lies" postulates a similar view of language to Schopenhauer. Originally an unconscious and instinctual process, language for Nietzsche gradually came to consist of only concepts that are by definition removed from the "thing in itself": for, although the first metaphor is "individual and without equals," as soon as it is translated into communal language it loses its uniqueness, succumbing to convention and becoming what Nietzsche calls "herd" language (116; 118; 115).[32] This tripartite metaphoric process – from physical thing to nerve stimulus and sound to, finally, conceptual language – suggests that for Nietzsche language is removed both from the real thing and from the experience of the original "subjective stimulation" (116). The nature of this process of abstraction makes Nietzsche suspicious of language and forces him to doubt whether it is possible to retrieve the original "truth" behind words. As he writes in "On Truth and Lies,"

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[31] See *On the Fourfold Root* 120; *World as Will and Representation* 1: 40, 2: 77, and 1: 234.
[32] Cf. *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche argues that human consciousness is created as a result of communal language that, as he puts it, it "takes place in words, that is, in communication symbols." In the same aphorism in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes language as a "bridge between persons," concluding that "consciousness actually belongs not to man's existence as an individual but rather to the community- and herd-aspects of his nature" (213).

The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression. The 'thing in itself' (which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for. This creator only designates the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors ... we possess nothing but metaphors for things – metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities. In the same way that the sound appears as a sand figure, so the mysterious X of the thing in itself first appears as a nerve stimulus, then as an image, and finally as a sound. Thus the genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things. (116-17)[33]

Here, Nietzsche argues that language is an arbitrary, communal system of "legislation" that consists of concepts abstracted through a metaphoric exchange (115). These concepts do not correspond to the "real things" which humans, forgetting that "the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors," take them to be (119). A concept, rather, does not designate the "thing in itself": it is "bony, foursquare, and transposable as a die … merely the *residue of a metaphor*" (118; emphasis in original).[34]

Nietzsche's view of language informs the claims Hulme makes in the entry in "Cinders" cited above. Following Nietzsche (and Schopenhauer), Hulme posits a view of language according to which language, albeit a useful tool for communication, is misleading. Such a

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[33] Cf. *Human, All Too Human* 16. On Nietzsche's views on the indeterminacy of language, see Emden 74-77.
[34] Cf. Nietzsche's remark in "The Philosopher" that "There is no 'real' expression and *no real knowing apart from metaphor*" (50).

view is consistent with remarks made in other fragments in "Cinders." Consider, for example, the following:

> In this ash-pit of cinders, certain ordered routes have been made, thus constituting whatever unity there may be – a kind of manufactured chess-board laid on a cinder heap. Not a real chess-board impressed on the cinders, but the gossamer world of symbolic communication. (9)

> Unity is made in the world by drawing squares over it. (10)

> Truth is what helps a particular sect in the general flow. (10)

> The aim ... of all thought is to reduce the complex and inevitably disconnected world of grit and cinders to a few ideal counters, which we can move about. (11)

> The truth is that there are no ultimate principles, upon which the whole of knowledge can be built once and for ever as upon a rock. But there are an infinity of analogues, which help us along, and give us a feeling of power over the chaos when we perceive them. (16)

The idea that lies behind all these fragments – that the existence of linguistic fictions or metaphors is both comprehensible and useful – invites comparison with Nietzsche's argument in "On Truth and Lies," according to which the acts of forgetting that language is constituted of metaphors and of taking words as truth are necessary for communicative purposes, but also for humans' survival; as Nietzsche puts it in this essay, "only by forgetting

that he himself is an artistically creating subject, does man live with any repose, security and consistency" (119). Moreover, in the same way that Nietzsche argues that notions of "truth" are linguistic constructs involving the "piling up [of] an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation ... like one constructed of spiders' webs" (118), in "Cinders" Hulme dismisses "truth" as a verbalism that "helps a particular sect in the general flow" (10), liking language to a "gossamer web" that, while it enables humans to communicate, it also perpetrates a series of illusions (cf. 10). A further comparison between Nietzsche and Hulme can be drawn. In "Notes," Hulme distinguishes between an "emotion" that "depends on real solid vision or sound" and that "It is physical" (24) and words that are only a "tally."[35] This binary echoes Nietzsche's own distinction between the original image that is initiated in humans during their first interaction with the physical world and language, which consists, as we have seen, of "bony" words (118). Hulme's claims in "Notes" that "The progress of language is the absorption of new analogies" (27) and that "Language [is] a cumbrous growth, a compound of old and new analogies" (29) can also be taken as corresponding to the history of language as a series of metaphors presented in "On Truth and Lies." Finally, the idea in "Cinders" that "A man cannot stand alone but always appeals to his fellows" (8; cf. 14, 12) is in consonance with Nietzsche's claim that language was originally invented as a result of the basic human need to participate in a community. There is no difference between Nietzsche's argument that language was conceived by primitives and the view expressed in "Notes" that the "making and fixing of words" began in the "nomadic" stage (28).

A reading of Hulme's reflections on language from the perspective of Nietzsche's essay is thoroughly consistent with the reading of his views on the nature of reality through Bergson's

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[35] See Kanetake's edition of "Notes" 4. The idea that words are "counters" also runs throughout "Cinders." Cf. 8, 11, 17.

anti-intellectualism which I proposed earlier in this chapter. This is because Nietzsche's

views on language in "On Truth and Lies" are in line with Bergson's mistrust of conceptual

language. Like Nietzsche, Bergson is suspicious of conventional language; he argues that

language is a useful tool needed for practical purposes, adding that language is also

misleading. Bergson's point, specifically, is that language cannot represent accurately the

experiential "flux," which Bergson equates with reality. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*,

Bergson thus argues that as a product of the intellect, language consists of concepts:

"abstract, general, or simple ideas" (27). These concepts, Bergson goes on to explain, "have

the disadvantage of being in reality symbols substituted for the object they symbolize, and

demand no effort on our part" (28). In the terminology of *Time and Free Will*, concepts for

Bergson are incapable of capturing the "inner life" or the "fundamental self," the latter which

remains always "inexpressible," for, "language," Bergson writes in *Time and Free Will*,

"cannot get hold of it without arresting its mobility or fit it into its common-place forms

without making it into public property" (129). In this sense, Hulme's suspicion of symbolic

language in the notebooks is concomitant with his conception of reality in terms of

Bergsonian "cinders." That is not to say, however, that Bergson's critique of conceptual

language is identical to Nietzsche's view on language in "On Truth and Lies." An obvious

difference is that, unlike Bergson, who, as we will see in chapter 3, holds that it is possible

through intuition to reach the "flux" of reality, in "On Truth and Lies" Nietzsche appears to

adopt a radically sceptical position, according to which there is no hope of reaching beyond

language and into a realm of universal and eternal truths. Unlike Bergson, that is, Nietzsche

does not hold that there is a deeper truth, an ultimate reality that awaits us before the veil of

appearance; as Andreas Urs Sommer notes, in "On Truth and Lies" truth is entirely

"perspectivist [*sic*]" and "situational" (258). A possibility of linking Nietzsche's argument to

Bergson's view of language, however, is granted to us by Crawford, who shows that a

different reading of Nietzsche's essay to the one proposed by Sommers is possible.

Nietzsche, Crawford argues, is not denying the possibility of truth in "On Truth and Lies"; on the contrary, he can be seen to follow Hartmann and Lange in holding that, even though conceptual or conscious language prevents us from grasping the real world, there is still the possibility that an instinctual or unconscious reaction to a sensation could approach the "thing in itself."[36] Hence Nietzsche's remark in the essay that the intuitive being "speaks only in forbidden metaphors and in unheard-of combinations of concepts … does this so that by shattering and mocking the old conceptual barriers he may at lead correspond creatively to the impression of the powerful present intuition" (122). As Crawford explains, "This passage characterizes the artistic, socially subversive, and transformative possibilities of language"; moreover, it shows how for Nietzsche "these very unconscious creative possibilities become an end in themselves" (xi). Thus understood, Nietzsche expresses a view, albeit less explicitly, similar to that of Bergson: that it is possible through an unconscious process – what Bergson calls "intuition" – to reach the "flux" of experience that exists beyond language. As we will now see, Hulme follows a similar route in "Notes," where in an attempt to make language, as he puts it, more "direct" and more "real," proposes a method of expressing ideas in a non-conceptual manner.

4. Poetry as "visual" language

The most recurring theme in "Notes" is the opposition Hulme sets between "prose" and what he describes as "poetry." These terms are not to be taken in their literal sense: "prose," for instance, includes "genteel poetry like Shelley's," while Hulme uses "poetry" to refer to

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[36] Klein makes a similar point as Crawford when he argues that it is wrong to understand Nietzsche as denying the possibility of truth. Unlike Crawford, however, who maintains that Nietzsche can be seen as trying to break from conceptual language through unconscious means, Klein understands Nietzsche as making "the positive and more complicated assertion that meaning … is principally a product of the intra-linguistic resources of language itself" (70). In other words, Klein sees Nietzsche in "On Truth and Lies" as advocating an anti-correspondence theory of language, rather than embracing scepticism.

Morris' "firm simple prose, creating in a definite way a fairy story" (25). What does Hulme mean by these two terms? "Prose" is language that is used to "pass to conclusions without thinking" (25); it is "making a tremendous deal out of a point which can be noted down in one sentence" (37) and it can thus be compared to "a line of string lying on a paper" (32). As Hulme writes elsewhere in "Notes," in "expositional prose we get words divorced from any real vision" (24); "The ideal of modern prose is to be all counters"; its "intermediate terms have only counter value" (25); phrases in it are simply "useful" (27; cf. 24, 31); and, as in algebra, in "prose" "the reader takes words as x without the meaning attached" (27). "Poetry," by contrast, is language that does not employ "counters" but "images." "Poetry" is thus the place where "phrases [are] made [and] tested" and where words "are all glitter and new coruscation" (27). "Poetry" is, therefore, "the advance guard in language (27). Moreover, unlike in "prose," where words are vague and superfluous, in "poetry" "each sentence should be a lump, a piece of clay, a vision seen" (25); it is "always … a solid thing" (25, 26). According to Hulme, in "poetry" there is "*No* flowing on of words, but tightly clutched tense fingers leaving marks in the clay"; the "Style [is] short, being forced by the coming together of many different thoughts, and generated by their contact," like "Fire struck between stones" (26; emphasis in original). "Poetry," finally, requires "great exactness": unlike prose which is "decorative," "poetry" presents "definite things" (42, 26; cf. 36). The fundamental difference between "prose" and "poetry," it turns out, is that, while "prose" uses "counters" and is thus indirect, poetry is direct, because it uses new images.

In principle, Hulme's distinction between "prose" and "poetry" follows Nietzsche's evolutionary account of language in "On Truth and Lies." The ideas that poetry is "the advance guard in language," that, in other words, words are created as part of a poetic (or artistic) inspiration and that these words end up being used in daily language, for example,

can be understood through Nietzsche's claim in "On Truth and Lies" that the origins of language are to be found in the artistically creating individual, whose instinct urges him toward metaphor building.[37] Likewise, Hulme's suggestion in "Notes" that "poetry" is more direct because it avoids words in favour of images, is consonant with the view in Nietzsche's essay, according to which the "first metaphor" that is created when "a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image" is, by definition, closer to the "thing in itself" than a word or a concept, both of which overlook the "individual and actual" (116-17). In a much more obvious and striking way, Hulme's idea that a language consisting of images is more direct than conceptual language is the very basis of the reasoning put forward by Bergson in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. As already discussed above, Bergson holds that conceptual language prevents humans from seeing the "flux" of experience, what he calls "real duration" or "*durée*," which, according to Bergson, cannot be reached through intellectual means. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson thus argues that real duration, although it "cannot be represented by images ... it is even less possible to represent it by *concepts*." As Bergson maintains:

> It is true that no image can reproduce exactly the original feeling I have of the flow of my own conscious life ... [However,] the image has at least this advantage, that it keeps us in the concrete. No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is certain intuition to be seized. (27-28)

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[37] On the process of metaphor building in Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lies," see Crawford 207-09 and Klein 66-69.

Bergson's suggestion here is that, because visual impressions are non-rational and non-conceptual, they can direct us to the point of intuition and, therefore, show us the way to duration, the *immédiatement donnée*. While Bergson is adamant that images alone do not lead us directly to duration – as he puts it in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, for duration to be reached "consciousness must ... consent to make the effort" (28) – he is, in a sense, allowing that images are the nearest thing to the original moment of intuition, at the time when, according to Nietzsche's genealogy, language is first created.

Better than through Bergson's claim in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Hulme's idea in "Notes" that poetry is more "direct" than "prose" because it deals in images and uses solid analogies, rather than vague, generalised words, can be read from the perspective of the work of Ribot. The significance of Ribot's work in understanding Hulme's claims regarding literary composition has been noted by a number of critics. Martin, first, identified Ribot's psychology as a "source" behind Hulme's use of the concept of "image," the latter which, according to Martin, follows closely from Ribot's use of the term in his theory of psychology ("The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic" 199). In the same line as Martin, Csengeri has found that Hulme "gathered some of his ideas on the subject of the image from the French philosopher and psychologist" ("T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from the French" 22). Finally, Rae has argued that Ribot's experimental psychology clarifies Hulme's notion of a language that consists of images, as well his aesthetic "anti-romanticism." Ribot's "demystification" of the process of artistic creation, Rae claims, allows Hulme to reject romantic and symbolist conceptions of poetry that present poetry as a mystical or ideal affair, postulating in its place a "classicist" theory of inspiration ("Hulme's French Sources" 76; *Practical Muse* 63). However, the way Ribot's analysis of the cognitive processes of abstraction and generalisation in *Evolution of General Ideas* compares to Hulme's distinction in "Notes"

between "poetry" and "prose" has remained unexamined.[38] In the remaining of this chapter, I turn my attention to Ribot's account of language in *Evolution of General Ideas* to explain how it informs Hulme's discussion of "prose" and "poetry" in "Notes."[39] Read through Ribot's distinction between "concrete" and "abstract" terms, Hulme's notion that "poetry" is more direct is seen as an attempt to break through conceptual language. This is an important point for two reasons. First, insofar as Hulme's ideas tie in with Ribot's account of language, the claims he makes in "Notes" present a consistent view of reality and of the role played in it by language. For, as we will see, Ribot's account of language speaks to both Nietzsche's argument in "On Truth and Lies" and to Bergson's idea in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that it is only through an unconscious process that we can grasp reality. Secondly, given the way that Hulme's description of "modern" poetry, as it will become obvious in the following chapter, is built on the view of language he presents in his notebooks, his thought is revealed to be much more coherent than previously allowed.

In *Evolution of General Ideas*, which traces the progressive development of the cognitive processes of abstraction and generalisation, Ribot draws a distinction between "concrete" words and abstract "general" terms. Put simply, Ribot's thesis in *Evolution of General Ideas* is that there is a direct line of progression from inferior abstraction, where attention is the primary condition of primitive people, to the formation of general images through a process

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[38] The only notable exception is Rae's brief discussion of Ribot's experiment in "Hulme's French Sources." Rae suggests that Ribot's experiment provided Hulme with a basis on which to develop his model of art, according to which the purpose of poetry is that of "presenting some reality directly rather than attempting to explain it to the intellect with the 'chiffres' [tokens] of highly abstract language: a reality that, transcendental or otherwise, forever resists explication in such terms" (81). Rae's emphasis, however, is not on Hulme's account of language in "Cinders" and "Notes," but on the way that, read via Ribot's (and Bergson's) scepticism about the existence of a transcendental realm, Hulme's "classical" poetry can be interpreted in terms of "the aesthetics of Pragmatism" (97; cf. 88). This is a view which Rae elaborates in *Practical Muse*. See 12, 47-64.

[39] As well as his distinction between "prose" and "poetry," Ribot's ideas, specifically in *Essay on the Creative Imagination*, enlighten Hulme's claims in "Notes" that poetry must use "new" and "physical" analogies, avoid using "vague" words, and aim to describe "solid, definite things" (cf. 24, 26, 34-36). I discuss the way in which Ribot helps us read these claims in the following chapter.

of dissociation to, finally, the substitution of these general images for words through complete abstraction. Ribot explains:

> [A]s we ascend in generalisation we rise ... into the approximate. The relatively empty concepts ... are the product of a discontinuous generalisation which prevents descent without interruption or omission into the concrete … They are names representing a knowledge that is incomplete, partial, inadequate or ill-organised … Having no possible contact with reality they float in an unreal atmosphere... (225)

In other words, since gaining capacity for abstraction, humans have been able to formulate general concepts; these concepts, in turn, have enabled a more advanced communication than previously possible, but because these concepts are "empty," they now prevent humans from descending into the "concrete" reality that we once experienced.

To determine the function of language as an intermediary between originary impressions and mental images with more precision, Ribot explains in *Evolution of General Ideas* that he carried out an experiment, the aim of which was "to discover the *instantaneous* operations (conscious or unconscious)" that occur when humans think, hear or read a word (113; emphasis in original). Individuals were submitted to a hearing of a series of words and were asked to describe without reflection what came to their minds: "We said to the subject," Ribot states, "'I am going to pronounce certain words; will you tell me directly, without reflexion [*sic*], whether this word calls up anything or nothing in your mind? If anything, what is suggested to you?'" (114). The experiment revealed that "[a]s a rule a mixed type prevails: a concrete image for certain words, and typographical vision, or auditory images, for others" (122). "Concrete" words, such as, for example, "dog," "animal" and "colour," generally

evoked a mental image of a particular thing, a phenomenon which Ribot describes in terms of the "logic of images." Early on in the book Ribot explains that this "logic of images" is characteristic of animals and of infants, while it also often acts as an "auxiliary for adults" during the process of artistic creation (27-28). In contrast, abstract or general terms such as "time," "cause" or "infinity," revealed in the minds of the participants a "typographic type [that] consists in seeing printed words and nothing more," or "auditory images unaccompanied either by the vision of printed words or by concrete images" (119-21, 129). Ribot describes the kind of reasoning involved here using Leibniz's terms: it is "blind" and "symbolic," the words in such cases evoking in individuals' minds only "tokens" (129).

As Nietzsche, therefore, Ribot holds an account of language according to which there is an irreparable difference between originary sensations and concepts that "fix" these sensations in language in higher forms of abstraction. Nietzsche's genealogy of language in "On Truth and Lies," as I already discussed, can be understood from the perspective of Schopenhauer's account of language. In this sense, it is significant that Ribot acknowledges Schopenhauer's idea that abstract concepts obscure reality and that it is only through intuitions that we can have true knowledge (*La philosophie de Schopenhauer* 4, 31-32, 121). Moreover, like Bergson, and to a certain extent Nietzsche, Ribot proposes in *Evolution of General Ideas* that it is only through unconscious means that we can eschew the limitations of language. Although not explicitly interested in proposing a method through which to grasp a reality that is obstructed from us by language, in the way that Bergson, for example, is, Ribot, as Nietzsche before him, hints at how it is possible to return to the originary sensation at a pre-linguistic level through non-rational or instinctual means.[40] He makes this clear when he states in the "Conclusion" of *Evolution of General Ideas* that language is a "substitute for the

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[40] Ribot was interested in the operation of concepts or general ideas in human reasoning. Thus, the aim of the experiment he carried out was specifically to investigate the "psycho-physiological condition of the existence of concepts [that] are practically unknown" (*Evolution of General Ideas* 113).

abstract intuition" gathered by primitive people through the faculty of "attention" (217).

Earlier in the book, he claims, borrowing Leibniz's words, that his experiment demonstrated

that words fail to produce in us a visual image of a particular thing when we have "no

simultaneous intuition of all the characteristics or attributes of a thing" (129). This implies

that it is not the case that some words denote nothing. Distancing himself from Taine who, as

Ribot notes, "is usually regarded as a Nominalist" (129n1), Ribot ascertains that abstract

words have simply lost their ability to trigger our attention:

> This is because each word exacts an act of attention, an effort, which corresponds to
>
> labor in the unconscious or sub-conscious regions. When this labor becomes useless,
>
> and we think, or appear to think, by signs alone all goes rapidly and easily. (130-31)

It follows that the originary sensation that is lost in words during the process of abstraction

remains "stored up" beneath general or abstract terms. This sensation is only accessible

through what Ribot calls the "unconscious substratum, this organised and potential

knowledge," that, he explains, "gives not merely value, but an actual denotation to the word,

– like harmonics superadded to the fundamental note" (132).

 Read through Ribot's report, what Hulme calls "poetry" evokes in the mind of the

recipient a concrete, mental image of a particular thing, while "prose" is language that

produces in the receptive mind only a "token." There is no difference between Ribot's

description of concrete and abstract terms as evoking visual images and "tokens"

respectively, and Hulme's remark in "Notes" that in "prose" "counters … can be moved

about, without the mind having to think in any involved way" or that in "poetry" "Each *word*

must be an image *seen*, not a counter" (25; emphasis in original).[41] Likewise, the ideas Hulme expresses in "Cinders" – that in place of "vague long pretentious words" "poetry" should use "the hard, definite, personal and concrete word" (22; cf. 26, 31) and that there is always "something lost in generalisation" as "Generalisations are only means of getting about" (14) – echo Ribot's view of the process of generalisation in the passage cited above. That is, like Ribot, Hulme can be seen as arguing in "Notes" that "general" terms are removed from reality and are used only to enable communication by passing tokens from one mind to another. Finally, Ribot's "logic of images" provides a way of reading Hulme's claims in "Notes" that "literary expression is from *Real* to *Real* with all the intermediate terms keeping their *real* value" (24; emphasis in original) and that "in a sense we may say that the heavy, solid use of words is always *nearer* to reality."[42] Another way of understanding Ribot's distinction between "abstract" and "concrete" terms is in terms of a distinction Ribot draws in a later work, *Essay on the Creative Imagination*, between "diffluent" and "plastic" terms. The former, Ribot argues, ought to be understood as "semi-schematic representations of the rational imagination"; the latter, as "clear-cut, concrete, reality-penetrated images" (195). Ribot's account of language, therefore, clarifies Hulme's discussion of "prose" and of "poetry" in "Notes" and reveals how this distinction follows from ideas regarding language expressed elsewhere in his notebooks.

5. Conclusion

Understood through ideas in the works of Bergson, Nietzsche and Ribot, the three most recurring claims Hulme makes in "Cinders" and "Notes" – that the "flux" of experience cannot be rationalized, that conceptual language is deceptive, and that a non-conceptual

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[41] Cf. the fragment in "Notes" that states that "[h]abitually … the reader takes words as *x without* the meaning attached" (24).

[42] See Kanetake's edition of "Notes" 38. In another fragment included in Kanetake's edition, Hulme equates "my attempt to get to reality" with the use of "no long words" (34).

language is more real and more direct than language consisting of "counters" – present a coherent argument. The idea that language is an illusion designed to enable communication, follows from the anti-intellectualist view of the world expressed in "Cinders" – to use Nietzsche's terms, Hulme argues that the "laws of truth" are established by the "legislation of language" (cf. "On Truth and Lies" 115). Likewise, Hulme's claim in "Notes" that language which consists of "images" is more real than "counter" language, examined from the perspective of Nietzsche's account of language in "On Truth and Lies," Bergson's suggestion in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that images can enable intuition, and Ribot's evolutionary view of language in *Evolution of General Ideas*, is revealed to be entirely consistent with the emphasis Hulme puts in "Cinders" on the deceptive nature of language. Despite claims by many critics that "Cinders" and "Notes" resist interpretation or that they are a collection of fragmented entries with no coherence, therefore, the ideas Hulme expresses in the notebooks form a coherent philosophical view of the world and of language that, crucially, as it will become clear in subsequent chapters, underpins the rest of his writings. The next chapter demonstrates how Hulme developed his notion of "modern" poetry on the view of language he postulates in "Cinders" and in "Notes." Acknowledging that Hulme's literary reflections follow from his "anti-intellectualist" view of language and of reality highlights the continuity in his thought.

Chapter 2

"A Lecture on Modern Poetry": Poetry as "Visual" Language

1. Introduction

In early 1908, following travels in Canada and Belgium, Hulme finally settled in London (Ferguson 39). It was in London, in the opening years of the twentieth century, that Hulme delivered "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," his first known piece of literary criticism. In this lecture, which was delivered to the "Poets' Club" most likely in November 1908, Hulme argues for the introduction in English poetry of a new verse form.[43] The majority of critics interpret the lecture as a manifesto for Imagism, the movement of poetry formally launched by Pound and Flint in 1913. Thus Hynes argues that in his lecture "Hulme gives the reasons why, the principles behind the practices which Flint and Pound advocated," Coffman maintains that "Hulme's argument for a new verse form reflects ... accurately the requirements of Imagism," and Harmer finds in Hulme's "dogmatic programme for a modernisation of poetry ... the ingredients of Imagism … already contained."[44] According to

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[43] For the lecture's chronology, see Schuchard, *Last Minstrels* 258. A number of critics, including Schuchard himself, have claimed that Hulme repeated "A Lecture" a second time, in the spring or summer of 1914. See, for example, Roberts 21-22; Hynes, ed. xii-xix; A. Jones 122; P. Jones 16; Sherry 38-40, 202; Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 62; and Schuchard, *Last Minstrels* 282. All these critics base their claim that Hulme redelivered the lecture in 1914 on Kate Lechmere's accounts, given in conversations with Roberts and Hynes. In claiming that "The lecture on Modern Poetry was given in the Kensington Town Hall just before I met Hulme about spring of 1914," Lechmere confuses Hulme's "A Lecture" with the lecture on modern *art* that he gave in January 1914. Cf. Lechmere, letter to Roberts, 10-11 Feb. 1938. See also her letter to Roberts, 29 Mar. 1938. This becomes clear once we compare Lechmere's description of the lecture in question with accounts of the January 1914 lecture given by Lewis, Pound and the art critic P. G. Konody. Lechmere's description matches Lewis', Pound's and Konody's eye-witness accounts of "Modern Art and its Philosophy," delivered to the Quest Society in London on 22 Jan. 1914. See Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* 107 and letter to Herbert Read 29 Jan. 1948; Pound, "The New Sculpture" 67, letter to Patricia Hutchins 30 Oct. 1953 (qtd. in Surette 132), and his letter to Roberts 14 July 1937; and Konody *Observer* 1 Feb. 1914: 7.

[44] Hynes, ed. xviii; Coffman 72; Harmer 30. Flint states that Hulme was a leader amongst the early Imagists, while Pound dates the beginning of Imagism to "the forgotten school of 1909," seeing Hulme's poetry as an example of the poetic practice of this group. See Flint, "History of Imagism" 71 and Pound's prefatory note to

these critics, what explains "A Lecture" as proto-Imagist manifesto is the emphasis Hulme

puts in it on *vers libre* as the principal form of modern poetry and on the use in this modern

poetry of visual images, two tenets usually seen as the central principles of Imagism.[45] Aside

from finding "A Lecture" the first and fullest exposition of Imagist poetry, critics argue that it

is characteristic of Hulme's tendency to borrow ideas from different sources, with little

regard for coherence. As Harmer argues for example, the lecture should be understood as "a

mosaic of arguments" assembled out of the ideas of Gustave Kahn, Jean-Marie Guyau, André

Beaunier, Jules de Gaultier and Rémy de Gourmont; similar claims have been made by

Taupin, Roberts, Burne, Martin, Sieburth and, most recently, Carr.[46] Finally, and in line with

the general view of Hulme as an inconsistent thinker, Sherry argues that Hulme combines in

"A Lecture" "opposite aesthetic philosophies," with Levenson adding that the "subjectivist"

aesthetic of the early lecture is at odds with the aesthetic "classicism" of "Romanticism and

Classicism."[47]

By carrying out an in-depth analysis of "A Lecture," this chapter challenges the common

interpretation that the argument Hulme makes in the lecture is incoherent and that the

aesthetic principles included in it are inconsistent with his later criticism. In the first part, I

focus on Hulme's claim in "A Lecture" that a distinctly "modern" spirit was evident in

philosophy and arts in 1908 and his argument that, as he puts it, "Each age must have its own

special form of expression, and any period that deliberately goes out of it is an age of

insincerity" (51). Hulme's demand for the introduction in poetry of a new verse form is best

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Hulme's poems in *Canzoni and Ripostes* 58-59. In his autobiography, Aldington also claims that Hulme played a central role in the development of Imagism. See 122-23.

[45] See Read, *Tenth Muse* 129; Harmer 30; Rodway 96; Martin, *New Age under Orage* 156; and Wacior 26.

[46] See Harmer 115; Taupin 84; Roberts 117; Burne 115; Martin, *New Age under Orage* 157-58; Sieburth 62; and Carr, *Verse Revolutionaries* 160. Although noting that "Hulme has made something new from the pieces," Carr compares Hulme's practice in "A Lecture" with the way Eliot constructs a "patchwork" of translated quotations in *The Waste Land* (cf. 160).

[47] Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Radical Modernism* 39; Levenson 61-62 and 97. See also Louise Blakeney Williams, who maintains that the "optimistic" view Hulme expresses in the lecture about the "reality of change" is at odds with the belief professed in his later writings in cyclic history (cf. 52-54).

understood as part of the broader campaign by poets in the early twentieth century against nineteenth-century verse. Like Flint, Storer and Pound, Hulme is dissatisfied with the existing state of poetry and in campaigning for a new or modern verse form he is expressing the hopes of his contemporaries for aesthetic rejuvenation. At the same time, however, in advocating a new form of poetry, Hulme rejects the same philosophical views he argues against in "Cinders," as well as in his essays on Bergson. His argument in "A Lecture," therefore, can be understood independently of the ideas of Flint and Pound, both of whom attacked nineteenth-century poetry on mainly aesthetic grounds. In the second part of this chapter, I concentrate on Hulme's description of modern poetry as "impressionist" (54) and examine his suggestion that modern poetry would find expression in "free verse" (53). As I show, Hulme is using Impressionist painting in the lecture not as a model for modern poetry, but as an example of an art that has accommodated the modern spirit and that, therefore, sets the precedent for a change in modern poetry. Likewise, in claiming that modern poetry will express itself in free verse, Hulme is essentially arguing against the use in poetry of strict rules of metre, rhythm and rhyme, features which he sees as incongruous with the modern spirit that is "relative." This corrects the view that "A Lecture" is a manifesto against metre, rhythm and rhyme, while it also explains why Hulme uses such "conventions" as rhyme and rhythm in his poetry. In the final part, I address Hulme's definition of modern poetry as "read" and the method he prescribes for the "new visual" poetry. In distinguishing between "read" and "chanted" verse, Hulme dissociates the poetry he advocates from the chanting of W. B. Yeats and Florence Farr, which he views as an example of "indirect" language. Read through ideas in the works of Bergson and Ribot, Hulme's "visual" poetry is revealed to be a transposition of his view of language in "Notes" onto the field of poetry.

2. The "modern spirit"

In "A Lecture," Hulme puts forward a critique of the Edwardian literary establishment. He begins with a jeer directed against Henry Simpson, the Scottish banker who acted as the President of the "Poets' Club" and who, as Hulme states, "told us last week that poetry was akin to religion" (49). He then goes on to berate the anonymous critic of the *Saturday Review*, the famous venue for writers like Anthony Trollope, George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, for holding that poetry is "the means by which the soul soared into higher regions, and ... a means of expression by which it became merged into a higher kind of reality" (49). Hulme is here referring to an unsigned article in the *Saturday Review* from November 1908 that described Storer's poetry as "slag," the anonymous critic claiming that Storer's poems are "a spiritual equivalent to the sucking of chocolate" ("Versicolor" 612).[48] What the anonymous critic of the *Saturday Review*, Simpson, and William Watson, the author of *Wordsworth's Grave* and *Lachrymae musarum* who is described later on in the lecture as more of "a political orator than a poet" (53), have in common, is that they harboured outdated ideas regarding poetry, its function and its method of composition. As Hulme puts it, they all make "mysterious passes and mumble of the infinite and the human heart"; this was in reality a "bluff," he argues, which can be compared to "the way medieval scientists spoke of God. When entirely ignorant of the cause of anything they said God did it" (49). Distancing himself from these critics, Hulme portrays himself as one among a "number of modern people" (50), an adjective that, as Hobsbawm has noted, has from the late nineteenth century onwards been used by artists in an effort to dissociate themselves from the establishment (226-27). It is because there is nothing modern in it that Hulme finds the poem posted outside the London Pavilion so disagreeable to him (cf. 55). Full of "clichés or tags of speech," Hulme claims that the poem is based on "old rules" (51); moreover, it is long, verbose and

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[48] Hulme's reference to the article in the *Saturday Review* was first identified by Schuchard. See *Last Minstrels* 258.

one among many poems written by people "with no poetic inspiration" (55).[49] Never a shy

polemicist, Hulme thus declares that "I have no reverence for tradition" and, rejecting all

"references to Dante, Milton and the rest of them," he announces that "Personally I am ... in

favour of the complete destruction of all verse more than twenty years old" (50-51).

Hulme was certainly not alone in turning against established notions of poetry and in

demanding a distinctly modern poetry. Late in 1908, Hulme began meeting regularly with

Storer, Flint and Pound, forming together their own little coterie, what came to be known as

the "Tour d' Eiffel" group.[50] Like Hulme, Storer, Flint and, to a lesser extent, Pound, were all

registering at this time their dissatisfaction with the existing state of poetry. In "An Essay,"

appended to his collection of poetry *The Mirrors of Illusion*, Storer argued that "at the hands

of her priests and disciples poetry has suffered the most" (78). It was time, Storer suggested,

for poetry to break from those "restrictions" of the past that "run counter to the current of

life." Poetry, Storer went on to claim, had to change and modernise itself: for "One does not

despise one's ancestors for having ridden in stage coaches, but one can use a railway train

oneself without disrespect to the dead" (81). Flint shared Storer's views on poetry. Reviewing

Mirrors of Illusion, Flint praised Storer's rejection of old techniques and, although he did not

find Storer's poems especially successful, Flint agreed with Storer that the existing poetry

was no longer adequate. He wanted to make it clear, Flint wrote, that "Amid much that may

be contradictory, one thing has been insisted upon in what I have written here about modern

English poetry: the need for revaluation of all poetical values" ("Book of the Week, Recent

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[49] The idea that regular verse requires less creative effort than modern poetry is also expressed by Storer, who claims in "An Essay" that "a trickster, a Cinquevalli of syllables and rhymes ... will not be able to disguise this fact in his blank verse" (108).

[50] For a history of the 'Tour Eiffel' group, including information about the circumstances that led Hulme to depart from the "Poets' Club" and invite Flint to the Tour d'Eiffel restaurant, see Hughes 11, Harmer 21, Ferguson 53-56, and Carr 133-35. See also Flint, "Book of the Week: Recent Verse" 11 Feb. 1909: 327 and Hulme, "Belated Romanticism" 350. For Pound's reminiscences of "Hulme's dinners," as he described them, see "Harold Monro" 8.

Verse" 26 Nov. 1908: 95). Pound, too, was determined to modernise poetry as it was being written in the London of 1908. Writing to William Carlos Williams on 21 October 1908, he rallied against the "materia poetica & metrica ... of Milton's or Miss Austin's [*sic*] day" and the "didactisism [*sic*]" of the past (8, 11). As Stock, Kenner, Tytell and, more recently, Moody, have shown, Pound devoted the best part of his early career in opposing the dominant conceptions of poetry and criticism.[51] As a quick glance at Hulme's lecture, Storer's "Essay," Flint's review of Storer's *Mirrors of Illusion* and Pound's letter to Williams suggests, all these poets felt in 1908 that they were, like the unnamed figure in the opening of Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, "out of key" and "out of date" with the poetry of their time and were determined to change it (lines 1, 6).[52]

In "A Lecture," Hulme bases his argument about the necessity of change in poetry on two ideas: that poetry had reached in 1908 a state of stagnation and that only the introduction of a new verse could rejuvenate poetic activity; and that poetry had a duty to change in order to accommodate the modern spirit, which, as he argues, was distinctly different from that of the nineteenth century. In the first case, despite his rejection in the lecture of all poetry "more than twenty years old" (50-51), and in contrast to the swagger and blast of the Imagist and Vorticist manifestos, Hulme presents his argument for change from a fairly dispassionate standpoint; he is thus keen on showing that his reasoning is based on elaborate empirical and historical observations concerning the nature of poetry. In the second case, he takes the opportunity to criticise the nineteenth century on ideological and philosophical grounds.

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[51] See Stock 29-41; Kenner 121-44; Tytell 35-111; Moody 68-126.
[52] For a fuller discussion of the dissatisfaction felt by Hulme's circle with the dominant trends in the early twentieth century, see Carr's enlightening discussion of the "School of Images" in *Verse Revolutionaries* 133-203.

"The principle on which I rely in this paper," Hulme announces early on in the lecture, "is that there is an intimate connection between the verse form and the state of poetry at any period" (50). The introduction of a new poetic form, in other words, is a necessary prerequisite for the production of new and original poetry; as he puts it later on in the lecture, "arts like poetry ... must find a new technique each generation" (51). He thus writes that, unlike other literary critics, he does not think that poetic activity can be explained by external reasons, such as the discovery of a new Continent. Rather, empirical and historical evidence leads him to conclude that poetic activity flourishes when a new form of poetry is invented:

> All kind of reasons are given by the academic critics for the efflorescence of verse at any period. But the true one is very seldom given. It is the invention or introduction of a new verse form. To the artist the introduction of a new art form is ... like a new dress to a girl; he wants to see himself in it. It is a new toy ... The discovery of America had about as much effect on the Courtier poets at that time as the discovery of a new asteroid would have had on the poetic activity of Swinburne. The real reason was, I take it, that the first opportunity was given for the exercise of verse composition by the introduction of all kinds of new matter and new forms from Italy and France. (50)[53]

The logic described here, according to which the introduction of new verse forms and the composition of new and original poetry are coextensive, is an established position within literary history – it forms part, for example, of Kirby-Smith's discussion of the development of modern verse – that helps us understand why Hulme and his fellow poets were so eager to welcome a modern form of poetry in 1908.[54] As explained in "A Lecture," the introduction by Wordsworth of the "Modern lyrical impulse ... in good set terms as a new method"

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[53] Cf. Hulme's claim in "Romanticism and Classicism" that the "blank verse" introduced in the Elizabethan rimes was, as he says, "new and so it was easy to play tunes on it" (63).
[54] See Kirby-Smith 44.

accounts for the great amount of original poems written by the British Romantics in the nineteenth century. This was also the lesson to be learnt from developments in France in the late nineteenth century, where, as Hulme explains, Kahn's new technique of *vers libre* resulted in "the appearance of a band of poets perhaps unequalled at any one time in the history of French poetry" (52). In his essay on *vers libre*, published as a "Préface" in *Premiers Poèmes* in 1897, Kahn suggests that the introduction of a new form in French poetry can accommodate the "plus complexe" and "plus difficile" modern thought; more crucially for Hulme, Kahn shows that a new verse form can reinvigorate the state of French poetry. Reiterating Kahn's argument in verbatim, Hulme uses it in his lecture to show why it is necessary to replace old verse forms with modern ones:

> It must be admitted that verse forms like manners and like individuals develop and die. They evolve from their initial freedom to decay and finally to virtuosity. They disappear before the new man, burdened with the thought more complex and more difficult to express by the old name. After being too much used their primitive effect is lost. All possible tunes have been played on the instrument. What possibility is there in that for the new men, or what attraction? (50)[55]

Detecting in the poetry of the early twentieth century a similar decay and lack of virtuosity as the one described in Kahn's "Préface," Hulme concludes that only the introduction of a new form of poetry can take poetry out of the state of stagnation in which, in his view, it has fallen.

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[55] Cf. Kahn 23. For further discussion of Hulme's appropriation of the ideas of Kahn in "A Lecture," see Csengeri, "T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from the French" 16-27.

At the same time, Hulme bases his argument in support of change on the idea that poetry has to be in line with "the spirit of our times" (53). This is another idea that can be understood through Kahn's argument in the "Préface" to *Premiers Poèmes*. Like Kahn, who advocates *vers libre* on the grounds that it is better suited to accommodate the "pensée plus complexe" [more complex thought]" of modern times (23), Hulme maintains in his lecture that twentieth-century English poetry has to adapt to the "trend of the modern spirit" (52). In his review of Tancrède de Visan's *L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain*, published in the *New Age* in August 1911, Hulme explains what he means by this idea, this time using Taine's terms:

> It starts out from this thesis. That there is in each generation ... a 'temperature morale' [a moral "temperature"], which is to be found at the same epoch in all the different orders of mental activity, and which constitutes 'l'état général de l'esprit de moeurs environnantes' [the general spirit of the moral standards of the external environment]. (57)[56]

By "spirit," therefore, Hulme only means the general worldview – what in later writings he refers to as *Weltanschauung*. The view in the lecture that poetry and art more broadly are inextricably linked with the general worldview or attitude of the time in which they are produced, stayed with Hulme throughout his career. It is, for example, part of Hulme's critique of the Romantic "critical attitude" in "Romanticism and Classicism," which he dismisses as having "outlasted the thing from which it was formed" (65). It is also used in his defence of abstract art in "Modern Art and Its Philosophy" in 1914, where Hulme presents

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[56] Taine makes this claim in *Philosophie de l'art* 101.

the geometric art of Epstein as the testimony to "the break up [*sic*] of the Renaissance humanistic attitude" (269).

What was the specific nature of this "modern" or "new" spirit? That is, how did it differ from the spirit of previous times? Hulme argues that a dramatic change in the way humans perceived the world occurred in the modern era and that, as a result of this change, the moderns ceased to believe in absolute truth, instead acknowledging the "relative" (52-53). To understand the way in which Hulme uses the terms "absolute" and "relative" here, it is useful to consider his argument as he presents it in "A Lecture" in more detail. Hulme begins by drawing a distinction between the "ancients" and the "moderns," moving on to describe the difference in the way the "ancients" and the "moderns" view the world:

> The ancients were perfectly aware of the fluidity of the world and of its impermanence; there was the Greek theory that the whole world was a flux. But while they recognised it they feared it and endeavoured to evade it, to construct things of permanence which would stand fast in this universal flux which frightened them ... We see it in a thousand different forms. Materially in the pyramids, spiritually in the dogmas of religion and in the hypostatised ideas of Plato. Living in a dynamic world they wished to create a static fixity where their souls might rest.
>
> This I conceive to be the explanation of many of the old ideas on poetry. They wish to embody in a few lines a perfection of thought ... hence the fixity of the form of poem and the elaborate rules of regular metre ... As the French philosopher Guyau put it, the great poems of ancient times resembled pyramids built for eternity where people loved to inscribe their history in symbolic characters. They believed they could realise an adjustment of idea and words that nothing could destroy.

Now the whole trend of the modern spirit is away from that, philosophers no longer believe in absolute truth. We no longer believe in perfection, either in verse or in thought, we frankly acknowledge the relative. We shall no longer strive to attain the absolutely perfect form in poetry. (52-53)

The mention of Jean-Marie Guyau in the passage cited above has led some critics to the conclusion that Hulme's descriptions of the ancient and modern spirits can be explained through Guyau's work, specifically *Les Problèmes de l' esthétique contemporaine* (1884) and *L' Art au point de vue sociologique* (1889). In *Les Problèmes de l' esthétique contemporaine*, in a discussion about the future of poetry, Guyau discusses the reasons why his contemporaries "naturalistes," prose writers such as Zola, turned to prose instead of poetry as a medium for their art. Among other things, Guyau writes:

La prose, ce qu'il y a de plus relatif et des plus mobile dans le langage, semble mieux convenir des nos idées modernes, si changeantes elles-même. Les grands poèmes des anciens âges ressemblent à ces pyramides dressées pour l'éternité, où les vieux peuples aimaient à inscrire leur histoire en caractères merveilleux et symboliques: aujourd'hui, les faits et les idées se succèdent si vite pour nos cerveaux fatigués que nous avons à peine le temps de les transcrire à la hâte, le plus simplement possible, sans symboles ni figures délicatement sculptées ... écrire n'est plus graver. (176)

Prose, that which is the most relative and the most flexible in language, seems more appropriate to our modern ideas, which keep changing. The great poems of the past resemble pyramids erected for eternity, on which the ancients loved to inscribe their history by producing fantastic and symbolic characters; nowadays, thoughts and ideas succeed one another so quickly for our tired minds that we only have time to translate

them in haste and as simply as possible with no symbolisms, nor delicately grafted

characters ... writing is no longer engraving.

Critics have also identified another passage, this time from Guyau's *L' Art au point de vue

sociologique*, as a possible source for Hulme's idea that the tendency of the modern spirit is

toward the "relative." In *L' Art au point de vue sociologique*, a work which examines the

social basis of art, Guyau states:

> L'art moderne doit être fondé sur la notion de l'imparfait, comme la métaphysique
>
> moderne sur celle du relatif. (123)
>
> Modern art ought to be based upon the idea of the imperfect, in the same way as
>
> modern metaphysics proceeds on the idea of the relative.

In both cases, Guyau's claims chime with Hulme's remark in the lecture that the defining

characteristic of the "modern" is its rejection of the absolute or the perfect and its recognition

of the relative (53). However tempting it may be to conclude that Hulme owes his idea that

the modern spirit is "relative" to Guyau, as Csengeri has rightly pointed out, Guyau's use of

the term "relative" is demonstrably different. In *Les Problèmes de l' esthétique*

contemporaine, Csengeri explains, Guyau was only making a point about how the

"naturalistes" writers preferred prose to poetry because it was more flexible. In *L' Art au*

point de vue sociologique, Guyau was specifically discussing literary realism; he was

interested, Csengeri writes, in "the *matter* not the *manner* of literature, and in this regard he

discussed the introduction of ugliness into realistic novels" ("T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from

the French" 25; emphasis in original). For Guyau in *L' Art au point de vue sociologique*,

therefore, relative meant "realistic," Guyau's idea being that the presentation of perfect

characters in the literature of this kind clashes with its aim, which is to present real, flawed characters with whom readers could relate, leading to "faux realisme" (cf. *L' Art au point de vue sociologique* 76, 83). Csengeri's conclusion in "T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from the French" that Hulme took Guyau's discussion "out of its original context, and put it into his own," thus seems fair (25).

In distinguishing between the ancients who "believe in perfection" and the moderns who "frankly acknowledge the relative," Hulme seems to be harking back to "Cinders," where he presented two antithetical views of the world. On the one hand, there are those who tried to impose an artificial unity on the flux of experience and whom Hulme derides in "Cinders" as "counter" philosophers (8). On the other hand, there are those who, like Hulme, endorse a view of the world as "cinders." As in "A Lecture," in "Cinders" Hulme sides against the idea that there is an absolute truth, unity or beauty in the world (8-10). Instead of reducing the world to "theories of the world, which satisfy [us]," as one entry puts it (14), we must recognise, he claims in another, that "The world is a plurality" (9). Likewise, rather than postulate philosophical views that are "flattering to our sense of power over the world" (11), Hulme suggests in "Cinders" that it is more accurate to recognise that the world is "essentially imperfect, chaotic, and cinder-like" (9), and thus accept the view that there is "No average or real truth" (13). In a sense then, the modern poet in a lecture who does not believe in absolute truth recalls Hulme of "Cinders," who happily acknowledges that the only reality is the experiential "flux." Hulme elaborates on this view – that there is no "absolute" truth and that the world is imperfect – in the *New Age* essays of 1909-11. Turning briefly to these essays provides a way of understanding how he uses the terms "absolute" and "relative" in the lecture to describe the "ancient" and the "modern" spirits respectively.

Following a similar argument as in his lecture, in "The New Philosophy" Hulme argues that the tendency to seek "perfection" in philosophy begins with the ancient Greeks, specifically Plato, for whom, he writes, "reality consisted of 'essences' or ideas" (86; cf. 111). This tendency, Hulme goes on to claim, can also be seen at work in neo-Hegelian philosophers such as Haldane, whose philosophy is based on "order and organisation" (93); it can also be seen in the theories of positivist philosophers in general, who vouch to rationalise reality through scientific methods (101). For Hulme, two philosophers who have rejected the view of the world as "perfect" and who have thus moved away from the constructions of systems in metaphysics are Jules de Gaultier and Bergson. In his review of Gaultier, Hulme posits that Gaultier demonstrates that philosophy is in reality "a means of expressing certain attitudes to the cosmos" and that, moreover, thinking the opposite implies "humbly groping after the truth" (99-100). Hulme also explains that, for Gaultier, the struggle of science for "certitude" and for "systematic structure" is misguided, as "All philosophy is bound to be untrue, for it is the art of representing the cosmos in words, which is just as much a necessary distortion as the art of painting, which represents solidity in a plane of two dimensions" (103). Metaphysics should instead resemble art: it must combine "freedom and chance," "bold speculation," "light-heartedness" and "idiosyncrasy." It must be seen, as Hulme puts it otherwise, as "an elaborate means for the expression of quite personal and human emotions" (101).

As with Gaultier, Hulme praises Bergson for offering an alternative approach to metaphysics. Thus in Hulme's "Notes on the Bologna Congress" Bergson is described as a philosopher who does not believe that philosophy could unveil any "Truth" (cf. 105). By understanding the world in terms of experiential "flux" and not as a unity of laws, Hulme maintains in this report, Bergson provides a more accurate and more sincere view of reality.

Citing Bergson in support of his argument, Hulme rejects the belief that "Somewhere at a great distance, Truth is hidden" and that "She is always waiting to be discovered" (105). He reiterates this view in "Bax on Bergson," now lauding Bergson for having shown how philosophers' quest for absolute knowledge is a dated approach to metaphysics: "What is so difficult for a man who has been brought up in one epoch of philosophy and lives on into the beginning of the next to understand," Hulme writes in "Bax on Bergson," "is this, that not only are there new answers to old questions, but in many cases the old questions cease to have an interest and any meaning for the next generation" (121).

There is an obvious link between Hulme's description of the modern poet in "A Lecture" and his discussion of Gaultier and Bergson in the *New Age* articles. Just as Gaultier and Bergson are deemed by Hulme in the *New Age* to understand the world without imposing any "artificial" unities over it (87; 101), so Hulme presents the modern poet in "A Lecture" as someone who rejects all notions of "perfection" (cf. 52). My claim here, therefore, is that in arguing in the lecture that the moderns "acknowledge the relative" (cf. 53), Hulme is referring to the philosophical view expressed in "Cinders" and which in his articles for the *New Age* he attributes to the philosophical methods of Gautier and, especially Bergson.

There is, finally, another aspect to Hulme's claim that the moderns should acknowledge the "relative," which is less immediately apparent. The lecture's opposition to notions of "perfection" and to the tendency of creating God-like structures and inventing theories of "absolute" truth (52), in a sense anticipates his rejection of romanticism, defined in "Romanticism and Classicism" as the belief that "man is a god" (62). It is also in line with his criticism in this lecture of Ruskin, who, Hulme writes in "Romanticism and Classicism," "wants to deduce his opinion like his master, Coleridge, from a fixed principle of the

cosmos" (62). Both the modern poet in the early lecture and his "classic" counterpart in "Romanticism and Classicism" recognise that it is not the job of poetry to make claims to an "absolute truth," thus avoiding speaking of poetry in an idealistic manner (cf. 49, 52, 62, 66). This is not to say that the arguments in the two lectures are identical; as we will see in chapter 4, in "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme primarily aims to reject the romantic Weltanschauung he detects in poetry and politics, a concern which he does not have in "A Lecture." Despite the change in terminology and focus, however, the poetry that Hulme criticises in "Romanticism and Classicism" is the same as the poetry he opposes in his early lecture. This is evident from the way that in both these lectures, Hulme directs his criticism towards the same poets. Thus in "A Lecture" he lists Tennyson, Shelley, Keats and prominent members of the Edwardian literary establishment, such as Simpson and Watson, as examples of poets guilty of chasing "perfection" and of using empty rhetoric, while in "Romanticism and Classicism," even though he adds Lamartine, Hugo, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne on his list of poets whose poetry he dislikes, Hulme also includes Tennyson, Shelley, Keats and the critic who "takes up the thing at least a couple of notes in pitch" (cf. 62-63).

3. Impressionism and free verse

Halfway through the lecture, Hulme describes the difference between the old and the modern attitudes in poetry by pointing to "analogous" developments in painting:

> The old poetry dealt essentially with big things, the expression of epic subjects leads naturally to the anatomical matter and regular verse...
> But the modern is the exact opposite of this, it no longer deals with heroic action, it has become finally introspective ... The opinion you often hear expressed, that perhaps a

new poet will arrive who will synthesise the whole modern movement into a great epic,

shows an entire misconception of the tendency of modern verse. There is an analogous

change in painting, where the old endeavoured to tell a story, the modern attempts to fix

an impression. We still perceive the mystery of things, but we perceive it ... in an

impression, for example, Whistler's pictures. We can't escape from the spirit of our

times. What has found expression in painting as Impressionism will soon find

expression in poetry in free verse. (53)

There are two things to note here, both of which invite further scrutiny. The first relates to the

role played by Impressionist painting in Hulme's formulation of modern poetry. The second

concerns the form that modern poetry would take. In what follows, I begin by briefly

considering Hulme's discussion of Impressionism in the lecture, then moving on to examine

in detail his suggestion that modern verse would find its expression as free verse.

As Carr points out, "before Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition [in 1910],

Impressionism still represented all that was most modern in art" (*Verse Revolutionaries* 198).

This was certainly Storer's impression, who wrote in 1908 that "To argue for or against

impressionism at this time of the day would be as foolish as to write a treatise proving the

circulation of blood" ("An Essay" 101). Understood in its broadest definition, as the art

practised by Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and Sisley, as well as Cézanne, Degas, Manet and

Whistler, Impressionism challenged many nineteenth-century conceptions of art. Hulme

values specifically Impressionism's choice of subject matter and its creative method. In the

passage cited above, he presents Impressionism as art that is not interested in presenting a

story or a narrative – this is what Hulme means when he says that Impressionism avoided

"epic subjects" – but that is rather only interested in the momentary presentations of the

artist's inward feelings. As he puts it earlier on in the lecture, the aim of Impressionism is

"the maximum of individual and personal expression" (53). In this sense, Impressionism

constitutes a transformation into art of the idea that Hulme professes in his article on Gaultier,

according to which philosophy should be "simply an elaborate means for the expression of

quite personal and human emotions" (101). More importantly, Hulme is attracted to the way

Impressionism avoids presenting ideas of "absolute truth," looking instead for inspiration in

material reality (53). This is evident from the way Hulme juxtaposes the Impressionist

method of representing feelings induced by "the vision of a London street at midnight" or the

"the flat spaces and wide horizons" of the Canadian prairies with the "lyrical impulse" of

Tennyson, Shelley and Keats (53). This regard for material reality, which both Compton and

Eitner identify as a central component of Impressionist art, can be seen in "Notes," where

Hulme writes in one entry that "All emotion depends on real solid vision or sound. It is

physical" (24), stating in another that "The art of literature consists exactly in this *passage

from the Eye to the Voice*" (31; emphasis in original).[57] It can also be seen in "Romanticism

and Classicism," where Hulme argues that a poem should always be built around "an actually

realised visual object" (71).

    Hulme's claim in the lecture that the change in Impressionist painting is "analogous" to

changes happening in the field of poetry, suggests that he was using Impressionism as an

example of a broader transformation in the spirit of the times. For Hulme, Impressionism is

part of a larger process in which artists are turning away from preoccupations with

"perfection." He appears to feel similarly about developments in music. As he writes in the

lecture, a "fanciful analogy" for the method of "piling-up and juxtaposition of distinct

images," the technique which he goes on to inaugurate as the defining characteristic of

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[57] See Compton n.pag. and Eitner 338.

modern poetry, can be found in "music ... when for the melody that is one-dimensional ... was substituted harmony which moves in two." As he explains, the "visual images" in modern poetry combine to "suggest an image which is different to both" in a way comparable to different notes in modern music uniting as a "visual chord" (54). One way of understanding Hulme's reference to music here is through Bergson, who on separate moments in his writings describes how the continuous, uninterrupted movement enacted in music can point us to a reality that is not available to us through conceptual language.[58] Another way of reading Hulme's claim, however, is through developments in the field of music in the early twentieth century. As Botstein has demonstrated, in the opening years of the last century composers such as Debussy looked to Impressionism to redeem themselves from what Botstein describes as "absolutist aesthetics" (160). Debussy himself later wrote to a friend that, during this time, his aim was to "Collect impressions" rather than present in his music a real-life portrait or a narrative, Debussy's hope being that music could lead the audience to a reality beyond the visual or the linguistic. For that to happen, Debussy maintains in this letter, music ought to be taken as a "whole, a single intense facing object of vision – a single *striking* object of vision" (qtd. in Botstein 161, 164; emphasis in original). Hulme's discussion of Impressionist art in "A Lecture," therefore, is best understood as part of his overall argument in the lecture, which is to convince that there was evidence in philosophy and in arts that the spirit of the time was changing and that poetry had to change accordingly.

Hulme concludes his discussion of Impressionism by saying that, just like the "modern spirit" found its expression in art as Impressionism, the "modern spirit" in poetry will find its expression as "free verse." For many critics, Hulme's demand for "free verse" is the central

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[58] Cf. *Time and Free Will* 100; "The Stating of Problems" 33-34; and "The Perception of Change" 149-50.

requirement which Hulme postulates for modern poetry.[59] The obvious problem with describing Hulme's definition of modern poetry as "free verse" is that, as various scholars have showed, "free verse" is an often misused term that, unless it is defined each time it is used, it runs the risk of being a misnomer.[60] In neglecting to explain what they mean by "free verse," critics including Taupin, Read, Rodway and Wacior fail to add to our understanding of Hulme's position regarding the form of modern poetry in "A Lecture." To gain an insight into how Hulme is using the term "free verse" in his lecture, I propose we briefly explore what the term stood for in 1908.

According to Flint's "History of Imagism," the poets Hulme associated himself with looked for inspiration to Japanese poetic forms and the French *vers libre* (71). Japanese forms and the French *vers libre* were thought of as "free" forms, as both put greater emphasis on individual rhythm than they did on regular metre, rhythm or rhyme.[61] Reviewing a volume of Japanese and Chinese poetry in 1908, Flint thus expressed his wish "that the poems in this book had been translated into little dropping rhythms, unrhymed" rather than into "heavy English rhymed quatrains," as in that way, Flint went on to argue, it would be possible to experience the "soul's music." This would have been preferable, Flint claimed, because "To the poet who can catch and render [this music] the future lies open," concluding by calling for poetry of "more subtle rhythms and broken cadences" ("Book of the Week: Recent Verses" 212-13). In this review, Flint is essentially arguing for the introduction in English poetry of French *vers libre*. This becomes obvious once we compare the claims he makes in his review with an article he wrote for the *Poetry Review* four years later, where Flint defines French *vers libre* as poetry "free from exterior law," praising the French *vers librists*, whose

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[59] See, for example, Taupin 245; Read, *Tenth Muse* 129; Rodway 96; and Wacior 26.
[60] See Hough 87; Pratt, Introduction to *The Imagist Poem* 39; Duffell 187; Malof 146; and Hartman 44.
[61] On the formal characteristics of Japanese verse forms and on its influence on the French *vers libre* movement, see Carr 189-190. On the influence of Japanese verse forms on the Imagist poets, see Gillies and Mahood 69-73; Copp 20-21; and Carr, "Imagism and Empire" 67-72.

primary concern, Flint argued, was to "follow rigorously the interior law of the poet's emotion and the idea which has given it birth" ("Contemporary French Poetry" 358). As Carr has demonstrated in detail, Flint's essay in the *Poetry Review* was influential to those around him, especially Pound, who was made aware by Flint about the importance of rhythm and assonance rather than rhyme (480-82). Directly influenced or not, Pound's principle of *melopoeia*, according to which form has "truly to bear the trace of emotion which the poem ... is intended to communicate" ("A Serious Artist" 244), certainly shares something with the verse advocated by Flint in both his 1908 and 1912 articles.

Like Flint, Storer was also campaigning in 1908 for a verse form that abandoned the conventions of regular rhythm and rhyme, criticising in his essay in *Mirrors of Illusion* all poetry that was "coffined alive in the restrictions of rhythm or rhyme." Unlike Flint, however, who advertised the French *vers libre* as the best-suited form for modern poetry, in "An Essay" Storer maintained that the modern poet had much more to learn from the work of the nineteenth-century English poets Sydney Dobell, Alexander Smith and Coleridge rather than the French *vers librists*. This is because, Storer claims, "nearly all the English poets have been vers-librists, for we never insisted on such rigidity of form as the French did" (110). The kind of poetry Storer favoured specifically was "separatist," by which he meant poetry stripped of "all unessential and confounding branches of literary art which only serve to hinder and destroy it" – that is, free from metre, rhythm, narration, drama and other "conventions" and "artificialities" (102). Storer thus concluded:

> There is no absolute virtue in iambic pentameters as such … however well they may be.
> There is no immediate virtue in rhythm or rhyme even. These things are merely means
> to an end. Judged by themselves they are monstrosities of childish virtuosity and

needless iteration. Indeed, rhythm and rhyme are often destructive of thought, lulling

the mind into a drowsy kind of stupor … Their use for their own sake may safely be left

to the music-hall and ballad concert type of poetry. (107)

Storer's idea that rhythm and rhyme are better suited to the music-hall, as we will see in the

final part of this chapter, recalls Hulme's distinction in "A Lecture" between read and

chanted verse. Here, however, we need only note how, even though Flint and Storer were

agreed in 1908 on the fact that regular forms of poetry were unsatisfactory, and despite all of

the "Tour Eiffel" poets being equally eager to find an alternative verse form to the "stale and

hackneyed" metre of old, as Pound later described nineteenth-century metric verse ("A

Retrospect" 253), in 1908 the poets of Hulme's "Tour Eiffel" group were not firmly settled

on a specific form of poetry.[62] This is significant because, as we will now see, in "A Lecture"

Hulme similarly refuses to prescribe modern poetry a specific verse form, freely

experimenting in his poetry with traditional rhythmic and rhyme schemes.

Hulme's first mention of either term – "free verse" or *vers libre* – occurs early on in the

lecture:

I came to the subject of verse from the inside rather than the outside. There were certain

impressions which I wanted to fix. I read verse to find models but I could not find any

that seemed exactly suitable to express that kind of impression, except perhaps in the

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[62] Pound advocated *vers libre* in "The Tradition" 93, "The Approach to Paris" 340, and in "How I Began" 213-14. Like Storer and Hulme, Pound drew a distinction between the free verse form used by the Imagists and French *vers libre*. As he put it in a letter to Alice Henderson from 1913, "'Vers Libre' is various things. there's 'Vers Libre'. And 'our vers libre' and 'their vers libre' [*sic*]" (4). In "A Retrospect," Pound expressed his dismay about how *vers libre* had become in the hands of some modern poets "as prolix and verbose as any of the flaccid varieties of prose that preceded it" (3). Pound was also an admirer of Japanese hokku poems. On Pound's use of the haiku, see Miner 115-28.

jerky rhythms of Henley, until I came to read the French *vers-libre*, which seemed to

exactly fit the case. (50)[63]

Further on in the lecture, Hulme returns to the subject of *vers libre*, now elaborating on what

he means by it:

> The new technique was first definitely stated by Kahn. It consisted in a denial of a
>
> regular number of syllables as the basis of versification. The length of the line is long
>
> and short, oscillating with the images used by the poet; it follows the contours of his
>
> thoughts and is free rather than regular ... it is clothes made to order, rather than ready-
>
> made clothes. This is a very bald statement of it and I am not concerned here so much
>
> with French poetry as with English. The kind of verse I advocate is not the same as
>
> *vers-libre*, I merely use the French as an example of the extraordinary effect that an
>
> emancipation of verse can have on poetic activity. (52)

Hulme's definition of *vers-libre* here is in its essence a summary of the argument put forward

in Kahn's Préface in *Premiers Poèmes*, where Kahn argues that *vers libre* allows the poet to

> écrire son rythme propre et individuel au lieu d'endosser un uniforme taillé d'avance et
>
> qui le réduit à n'être que l'élève de tel glorieux prédécesseur. (28)
>
> write his own individual rhythm, rather than follow pre-fabricated restrictions, and thus
>
> reduce himself to being simply a follower of so-called glorious masters.

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[63] Hulme's mention of the "jerky rhythms" of Henley here may be indicative of an early desire to move away from what he described in "Romanticism and Classicism" as the vague and high-pitched rhetoric of Romanticism (62-63). As Kirby-Smith argues, Henley's experiments with verse were "Most relevant to twentieth-century free verse," precisely because for Henley, Kirby-Smith writes, "free verse was a way of stripping off the Tennysonian-Swinburnian rhetoric that prevented poetry from coming to terms to the hard facts of life" (129).

Although Hulme's reliance on Kahn suggests that he endorses Kahn's *vers libre*, Hulme states that he does not think of French *vers libre* as the principal form of modern poetry. Tempting as it may be to conclude that he is here contradicting himself, Hulme is simply making the point, which is also the point Storer makes in his "Essay," that what makes *vers libre* a primarily modern form of poetry is that it does not follow any prescribed rules. This is the only definition of *vers libre* that can be got out of "A Lecture" and it is, in fact, the only satisfactory definition that, as scholars have shown, can be given to the terms "*vers libre*" and "free verse" as they are used in English poetry. Hough thus writes that "free verse" as adopted by English poets in the early twentieth century is more correctly understood as *vers libéré*, not *vers libre*, as, whereas *vers libre* refers to verse that is "born free," *vers libéré* denotes verse that "has been liberated from some pre-existing chains" (87). Kirby-Smith makes a similar point to Hough, suggesting that the only common characteristic of "free verse" poems in English is that "they escape or deviate from traditional meters" and that they thus "run counter to expectations of various sorts" (43, 47).

That Hulme is favourable to a verse form that is not prescriptive but that only abandons strict conventions is made evident from his poetry, which is an example of what Malof calls "fragmented free verse," or, in Kirby-Smith's terms, "vers-libristic" form, "a loosening up of poetic structure into lines of irregular length" but which retains, as Kirby-Smith explains, "a certain regularity of syllabification and use of rhyming endings" (44). Consider, for example, "The Embankment":

Once, in finesse of fiddles found I ecstasy,

In a flash of gold heels on the hard pavement.

Now see I

That warmth's the very stuff of poesy

Oh, God, make small

The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,

That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie.

A rhyming structure persists – "ecstasy" with "poesy"; "I" with "sky" and "lie." In "Above the Dock," the iambic pentameter ensures that the rhythmic structure is much more fluid:

Above the quiet dock in midnight,

Tangled in the tall mast's corded height,

Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away

Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.

Consider also his unpublished poem "A Sunset," with the primary metrical stress marked on its original manuscript:

I love not the Sunset

That spréad like a scarlet sóre

O"er hálf a sick sky,

Or flaunts a tráiled red globe

Along the fretted edge of the city's roofs

Abóut the time of hómeward going crows

Calling aloúd for all to gape

At its beáuty

>Like a wanton.

"Autumn" is also unrhymed, but it is written in a much freer form:

>A touch of cold in the Autumn night –
>
>I walked abroad
>
>And saw the ruddy moon
>
>Like a red-faced farmer.
>
>I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
>
>And round about were the wistful stars
>
>With white faces like town children.

Here, the conventions of rhyme and metre are rejected completely, the modern poet left free to express himself. Instead of trying to achieve a "perfect" representation, in "Autumn" Hulme simply presents a series of impressions. He does not speak, but nods; in the terminology of "A Lecture," he possesses a "tentative and half-shy manner of looking at things" (53-54).

Like Flint and Storer, therefore, Hulme argues in "A Lecture" for a verse form that allows the poet to express himself, without imposing on him strict rules regarding metre, rhythm or rhyme. French *vers libre* certainly adhered to this requirement, yet, as Storer noted, so did English free verse. It was in this sense only that Hulme saw in French *vers libre* a form that could emancipate modern English poetry. As understood by Hulme, Flint and Storer, the modern poet should adopt not a form that rejects metre, rhythm, and rhyme altogether, but a form that allows the poet to freely express himself, without having to conscribe to any formal

restrictions. This explains why Hulme uses rhythm and rhyme in his poems. Ultimately, what concerns him the most in "A Lecture," however, is not so much the specific verse form that modern poetry will take, but that it is "visual." What Hulme means by "visual" is examined in the next and final part of this chapter.

4. The "new visual art"

Having argued that the "modern spirit" would find its expression in poetry as free verse, Hulme moves on in "A Lecture" to explain in more detail how modern poetry differs in its aims and its methodology from poetry that obeys to strict metric, rhythmic and rhyme patterns:

> Say the poet is moved by a certain landscape, he selects from that certain images which put into juxtaposition in separate lines serve to suggest and to evoke the state he feels ... Two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both.
>
> Starting then from this standpoint of extreme modernism, what are the principal features of verse at the present time? It is this: that it is read and not chanted ... We have thus two distinct arts ... The older art was originally a religious incantation; it was made to express oracles and maxims in an impressive manner, and rhyme and metre were used as aids to the memory. But why, for this new poetry, should we keep a mechanism which is only suited to the old? The effect of rhythm ... is to produce a kind of hypnotic state, during which suggestions of grief or ecstasy are easily and powerfully effective ... This is for the art of chanting, but the procedure of the new visual art is just the contrary. It depends for its effect not on a kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of visual images should exhaust one. (54)

Later on in the lecture, Hulme returns to elaborate on the difference between the modern and old art:

> This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes. The material ... is images and not sound. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic effect of rhythm. (56)

On the one hand, Hulme draws a distinction between "read" and "chanted" verse or poetry. Hulme's definition of modern poetry as poetry that is read and that "appeals to the eye" has received little critical attention. The few critics who have discussed it, argue that in emphasising that modern poetry is for the eye, not the ear, Hulme advocates typographic experimentation, or, at the very least, must be anticipating the experimentations with typography of e. e. cummings, Apollinaire and the Dadaists (Carr 179; Kirby-Smith 46-47). Here, I argue that a different interpretation of Hulme's distinction is possible, according to which Hulme's definition of modern poetry as visual is intended to distance his conception of modern poetry from the popular chanted verse of the time. On the other hand, Hulme describes how modern poetry consists of distinct images arranged in juxtaposition and also how modern poetry aims at creating "a plastic image." In order to understand these two claims, it is useful to return to the ideas of Bergson and Ribot.

Hulme's description of the "older art" of chanting in "A Lecture" fits perfectly the profile of the chanted verse popularised by Yeats and Florence Farr in the early 1900s. In his

excellent study of Yeats and chanted verse, Schuchard explains how Yeats turned to chanting in an attempt to revive Irish literature. "Seeing himself as the inheritor of the Irish bardic and ballad traditions," Schuchard writes, Yeats "set out to reconcile in his work the ancient Gaelic tradition with the younger Anglo-Irish tradition," a synthesis he achieved in works such as "*Love Song*. From the Gaelic" and the Ballads of "Moll Magee," "Father O'Hart," "Old Foxhunter" and "Father Gilligan." Yeats' turn to the ballad form, according to Schuchard, links him to "the distant bardic order in England through Blake and those Romantic poets who had not relinquished the power of the voice to the printed page," as well as to Gray, Macpherson, Percy, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Tennyson, all of whom idolised the bards (*The Last Minstrels* 5-6). The quest to revive the bardic arts led Yeats to collaborate with Florence Farr, one of the most exciting recital actresses at the time. The pair first met in 1891; impressed with Farr's acting and delivery of verse, Yeats invited Farr to join him in developing together a new art of chanting. When in 1901, on Yeats' encouragement, Arnold Dolmetsch presented Farr with a kind of lyre called a "psaltery," Farr and Yeats finally found the art of chanting or "cantilating" they wanted. As Schuchard explains, "cantilating" soon captured the imaginations of many poets in the early twentieth century, including the members of the "Poet's Club," who invited Farr to perform at the Club's premises on St. James street some point in 1908 (256). An idea of the kind of art Farr and Yeats were promoting can be found in Farr's "The Music of Speech," a self-promotional pamphlet published in 1909, in which Farr argues that poetry must strive to become like music. "It is only by listening very carefully to the little tunes contained in every word," Farr maintains in this pamphlet, "that one comes to divine something of the real meaning of the tradition of magic words" (19). As she goes on to explain, in order for chanted verse to be effective, "The audience should not be hurried and wearied by violent transition, but should absorb each phrase, and feel that each phrase was building up a great cumulative effect" (20). This was an

idea Farr shared with Yeats, who in 1904 described musical rhythm as "the glimmer, the

fragrance, the spirit of all intense literature" and as that which "separates good writing from

bad" and who, like Farr declared that "this new art ... will have to train its hearers"

("Speaking to the Psaltery" 25-26).

It is easy to see why Hulme would have wanted to distinguish his brand of modern poetry

from the chanted poetry of Yeats and Farr. Farr's and Yeats' discussion of recited verse was

certainly not the "plain talk" that Hulme demands in "A Lecture" (cf. 49). Speaking of

chanting as poetry that makes words sound magical, Farr in particular belongs to those critics

derided in the lecture for describing poetry as a "higher kind of reality" (49). Even though

there is no mention of Farr's name in Hulme's writings, Hulme refers to Yeats twice in

"Notes." On the first occasion, he associates Yeats with the "popular idea of poet as in

communion with the infinite," an idea which, as this entry states, can also be found in

Tennyson (cf. 37).[64] In the second instance, Hulme writes that "W. B. Yeats attempts to

ennoble his craft by strenuously believing in supernatural world, race-memory, magic and

saying that symbols can recall these," concluding that "This [is] an attempt to bring in an

infinity again" (43). Given Hulme's opposition in "A Lecture" to critics who "make

mysterious passes and mumble of the infinite and the human heart" (49), he would certainly

have opposed the chanted verse of Yeats' and Farr. More importantly, Farr's slow, rhythmic

"cantilating" is at odds with the modern poetry of Hulme that "depends for its effect not on a

kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of

visual images should exhaust one" (54). In other words, read and chanted verse are based on

two diametrically opposite methods of composition. Whereas the "old" art of chanted verse

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[64] In the fragment in "Notes," Hulme mentions specifically the "account of Yeats walking in the woods" (cf. 37). This seems to be an allusion to Yeats' description in his book *In the Seven Woods*, published in 1903, of his creative process. Yeats writes how "walking about among the Seven Woods," the poems included in the collection "came to [him] in a dream" (qtd. in Jeffares 73).

creates "suggestions of grief or ecstasy [that] are easily and powerfully effective" through the use of rhythm, modern poetry, as Hulme explains in the passage cited above, presents images in juxtaposition, a process that aims to "arrest" the attention of the reader. Moreover, while chanting tries to "influence by the hypnotic effect of rhythm," modern poetry, as Hulme describes it later on in the lecture, "builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader" (56).

The method of presentation of different images in distinct lines that Hulme prescribes for modern poetry can be understood through Bergson's key suggestion in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that many diverse images can lead us "to the precise point where there is certain intuition to be seized" (28). In Chapter 1, I demonstrated how the idea behind this suggestion is that images are better equipped to guide us to duration because, unlike concepts, images are non-rational; as Bergson puts it in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, images "keep us in the concrete" (27). In Chapter 1, I argued that this idea clarifies Hulme's distinction in "Notes" between "prose" and "poetry." Here, it is another aspect of Bergson's suggestion that is the most relevant, namely Bergson's claim that it is only through the *convergence* of distinct images that intuition can be seized. Bergson writes in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*:

> By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is needed to call up, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals. By providing that, in spite of their differences of aspect, they all require from the mind the same degree of attention, and in some sort the same degree of tension, we shall gradually accustom consciousness to a particular and clearly-defined disposition – that precisely which it must adopt in order to appear to itself as it really is, without any veil. (28)

The reason why it is important that images are distinct, Bergson explains, is because different images succeed in triggering our attention towards intuition without directing us to a specific point. An important requirement of intuition for Bergson is that it requires an effort on the part of the individual. He thus goes on to say:

> But, then, consciousness must at least consent to make the effort. For it will have been shown nothing: It will simply have been placed in the attitude it must take up in order to make the desired effort, and so come by itself to intuition.

The idea here is that, precisely because intuition requires effort from our consciousness, it cannot be given to us, but only be suggested to us.

Read through Bergson's idea, the juxtaposition of images in modern poetry that Hulme proposes is designed to facilitate the process of intuition. The modern poet presents a series of brief and distinct images or metaphors designed to lead the reader to an intuitive moment. This logic is enacted in Hulme's poetry, where metaphors are presented successively, without Hulme privileging one image over another and where, as suggested by Hulme in "A Lecture," the reader is encouraged to make out of them as he wants and to unify them into a new image (54). In "Above the Dock," for example, the image of the hanging moon is followed by that of a balloon held by a child; the two images carry equal weight and unify into an image of the moon floating as if a balloon held by the child. Likewise, "A Sunset" begins with the image of the sunset "spréad like a scarlet sore," the poem then moving rapidly through the images of the "hálf a sick sky," a "tráiled red globe," "the city's roofs," and the "hómeward going crows." Finally, in "Autumn" Hulme associates the "ruddy moon" with a "red-faced farmer"

and "wistful stars" with the "white faces" of "town children," the mind of the reader shifting suddenly from one image to the next. In the terminology of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Hulme invites the reader to make the effort required by intuition; he must suspend any "particular and clearly-defined disposition" he may have.

A similar idea is expressed in "Bergson's Theory of Art," where Hulme explains that the poet must always aim to invent original metaphors – "because language will not carry over the exact thing you want to say," he writes, "you are compelled simply in order to be accurate to invent original ways of stating things" (200) – only to then stress that the presentation of metaphors and epithets alone does not suffice. As he argues, what matters most in poetry is

> not the accidental fact that imagery conveys over an actually felt visual sensation, but the actual character of that communication, the fact that it hands you over the sensation as directly as possible, attempts to get it bodily with all the qualities it possessed for you when you experiences it. The feeling conveyed over to one is almost a kind of instinctive feeling. (201)

The "instinctive feeling" that Hulme describes here is intended to prepare us for intuition, ultimately aiming at achieving "actual contact with reality" (203). This point receives more careful examination in the next chapter. Here, it suffices to note how in explaining in "Bergson's Theory of Art" that the presentation of images in poetry is not enough, but that these images must serve to generate communication between the poet and the reader, Hulme acknowledges that rhythm and metre had a role to play in poetry. Making the point that poetry had to consist in "fresh metaphors and epithets," Hulme thus adds:

Among all the varied qualities of good verse, and in the complex kind of motion which

it can produce, there is one quality it must possess, which can be easily separated from

the other qualities and which constitutes this distinctively aesthetic emotion for which

we are searching.

[...]

To get at what it is definitely, I only consider it in as far as it bears on the choice of

epithets and images. The same quality is exhibited in the other parts of verse, in the

rhythm and metre, for example, but it so happens that it is most easily isolated in the

case of epithets. (198)

This is an important qualifier, for it explains why Hulme does not abandon in his own poetry

such conventions as rhythm or rhyme.

Hulme also writes in "A Lecture" that, in contrast to chanted verse, modern poetry

"appeals to the eye rather than to the ear" and that, moreover, "It has to mould images, a kind

of spiritual clay, into definite shapes" (56). The requirement that Hulme postulates here for

modern poetry can be understood through Ribot's theory of imagination in *Essay on the*

Creative Imagination. According to Ribot, there are two main types of reasoning involved in

the processing of "abstract" and "general" ideas: reasoning from particular to particular, and

reasoning by analogy. Both are needed to pass from the known to the unknown; the

difference is that, whereas in the first case the mental progress is of the simplest form, as the

mind simply passes from the immediately given to that suggested by experiential association,

reasoning by analogy is of a far higher order, as it presupposes mental construction. Focusing

on analogical reasoning, Ribot shows that, as a spectrum ranging from valueless likeness to

cognitive resemblance, analogical reasoning leads to different kinds of creative imagination.

In cases in which analogies are valueless, the operation involved is "diffluent imagination." As Ribot explains, this process consists of "vaguely-outlined, indistinct images ... evoked and joined according to the least rigorous modes of association" (195). When analogies approach cognition, however, they give rise to what Ribot terms "plastic imagination." This "plastic imagination," Ribot explains, "has for its special characters clearness and precision of form," adding that its "material [*sic*] are clear images, approaching perception, giving the impression of reality" (184).

In various entries in "Notes," Hulme writes that "poetry" (or direct language) must be made up of "analogies," in a way that invites comparison with Ribot's definition of plastic imagination as the process of "reasoning by analogies." In one fragment in "Notes," for example, Hulme states that "the poet is forced to use new analogies, and especially to construct a plaster model of a thing to express his emotion at the sight of the vision he sees, his wonder and ecstasy" (24; cf. 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, 42). Elsewhere, in a fragment entitled "Example of Plastic Imagination," Hulme asserts:

> The two tarts walking along Piccadilly on tiptoe, going home, with hat on back of head.
> Worry until could find the exact model analogy that will reproduce the extraordinary effect they produce.
> Could be done at once by an artist in a blur. (28)

In Ribot's terms, the logic in both these fragments is that through cognitive analogies, it becomes possible for the poet to present accurately that which he has in his mind – to give an impression of reality. The idea that the success of a poem depends on the ability of the poet to use "exact" analogies features also in "Romanticism and Classicism," where a similar

example to the entry in "Notes" – of someone "walking behind a woman in the street ... the skirt rebounds from her heels" (70-71) – is used to explain the creative process involved in "classic" poetry. To represent the emotion produced by the movement of the woman, Hulme maintains in "Romanticism and Classicism," it is necessary that the poet has in his mind an "actually realised visual object." More importantly, Hulme goes on to argue, the analogy used by the poet must be "every bit necessary for accurate description ... sincere in the accurate sense" (71). The same idea can be found in "A Lecture." For in explaining in "A Lecture" that unlike chanted verse, modern poetry "mould[s] images … into definite shapes" and "builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader" (56), Hulme is essentially stating the case he later makes in "Romanticism and Classicism": that the poet must aim to capture the feeling he wants to express through clear and accurate analogies.

In *Essay on Creative Imagination*, Ribot locates the process of diffluent imagination in the "art of the 'symbolists'," by which Ribot, as he explains, means art that "despises the clear and exact representation of the outer world [and] replaces it by a sort of music that aspires to express the fleeting inwardness of the human soul" (202). In contrast, "plastic imagination," Ribot argues, is involved in those arts which present images in a precise and detailed way, for example the literature of Hugo, in whose works, Ribot asserts, we find "a stream of glittering images" (188). Quoting Mabilleau and Gautier with approval, both of whom write on Hugo, Ribot claims that Hugo "wants to *see the words*"; Because for Hugo "a book is made to be read, not to be spoken aloud," Ribot continues, "Hugo never spoke his verses but wrote them out ... as if he needed to fixate the image ... to find the appropriate word" (189; emphasis in original).[65] As well as explaining Hulme's emphasis on the use of accurate analogies,

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[65] Ribot is here quoting Mabilleau who was, in turn, quoting Gautier. Cf. Mabilleau 122 and Gautier's idea that "Un livre est fait pour être lu, et non parlé à haute voix [a book is to be read, not to be spoken out loudly]" (qtd. in Thibaudet 207). In his study of Hugo, Mabilleau discussed Hugo's poetic experiments in free verse, claiming that Hugo belonged in the tradition of the "'coloriste' ... poètes moderns" (cf. 122).

therefore, Ribot's theory of creative imagination provides a different way of understanding Hulme's distinction between chanted and visual art. For, despite Hulme's dismissal of Hugo as a "Romantic" later on in "Romanticism and Classicism," the modern poet in "A Lecture" resembles Hugo in Ribot's analysis: they both aim at creating visual, not aural, analogies because, as explained above, they hold visual images to be the only means of approaching perception.

In claiming that, unlike chanted verse, modern poetry should present images in juxtaposition and that it should build up a plastic image, Hulme was in many ways returning to the account of language he presented in "Notes." On the one hand, the juxtaposition of distinct images that Hulme prescribes as the method of modern poetry ensures that poetry has a direct effect on the reader. It does this by "arresting the attention" of the reader through a process that leads to intuition. This "directness" is what separates modern poetry from chanted verse and indirect conventional language. On the other hand, the process of finding accurate analogies to represent the feeling or idea that the poet has in his mind, which Hulme postulates in "A Lecture" as an essential quality of modern verse, guarantees that modern poetry has greater contact with reality than chanted verse. Understood through Ribot's theory of creative imagination, analogies used in modern poetry approach perception in a way that the "verbal quibbles" of chanted verse, as Hulme describes the rhythmic language of chanted verse in "A Lecture," cannot (54). Thus understood, the overarching aim of "visual" poetry is to return the reader to the point of originary sensation.

5. Conclusion

Hulme belonged to a generation of poets who were dissatisfied with existing conceptions of poetry. This explains why his first concern in "A Lecture" is to explain how the modern

spirit differs from the spirit of the nineteenth century. The latest developments in philosophy and in painting demonstrated, Hulme argues, that the moderns conceived of the world in a significantly different way than their predecessors. Drawing on Kahn's theory that verse forms are gradually worn out and that they must constantly be renewed, Hulme uses the ideas of Kahn to argue for the benefits of introducing a new verse form. Although as Flint, Storer and Pound, Hulme suggests that regular metre, rhythm and rhyme were no longer adequate for poetry, he was more interested in defining a method of composition for modern poetry. In this process, Hulme recasts the "anti-intellectualist" account of language he put forward in the notebooks into a theory for a "new visual art." That his argument in "A Lecture" can be understood through ideas expressed in "Notes," as well as in "Romanticism and Classicism" and "Bergson's Theory of Art," reveals a greater consistency in his thought than commonly assumed.

Chapter 3

Writings on Bergson: Hulme's Interpretation of Bergson's Metaphysics

1. Introduction

In July 1909, Hulme published in the *New Age* an article entitled "The New Philosophy."

A review of William James' *A Pluralistic Universe*, this short essay is largely devoted to the

philosophy of Bergson. Hulme credits Bergson with offering the most satisfactory

repudiation of the "old intellectualist philosophy"; complaining that Bergson's philosophy

has received little attention in England, he announces that "The twenty years required for an

idea to cross the Channel are fulfilled, and now we shall hear of nothing but Bergson" (85).[66]

In the next two and half years, Hulme wrote extensively on Bergson, discussing Bergson's

philosophy in essays, letters and lectures and also translating Bergson's 1903 essay

Introduction à la métaphysique. According to the common critical interpretation, on

encountering Bergson in 1909 Hulme immediately embraced the theories of the French

metaphysician, finding in Bergson "a philosophical way out of the nightmare of nineteenth-

century materialism and mechanism" (Csengeri, ed. xi). He soon became disenchanted with

Bergson's metaphysics, however, realising that his political views were at odds with the

theories of Bergson.[67] Admittedly, such trajectory of intellectual development is supported by

claims Hulme makes in his writings. He repeatedly praises Bergson, for example, for

enabling him to free himself from mechanism, which he describes, echoing Huxley's mantra,

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[66] James acknowledges Bergson's impact on his work in *A Pluralistic Universe* 208, 214, 225 and 265, where he also discusses Bergson's "anti-intellectualism" to some length. Hulme's claim in "The New Philosophy" that James devotes "one half of the book" to Bergson (85), however, is an exaggeration. In reality, James considers Bergson's theories in two of the eight chapters included in *A Pluralistic Universe*.

[67] See Csengeri, "The Intellectual Development of T. E. Hulme" 7 and "The Chronology of T. E. Hulme's *Speculations*" 109. This view is also held by other critics. See, for example, Roberts, T. E. Hulme 139-40, Levenson 82, Ferrall 17-18, and Matz 117.

as "a nightmare which has long troubled my mind" (127; cf. 146, 151).[68] Hulme also argues that Bergson provided him with a solid account of metaphysics, as well as a satisfactory definition of poetry and of art in general (cf. 86, 101, 111, 191-93). Moreover, in "Balfour, Bergson, and Politics," he recognises the validity of Lasserre's and Maurras' criticism of Bergson's metaphysics on political grounds (cf. 165). Finally, in "A Notebook" in 1915, he makes it clear that Bergson's failure to accept an "absolute chasm" between biology and moral values is "ridiculous"; as he puts it, "Biology is not theology, nor can God be defined in terms of 'life' or 'progress'" (425).

There are, however, two significant flaws with this assessment of Hulme as Bergsonian in 1909 and anti-Bergsonian from 1912 onwards. On the one hand, it fails to discriminate between the moments in his work when Hulme explains, endorses, freely interprets or criticises Bergson's philosophy. While in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifold" he aims to give an overview of Bergson's metaphysics, in other writings he makes it clear that he is giving "simply a personal confession" of how Bergson's philosophy has altered his own views (126; cf. 147).[69] Furthermore, as S. Schwartz and Jesse Matz have separately pointed out, given that Hulme often "misreads" Bergson, we should be careful not to identify him too closely with Bergson.[70] On the other hand, such interpretation does not explain why ideas that can be described as "Bergsonian" feature so prominently in his post-1911 writings, most obviously in "Romanticism and Classicism."[71] While Roberts, Csengeri and Carr understand the presence of "Bergsonian" ideas in Hulme's later work as a case of "natural" overlapping,

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[68] Huxley described physical determinism as a "great truth" that "weighs like a nightmare … upon many of the best minds of these days" (qtd. in Ayres 115-16).

[69] As Ferguson points out, the lecture was "aimed at introducing Bergson to a lay public in clear and simple terms" (96).

[70] S. Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism* 52; Matz 117.

[71] Elements in Bergson's works feature also in Hulme's essays on politics, his art criticism and his war writings. The part played by Bergson in Hulme's politics, art criticism and ethics is discussed in more detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

an alternative explanation is possible.[72] Hulme was critical of some aspects of Bergson's philosophy from early on in his career, valuing Bergson's method of intuition and the empirical nature of his philosophy more than he valued Bergson's conclusions. Such reading of Hulme explains the presence of Bergson in "Romanticism and Classicism" and shows that the way Hulme is using Bergson in this lecture is consistent with his overall interpretation of Bergson' philosophy.

As I already discussed in the previous chapters, certain ideas in Bergson's philosophy provide a useful framework from within which to understand some of Hulme's statements, such as the fragments in "Cinders" and "Notes" that refer to Hulme's views on the nature of reality and of language, and his definition of "modern" poetry as "direct" in "A Lecture" (cf. 54). Here, the aim is to explain in detail how Hulme interpreted Bergson's philosophy. I begin by setting Hulme's discussion of Bergson in the intellectual context of the early twentieth century. The fact that Bergson's philosophy was welcomed as a new and exciting way at looking at the world in the early 1900s offers one possible explanation as to why he appealed to Hulme so much. More specifically, in Bergson Hulme found a positive theory for understanding reality through intuition. He was hesitant, however, about endorsing some of Bergson's conclusions, remaining more enthusiastic about the method of intuition and Bergson's theory of duration than he was about Bergson's discussion of free-will or his philosophy of life. In the final section, I argue that Hulme found in Bergson first and foremost the possibility for a theory of art. Examining Hulme's appropriation of Bergson's philosophy sheds light on the discussion of "classic" poetry in "Romanticism and Classicism."

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[72] Roberts 138; Csengeri, ed. xi; Carr, "T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'" 101.

2. Bergson's crossing of the Channel

In the France of 1907, the year when *Creative Evolution* was published, Bergson was "arguably the most celebrated thinker" (Antliff 3). Part of the reason for his appeal was that Bergson's philosophy conformed to the "spirit" of the time. As Grogin shows, Bergson's rise to fame sprung from the general disillusionment of French intellectuals with what Grogin describes as the "reigning positivist orthodoxy inherited from the Second Empire" (2). In Bergson's philosophy, these intellectuals felt they had the most serious and credible critique of positivism in years. Precisely because the feeling of dissatisfaction with positivism was so undetermined, Bergson appealed to a wide spectrum of people with often little or nothing in common. Thus "Bergsonians" included occultists who did not think that positivism could answer the fundamental questions regarding human nature, moralists who maintained that France was suffering from a "moral void" that scientism was unable to fill, psychologists wanting to address areas of the human psyche that rationalism left unexplained, and religious thinkers who opposed the scientific explanation of religion (Grogin 4-12). Bergson also appealed to what Léon Blum described as the "*prochain generation litteraire*," the young French aesthetes who found that Bergson shared their anxieties; like these artists, Bergson was concerned with "the effort of the individual to free himself from logical constraints and natural necessities" (qtd. in Grogin 37).[73] Finally, Bergson's philosophy was utilised by political intellectuals on both Left and Right. Syndicalists such as Sorel, Lagardelle, Berth, Severac, and Oliver, and Conservatives including Maire, Clouard, Pujo, Massis and de Tarde were all "Bergsonians" (Grogin 118, 190).[74]

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[73] For a useful discussion of Bergson's appeal to French artists, specifically Cubists, Rhythmists and Futurists, see Antliff 30-34, 39-66 and 67-105. On Bergson's influence on French poets, see Guerlac, *Literary Polemics* 159.

[74] On the ways in which Bergson's philosophy lends itself to both the Left and Right, see Grogin 86-90 and Schwartz, "Bergson and the Politics of Vitalism" 278. Antliff goes as far as to suggest that in the inter-war years, the prevalent "romantic fascism" in Germany links Bergson to Nazism (14-15).

The "new philosophy," as Hulme described Bergson's philosophy in his review of James in July 1909, had gradually made its way from across the Channel to England.[75] Between 1909 and 1911 alone, no less than two hundred articles in journals, newspapers and books on or about Bergson appeared.[76] Wildon Carr, A. D. Lindsay, Bernard Bosanquet and A. J. Balfour all began to promulgate Bergson's metaphysics and to lay it out in simple terms; A. N. Whitehead declared himself in agreement with Bergson's premise that the limitations of mechanistic science were burdening the development of philosophical investigation (Grogin 83); and the Cambridge philosopher John Ellis McTaggart embraced Bergson's distinction between time as durational succession and durée in his 1908 article "The Unreality of Time."[77] Bergson's philosophy was also warmly received in the arts and literature. John Middleton Murry reported in 1911 that Bergson's philosophy is "a living artistic force" (9), while as various critics have shown, Flint, Eliot, Pound, Lewis and the artists associated with Vorticism were all inspired, at least at one point in their careers, by Bergson.[78]

Various reasons are given as to why Bergson appealed to Hulme's generation of artists and poets, including that he provided authors and artists with an alternative to the prevalent Naturalistic forms of art, which are usually associated with positivism, and that his theory of duration accommodates modern artists' reinterpretation of the concept of "time" (Grogin 6). What makes artists and poets turn to Bergson above everything else, however, is the way in which Bergson's work is of direct relevance to art. Although he never formulated an aesthetic theory *per se*, Bergson gives art philosophical significance by comparing intuition to the

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[75] As Grogin notes, the term "philosophie nouvelle" was often used by French intellectuals to describe Bergson's philosophy (cf. 90).

[76] The *New Age* alone published sixty three articles and letters on Bergson between the period 1909 and 1914. Bergson's philosophy was debated extensively in journals as diverse as *The English Review*, *The Monist*, *Science*, *The Philosophical Review* and *The Hibbert Journal*. For a useful account of the reception of Bergson's philosophy in Britain, see Gillies 33.

[77] See W. Carr, "Bergson's Theory of Instinct" and *Henri Bergson: The Philosophy of Change*; Lindsay, *The Philosophy of Bergson*; Bosanquet, "Prediction of Human Conduct"; Balfour, "Creative Evolution and Philosophic Doubt." On the impact of Bergson on British philosophy, see Copleston 212-15 and Lowe 267-96.

[78] See, for example, Gillies 46-50, Meyer 15-16, Jain 53, and H. Carr, *Verse Revolutionaries* 193-194, 388, 429.

process of artistic creation, using art as a paradigm for illustrating the concepts of *duration*

and *intuition*, and also by substantiating his arguments using examples from aesthetic

experience.[79] Moreover, Bergson avoids using philosophical jargon, finding that, especially

in his shorter and more accessible essays, literary metaphors are better suited for

accommodating his "intuitive" metaphysic – in fact, Bergson's poetic style won him the 1927

Nobel for literature. While for some his "poetic effort," as Russell referred to Bergson's style

and method, was cause for criticism – the analytic philosopher famously compared Bergson

to Shakespeare and Shelley, ultimately dismissing him as a "cosmic" poet – it is easy to

imagine how the young poets and writers of Hulme's generation, most of whom were

untrained in philosophy, would find Bergson's "poetic effort" refreshing and relevant.[80]

Hulme certainly did. In his article on Gaultier, he describes Bergson as a philosopher who

treats philosophy "not as science but as an art" (99), presumably a reference to the way

Bergson invokes the model of artistic perception to describe how metaphysics should

combine analysis with intuition (e.g. *Laughter* 150). Rather than "humbly groping after the

truth," philosophy in Bergson's view, Hulme writes, is the "means of expressing certain

attitudes to the cosmos ... simply an elaborate means for the expression of quite personal and

human emotions" (100-01). Bergson's anti-intellectualism, he goes on, has restored "bold

speculation," "light-heartedness" and "idiosyncrasy" in philosophy (100). Hulme also praises

Bergson's writing style. In "The New Philosophy," he thus singles out as one of Bergson's

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[79] See, for example, *Time and Free Will* 7-8, 14, 134; *Creative Evolution* 45, 176; "Life and Consciousness" 12-13; *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 32-24; and "The Life and Work of Ravaisson" 231. The closest Bergson comes to working out a theory of art is in *Laughter*, where he briefly discusses the object and aim of art, maintaining that the purpose of art is to "come into direct contact with sense and consciousness" and to thus "enter into immediate communion with things and with ourselves" (150). For discussions of Bergson's use of art in his work, see Lacey 188-96, Pilkington 14, and Lorand 400.

[80] See Russell, "Philosophy of Bergson" 33 and *History of Western Philosophy* 722. Perhaps Russell's rejection of Bergson's "poetic" style is ironic, given that Russell also won a Nobel for literature. Both Le Roy and James praise Bergson's writing style. Le Roy finds his writing as "truly ... magic" (56), while James admits to being fascinated with Bergson's "*art de bien dire*" (*A Pluralistic Universe* 227). According to Gunter, Bergson's theories were being received at the time as "naïve, if fascinating poetry" (15). In "The New Philosophy," Hulme agrees with James that Bergson is not one of those "dusty-minded philosophers" (85). In this sense it is significant that, as Ferguson suggests, Hulme was conscious of the fact that he was not formally trained in philosophy (103).

greatest contributions to modern philosophy the "extraordinary clearness" in which Bergson

attacks "intellectualism" (86), a claim he repeats elsewhere in his writings (cf. 89, 99, 126,

148). What "struck" him the most in Bergson, he argues in "A Personal Impression of

Bergson" from November 1911, was Bergson's "visual" style. He describes Bergson

lecturing in the following way:

> I was struck ... by the extraordinary difference between the manner of his delivery and
>
> that of the Germans. I could describe it best by saying it was emphatically not fluent. It
>
> was not 'determined'. His eyes seemed always to be half-closed, and he gave you all
>
> the time the impression of a man describing with great difficulty the shape of
>
> something which he just saw. (167)

Exactly like the "modern" poet in "A Lecture" whose job is "to mould images ... into definite

shapes" (56), Hulme presents Bergson in "A Personal Impression of Bergson" as someone

who avoids using "ready-made phrases," focusing instead on "vision" (167). Moreover,

Hulme's description of Bergson in the passage above recalls the poet and artist in

"Romanticism and Classicism" who tries "to get the exact curve of ... an object or an idea in

the mind" (69; cf. 199). Such analogy between philosopher and poet is in fact explicitly

suggested by Hulme in the article on Haldane from August 1911, where he likens the "visual"

philosopher to "a poet delighted with the physical metaphors before him that press directly

and actually to be employed as symbols of thought" (96).

Bergson's popularity in Britain reached its apex in the spring and autumn of 1911, when

the French philosopher toured the country giving lectures, attracting not only the

intelligentsia but also many "Five o'clock Bergsonians," as Péguy had described the French

members of the "high society" who attended Bergson's Paris lectures (qtd. in Grogin 123).

As in France, the lecture halls in Oxford, Birmingham and London surpassed capacity levels,

and the lectures were regarded as both intellectual exchanges and cosmic events. Given that

Bergson's London lectures were advertised in all the major newspapers and received

extensively coverage in the *Times*, Isaiah Berlin's impression at the time that "there has been

nothing like this in England since the lectures of Thomas Carlyle" was both perceptive and

accurate (qtd. in Gunter, "Bergson" 179).[81] As we will see further below, Hulme received

Bergson's sudden popularity and his appeal to the *haute bourgeoisie* with extreme unease, the

audience at the University College of London lectures causing him "a most profound fit of

depression" (154). For now, however, we need only note that despite being among the

earliest advocates of Bergson's philosophy in Britain, in 1909 Hulme was not alone in seeing

in Bergson's philosophy a new and exciting way of understanding the world and art.[82]

3. A philosophy against "artificial gymnastics"

The introspective method and the "poetic effort" of Bergson's writings described above

should be understood as part of the French philosopher's conscious attack on a long history

of what Bergson describes in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* as "metaphysical dogmatism,"

meaning the view of philosophy which privileges reason at the expense of "intuition" (cf. 24,

42). Hulme criticised philosophies that imposed "unity" and "truth" on experiential "flux"

through a process of "artificial gymnastics" in "Cinders" (13; cf. 9-12, 17, 22). Facets of this

idea, as I suggested in chapter 2, can be seen to feature in both "A Lecture" and in

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[81] See the *Times* 18 May 1911 4a; 4 Oct. 1911 3d; 21 Oct. 1911 4d; 23 Oct. 19114d; 28 Oct. 1911 11c; and 30 Oct. 1911 10b. For detailed accounts of the lectures' popularity and Bergson's reception in London more generally, see Antliff 4 and Gillies 29-30. Russell echoes Berlin's sentiments when he complains in October 1911 that Bergson's lectures "are reported in the daily newspapers – all England has gone mad about him for some reason" (qtd. in Monk 238).

[82] As demonstrated in Gunter's *Bibliography* of writings on Bergson, Hulme was one of the first, if not the first, critic in England to have discussed Bergson publicly, his articles predating the works of W. Carr, Lindsay and Bosanquet on Bergson. See Gunter, *Henri Bergson: A Bibliography* 120, 136-37, 230-31, 275.

"Romanticism and Classicism." In the former, Hulme draws a distinction between "ancient" philosophers such as Plato who despite acknowledging the "fluidity of the world" try to order this "flux" by creating "a static fixity," and the moderns who "no longer believe in absolute truth [and] frankly acknowledge the relative" (52-53). A similar philosophical view comes under attack in "Romanticism and Classicism," but is now part of a politically-charged argument against romanticism, which Hulme associates with the belief in human perfection (62, 66). In the *New Age* articles, Hulme renews his attack on "artificial" systems on reality and advances a view of reality as experiential "flux" similar to the one suggested in "Cinders" and the lectures on poetry. As in "Cinders," he berates the emphasis placed by "science," "rationalism" and "idealism" on logic and geometry, arguing for an alternative approach to philosophical problems (cf. 87, 90-91, 94-95, 106, 110-13). The difference is that, unlike in "Cinders" where Hulme remains enigmatic as to which philosophies exactly he thinks of as "artificial," in his *New Age* articles on Bergson he is explicit about the philosophies he criticises and the reasons why he thinks of these philosophies as unsatisfactory. In doing so, Hulme interprets Bergson's attack on "intellectualism" as the philosopher's greatest contribution to modern thought; and, despite recognising that Bergson was only one among many thinkers who reacted against the use of science and mathematics as bases for philosophical investigation – Burke, Coleridge, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and James, he concedes, had all been crusading against positivism broadly understood long before Bergson – he insists that only Bergson had rejected "intellectualism" in a "clear" and "precise" manner (91; cf. 71-72, 86, 151, 171, 194).[83]

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[83] For a useful discussion of the movement against "militant scientism" in the nineteenth century, see Schwartz, *Matrix of Modernism* 24-27.

Beginning with his review of Gaultier, Hulme criticises the view of philosophy as science, lamenting the fact that philosophy adopted the method used by science and thus losing its independence. As he explains:

> [Philosophy] began to regard itself as science, to consider itself a systematic structure, solidly built up, which should give us certain unquestionable results ... Philosophy, tempted by science, fell and became respectable. It sold its freedom for a quite imaginary power of giving sure results. It was a solemn structure, in face of which light-heartedness was out of place ... One felt uncomfortable in it. Nothing could be done by sudden insight and images ... Here was no place for the artist to impertinently express an attitude before the cosmos, but rather for the humble professor to work honestly in a corner.
>
> To a certain extent this movement was correct. Logic, psychology, etc., look like, and as a matter of fact are sciences ... But the danger was when they began to absorb philosophy itself, when it began to consider itself as merely a scientia scientium. (100)

As he goes on to say in the article on Gaultier, this old conception of philosophy "prisoned [*sic*] us, restrained our vagaries" (101). He returns to this idea in the report of the April 1911 International Congress of Philosophy in Bologna, now rejecting "scientism," meaning the view that, as he explains, "Somewhere at a great distance, Truth is hidden ... always waiting to be discovered" (105). In a second report he wrote of the Bologna Congress, Hulme dates the view that philosophy should be "pursuing the same method as that of science, that of intellectual analysis, and having the same ideal, that of a complete science of existence," back to the "Greeks," gladly reporting that, as testified by Bergson's address to the conference, modern philosophy was "beginning to form a more fluent and a less rigid and systematic

conception of truth" (110).[84] Philosophy after Bergson, Hulme thus announces in this second report, will see it as its aim as that of investigating "the field of the unknown"; as he puts it otherwise, its "future lies in a recognition of the fact that it must pursue a different method entirely to that of science. It must give up the attempt to give a complete intellectual representation of the cosmos" (111).

In the *New Age* articles Hulme also attacks "rationalism," which he defines in the review on Gaultier as "the abuse of the power of translating the flux of immediate experience into a conceptual order" (86), as well as "intellectualism," defined in his review of Bax as the attempt to "resolve" reality into "logical concepts" (90). The conceptualisation of reality in an ordered system is likened in this article on Gaultier to a "geometrical diagram" or "a chess-board" in which the "movement is from one square to another"; returning to the central metaphor of the notebooks, Hulme describes the flux of immediate reality as "a kind of chaotic cinder heap," in where the movement is always "indefinite," and therefore freer than in the "chess-board" of rationalism (86). In his review of Bax, Hulme argues that intellectualism "takes a bad analogy, logic and the geometric sciences, which are in essence identical, and asserts that the flux of phenomena which apparently contradicts this is not real, and can really be resolved into logical concepts" (90). Like with rationalism, the problem with intellectualism in Hulme's view is that it interprets reality without actually taking into account the experiential "flux" that is the real essence of reality.

Another philosophical view that comes under attack in the *New Age* articles is Haldane's neo-Hegelian "idealism," a view I briefly discussed in Chapter 1. For the purposes of this

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[84] The paper Bergson delivered at the Bologna Congress is entitled "Philosophical Intuition." In it, Bergson announces that "metaphysics at present is tending to become more simplified, to draw closer to life," with Bergson arguing that it is wrong to associate philosophy with science, as "Such a conception ... would be unfair to science. But ... much more unfair to philosophy" (107, 123).

chapter, it is crucial to briefly examine Haldane's *Pathway to Reality* in more detail. Haldane argues in *Pathway to Reality* that "Experience [is] an indefinite manifold made definite only in so far as it is arranged by reflection under general conceptions" (190). Haldane's idea is that, although experience is a totality, it is "not a thing to be laid on the dissecting table and taken to pieces." Rather, for Haldane experience "is the ultimate reality behind which you cannot get" (88). To differentiate between "knower" and "object known," Haldane maintains that philosophers must begin from the unified whole of experience. This is what he means when he writes in his Preface to Hegel's *Science of Logic* that "Behind knowledge we cannot go. There is no standard of truth save in its own process" (14). Haldane's brand of Idealism, as Vincent demonstrates, draws on a specific reading of Hegel's logical doctrines. Like Bosanquet and other neo-Hegelian Idealists, Haldane believes that when we speak about conscious experience, we speak essentially about judgment.[85] Judgment, in other words, is our consciousness, and because all experience is "qualified" by judgment, our entire world becomes a series of interconnected judgments. As Vincent explains, for Hegel logic plays a central part in this process as it deals with our consciousness through judgments, leading us ultimately to an understanding of human experience. Haldane interprets Hegel's logical doctrines differently, arguing in *Pathway to Reality* that Hegel understands "human experience as the source of his quest after what is ultimately real" (284). Thus, according to Haldane, there can be no leap from judgment to reality; because reality is only the epiphany of consciousnesses, philosophy becomes the "self-comprehension of mind" (148).

In his review of *Pathway to Reality*, Hulme argues that for Haldane "Reality is an intellectual system, and the flux only has reality in so far as it fits into this system" (93). He explains:

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[85] See *Pathway to Reality*, where Haldane defines reality as "the logical system of my judgment" 295-96. A similar argument is made by Bosanquet in *Essentials of Logic* 32.

Like all idealists since Berkeley, he uses the formula 'esse is percipi' [to be is to perceive], as an acid wherewith to break up the apparent solidity of the objective world to a fluid form more suitable for digestion in a spiritual system. Once having reduced it to a flabby condition of this kind, he is in a better position to prove his second step, that it is moulded entirely by the laws of the intellect ... Reality must consist in the common system, the objective world ... The next step consists in proving that this common system, this objective world, is entirely a construction of the intellect ... Reality consists in an objective system ... The nature of the world is thus rational, 'Esse is intelligi [to be is to be understood].' (94)

Haldane, Hulme contends here, invokes an external logic – "the laws of the intellect" – in order to explain reality. In other words, Haldane gives too much authority to the intellect, thus ignoring reality as reality is experienced. Although recognising like Haldane that "the flux is reduced to a practical order for personal life by the intellect, and made habitable," Hulme cannot accept that the "intellect" is "the only reality." To illustrate what he means, he gives this example:

When unhappy proximity forces me to survey Edwardian architecture I am quite aware that what gives fixity to the extraordinary chaos of varied marble is the hidden steel girder, but I cannot console myself, as Mr. Haldane does, by saying that the steel alone is real and that the marble is a passing dream. (94-95)

Likewise, while Hulme is prepared to accept that the human mind "is compelled to 'think' the world according to a system of concepts," he does not agree with "Mr. Haldane and the

Hegelians [who] attribute some transcendental value to the word 'think'"; on the contrary, Hulme maintains that "Thinking might be, and probably is a method of distorting Reality" (95).

As it turns out, Hulme's fundamental objection to Haldane is that Haldane is what he describes as a "counter" or "derivative" philosopher: he "can manipulate the counters, without ever having been in actual contact with the reality of which he speaks" (95). Haldane uses abstractions to explain the physical things which cannot be experienced by the intellect. In doing so, Hulme restates Bergson's suggestion in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that metaphysics must consist in "a passage from reality to concepts and no longer from concepts to reality" (45). Because Haldane assumes that "Thought creates things rather than things thought" (94), for Hulme he is a philosopher who lacks "original 'visual' act" (97). What he means by this is that Haldane lacks the ability for intuition, which is what, according to Hulme and Bergson, gives impetus to all philosophical ideas. As he explains:

> Once having received the impulse from the act of intuition, the philosopher has to continue in the other plane of abstraction. But he must not go too far in this medium or he loses foot and must return to the primary act of intuition. Like Antaeus, he must touch the earth for renewed strength...
> The legitimate function of logic only comes in the elaboration of the original 'visual' act ... Never moving on the physical plane where philosophy arises, but always in the abstract plane where it is finished and polished, Mr. Haldane has his reward in a perfectly extraordinary facility in moving his counter words. (97)

Haldane's Idealism, therefore, just like "science," "rationalism" and "intellectualism," is deemed by Hulme as unable to explain reality: all these systems disregard the experiential "flux." At the same time, by invoking external systems – science, mathematics or logic – all these philosophical views explain reality by alluding to abstract ideas that are not part of the experiential world.

For Hulme, the only satisfactory alternative is Bergson's philosophy. Bergson does not impose a "conceptual order" on reality through "intellectual analysis," nor does he approach philosophical questions relating to the nature of reality from an a priori "plane of abstraction." On the contrary, Bergson approaches reality through the "visual" act of intuition (97). In doing so, Bergson restores what is for Hulme the only philosophical method that can shed light into the workings of reality. In a letter he sent to the *New Age* in June 1911, Hulme thus describes intuition as an "element which exists in nature, but which was banished in the eighteenth century because men were determined on being clear at any cost" ("Bergsonism in Paris" 190); in the article on Bax, Hulme claims that only intuition allows us to "grasp the nature of reality" (91; cf. 85). The choice for Hulme is therefore simple: as he puts it in the review of Bax, we could either "resign ourselves to the nature of the cosmos," or follow Bergson into the "turbulent river of reality" (91). Furthermore, unlike philosophies that exercise "artificial gymnastics," Bergson presents a precise and empirically verifiable analysis of reality (91).[86] "There is nothing infinite or ineffable" about Bergson's conception of the "fundamental self," Hulme writes in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds"; rather, Bergson's free creating durational subject must be understood as "a perfectly finite thing," adding that "What Bergson means by an intuition is a perfectly normal and frequent phenomenon" (178). Like the "classic" poet in "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme

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[86] Both Rae and Ansell Pearson have pointed out at the way Bergson's metaphysics puts a great emphasis on empirical facts. See Rae, *Practical Muse* 56 and Ansell Pearson ix.

presents Bergson in the article on Haldane as someone who remains grounded in reality. Bergson does not speculate from a "plane of abstraction," but constructs his philosophy in an "act of intuition ... a perception of a physical analogy." Unlike Haldane, Bergson does not go "too far" in the medium of abstraction; it is in this sense that Bergson resembles the "classic" poet in "Romanticism and Classicism": "He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circumambient gas" (62). As we will see further on in this chapter, Hulme's interpretation of Bergson as a philosopher who provides a way of understanding the experiential "flux" in an intuitive but also empirical manner explains why Bergson features so prominently in "Romanticism and Classicism"; it also explains why Hulme can associate Bergson with the "classicist" view which is "perfectly human and never exaggerated" (66). I return to this idea later on in this chapter. Before we consider Hulme's appropriation of Bergson in "Romanticism and Classicism," however, it is necessary to first understand how exactly Hulme thinks that Bergson's philosophy can lead into the "turbulent river of reality" (91).

4. The "real importance" of Bergson

In "The New Philosophy," Hulme distinguishes between Bergson's "destructive criticism of intellectualism" and the "positive constructive part" of Bergson's philosophy, by which he means the French philosopher's method of intuition. According to Hulme, what makes intuition "positive" is that it represents the "fullness of content that no conceptual description can equal" (87). Hulme kept returning in his writings throughout the next two and a half years to this idea, stating repeatedly that "intuition" enables understanding of reality (cf. 91, 96, 111, 171-72, 179). In Hulme's view, intuition provides access to the deeper structures of reality, where, as he writes in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," there is a "complex thing" that is "absolutely unseizable [*sic*] by the intellect" and which can be called "for the

sake of convenience ... an intensive manifold" (173-74; cf. 120, 72). In Bergson's "method" and in the "category he works with, that of intensive manifolds," Hulme argues in "Bax on Bergson," lies the "the real importance of Bergson" (119).[87] In order to understand what Hulme has in mind when he praises Bergson's "method" and "category," and to investigate his claim that Bergson provides an accurate picture of reality, it is necessary to turn briefly to Bergson's own project. A basic knowledge of Bergson's project ultimately helps assess Hulme's interpretation of Bergson, allowing us also to see which aspects of Bergson's thought appealed to him the most, and which he was less enthusiastic about.

The foundational premise of Bergson's philosophy is the idea that all philosophical investigation based on rational analysis is misleading and therefore inadequate. This supposition leads Bergson, in a move that defines his entire metaphysic, to distinguish between "intellect" and "intuition." Put simply, for Bergson there are two forms of knowledge: one reached at by analysis or through the "intellect" and another which is the result of "intuition," achieved when we "carefully look into ourselves" (*Time and Free Will* 130; cf. *Introduction* 47). The intellect is a well-tuned instrumental mechanism, working in order to organise reality in a practical, convenient and efficient manner. The problem is that in doing so, the intellect suppresses "our inner and individual existence" (*Time and Free Will* 129-30). According to this logic, our mental, social and linguistic mechanisms are all geared towards practical considerations, thus preventing us from experiencing reality as it truly is: in its rawest state. As Bergson explains in his essay "The Soul and the Body," our brains process only those experiences that are relevant to our daily lives, censoring all but the "practically useful," with language arranging rather than expressing our thoughts and with

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[87] Hulme is not consistent in his distinction between intuition as method and "intensive manifolds" as category. In "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics," for example, he refers the "theory of intensive manifolds" as Bergson's "method" (160). In the prospectus for his lectures on Bergson in 1911, he similarly refers to the "conception of an intensive manifold" as Bergson's "new method" (qtd. in Ferguson 96).

our "outer … social life" as a result dictating our feelings, thought and actions (qtd. in Schwartz, *Matrix of Modernism* 28). He makes a similar point in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, now arguing that the "intellect" is not interested in finding a pre-existing reality, but only "to draw profit – in short, to satisfy an interest" (38-39). Despite stressing that all of our activities are determined by the "intellect," Bergson holds that it is still possible to recover true reality or "immediate experience," by practising "intuition." Everyone has moments in their lives, he suggests, where our practical orientation is suspended. In these moments, we become aware of deeper psychic states, as occurs, for example, in dreaming. Because it is especially difficult to attain these moments in real life, Bergson reasons that we must depend upon the artist or the philosopher to guide us there, the artist and the philosopher being more accustomed to intuition than the rest of us. Thus the "bold novelist" in *Time and Free Will* is "tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego," and by revealing to us the "fundamental absurdity" of logic, he brings us back "into our own presence" (134). In a similar way, the philosopher, as explained in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, moves us from conceptual abstractions back to immediate experience, his job being "to promote a certain effort, which in most men is usually fettered by habits of mind more useful to life" (27).

Through "intuition," Bergson hopes that we can access "duration" or "real time," as opposed to time generally conceived as a set of discrete moments. Because Bergson's philosophy, as it has been pointed out, is predominantly a "philosophy of time" (Lacey 26; Mullarkey 5), to appreciate his argument it is necessary to understand the distinction he draws between the inner experience of *durée* and the space outside that surrounds us. As Bergson argues in his first book, *Time and Free Will*, as inherited from Kant, the prevalent conception of time in the late nineteenth century wrongly conceives of time in terms of space.

Kantian time is thus described by Bergson as a "homogeneous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity" (90). This "spurious concept" of time that regards "time as an unbounded medium, different from space but homogeneous like the latter," Bergson asserts, is "nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness" (98-99). What concerns Bergson the most in *Time and Free Will* is that this "Kantian" conception of time eliminates the possibility of "real change." For, by understanding time as quantitative, homogeneous and static like space, Kant, in Bergson's view, removes the potential for creation, thus leading us to determinism. In repudiating the "spatialisation" of time, Bergson hopes to show that we are free creating individuals – it is in this sense that the question of free will is linked to the question of time. Intuition in *Time and Free Will* intends to enable us to access "real duration" and thus rediscover our ability for creation. By what Bergson refers to as "a vigorous effort of analysis" (129) that involves paying close attention to our experience, it becomes obvious that our psychic states are continuously changing, that an object already perceived will appear different the second time it is seen, and that objects are constantly altering in our consciousness (129-30, 199-200).

It is obvious from his writings that Hulme endorses Bergson's method of intuition, repeating after Bergson that the "method" of pure philosophy should be a process whereby "Our intelligence ... can install itself in the flux of reality by means of that intellectual sympathy that one calls intuition" (87; cf. Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 6). As Hulme argues in the article on Bax, because the "intellect" cannot represent the "flux" of reality – for "the logical is like a serpent engaged in continually swallowing the endless meal of the flux, a task in which it can never succeed" – the nature of reality is only accessible through intuition; as he states, "by intuition one can identify oneself with the flux" (91).

Similarly, in his report of the Congress in Bologna for *Nature*, he praises Bergson for demonstrating that there are "two different, and indeed inverse, ways of acquiring a knowledge of reality," making it clear that "intuition," not the "intellect," is the method best suited for modern philosophy (111-12).

Hulme also recognises that Bergson's notion of intuition is significant insofar as it allows access to the immediate reality of duration, or what Hulme refers to as the "intensive manifold." As far as I can tell, the phrase "intensive manifold" does not appear anywhere in Bergson's work, in the original texts or in translations of his work. The rationale behind Hulme's choice of term seems to come from Bergson's discussion early in *Time and Free Will* of different kinds of "magnitudes" or "intensities," one which is described by Bergson as "intensive" and the other as "extensive" (3). As Bergson argues in the opening pages of *Time and Free Will*, the human mind normally defines the "intensity of a sensation" either "by the number and magnitude of the objective, and therefore measurable, causes which have given rise to it," or by reducing sensations "to extensive differences between the changes taking place between them" (4, 6). For Bergson, both are wrong: sensations cannot be ordered or counted and to treat them like they can be is to treat them quantitatively and not qualitatively. As he sums it up towards the end of the book, "the intensity of a simple state ... is not quantity but is a qualitative sign" (224). Bergson elaborates on this idea throughout *Time and Free Will*, ultimately being led to the conclusion that there are "two very different kinds [of] multiplicity" (85; cf. 85-87, 121, 128-29). On the one hand, there is a multiplicity of material objects "to which the conception of number is immediately applicable"; on the other, psychic states constitute a complex and indissoluble whole and, therefore, "the multiplicity of states of consciousness ... cannot be regarded as numerical" (87). Understanding psychic states quantitatively, Bergson asserts, requires "the help of some symbolical representation, in

which a necessary element is *space*" (87; emphasis in original). Bergson thus defines "pure duration" as an "intensive magnitude" in the sense that, like sensations, pure duration cannot be counted or ordered: for it is an "interpenetration of conscious states" (108).

In "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," Hulme explains that by "intensive manifold" he means "an absolute interpenetration ... which ... cannot be said to have parts because the parts run into each other, forming a continuous whole, and whose parts cannot even be conceived as existing separately."[88] This "thing," he continues, "could not … be called a quantitative multiplicity, but a qualitative one" (174). To explain what he means, he uses the following example:

> If you melt salt in water, after a time salt would be found in every particle of the water, and you might think then that here you had interpenetration. But no: your mind cannot support an idea of that kind. It sets to work and imagines that the molecules of salt fit in between the molecules of water. It so gets rid of the idea interpenetration and reduces everything to an extensive manifold ... But if you suppose that there do exist in the world some instances of real interpenetration, then the intellect, working by analysis, would be incapable of understanding them. (174)[89]

In other words, it is difficult, Hulme claims, to see the "intensive manifold," because our intellect is programmed to reduce everything to a quantitative multiplicity – to what he calls an "extensive manifold," meaning that "which can be resolved into separate elements or

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[88] Cf. Bergson's description of "pure duration as the "interconnexion and organisation of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought" in *Time and Free Will* 101.

[89] Bergson uses a similar example – of sugar melting in water – in *Creative Evolution* to make a slightly different point: that when we take the non-living in the context of the world as a whole, containing life, interacting with consciousness, and enduring, the non-living can be seen to also endure (9, 339).

atoms" (172). The only way to grasp the "intensive manifolds" is therefore through intuition, precisely because intuition focuses not on extensity, but on intensity (173-74). This is what Hulme means when he states in "Romanticism and Classicism," returning to the subject of intuition, that "To deal with the intensive you must use intuition" (72).

In claiming that the "real importance" of Bergson is intuition and his theory of "intensive manifolds," Hulme makes explicit the features of Bergson's philosophy which he finds most appealing. For Hulme, the lesson from Bergson is that it is possible through intuition to get to where philosophies of "artificial gymnastics" cannot. As discussed in chapter 1, this concern – of how to understand or interpret the "cinders" of reality – runs throughout the notebooks. A similar theme features also in "A Lecture," where Hulme inaugurates direct communication with reality as the primary aim of modern poetry (53-54). Indeed, as will become obvious by the end of my thesis, the idea that there is a deeper structure of reality that cannot be accessed through rational means but only through intuition, underwrites the entire of Hulme's work. For all his approval of Bergson's intuition and the "theory of intensive manifolds," however, Hulme, as I will now show, was not so enthusiastic about many other aspects of Bergson's metaphysic.

5. Bergson's "conclusions" and the rising popularity of Bergson

In a revealing passage in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics" from November 1911, Hulme explains that Bergson's philosophy is best divided into "three perfectly distinct parts":

> There is first the new 'method', the theory of intensive manifolds; there is secondly the result of the application of this method to the nightmare of universal mechanism, which constitutes the theory of duration; and finally there is what I might call his

'conclusions', his cosmology, his views on the soul, and the rest of it. Now in my

opinion the first of these is by far the most important, and it is in these that his

originality lie. But the conclusions are the part of Bergson which, while they are the

easiest to explain and criticise, are also the most attractive to the ordinary man. (160)

Hulme makes a similar claim in "Bax on Bergson," an earlier article from August 1911,

distinguishing in this essay between the "real importance" of Bergson and "the conclusion to

which the application of his method leads him, that of the dualism of soul and body," a

conclusion which, Hulme adds, "is precisely the conclusion which most people seek" (119-

20). Both in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics" and in "Bax on Bergson," Hulme argues

that Bergson's theory of "intensive manifolds" can be understood separately from Bergson's

"theory of duration." Thus, even though, as I have explained above, what Hulme refers to as

Bergson's theory of "intensive manifolds" is, in essence, identical to Bergson's theory of

duration, he treats them as quite distinct. In doing so, Hulme is not contradicting himself;

rather, he expresses his disagreement with how Bergson *applies* his theory of "intensive

manifolds" in his work, reaching several different conclusions. Moreover, in both articles

Hulme dismisses popular interpretations of Bergson. The two points to note here are that in

criticising the parts of Bergson that are attractive to the "ordinary man," Hulme discredits

Bergson's "conclusions" – what he describes in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson, and Politics" as "his

cosmology, his views on the soul, and the rest of it"; at the same time, he registers his

dissatisfaction with the rising popularity of Bergson in the London of 1911.

Hulme is right in stating that Bergson "applies" duration in different ways and to different

ends. A brief overview of Bergson's books will confirm this view. As I mentioned earlier in

this chapter, in *Time and Free Will* Bergson's emphasis is on asserting individual freedom.

Our real experience of the world, not the one that we have been programmed to think of, Bergson argues, transcends the material world and is, therefore, free to develop over time. Bergson's argument is primarily directed against associationism, a philosophical doctrine with a long and complex history, but which Bergson understands in its broadest definition, meaning the view that regards an idea or a state of mind as disappearing after it has been replaced by another idea or state of mind. To illustrate his argument, Bergson gives the example of someone standing up to open a window but for some reason forgetting why he stood up before he actually opens it. For the associationist, Bergson maintains, the person standing up had two ideas – that of standing up and that of opening the window – and that one disappeared, leaving him only with the idea of standing up (160). Specifically, Bergson objects to associationism's "mechanical" interpretation of complex ideas, according to which the mind registers external things, and to what this view implies: "scientific determinism" or the view that humans do not have free will. Dismissing associationism as a description of only our superficial consciousness – in our practical lives, Bergson writes, "we 'are acted' rather than act ourselves" (231) – he is keen to show that in our deeper consciousness – in "real duration" – we can restore our freedom and "recover possession of oneself" (232). At the same time, as Schwartz has pointed out, Bergson's argument in *Time and Free Will* is also an attempt to overcome the idea that human action is determined by natural causality. Bergson does this, Schwartz explains, by showing that, because in "real duration" there is no mechanistic causality, there is freedom (*The Matrix of Modernism* 14).

Seven years later, in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson deployed the theory of duration he had formulated in *Time and Free Will* in order to prove, as he puts it in the Introduction, "the reality of matter and the reality of spirit, and ... to lessen greatly, if not to overcome the theoretical difficulties which have always beset [this] dualism" (vii). In *Matter and Memory*

Bergson thus challenges the traditional philosophical formulation of the mind/body dualism, rejecting both Idealist and Realist accounts of it. The Idealist view, he argues, postulates that the world is in our heads or exists as a representation of ideas we have in our heads – this is what Kant, in Bergson's view, means when he writes that the world is a phenomenon and that all we can know of the external world is an image we give to it that is determined by the structure of our minds. Realists, by contrast, understand perception as a function of our brains; perception for Realists responds to the external world and thus representations in our mind can be explained by physical causes. For Bergson, both idealism and realism are wrong; they are based on "external perception," which, he explains, always results in the binary opposition of representation and matter (17). In an attempt to offer a different account of the mind/body dualism, Bergson proposes an elaborate theory of "pure perception," where "subject and object coincide" (195), and moves on to restate the problem of perception in terms of images rather than representations. He is thus able to show that the supposed "dualism" between consciousness and matter, or body and soul, is in fact a monism; in *Matter and Memory* matter and spirit co-exist through memory in the heterogeneity of duration (292). It is in this sense that Bergson states that memory is "the point of contact between consciousness and matter" and that, moreover, "in phenomena of memory ... we believe that we can grasp spirit in its most tangible form" (81).

Finally, in *Creative Evolution* in 1907, Bergson applied his theory of duration to the field of evolutionary theory. The problem with understanding evolution through scientific investigation, Bergson maintains in *Creative Evolution*, is that it completely disregards change. As Bergson understands it, the scientific account of evolution leads to mechanism and finalism, two doctrines which he had been keen on refuting since *Time and Free Will*; more importantly, the scientific account of evolution implies denial of duration (9, 19-20). In

mechanism, the parts are pre-given and re-arranged by external "laws" as, for example, in Laplace; in finalism, it is the goals that are pre-given and determined, therefore denying the unpredictability of duration. Ultimately, both mechanism and finalism are for Bergson restricted by the "intellect": they are regulated by "mathematical laws," with one interested only in efficient causality and the other in the "realization of a plan" (45). If we avoid the "mechanistic instinct of mind" (17), Bergson argues, then we can come to see that living beings, like the universe as a whole, are *durational*; thus for Bergson "The living organism is a thing that *endures*" (15). Moreover, we can come to see organic evolution as resembling the evolution of consciousness: "the past presses against the present and causes the upspringing [*sic*] of a new form of consciousness, incommensurable with its antecedents" (27). Biological evolution, therefore, becomes in Bergson's book a form of *creation* – duration, as he explains, "means invention, creation of forms, continual elaboration of the absolutely new" (11). At the same time, intuition is elevated to "mind itself," "life itself," and the "unity of the spiritual life" (268). The object of intuition becomes life as a whole; "the whole of humanity, in space and in time" becomes "one galloping beside and before and behind each of us ... able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death" (271).

Hulme discusses Bergson's treatment of the question of free will, Bergson's views on the relation between soul and the body, and Bergson's theory of evolution in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds." He begins by reconstructing Bergson's argument concerning free will, following closely Bergson's argument in *Time and Free Will*. Hulme explains how Bergson allows for freedom by distinguishing between the "superficial" and the "fundamental" or "deeper" self, moving on to show how Bergson refutes determinism through a specific conception of *change* and *time* parallel to his distinction between two kinds of selves. The

intellect, he explains, deals with change by asserting that "all bodies can be analysed out into separable elements"; consequently, it reduces change "to a mere change in position of the particles" and, thus, "explains change by denying its existence" (178-79). He ends his discussion by stating that it is important to understand Bergson's account of the mind as a "free creative activity" because it is the "first application" of Bergson's "method" (182), adding that Bergson leaves many questions unanswered in *Time and Free Will*; for even though in *Time and Free Will* Bergson goes some way to refuting mechanism, Hulme argues, he still needs to prove that such free mind really does exist. As he puts it:

> the retort is still open that the whole thing is subjective. It may be a kind of self delusion...
>
> You have still got to prove that this state of flux – this feeling of a free activity which you feel in a certain tension – is not merely a subjective state of mind, but does give you real information about a reality which exists outside you. (182)

In a sense, Hulme's remark here is a rhetorical ploy. This is suggested by the fact that Hulme goes on to show that the answers to the questions Bergson left unanswered in *Time and Free Will* are provided in Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. However, he does not return to the subject of Bergson's treatment of free will in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" or, indeed, in any of his other writings on Bergson. The question of free will is therefore left hanging and, even though we cannot possibly know whether Hulme agreed or disagreed with Bergson's views on individual freedom, it appears that he was not especially concerned with Bergson's treatment of "free will." This would explain why he does not identify it as a central aspect of Bergson's thought anywhere in his lecture. In any case, we know that in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," Hulme interprets Bergson in *Time and Free Will* as

making the point that "free acts are exceptional" and of "rare occurrence," occurring when "at moments of tension and crisis ... we choose in defiance of what is generally called a motive" (179). Although this guarantees freedom, it also shows that acts of freedom are only rare. Such view is consistent with Hulme's "classicism" and the position he advances in "Romanticism and Classicism": that "freedom in man is much exaggerated" (64). This is what allows him to argue in "Romanticism and Classicism" for a recognition of human limitations while, at the same time, claim that "That we are free on certain rare occasions, both my religion and the views I get from metaphysics convince me" (64).

Hulme goes on in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" to discuss Bergson's treatment of the question of the relation between mind or soul and the body in *Matter and Memory*, employing in his discussion a series of metaphors taken directly out of Bergson's book (183; cf. *Matter and Memory* 165-66, 233-37, 292-300). He does not, however, elaborate on Bergson's distinction between spirit and matter, nor does he explain how Bergson thinks that this dualism can be overcome. Instead Hulme emphasises that Bergson's treatment of the distinction between mind and matter goes back to the "idea of the intensives":

> Where are these past memories stored? The answer to that is that the whole of your past life is in the present. This inner stream which composes your inner self bears in it not the whole of your past in the form of completed pictures, but bears it in the form of potentiality. In this stream the elements are ... interpenetrated. All that happens in an act of recognition is that the interpenetrated parts get separated out (184).

In doing so, he evades what is perhaps the most important part of Bergson's argument in *Matter and Memory*, namely Bergson's conclusion, given in the fourth and final chapter of

Matter and Memory: that "between brute matter and the mind ... there are all ... the degrees of freedom" (296). Bergson's "views on the soul," as Hulme argues in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson, and Politics" may be attractive for many, but are certainly not the most important (160). Rather than Bergson's treatment on the soul, Hulme chooses to highlight how the "novelty" of Bergson's thesis in *Matter and Memory* lies in the fact that Bergson deals with the question of mind/body dualism "not as a mere matter of speculation, but on a basis provided by an examination of a body of empirical observations" (182).

Much more time is devoted in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" on Bergson's account of the process of evolution in *Creative Evolution*, described by Hulme as the "most familiar part" of Bergson's philosophy. Hulme writes that for Bergson evolution is "produced by a kind of impulse which is something akin to the creative activity we find in our own mind," explaining that in Bergson's view, this impulse "is not material at all ... it is of the same nature as the kind of activity we find in ourselves, and which, being an intensive manifold, could not be understood by the intellect" (184). He proceeds to reinstate Bergson's criticism of mechanism and finalism, defining mechanism as the view that "the whole of the change has been produced solely as the result of the forces exerted upon the atoms" and describing finalism as the view that understands "life ... to be following a plan all laid down beforehand ... working towards some final end which is generally taken to be man" (185). Bergson, Hulme argues, demonstrates convincingly that both mechanism and finalism are problematic in that they fail to account for different lines of evolution. Repeating Bergson's argument in *Creative Evolution*, Hulme explains that mechanism and finalism fail to explain how it is that in two separate lines of evolution, that which includes vertebrates and that which ends in molluscs, it is possible to have the production of an eye composing of the same parts. If we accept Bergson's hypothesis, Hulme states, then we can see how

evolution is a separating out of elements which interpenetrated in the original impulse. If then you get the same organs developed on divergent lines of evolution, you have on Bergson's theory nothing to be surprised at, for they both develop it from their common origin... (185-86; cf. *Creative Evolution* 98)

Another example from Bergson that Hulme uses in the lecture is Bergson's metaphor of the hand moving through iron filings, which Bergson employs in *Creative Evolution* to explain the process through which nature evolves.[90] Like a hand that moves "through iron filings that are compressed and offer resistance to it," Hulme writes, so "impulse" moves through matter creating life (187; cf. *Creative Evolution* 94-95). In contrast to mechanism and finalism, both of which interpret evolution in terms of material necessity, "The characteristic of the impulse," Hulme explains, is "a free creative activity"; thus, the process of evolution as Bergson understands is "a gradual insertion of more and more freedom into matter." Hulme makes it clear, however, that this "gradual insertion of freedom into matter," as he describes the process of evolution, should not be understood as a "plan laid down beforehand." Rather, in this process "chance" plays a crucial part; more importantly, this process is not teleological, nor is it geared towards the perfection of man (187). What Hulme means by this is that evolution in Bergson's view is unpredictable and it may thus result in different directions (188-89). Finally, he concludes that *Creative Evolution* "does not add anything new to Bergson's thought"; for "If one has understood the difference between intensive and extensive manifolds, you have grasped the whole of that" (190). As it turns out, therefore, the value of *Creative Evolution* for Hulme is that in it Bergson manages to "plant all his ideas

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[90] In "Bax on Bergson," Hulme complains that "Every critic explained Bergson in precisely the same phrases and the same metaphors, which were at the same time Bergson's own," describing such strategy as "ludicrous" (116). In a way, in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" Hulme was guilty of following a similar strategy as the critics he berates in "Bax on Bergson."

solidly down on the earth and show them at work before you in a concrete form, in physical shape" (190). There are two things to note here. First, the fact that Hulme again singles out Bergson's theory of "intensive manifolds" as the most important part in Bergson's thought suggests that it is Bergson's theory of duration, not his philosophy of life, that Hulme finds the most significant. Secondly, as in his discussion of *Matter and Memory*, in presenting Bergson's argument in *Creative Evolution*, Hulme is keen on emphasising that Bergson's theory of evolution has as its basis "empirical proof" (185). It is Bergson's attention to empirical facts that ensures for Hulme that Bergson's theory of evolution possesses "stability and ballast" (190).

Thus, for Hulme the essence of Bergson's metaphysics is to be found in Bergson's method rather than in Bergson's "conclusions." According to the interpretation of Bergson Hulme postulates in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," what is important in *Time and Free Will* is not Bergson's theory of the free creative mind, but the way Bergson reaches this theory – through intuition (182). Likewise, in his discussions of *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, Hulme argues that Bergson's theory of "intensive manifolds," by which he means Bergson's notion that there is a reality which the intellect cannot grasp, is far more important than either the distinction between matter and spirit or the philosophy of life of *Creative Evolution* (184, 190). In other writings, he is much more polemical than he is in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" about Bergson's "conclusions," dismissing them as popular misinterpretations of Bergson's philosophy. As he puts it in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics," "the whole reason why his conclusions are worth discussing at all is that they have been arrived at by this new method" (161). He expresses a similar view in "Bax on Bergson," now explaining what he means by Bergson's "conclusions":

while the real importance of Bergson lies in pure philosophy, lies in his method, lies in

the category he works with ... yet the conclusion to which the application of his method

leads him, that of the dualism of soul and body, is precisely the conclusion which most

people seek. It is nice for the timid to be assured on thoroughly respectable authority

that there is a chance of immortality and that they have free will. (119-20)

Hulme's point in "Bax on Bergson" is that those who ignore Bergson's method of intuition

and his theory of "intensive manifolds," focusing instead on Bergson's "conclusions,"

misinterpret the French philosopher's thought. Bax, Lindsay, Balfour, the women who

flooded Bergson's lectures in 1911, and critics such as Simmons who, as Hulme protests in a

letter sent to the *New Age* shortly after Bergson's lecture tour in London, gained their

understanding of Bergson's philosophy from "reports of popular lectures in the 'Times'"

("Bergsonism" 46), all come under attack.

Hulme first expresses his disapproval of "popular" interpretations of Bergson in "Bax on

Bergson" in August 1911. Bax published a review of Lindsay's *The Philosophy of Bergson* in

the *New Age* the previous month, in which he accuses Bergson of being merely the latest

"fashion in philosophy," complaining that "it is difficult to find an adequate explanation in

the intrinsic merit of his work" for Bergson's growing reputation (280-81). Hulme retorts in

"Bax on Bergson" that Bax belongs to a generation of philosophers who have their "mental

make-up so definitely crystallised around Kant and other philosophers, that they have not ...

in the least grasped what it is exactly new that Bergson has brought into philosophy," adding

that philosophers like Bax fail to appreciate Bergson's method of intuition, "the thing which

is at the centre of everything that he says" (117; cf. 160). Hulme's more serious objection to

Bax, however, is that Bax fails to differentiate between the "real" and the "fashionable"

Bergson:

> It seems always to be the case that there are two definite stages in the reputation of a
>
> philosopher ... There is first a stage in which he is known to the few people who really
>
> care for and who are really able to understand subjects about which he writes ... This
>
> was the case with Bergson from about 1890 up to six months after 'Evolution
>
> Créatrice' was written. Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, it seems a man's
>
> reputation spreads all over Europe. Articles appear in newspapers ... the propagandists
>
> of the different sects utilise him for their own purposes ... he penetrates to the drawing-
>
> rooms, he is welcomed and read by the ladies who have ambitions salon-wise; and,
>
> finally, chatter makes his name stink in the nostrils of everyone who cares seriously for
>
> philosophy. (119)

One could be forgiven here for thinking that Hulme's unease at Bergson's fame is elitist –

some would suggest that it is even misogynistic.[91] However, as Gillies, Guerlac and Quirk

have all demonstrated, looking at the years from 1907 onwards, when *Creative Evolution* was

published, a valid and credible distinction can be drawn between those who were

"Bergsonian" and those who found "Bergsonism" interesting. While "Bergsonians" were

"genuine students of the philosophy," Gillies argues, "Bergsonism" consisted of "various

corruptions of Bergson's ideas" (26).[92] Seen in this context, Hulme's comments about the

"ladies who have ambitions salon-wise" in the passage above, as well as his claim about the

audience of "women, most of them with their heads lifted up in the kind of 'Eager Heart'

attitude" (154) at the UCL lectures in "Bergson Lecturing," gain a different, if not entirely

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[91] See Garver 142-43; H. Carr, "T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'" 108-10 and *Verse Revolutionaries* 392; and Ardis 47.

[92] See also Guerlac, *Thinking in Time* 10 and Quirk 54.

innocent, meaning; at the very least, it invites rethinking of Garver's claim that Hulme

rejected Bergson's philosophy for its "overly close association with women" (143). My point

here is that Hulme's gender politics should not obstruct us from the fact that in expressing

dismay at the presence of middle-class audiences, including women, at Bergson's lectures,

Hulme is questioning the way Bergson's philosophy was being utilised by people who care or

know little about philosophy. This is not to say that Hulme does not read Bergson's thought

with a heavy interpretative bias – for he certainly did – or that he was trained in philosophy –

for he was not. While Bergson's philosophy cannot be understood if one ignores Bergson's

method of intuition and his theory of duration, they only feature in Bergson's oeuvre as part

of a broader discussion about the existence of free will, the unity of matter and spirit, and a

philosophy of life as creative; disregarding all these ideas or dismissing them as

"conclusions" seems unfair. As is clear from his exposition of Bergson's work in "The

Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," Hulme had a very good grasp of Bergson's work. That

he emphasised some aspects of Bergson's work over others, shows that he did so deliberately.

Acknowledging that Hulme was not so enthusiastic about certain of Bergson's arguments is

important here, for it complicates the common critical view that in the years between 1909

and 1912 Hulme was a disciple of Bergson who merely repeated Bergson's ideas with

approval.

6. "Bergson's Theory of Art"

It is impossible to understand Hulme's interpretation of Bergson without also examining

"Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme's lecture on Bergson and art from around 1911-12. This is

because in "Bergson's Theory of Art" Hulme explains with more clarity than anywhere else

in his writings the reasons why he finds Bergson an important philosopher. He argues that as

well as offering a comprehensive theory of reality, the French thinker provides the basis for a

"theory of art." Hulme does not mean that Bergson has created a theory of art; as he clarifies, claiming that Bergson has a theory of art "would be absurd" (191). Rather, the importance of Bergson for Hulme is that "by the acute analysis of certain mental processes he has enabled us to state more definitely and with less distortion the qualities which we feel in art" (191). As it turns out, in "Bergson's Theory of Art" Hulme uses Bergson's ideas to restate – and modify – claims he makes about poetry in "A Lecture." In view of the fact that many of the ideas in "Bergson's Theory of Art" feature also in "Romanticism and Classicism," "Bergson's Theory of Art" links Hulme's description of modern poetry with the "classicism" of "Romanticism and Classicism." This is important because it complicates the critical position that by late 1911 Hulme abandoned Bergson; it also explains why Bergson features so prominently in "Romanticism and Classicism."

As we will remember from the previous chapter, in "A Lecture" Hulme defines the "new visual art" as a means of "expression and communication" of that which the poet conceives in his mind; it is in this sense that the success of "impressionist" poetry is measured by the extent to which it achieves "the maximum of individual and personal expression" (53) and also judged by whether or not it "arrests" the reader's attention (54). According to the argument presented in "A Lecture," the modern poet recaptures the original "vision" that is obstructed by the conventional language of "prose": as Hulme puts it, the poet "must continually be creating new images, and his sincerity may be measured by the number of his images" (55). Hulme also maintains in this lecture that the poet must not make explicit any image or metaphor to the reader, but, rather, prompt the reader to combine distinct images in original and novel ways – thus the images in modern poetry "unite to suggest an image which is different to both" (54). Ultimately, this juxtaposition of images which Hulme prescribes for modern poetry serves to direct the reader's attention to a moment of intuition, and thus aims

to achieve communication between poet and reader, defined in "A Lecture" as the fundamental aim of modern poetry (54-55). In "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme makes similar claims to the ones he postulates in "A Lecture," now linking them explicitly to Bergson's philosophy. He maintains, for example, that Bergson shows how it is impossible to predict the end result of a work of art – "For to predict would be to produce it before it was produced" – adding that Bergson also shows that artists should "accept" the "unforeseeable," because "art lives on creation and implies a belief in the spontaneity of nature" (191; cf. Bergson, *Creative Evolution* 30, 45). Moreover, he describes the "process of artistic creation" as "a process of discovery and disentanglement," repeating after Bergson that the job of the artist should be to present a "certain vision of things," which the "recipients" in turn "recognise ... as true" (194; cf. Bergson, *Laughter* 153-54). As Bergson in *Laughter*, Hulme explains that art should be "an individual way of looking at things"; it should be the activity of an individual who "was able to break through the conventional ways of looking at things ... to pick out one element which is really in all of us, but which before he had disentangled it, we were unable to perceive" (194-195; cf. *Laughter* 152). Finally, as in his early lecture, Hulme argues in "Bergson's Theory of Art" that linguistic metaphors "soon run their course and die" (195). Returning to the distinction he cast in "Notes" and in "A Lecture" between "poetry" and "prose," Hulme emphasises in "Bergson's Theory of Art" that the poet must "avoid this defect of language" (202; cf. 24-25, 55). Owing to the particular nature of language, the poet must "continually to be searching out new metaphors ... because the visual effect of a metaphor so soon dies"; as such, he must not "rest satisfied" until he "got hold" of a metaphor, "which did pull up the reader and make him visualise the thing" (195). As in "A Lecture," therefore, Hulme argues in "Bergson's Theory of Art that the aim of poetry should be "to arrest you and to make you continuously see a physical thing" (202; cf. 54).

The significant difference between the two lectures is that in "Bergson's Theory of Art" Hulme can explain in more detail how exactly a poet can recover the "vision" behind words by drawing on Bergson's ideas. Bergson's notion that our mind is always oriented towards action, and is thus only able to see the practical side of things, is used by Hulme as evidence that "in ordinary perception, both of external objects and of our internal states, we never perceive things as they are, but only certain conventional types" (193). For Hulme, Bergson's distinction between the intellect, which sees only the practical side of things, and intuition, which grasps the "immediate reality," is important because it "enables one to give a more coherent account of ... what previously had only been assumed." What the poet needs, Hulme repeats after Bergson, is "pure perception" or intuition; like Bergson, he thus argues that "the function of the artist is to pierce through ... the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action" (193), also adding that the poet must place "himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy and breaking down by an effort of intuition that space puts between him and his model" (192).[93] Through intuition, moreover, the poet can "dive" into the deeper structures of reality, where the "intellect" cannot go. In this way, Hulme's "Bergsonian" poet captures that which he wants to express in its original intensity; recognising that language is prohibitive, he can "force the mechanism of expression out of the way in which it tends to go and into the way he wants" by "a certain tension of mind" (200; cf. Bergson, *Laughter* 154). This is also the unifying idea in "A Lecture," where Hulme makes it the aim of the modern poet to express in us that which conventional language cannot describe (cf. 56).

While in "A Lecture" the demand Hulme postulates on the poet is only to arrest the attention of the reader, in "Bergson's Theory of Art" there is an added emphasis on accuracy

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[93] Cf. Bergson, *Laughter* 151-52; *Creative Evolution* 176; and *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 21-23.

and precision as requirements for poetry. Hulme likens the poet in "Bergson's Theory of Art" to an architect who uses "architect's curves" to draw the line he has in his mind in the most accurate way possible. The architect-poet does not give in to "conventional means of expression," but, rather, expresses "This vision he had of the individuality of the curve" (199). Thus art for Hulme is a "desire for accuracy." As he writes:

> The motive power behind any art is a certain freshness of experience which breeds dissatisfaction with the conventional ways of expression because they leave out the individual quality of this freshness. You are driven to new means of expression because you persist in an endeavour to get it out exactly as you felt it.
>
> You could define art, then as a passionate desire for accuracy. (200-01)

According to S. Schwartz, Hulme's emphasis on accuracy in "Bergson's Theory of Art" is proof of the fact that Hulme is using Bergson in an "un-Bergsonian manner." "While Bergson wishes to restore the subjective flux of experience," Schwartz argues, "Hulme wants to present an objective element that all of us can apprehend"; in Schwartz's view, this demonstrates that "Hulme is turning ... from the subjective to the objective side of experience" (*The Matrix of Modernism* 54). Levenson shares a similar view, finding Hulme's call for accuracy as evidence that he was moving away from the "subjectivist" aesthetic of Bergson towards objectivism (87, 99-100). In detecting a clear rupture in Hulme's thought, both Schwartz and Levenson fail to see that, rather than moving from one position to another, in "Bergson's Theory of Art" Hulme is promulgating a specific interpretation of Bergson, based on the aspects in Bergson's philosophy which he found the most appealing: intuition; Bergson's notion of an immediate reality existing, not accessible through intellectual means;

and the way in which Bergson, in Hulme's view, grounds his metaphysical theories on empirical observations.

Schwartz is right in noting that Hulme is not interested in restoring the "flux" of experience; for, Hulme's poet differs significantly from Bergson's philosopher who aims, as Bergson explains in "The Soul and the Body," to recover the flow of duration (56-57). Yet, there is nothing "un-Bergsonian" about Hulme insisting in "Bergson's Theory of Art" on the poet presenting the object or idea he has in his mind in an "accurate" way. This claim follows from two different ideas expressed by Bergson. The first occurs in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Here, Bergson argues that analysis can only understand an object through conventional measurement because the "intellect" is blind to the internal character of that object, with Bergson adding that intuition is an "*intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it" (6; emphasis in original). Hulme's insistence that the object presented in poetry is precise and unique approximates Bergson's description of the process of intuition in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Hulme's call for accuracy and precision in "Bergson's Theory of Art" is also consistent with Bergson's brief discussion of art in *Laughter*, a passage that is missing from Schwartz's analysis. Bergson argues in *Laughter* that the poet's aim is to "make us see something of what they have seen" (156), defining poetry as a "direct vision of reality" (157). Moreover, Bergson explains in *Laughter* that art "always aims at what is *individual*," by which, as he explains, he means that the artist should aim to "fix" that which "he has seen at a certain spot, on a certain day, at a certain hour" (161). This is important for Bergson because only by presenting precise objects can the poet bring us "face to face with reality itself" (157). Thus, although Hulme is not interested in recovering the flow of duration, which, for Bergson, can be recovered only through "the rhythmical arrangement of words ... animated

with a life of their own" (156), it is misleading to claim that Hulme is using Bergson in an "un-Bergsonian" way. Rather, as when discussing Bergson's metaphysics, Hulme offers in "Bergson's Theory of Art" a specific reading of Bergson that privileges his method at the expense of Bergson's "conclusions."

The metaphor of the architect trying to present the object or idea that he has in his mind in the most precise way possible features also in "Romanticism and Classicism," in which, as in "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme declares the "great aim" of poetry to be "accurate, precise and definite description" (68). The way Hulme uses this claim in "Romanticism and Classicism" is significantly different; as we will see in the next chapter, the distinction between accurate description and vague rhetoric carries a distinctly political valence. Yet, the confluence of aesthetics and politics in "Romanticism and Classicism" should not distract us from the fact that Hulme's description of "classic" poetry is consistent with his discussion of poetry in "Bergson's Theory of Art," and thus with his general interpretation of Bergson. As I already discussed in this chapter, in "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" Hulme notes the way in which Bergson's metaphysics is grounded on empirical evidence (182, 185). This is significant because it is Bergson's attention to empirical facts that explains the presence of Bergson in "Romanticism and Classicism." In his philosophy as Hulme understands it, Bergson explains the process of poetic creation without postulating that there is anything mysterious or magical in the composition of poetry, a conception of poetry which Hulme has been trying to discredit since the time of "A Lecture" and which now, in "Romanticism and Classicism," he associates with the romantic view of poetry. To use the terms of Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism," while Bergson's emphasis on inspiration and spontaneity is shared by key romantic aesthetes such as Coleridge, Bergson's attention to empirical facts

makes him a "classic," insofar as we understand "classic" to mean someone who "never flies away into the circumambient gas" (62).

As in "A Lecture" and in "Bergson's Theory of Art," in "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme follows Bergson in describing the poet as diving into the "flux" of reality and reproducing that which the poet sees in his mind. The "classic" poet, Hulme argues in "Romanticism and Classicism," has a "rare" ability to "see things as they really are, and apart from the conventional ways in which you have been trained to see them"; moreover, through a "concentrated state of mind," Hulme's "classic" poet is able to get at the "actual expression of what one sees" (69). The process involved in the act of creation, Hulme states in this lecture, "is ... worked out in Bergson," who shows that:

> the characteristic of the intellect is that it can only represent complexities of the mechanical kind. It can only make diagrams, and diagrams are essentially things whose parts are separate one from another. The intellect always analyses – when there is a synthesis it is baffled. (72)

The "central feature of his whole philosophy," Hulme goes on to argue in "Romanticism and Classicism," is that, "To deal with the intensive you must use intuition," as "the intellect can only deal with extensive multiplicity" (72). What determines the success of a poem for Hulme is not the "scale or kind of emotion produced," nor the subject, but whether it has any real "zest" in it. By "zest" Hulme means that the poet must have "an actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted"; the poet should subsequently present this object in the most sincere way possible. Hulme thus writes that "If it is sincere in the accurate sense, when the whole of the analogy is necessary to get out the exact curve of the feeling or the

thing you want to express – there you seem to me to have the highest verse" (71). This process recalls both the poet in "A Lecture," who selects "certain images ... to evoke the state he feels" (54), and the artist in "Bergson's Theory of Art," who describes the "individuality" of that which he sees in his mind by breaking through "stock" perception (199). Hulme recognises in "Romanticism and Classicism" that this "positive quality" of verse "is the same as you get in the more romantic people." He thus acknowledges that the "sincerity" demanded of the "classic" poet is akin to what Coleridge terms the "vital or organic," words which Hulme sees as "a convenient metaphor for a complexity ... in which the parts cannot be said to be elements as each one is modified by the other presence, and each one to a certain extent is the whole." In many ways, then, the mind of the "classic" poet resembles Ruskin's "imaginative mind," which

> seizes and combines at the same instant all the important ideas of its poem or picture, and while it works with one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying all in their relation to it and never losing sight of their bearings on each other – as the motion of snake's body goes through all parts at once and its volition acts at the same instant in coils which go contrary ways. (72)

As Howarth has noticed, the metaphor of the mind moving like a snake's body and synthesising the poem's form and meaning is taken almost in verbatim out of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*; more intriguingly, it echoes Coleridge's description in *Lectures on Literature* of Shakespeare's genius "writhing in every direction, but still progressive" (qtd. in Howarth 37). Far from accidentally, Hulme is consciously paralleling in "Romanticism and Classicism" the synthesising power of intuition with Ruskin's and Coleridge's theory of Imagination. That he would do so, should not surprise us: as many critics have pointed out,

there are intimate connections between Bergson and Coleridge. Wellek and Muirhead, for example, demonstrated some time ago how Coleridge was one of the most influential proponents of vitalism, while Chiari and Haeger have separately argued that Bergson's theory of duration is in many ways a continuation of ideas first laid out by the romantics and Coleridge in particular.[94] The similarities between duration and Imagination become obvious when we compare Bergson's discussion of duration with Coleridge's famous formulation of Secondary Imagination in *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge defines Imagination in *Biographia Literaria* as a power that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ... struggles to idealize and to unify" and is thus "essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead" (1: 304; emphasis in original). As a continuous creative projection, Coleridge's Imagination anticipates Bergson's description of the durational *élan vital* in *Creative Evolution*, defined by Bergson as a "*current passing from germ to germ through the medium of a developed organism ...* as if the organism itself were only an excrescence, a bud caused to sprout by the former germ endeavoring to continue itself in a new germ" (27; emphasis in original). More crucially, the creative movement of the romantic Imaginative mind parallels the diving-into-flux of the Bergsonian artist, his breaking through the static recognition of the world (which for Coleridge is the characteristic activity of Fancy), and the making of that which the artist sees or feels available to the world.

While Bergson's duration postulates an Imaginative mind creating an ever-unpredictable unity, however, his metaphysic is fundamentally different to that of Coleridge. Coleridge's distinction between Imagination and Fancy is primarily an attack on the mechanistic materialism of eighteenth-century philosophy through a re-appropriation of German Idealism

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[94] See Wellek 101; Muirhead 127-28; Chiari 25; and Haeger 98-99. Wellek argues that Coleridge's notion of the productive Imagination should be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between form and matter, while Muirhead demonstrates how Coleridge postulates a "view of Nature as a progressive system of embodied and individualizing activities" and shows how Coleridge's philosophy of nature is based on the principle of interconnection of elements (127-28).

(Haeger 98). As Rae demonstrates, Bergson's account of intuition breaks away from German Idealism, specifically the theories of Schelling, the philosopher on whom Coleridge relies the most in *Biographia Literaria*. This is because, Rae argues, Bergson's artist does not transcend the particulars to the real of universal Ideas, thus offering the basis for a theory of poetry that is "organic" but that, crucially, is not mystical or idealist (*Practical Muse* 57).[95] In acknowledging in "Romanticism and Classicism" that both Ruskin and Coleridge postulate an essentially similar aesthetic to Bergson, but at the same time objecting to the metaphysic of Ruskin and Coleridge (67, 72), Hulme is deliberately seeking to re-appropriate the romantic notion of "organic" creation and to recast it with a distinctly different metaphysic. Turning to "Bergson's Theory of Art" helps explain this point. Hulme writes in "Bergson's Theory of Art":

> To describe the nature of the activity you get in art, the philosopher must always create some kind of special vocabulary. He has to make use of certain metaphysical conceptions in order to state the thing satisfactorily. The great advantage of Bergson's theory is that it states the thing most nakedly, with the least amount of metaphysical baggage. (194)

He goes on to explain that intuition for Bergson is simply a rare ability for "natural detachment," that those who are capable of using intuition do so "only by accident, and in one sense only" (196), that an artist is simply a "person who is able to turn aside from action and to observe things as they are in a disinterested way" (197), and that the process through which art is created, intuition, is nothing more than a "human activity" (204; cf. Bergson,

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[95] Cf. Bergson, "The Stating of Problems" 34. Rae acknowledges that, by the time of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson embraces mysticism and that a turn to mysticism is already evident in *Creative Evolution*. Yet, Rae rightly points out that in *Creative Evolution* Bergson uses *élan vital* mostly as a model for the inner self rather than as something continuous with it. See *Practical Muse* 246n57.

Laughter 154). It is this interpretation of Bergson as an intuitive philosopher who pays attention to empirical facts that explains why Hulme has no hesitations about using Bergson in "Romanticism and Classicism" to describe "classic" poetry. This is not to say that Hulme's interpretation of Bergson is accurate; rather, it is to note that Hulme's use of Bergson in "Romanticism and Classicism" is entirely consistent with his reading of Bergson in his other writings.

7. Conclusion

A close examination of Hulme's writings on Bergson reveals the answers to the following questions: What was the specific attraction Bergson held for Hulme? To what ends did he use Bergson's metaphysics? And, to what extent did Hulme deviate from the theories of Bergson? Like many other young aesthetes in the early twentieth century, Hulme was attracted to Bergson's "poetic effort" and his intuitive method. More importantly, Hulme found in Bergson a positive theory for understanding reality as that which cannot be grasped by conventional language or "artificial gymnastics," but that can only be reached by intuition. While he valued Bergson's method of intuition and the French philosopher's idea that an immediate reality exists beyond language, Hulme was critical of Bergson's "conclusions." Hulme's "selective" reading of Bergson is nowhere more evident than in "Bergson's Theory of Art," where he draws on Bergson's theories to explain how the poet, by turning the objects in his mind into accurate and precise "visions," can enable us to come closer to reality. Understanding the way Hulme interpreted Bergson's philosophy helps explain the reason why in "Romanticism and Classicism" he uses Bergson's aesthetic theory as the basis for "classic" poetry. Ultimately, the great lesson of Bergson for Hulme is that a deeper reality exists that can only be grasped through anti-intellectual means. This idea also underwrites Hulme's political essays, to which I now turn.

Chapter 4

Essays on Politics: Classicism as Conservatism

1. Introduction

During the time when he was publicly defending Bergson's philosophy, Hulme also wrote

a number of essays in which he advocated a "classical" attitude in politics. By "classical"

attitude, Hulme means the view of humans as imperfect or "limited"; in politics, the

"classical" attitude asserts that nothing positive can ever come out of disorder and that, as

Hulme puts it in "A Tory Philosophy," "The best results can only be got out of man as the

result of a certain discipline which introduces order into this internal anarchy" (235). Critics

have always been quick to detect a contradiction in Hulme's contemporaneous defence of

Bergson and the ideas he promulgated in these political essays: how could he possibly

reconcile the individual freedom guaranteed by Bergson's ever-creating, ever-unfolding élan

with his advocacy of discipline and order in politics? The conventional explanation is that a

breach occurred between Hulme and Bergson at around 1912, with Hulme endorsing the anti-

democratic politics of Maurras and Lasserre, two thinkers who opposed Bergson's

philosophy on political grounds.[96] Even those critics who like Schwartz maintain that

Hulme's political beliefs are not incompatible with his admiration of Bergson's metaphysics,

argue that his politics is authoritarian; according to Schwartz, Hulme's "reactionary

ideology" is entirely consistent with a "vitalism of the Right" ("Henri Bergson and the

Politics of Vitalism" 296).[97]

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[96] See Roberts 139-40; Levenson 37-47 and 80-102; Ferrall 17-18: Robinson 109-111; Ardis 7; R. Potter 67; and L. B. Williams 25.

[97] H. Carr makes a similar claim. See "T. E. Hulme and the Spiritual Dread of Space" 101.

In this chapter, I offer a different interpretation of Hulme's "classicist" politics. What critics often neglect is the significance of the context in which Hulme makes his political claims. As I show in the first part of this chapter, Hulme did not turn to politics because he "ran out of things to say ... about philosophy and art" (L. B. Williams 69), nor was he in his essays "harking back to the 'Chesterbelloc' debate that raged through the pages of *The New Age* for much of the winter of 1907-8" (Ferguson 99). Rather, taking a genuine interest in the events which unfolded after the 1910 General Election in England, he participated in a very topical debate concerning the future of the Conservative Party. All five of Hulme's essays on politics were published in the *Commentator*, a Conservative weekly that appeared in the wake of the Conservatives' electoral defeat and of the constitutional crisis that ensued.[98] In these articles, Hulme is responding to the *Commentator*'s call for the formulation of a plausible and effective conversion strategy; he proposes ways in which Conservative rhetoric could be reformed and in doing so, Hulme draws on ideas expressed in "Bergson's Theory of Art." Moreover, his discussion of a reconversion strategy can be understood from the perspective of Sorel's method of "diremption", which constitutes an appropriation of Bergson's anti-intellectualist philosophy. Seen in the context of the debate in the pages of the *Commentator*, it becomes obvious that Bergson features prominently in Hulme's political analysis. At the same time, even though to his own admission Hulme was inspired by Maurras' and Lasserre's campaign against Socialists in France, in his political essays he does not embrace

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[98] Martin, first, suggested that Hulme's connection with the *Commentator* has to be studied, writing in 1962 that Hulme's articles in the *Commentator* must be examined by "those who wish to complete their knowledge of Hulme's works" ("T. E. Hulme: A Bibliographical Note" 307). Martin did not, however, investigate Hulme's connection with the *Commentator* further, instead opting to concentrate on Hulme's relationship with the *New Age* circle. See *New Age under Orage* 213. Robinson regrets the fact that Hulme's and Storer's connection with the *Commentator* has gone "totally unnoticed" (107), yet, like Martin, he reads Hulme's political essays through the writings of the *New Age* "reactionaries," specifically Kennedy and Ludovici (95-118). Most recently, L. B. Williams has acknowledged that writers from both the *New Age* and the *Commentator* "suggested to Hulme that an aristocratic alternative to democracy was possible and that it had existed and prospered in a pre-modern age," concluding, however, that "even more than by English Conservatives, Hulme was influenced by French thinkers" (75-76).

the proto-fascist programme of the *Action Française*, nor are his ideas consistent with the radical Right. Both Levenson's claim that "Hulme embraced the programme of reaction almost as soon as he discovered it" (83) and Robinson's assessment that he campaigned for "the maintenance of a rigidly stratified, hierarchical society" (91) must, thus, be substantially revised. Ultimately, acknowledging the context in which Hulme developed his "classical" politics clarifies the "classicism" of "Romanticism and Classicism" by emphasising the great extent to which Hulme's description of poetry as "classic" is politically-charged.

2. The Conservative Party "crisis" and the *Commentator*

Hulme writes repeatedly in his essays on politics about the need of Conservatism for an effective conversion strategy. In "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" and "The Art of Political Conversion," as well as in "Theory and Practice," he argues that, because political conversion is a largely emotional process, the Conservative Party must try and appeal to the electorate's instincts rather than address them as rational beings, suggesting ways in which Conservative propaganda could be made more effective (cf. 209-212, 215, 227-28). Hulme's case study of the propaganda strategy of the Conservative Party has gone largely unnoticed by critics. As far as I know, it has only captured the attention of his most recent biographer, who claims that Hulme found it "remarkable" that in 1911 "so many middle-class people were attracted to radical views in general" (Ferguson 99). Hulme's discussion of the need of the Conservative Party to present its beliefs in a more convincing manner, however, is only fully understood when set in the context of the debate that took place in the *Commentator*, to which Hulme's articles were in fact a direct contribution.

At the turn of the century, the Conservative Party in Britain was facing a significant leadership crisis. Arthur Balfour, who succeeded Salisbury as leader in July 1902, was

finding himself unable to steer the Party through the many challenges posed by the changing

social and economic conditions, being forced to make unpopular decisions (Green 2). The

Party crisis reached its climax following the Conservative Party's losses to at the 1906

General Election that paved the way for the Liberals' ascent to power. By 1910, the Liberals

had established themselves as the most potent political force in the country; according to

Ramsden, the Conservative Party was now "out of control" and "dangerously split" (197,

201-02).[99] The Conservatives' discontent was aggravated in 1910, when the Liberal Prime

Minister Asquith began pushing for reforms aiming at limiting the power of the Lords (Ensor

424-25). Amidst this turmoil of political change, the Party's disintegration was being

discussed extensively in the Conservative press. A reading of mainstream "Tory" newspapers

demonstrates that the success of the Liberals in winning the electorate and the rise of the

Labour party was interpreted as directly related to the lack of strong leadership and,

specifically, to the inability of the Party's leaders to devise a coherent political and

ideological strategy. Thus the *Spectator* argued that under Balfour the Conservative Party

was lacking a "certain hardness of temperament," the *Morning Post* dismissed Balfour's

"policy of vacillating shilly-shally," and the *National Review* waged a "Balfour Must Go"

campaign.[100] It was in response to the political events of early 1910 that in May a group of

Conservatives launched the *Commentator*.[101] This weekly newspaper's primary task, as its

opening editorial proclaimed, was "the advocacy and propagation of Conservative

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[99] See also Dangerfield 70; Green 267; and Searle 81-82.

[100] Qtd. in Ramsden 199, 201, 211. On the Conservatives' fear of Socialism, see Green 137. For an analysis of the "crisis of Conservatism" and of the dissatisfaction among the members of the Party with the leadership, see Searle 79-81.

[101] I have not been able to determine the newspaper's founder or its editorial committee. A "Notice" to the readers in November 1910 states that "*The Commentator* is published … at the personal expense of one independent Conservative, who is not only sacrificing money, but a great deal of valuable time, for the purpose of making a supreme effort to extricate this country from the slough of despond into which it has sunk" (2 Nov. 1910: 553). Despite a clear sense of purpose shared by the editors, the *Commentator* is rather multivocal. Its contributors include prominent Tories, such as Lionel Valdar, Louis J. MacQuillant and Sydney Knox, the fantasy short-story writer and occultist George Raffalovich, the poet and critic Alfred Berlyn, and the poet, author of children's stories, Margaret Sackville, who was to become a prominent pacifist activist during the First World War.

principles"; at a time when the traditional structures of power were coming under assault by the Liberal and Labour opposition, the *Commentator* promised "exhaustive enumeration and criticism" of "the many … causes operating detrimentally to the interests of the nation" ("The Question" 1). Like other Tory newspapers, the *Commentator* put forth a forceful critique of the party's leadership, stating repeatedly that the existing leaders had betrayed the Party's base and bemoaning the fact that, as one contributor put it, "we have the official party in one direction and the rank and file of the party pulling in another, and in this manner the Conservative instincts of the English nation as a political factor are wasted" ("Plain Talk to Conservatives" 51).[102] In the first issue it was thus announced the *Commentator* was dissatisfied with how "The Conservative leaders have completely forgotten that they were sent to Parliament to represent Conservative principles," a demand the paper continued to make right up to its final issue, which reminded Conservative voters that the Party could only be rescued by "a bold and unswerving advocacy of true Conservative principles" ("The Question" 1; 11 June 1913: n.p.).

Historians have noted how the Constitutional crisis of 1910 and the anxieties that it caused amongst the Conservatives splintered the Party faithful into different factions, with many taking a partisan approach against the Party. There were those who, in the name of "National Efficiency," pioneered a national government of "first-rate men," the primary aim of which would be to preserve the Empire. There was also the "Reveille" movement led by die-hard Tories such as Willoughby de Broke, and associated with nationalist, xenophobic and racist views as expressed by Arnold White (Searle 82-86; Sykes 661-67). The *Commentator* certainly shared these separatist groups' conviction that the party leadership had alienated the electorship, demanding from the Party, like the "Reveille" group and the champions of

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[102] This is a recurring theme in the *Commentator*. Cf. 20 May 1910: 1, 52; 14 Sep. 1910: 387; 28 Sept. 1910: 441; and 19 Oct. 1910: 523.

"National Efficiency," a more uncompromising approach to the Liberals' attempts at changing the status-quo.[103] Yet, for all its polemics and despite its critical stance against the Party's leadership, the *Commentator* rarely deviated from the official party line; there is also no sign of xenophobic or racist ideas in it. In its three-year-run of life, it consistently backed the Conservatives in the Commons and Lords over such issues as Tariff Reform and Irish Home Rule and repeatedly praised the Party's policies. Characteristically, the *Commentator* made it clear that "In spite of all we have said against the action of the official Conservative party, we can assure you that the only way to rid yourselves of Radical tyranny is to support Conservative candidates at the next election" ("Plain Talk to Working Men" 6). What distinguishes the *Commentator* from the mainstream Conservative newspapers of the time is the emphasis it put on the need of the Party to provide its supporters and the general public with a cohesive ideology and to devise an effective propaganda strategy. According to the *Commentator* Conservatives, the party should present the electorate with a "clear and defined policy" ideology because, as it was announced in the first issue:

> To go before them with a hundred and one suggestions for breaking up the last stronghold this country possesses for the protection of the freedom of its people, and for the maintenance of its prosperity as a commercial nation, is simply to court defeat. Without such a defined policy, it is impossible to enthuse the electorate, and especially when it is perfectly obvious that the leaders are irretrievably mixing themselves up with the politics of the other side. ("The Question" 2)

By "other side," the *Commentator* contributors mean the Liberals or, as they refer to them interchangeably, the "socialists," two terms that, as Searle shows, were often conflated in the

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[103] Cf. *Commentator* 8 Feb. 1911: 203; 19 Jul.1911: 140; and 5 Apr. 1911: 327.

Edwardian times (81). The *Commentator* attributed the success of the Liberals to their

"methods of training." As stated in an unsigned article from December 1910, if the

Conservative Party was to be successful at the elections, the Conservatives needed to match

the propaganda techniques of the "socialists":

> Any political speaker will tell you that the requirements of public, and especially
>
> outdoor, speaking have undergone considerable changes. Rhetoric appeals to human
>
> emotion and instincts fall exceedingly flat, or else create uproar. To keep an audience
>
> silent and listening, it is necessary to provide it with facts, or to answer those put
>
> forward by opponents. Even figures are becoming interesting to the modern crowd … If
>
> we are to be put in the abject position of being taught by Socialists, it would seem that
>
> the first lesson we should learn is their methods of training their adherents in the way of
>
> exposing the vulnerable points in an opponent's arguments. ("Political Organisation"
>
> 86)

Thus, in its three years of circulation, the *Commentator* continuously sought to address what

it perceived was the Conservative Party's major weakness, namely its lack of efficient

propaganda strategy.

More than any other contributor, it was Storer, Hulme's friend from the time of the "Poet's

Club," who undertook the task of giving the party "a Conservative ideal and an expressed

philosophy" ("The Conservative Ideal" 139). Storer began writing for the *Commentator* at

around the same time as Hulme, his first article appearing only a month before Hulme's "A

Note on the Art of Political Conversion" was printed. The arguments Storer puts forward in

the *Commentator* are almost identical to Hulme's. Like Hulme, Storer argues that the

Liberals' electoral success could be explained by the fact that they appealed to people's emotions more "directly" and that it is necessary for the Conservatives to come up with a fully worked-out ideology. Moreover, in the same way as Hulme, Storer associates the Liberal position with romanticism and the views of the Conservative Party with classicism, rejecting Progress and defining Classicism as the belief in human limitations. As such, it seems appropriate to consider their articles as part of the same project.

3. "Anti-intellectualism" as theory of propaganda

In his first article for the *Commentator*, Storer writes:

> People are not Conservatives or Socialists by the operation of rational processes, but from conviction, which is an instinctive silent thing. Arguments and reasons are merely means for advancing towards or preserving an end. Though it may seem at first glance a point of little importance that the English intellectuals are mainly, if not entirely, on the side opposed to Conservatism, consideration will show that though theirs is a very small class, it exercises an influence altogether out of proportion to its size. ("The Conservative Ideal" 139)

Storer's idea here is that the formation of political ideology is an instinctual or non-rational process and that the Conservatives must do more to appeal to the basic emotions of the electorate. Specifically, Storer argues that a major reason for the mass appeal of Liberalism is the work done by Liberal intellectuals towards popularising Liberal beliefs. Thus, if the Conservatives are to be effective in gaining back members of the electorate, Storer goes on to claim in "The Conservative Ideal," they must "destroy" the Socialists' "illusion of being in the fashion" (139). "What was wanted," Storer proposes in an article in May 1911, is "a

weapon with which to strike the revolutionary evil at its head and centre of activity. This work," he continues in this essay, "writers can do, and it is as important in its way as the day-to-day tactics of the practical politicians" ("A Basis for Nationalism" 426). Like Storer, Hulme maintains in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" in February-March 1911 that "Conversion is always emotional and non-rational" (209), arguing, like Storer, that the intellectuals play an important part in the formulation of political beliefs. Hulme's analysis is identical to Storer's:

> We may be under the delusion that we are deciding a question from purely rational motives, but we never are...
>
> Now this does seem to me to be a point of practical importance if it helps us to convert this class. For though the type may not be numerous, it does have, in the end, a big influence in politics. Not very obviously or directly, for in no country do the intellectuals appear to lead less than in ours; but ultimately and by devious ways their views soak down and colour the whole mass. (209)

Both Storer and Hulme, therefore, were agreed on the significance for the Conservative Party to reconvert the young intellectuals who had joined the Fabians. The first step in doing so was to recognise the non-rational nature of the psychological process involved in ideological formation.

At the time Storer and Hulme were writing for the *Commentator*, the view that ideological conviction is a non-rational process was a fairly widespread idea, popularised by various crowd psychologists. Sherry shows that crowd psychology was being used by Liberal politicians for propaganda purposes, while McLelland demonstrates how it was also utilised

by those suspicious of liberalism as evidence against "liberal" belief in "reason as a universal legislator" (627).[104] One of the most famous expositions of this view of ideology as a non-rational process was given by Gustave Le Bon in *The Crowd*, a text which Hulme cites in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" in support of the claim he makes in this essay that "conversion is anything but intellectual" (208). In *The Crowd*, Le Bon argues that "crowds are not ... influenced by reasoning, and can only comprehend rough-and-ready associations of ideas," so that "The orators who know how to make an impression upon them always appeal ... to their sentiments and never to their reason" (112). Le Bon attributes this phenomenon to the nature of "man" who, he writes, "possesses the ... facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images" (13) and whose "Reason and arguments are incapable of combating certain words and formulas" (100). Ultimately, Le Bon's study of crowd psychology aims to show how words such as "democracy," "socialism," "equality" and "liberty," described by Le Bon as "vague," often become "natural forces": words that "evoke grandiose and vague images in men's minds" (101, cf. 21). Another study mentioned by Hulme in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" is Graham Wallas' *Human Nature in Politics*. Building on Le Bon's work, Wallas argues in *Human Nature in Politics* that it is a mistake to exaggerate the "intellectuality of mankind," as political allegiance frequently depends on impulses and instincts (21; cf. 69). In the same manner as Le Bon before him, Wallas asserts that it is part of human nature to seek something "vague" to believe in. According to Wallas, this human tendency to believe the "vague" is what explains Socialism's great popular appeal: "The need of something which one may love and for which one may work has created for thousands of working men a personified 'Socialism,' a winged goddess with stern eyes and drawn sword to be the hope of the world" (93).

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[104] See McClelland 661-81 and Sherry, *Great War and the Language of Modernism* 25.

In many ways, in his essays Hulme employs the observations of Le Bon and Wallas as evidence of the fact that Conservative propaganda must change. In "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," for example, he argues like Le Bon that "catch-words," words such as "natural" and "free," end up acquiring the status of "mental categories" through a process in which politicians and other rhetoricians "deliberately reiterate a short phrase … until it gets into the mind of the victim, by a process of suggestion definitely not intellectual" (211, 208-09; cf. *The Crowd* 127). In "The Art of Political Conversion," published in the *Commentator* in April 1911, Hulme warns his fellow Conservatives that to win back votes from the Liberals, they have to appeal to the electorate's "instincts," for, as he puts it, "it is absolutely no use trying to convert them by means of hard facts" (214). Thus William Samuel Lilly's Conservative treatise *Idola Fori*, Hulme argues in this article, may be "perfectly sound … it contains the exact truth, and … it exactly represents my own position," but it fails to appeal to the people because it has "no propaganda qualities ... It is sense, but it is not 'catching'" (215). Following Le Bon and Wallas, therefore, Hulme stresses in both essays on "Political Conversion" the need of using "catch-words" that evoke mental images as a method of political persuasion (cf. *The Crowd* 100; *Human Nature in Politics* 40-41).

Although Hulme credits in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" the view of political conversion as an instinctive process to Le Bon and Wallas, the idea that instinct plays a vital function in humans' decision-making can also be found in Bergson's philosophy, specifically Bergson's suggestion in "The Soul and the Body" discussed in the previous chapter, according to which the intellect censors our experiences except the "practically useful" (qtd. in S. Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism* 28). Bergson is mentioned only once in Hulme's *Commentator* articles, but the significance of this solitary reference should not be underestimated. In "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," Hulme refers to Bergson as a

philosopher who, like Le Roy, Croce, Eucken and Simmel, understand "the intellect ...

merely as a subtle and useful servant of the will, and of man's generally irrational vital

instincts" (208). While Bergson does not discuss political conversion anywhere in his work,

the implications of his critique of intellectualism on the formation of ideologies were noted

by Georges Sorel, whose *Reflections on Violence* Hulme translated for publication in 1914. In

Reflections on Violence, Sorel argues that "we do nothing great without the help of warmly-

coloured and clearly-defined images, which absorb the whole of our attention" (164-65). By

utilising the power of language, Sorel maintains, it is possible to create "a body of images

capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments," adding in a footnote that "This is the

'global knowledge' of Bergson's philosophy" (137).[105] As I discussed in the previous

chapter, in "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme argues that Bergson's philosophy provides a

basis for a theory of art, the "motive" of which "is a certain freshness of experience which

breeds dissatisfaction with the conventional ways of expression because they leave out the

individual quality of this freshness" (200). Moreover, in "A Lecture" Hulme emphasises the

importance that words acting as images have on the recipient, a claim which, as analysed in

Chapter 2, can be read through Bergson's suggestion in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that

images are more effective than conceptual language. The task with which Hulme charges the

Conservative propagandist in his essays on politics parallels both the steps taken by the artist

in "Bergson's Theory of Art" and by the modern poet in "A Lecture"; more importantly, his

analysis of the process of conversion echoes Sorel's appropriation of Bergson's metaphysics.

A brief examination of Hulme's proposals for the renewal of the Conservative dialect

confirms this point.

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[105] Sorel makes a similar point in *La Décomposition du Marxisme* 252. In *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel also acknowledges the influence of Le Bon on his thought, describing Le Bon as "one of the most original physicists of our time" (152). For an enlightening discussion of Bergson's influence on Sorel, see Stanley, Introduction to *From Georges Sorel* 47-54.

In "The Art of Political Conversion," Hulme maintains that words gradually lose their meaning and effect, arguing that it is compulsory to continuously enrich language with new and fresh metaphors. The significant difference between this essay and his discussions in "A Lecture" and "Bergson's Theory of Art," is that the emphasis now is not on poetry but on the language used by Conservatives:

> I am firmly convinced that just at the present time Conservative thought has come to an important crisis. The old set of catch-words in which its philosophy embodied itself are now absolutely worked out. They now appeal only to the older generation, to the new they appear to be mere date nothings...
>
> The Socialist is mistaken in thinking that Banbury is saying nothing, that there is nothing behind the phrases, 'rights of property', 'for king and country'. On the contrary, there is, and it is exactly what I or any other young Conservative holds. But I should never dream of expressing myself by those phrases...
>
> The phrases feel dead in exactly the same way as clichés in bad poetry do. It is only by a certain unexpectedness of phrasing that a certain feeling of conviction is carried over, and you feel that the man was actually describing something at first hand ... The point is, that any metaphor or image in time becomes conventionalised, and so ceases to convey any real concrete meaning. (215-16)

For the same reasons that he disapproves of Lilly's *Idola Fori*, Hulme rejects in "The Art of Political Conversion" the language used by Conservative spokespeople, such as Sir Frederick Banbury, the ardent anti-statist and champion of the old order: it is dated and thus fails to appeal to the young intellectuals.[106] What is significant is that in doing so, Hulme advocates

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[106] On Banbury's brand of Conservatism, see Cooper 30 and Reid 149-69.

the use of "fresh" and "unexpected" images in Conservative rhetoric, thus essentially restating the demand he makes in "Bergson's Theory of Art" for "Creation of imagery to force language to convey over this *freshness* of impression" in a different context (201; emphasis in original). He makes a similar point in "Theory and Practice," where he argues that Conservatives should communicate their ideas in a "direct instinctive way," explaining what he means by "direct instinctive way" by turning to Keats, as in "Bergson's Theory of Art." Drawing attention to Leigh Hunt's anecdotal account of the effect that Spenser's poem "Faery Queene" had on the young Keats, Hulme states:

> When he came to the phrase about 'sea shouldering whales', Keats jumped in a state of wild enthusiasm about the epithet 'sea shouldering'. Why? ... Simply for this reason, that the choice of an epithet like this at once communicated in a kind of direct instinctive way to Keats the feeling that Spenser was not merely decorating his story with the conventional adornments in the way of animals that the age approved of … but that he had in his mind a distinct visual sensation, a real personal vision of the thing he was describing, and this resulted in the choice of the unusual epithet in order to convey this feeling over directly. (227-28)

Redeploying his analysis of language in "Bergson's Theory of Art" (cf. 201), Hulme argues in his essays on politics for a reform of Conservative Party propaganda, proposing a change in the vocabulary used by Conservatives. In "The Art of Political Conversion," he states that this was one of the lessons to be learnt from France, where Maurras and his circle had been successful in the 1890s in "restating an old dialect," and therefore in giving the "French Conservative party" "fresh expression" (217). The result of this "restating" of Conservative "dialect," Hulme maintains in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," is that "*L'Action*

Française has made it rather *bête démodée* to be a Socialist ... They serve their victim with the right kind of sauce" (210). Storer thought so too: "Papers like *L'Action Française*, writers like Pierre Lassère [*sic*], and Charles Mauras [*sic*]," he had written weeks earlier, "have succeeded in gathering around them a group of young men who laugh at the old-fashioned dreams of Socialism with the quiet understanding of its power that can best be found in men who were themselves once among its supporters" ("The Conservative Ideal" 139). That was exactly what the Conservatives in Britain had to do. As well as pursuing a much more effective propaganda strategy, however, the reason the *Action Française* were so successful in mitigating their theories in Hulme's view, was because, as he puts it in "Balfour, Bergson and Politics," Lasserre and Maurras "show … vivid interest in the theoretical basis of their position and … make an endeavour to find a thought-out consistent political philosophy" (164). Reforming the Conservative rhetoric, therefore, was not enough; what was needed if the Conservatives were to be successful in converting members of the electorate was a coherent, fully worked-out political philosophy.

4. "Diremption"

Hulme puts emphasis on the need of developing a coherent Conservative ideology in "The Art of Political Conversion," where he suggests that an "ideal" would help the Conservative Party lure back the "young intellectual ... from the arms of the Fabian Society." As he puts it:

> How was he to be converted? ... the peculiar type of motive which will move these
> people ... must be something rather abstract, something in the nature of a Utopia or an
> ideal. It is, then, quite ridiculous to attempt to meet them on a different plane entirely ...
> To be effective you have to meet one vague ideal by another vague ideal...

The problem is to find something which shall come under this category on the Conservative side. (214)

The logic here is that a Conservative "ideal" would not only make it easier to recruit young intellectuals, but that it is equally important for the Conservatives to expose Socialism as a sham ideological position. Thus turning once again to developments in France, Hulme cites the "speech by Jaurès, which ... will become historic, as marking a turning-point in political tendencies" as an example of a strategy the Tories in Britain should follow. The reason why this socialist thinker's lecture was relevant here, Hulme purports, is because Jaurès recognised how an attack on "the dogmas on which the appeal of Socialism to the intellectual is based, the stock of ideas which they had never argued about," is much more effective than "any mere attack on details," making "the ground ... moving under their feet" (217-18).

Hulme's suggested strategy in "The Art of Political Conversion" hides an obvious problem: if the formation of ideologies involves an unconscious process over which we have no control and all beliefs are instinctive, then how can Hulme claim to be able to uncover a false belief? In other words, what is it that enables him to determine which beliefs are false and which are not? Hulme acknowledges this problem in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," where he states that "No one can escape from the law of mental nature ... We may be under the delusion that we are deciding a question from purely rational motives, but we never are" (209). He does not address it directly, however, and nor does Storer. Yet, despite his admission that he cannot have a detached point of view, Hulme does suggest that it is possible through careful examination to uncover the "theory" on which any view is based, describing in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion" his own "change of mind on

the subject of Colonial Preference" (210). This is an important point, for it reveals a great

deal about what Hulme takes to be a good method of reconversion:

> once I had got the theory out fairly and squarely before me, had seen its origin and
>
> history, its influence over me had gone. It was powerful because I really didn't know
>
> that it existed ... the histories I had been brought up on, while never stating this view as
>
> a theory, had yet so stated all events in our Colonial history as to convey it by
>
> suggestion. Always the English were shown as succeeding as by some vague natural
>
> genius for colonisation or something of that kind ... The people who did make definite
>
> plans, like the French ... and later the Germans, were always represented as failing...
>
> It took me years to get rid of the effects of this. For when an idea is put into your head
>
> in this indirect way, you are never conscious of its existence. It just silently colours all
>
> your views. (212)

Hulme's point here is that it is only when one sees the "theory" behind a specific view or

belief that its influence disappears.[107] This possibility is granted by Le Bon and Wallas.

According to Le Bon, a "general belief being little else than a fiction ... can only survive on

the condition that it be not subjected to examination" (149-50). For Wallas, likewise, it is

possible to discover "facts in the world around us" that are not based on "affection and

instinct" through a process of "deliberate observation and analysis" (98). Neither the theory

of Le Bon, nor Wallas' suggestion, are, however, viewed by Hulme as satisfactory. As he

puts it in "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," "no one has given any connected

theory of ... the conversion of the 'intellectual', of the leisured middle-class wobbler" (209).

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[107] Hulme is enigmatic about the moment of his "conversion." In "Art of Political Conversion" from April 1911, he refers to "the days when I was a Socialist," claiming that he was "already converted" to Conservatism (214), while in "Bergson Lecturing" he describes himself as a "Tory by disposition" (155). In the notes and letters Hulme left behind, there is nothing that suggests such moment of conversion. As Ferguson argues, when Hulme is alluding to his own experiences, it is often for rhetorical reasons (102-03).

A more interesting theory of conversion than those of Le Bon and Wallas, and one with which Hulme seems to be in agreement, can be found in Sorel, who devised a method for simultaneously uncovering "illusions" and creating new ones. Unlike Le Bon and especially Wallas, who in Hulme's view "somehow leaves you with a suspicion in your mind that he does still think that the 'intellectual' is in the position which Mill, in the age of naive belief in reason, imagined him to be" (209), Sorel approaches the question of ideological conversion from Bergson's "anti-intellectualist" perspective.

In "Unity and Multiplicity," Sorel argues that "language deceives us constantly as to the true nature of the relationships which exist between things," thus arguing in this essay that "Before commencing a systematic critique of a system, there would often be a very real advantage in finding out the origin of the images which are frequently encountered in it" (253). Sorel explains the aim of this method in his Introduction to *Reflections on Violence*, an essay entitled "Letter to Daniel Halévy," in which he writes of his hope of exposing what he terms the "myths" assisting ideological "utopias," specifically the "myths" which are "founded on the legends of the Revolution" and which preserve "all their value as long as these legends remained unshaken" (31). Sorel elaborates on this myth-exposing method in "Materials for a Theory of the Proletariat," now writing that:

> In order to study the most important phenomena of history, social philosophy is obliged to proceed to a 'diremption,' to examine certain parts without taking into account all their connections with the whole; to determine in some way the nature of their activity by isolating them. When it has attained the most perfect knowledge in this way, social philosophy can no longer try to reconstruct the broken unity. (228)

What Sorel calls "diremption" takes into account both the rational aspects of reality which are deducible through close observation, and the "irrational" aspects which are equally, if not more, important.[108] As Sorel goes on to argue in "Materials for a Theory of the Proletariat," "Rather than representing things, this method produces symbols in which phenomena participate, sometimes in a rather obvious way, sometimes in a distant and complex way, impossible to define" (228). Once the less "obvious" phenomena are uncovered through "diremption", Sorel maintains in "Materials for a Theory of the Proletariat," they can then be analysed by reason: for "Reason should be prepared to use fully our constructive faculties which, after we have practiced 'diremption,' can give us a symbolic knowledge of what history creates by means beyond our intelligence" (228). In this sense, "diremption," as Sorel himself acknowledges, constitutes an elaboration of Bergson's method of intuition, according to which we can access the true nature of the world only through non-intellectual means. In "Letter to Daniel Halévy," Sorel thus states that the great lesson from Bergson is that "The mind of man is so constituted that it cannot remain content with the mere observation of facts, but wishes to understand the inner reason of things" (24-25). This is the logic behind the argument in *Reflections on Violence*: the modern syndicalist movement must learn from the example of the French socialists in the nineteenth century who deliberately perpetrated "myths" based on the French Revolution, for, only with the creation of a "myth" can an ideology be truly effective (71, 135-37). The idea is that, after the political philosopher exercises "diremption," he creates a "myth" which ensures that people always have something to strive after. In order to avoid falling into invalid reasoning – that is, claim that myths are all-powerful and also asserting that they could also be easily exposed – Sorel distinguishes in *Reflections on Violence* between "myths" and "utopias." The difference is that, unlike "myths," "utopias" can be overruled. Sorel thus describes "utopias" as "an

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[108] For an enlightening discussion of Sorel's method of diremption, see Gasiorek 154-55. Gasiorek argues that, read through Sorel, Hulme's "diremptive technique" enables him to put forward a forceful critique of "secular modernity" (159).

intellectual product" and "the work of theorists," as opposed to "myths" which are "expressions of a determination to act" (28). The ideas at the basis of "utopias" are not down to material or historical reasons, as are "myths," but can be traced to purely literary conflicts; as Sorel argues in *Illusions of Progress*, believing otherwise "is an ideological and highly superficial explanation" (9). A "myth," by contrast, is irrefutable; as Sorel argues in "Letter to Daniel Halévy," a "myth" is "identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement" and is thus "unanalysable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical descriptions" (29). Ultimately, through "diremption," Sorel is able to refute the "utopia" of democracy and, most crucially for him, put forward a theory for the creation of "the myth of the general strike" intended to ensure workers' radical and unswerving struggle (*Reflections on Violence* 135-37; cf. "Letter to Daniel Halévy" 24-31).

In the Preface to his translation of *Reflections on Violence*, Hulme singles out as Sorel's most important contributions to political philosophy Sorel's account of how any ideology "naturally includes a system of sentiments" (247nb), as well as Sorel's suggestion that ideologies end up assuming the status of "*pseudo-categories*" (248; emphasis in original). Hulme explains that Sorel shows that ideologies "depend on certain fundamental attitudes of the mind, on unexpressed major premises," adding that "The explanation of how these major premises get into the position of *pseudo-categories* goes a long way towards removing a man from their influence" (248; emphasis in original). Specifically, in the Preface Hulme is concerned with how Sorel analyses in *Reflections on Violence* the position of "liberal Socialists" (248). According to Sorel, Hulme argues, there are "two distinct elements" in "a movement like Socialism ... the working-class movement ... and the system of ideas which goes with it." The socialist movement consists of the workers' movement and the democratic

ideology is associated with socialism: "If we call one (I) and the other (W), (I+W) will be the whole movement" (246). The problem with the "democrat," Hulme writes in the Preface, is that "When ... the denial of the connection between I and W forces the separate existence of (I) on his notice, he at once thinks of it, not as one possible *ideology* amongst others, but as an *inevitable* way of thinking" (247-48; emphasis in original). The lesson from Sorel for Hulme, therefore, is that "It is this notion of the *necessary*, the inevitable character of the *democratic* system of ideas, which is here the stumbling-block ... The ideas which underlie it appear to him to have the *necessary* character of categories" (248; emphasis in original). Translated into a theory of propaganda, Sorel shows that "All effective propaganda depends ... on getting ... ideas away from their position 'behind the eye' and putting them facing one as objects which we can then consciously accept or reject" (248).

As we will now see, both Hulme and Storer use in their articles for the *Commentator* a method similar to Sorel's "diremption". To use Sorel's terminology, in their attempt to reconvert the young Fabian intellectuals, Hulme and Storer penetrate into the "inner reason" of Liberalism; they expose the Liberal position as "utopia," dismissing Liberal ideology as a "pseudo-category." This is an important point, for insofar as Sorel's "diremption" is based on Bergson's intuitionist metaphysic, Hulme's and Storer's strategy of reconversion is revealed to be guided by Bergson's "anti-intellectualist" thesis.

5. The creation of a Conservative ideology

The main ideological force behind Liberalism, Storer and Hulme argue in the *Commentator*, is Progress, by which they mean the belief that humans have an inherent ability to expand their consciousness, grow their awareness and endlessly achieve better conditions of life. Storer, first, writes in his January 1911 essay for the *Commentator* that "So

completely does the conception of the word progress as meaning improvement seem to have imposed itself upon writers generally that it is almost a rarity to find it treated as meaning no more than change or motion," complaining that "Progress is, in fact, a word that thrills them" ("The Romantic Conception of History" 170). A similar argument is put forward by Hulme. In "On Progress and Democracy" in August 1911, Hulme states that the "middle-class intellectual" is driven by "a belief in inevitable 'Progress', the belief that," he explains, "the forces of things are themselves making for good, and that so good will come even if things are left to themselves" (222). Hulme reiterates this view in "Theory and Practice" in November, now claiming that Progress is what allows the Fabians to demand the delegation of political power down to the "lower" classes, the idea being that, given sufficient education, everyone can progress and develop their consciousness (230). In tracing the belief in Progress behind Liberal reforms in "Theory and Practice," Hulme is making an acute historical observation. Collini, Burrow and Freeden have all demonstrated how Liberals had been basing their proposals for social reform on an account of Progress since the late nineteenth century.[109] Aware that the Liberals were using Progress to legitimise their social policies, both Hulme and Storer try in their articles to uncover the origins of Progress, ultimately refuting it by counteracting the Liberals' argument through appealing to history and science. In doing so, they took the first step towards creating a plausible and coherent set of beliefs for the Conservative Party.

Storer and Hulme argue that Progress can be traced back to what Storer describes as the "orgy of Romanticism" that spread through Europe since about the nineteenth century ("The Romantic Conception of History" 170).[110] According to Storer,

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[109] Collini 159-62; Burrow 29, 255; Freeden 48.
[110] Storer makes similar claims in "From Democratic Liberalism to Positive Conservatism" 68; "The Conservative Ideal" 139; and "The Stage Conservative and the Real One" 155.

> Progress ... is the result of a Romantic Conception of History, the conception which is pleased to consider that the Middle Ages were barbarious, and that we can show some kind of advance in civilisation since the days of the Hellenic culture. It is the conception which believes that man is going to alter from inwards outwards, which imagines, with a credulity that really is sublime ... that something will be brought into the world that was not already there. ("The Romantic Conception of History" 170)

In this article, Storer dates "Progress" back to the time of the "great Romantics – Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Hugo, Gautier, Michelet, Sand, De Musset, Dickens, Marx, Lassalle, Morris, Wagner, and where he writes of politics ... Shaw" (170). In "A Tory Philosophy," Hulme maintains that "Progress" goes back to "Turgot and Condorcet, through Saint Simon, down to its present use by the Socialists" (239). Like Storer, however, Hulme purports that it is Rousseau in particular who has transformed "Progress" into a specific political ideology. As he writes in the Preface to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*,

> All Romanticism springs from Rousseau, and the key to it can be found even in the first sentence of the *Social Contract* – 'Man is born free, and he finds himself everywhere in chains.' In other words, man is by nature something wonderful, of unlimited powers, and if hitherto he has not appeared so, it is because of external obstacles and fetters, which it should be the main business of social politics to remove. (249)

Rousseau's "optimistic and romantic view" of humans as essentially good, Hulme goes on, "leads naturally to the characteristic democratic doctrine of inevitable *Progress*" (251; emphasis in original. Cf. 212, 222-24, 230). The exact same idea features also in "Romanticism and Classicism," where Hulme argues that the romantics "had been taught by

Rousseau that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him," also claiming that "This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder." "Here is the root of romanticism," Hulme concludes in "Romanticism and Classicism": that "if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress" (70).

Identifying the teleological belief in Progress as the fundamental presupposition of Socialism, both Hulme and Storer refute it. A common Liberal argument in support of Progress was that evidence of uninterrupted social Progress could be found in history. As Collini demonstrates, this was a line of argument adopted by a long line of Liberal thinkers, including Spencer and Hobhouse (186). In "On Progress and Democracy," Hulme offers a different interpretation of history to Spencer and Hobhouse, arguing that there is nothing in history that proves that civilisations continuously progress or that, indeed, they progress in the right direction. He therefore dismisses the Socialist belief in progress as an illusion. For, what history teaches us, Hulme argues, is that civilisations recur and are constant, which is why, for example, the "little Tuscan Republics" resemble the modern states (223). According to Hulme, evidence for this can be found in Flinders Petrie's study, which, as Hulme interprets it, shows that "civilisation is not constantly increasing, but a recurrent phenomena [*sic*]" (224). Petrie's observation thus demonstrates for Hulme that "arts pass from archaic simplicity through the perfection of the best period to the final decay." More significantly, Petrie's study has implications for politics:

> What is the application of this to politics? Obviously, it sweeps right away that naïve belief in inevitable progress which enables the intellectual to welcome with enthusiasm

the sweeping away of all the checks on an uncontrolled democracy, a phenomena [*sic*]

which otherwise his reason would compel him to detest. (224)

Storer makes a similar point in "The Romantic Conception of History," stating that "In

literature and art, there is nothing that cannot be paralleled in antiquity." Thus, for example,

"Our Post-Impressionists," Storer writes, "are no newer than the art of ancient Greece and

Egypt and Assyria" (170). In another article in May 1911, Storer argues that this shows that

"ideas can no more be destroyed than they can be created"; it also proves that "It is a piece of

pure romanticism to believe that they can. What can happen to them is that they can be

discredited, obscured, temporarily forgotten – and rescued" ("A Basis for Nationalism" 426).

According to Hulme and Storer, evidence that discredits "Progress" can also be found in

science, specifically the theory of evolution of the Dutch geneticist Hugo de Vries. Historians

of ideas have noted how liberal thinkers had been using evolutionary biology as proof of the

"fact" of Progress since the time of Spencer and Mill (Collini 161; Burrow 196). Spencer, for

example, uses the laws of evolution in *The Man Versus the State* to argue against the

interference of the state in the life of individuals, the free actions of whom Spencer describes

as "the vital principle of social progress" (181; cf. *Studies in Sociology* 434). Counteracting

Spencer's argument, Storer argues that De Vries' mutation theory proves that "The changes

in species are effected, not by infinitely subtle alterations, but by leaps, and once a species is

fixed, it remains fixed" ("The Romantic Conception of History" 171). Hulme echoes Storer's

argument in "Theory and Practice," "A Tory Philosophy," as well as in "Romanticism and

Classicism." Thus in "Romanticism and Classicism" he credits De Vries for showing that

"each news species comes into existence, not gradually by the accumulation of small steps,

but suddenly in a jump, a kind of sport, and that once in existence it remains absolutely

fixed" (61), explaining in "Theory and Practice" that the implication of De Vries' theory for politics is that "It is ... no good planning out any state society whose successful working would depend on the assumption that the percentage of intelligent and disinterested people can be indefinitely increased" (230; cf. 242-43).

As well as refuting Liberal ideology by challenging its most fundamental premise, Hulme and Storer are intend on giving the Conservative Party a positive and coherent ideology. It is to this effect that they introduce in their discussion in the *Commentator* a distinction between "romantic" and "classic" politics, linking romanticism to the Liberal position and associating classicism with Conservatism. Even though Hulme is widely regarded by critics as the first to have refuted political "romanticism" by opposing it with "classicism" in Britain, it is in fact Storer who first used the terms of the opposition in a political sense.[111] On 25 January 1911, Storer thus announces in the *Commentator* that "a classical reaction against a century of Romanticism gone mad in art, letters and politics is beginning to arise" ("The Romantic Conception of History" 170). Describing Socialism as "a typical piece of Romanticism in its conception of the whole State, as subordinated to the proletariat part of the State" (170), Storer goes on to define "classicism" in another article in February as the "moment for enthusiasms over things as they are rather than [the] worship and homage to the goddess of things as they never can be" ("On Revolution and Revolutionaries" 202), adding that "the enthusiasms of educated people must be transferred from the revolutionary to the conservative side, from the Romantic to the Classic" (202). Soon afterwards, Hulme began to employ this distinction himself. In "Anti-Romanticism and Original Sin," a lecture delivered to the Heretics Society in Cambridge, probably in March 1911, and which, according to some

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[111] See Martin, *New Age under Orage* 221 and Schuchard, "Eliot and Hulme in 1916" 1085. J. M. Kennedy drew similar parallels between romanticism and Liberalism and classicism and Conservatism to Storer, but, as far as I know, Kennedy's first recorded use of "romanticism" and "classicism" in a political sense is in an article in the *New Age* published some eight months after Storer's article appeared in the *Commentator*. Cf. Kennedy, "Tory Philosophy" 342.

critics, must be understood as the basis of "Romanticism and Classicism" (Ferguson 112;

Howarth 32), Hulme argues that the common idea behind the Liberal position and

romanticism is their shared belief in Progress. More crucially, Hulme sets "romanticism"

against "classicism." Ogden, who was present at Hulme's lecture in Cambridge, wrote this

report in the *Cambridge Magazine*:

> Mr T. E. Hulme ... emphasised the importance of certain words – words of power – in
>
> the formation of prejudices and ideals, and the general clouding of our judgment ... It
>
> never occurred to the Classicists to have any illusions about Progress ... Let no-one
>
> think he denied Progress in the sense of change. Obviously there is change; but what he
>
> did most certainly deny was the particular kind of Progress which was responsible for
>
> the particular kind of emotion characteristic of the professed Romantics of the 'New
>
> Heaven and a New Earth' sort. ("Original Sin – and Mr T. E. Hulme" 201)

The belief in "The New Heaven and the New Earth," which was mocked in the *Commentator*

in 1910 (cf. 10 June 1910: 50), is cast by Hulme in his lecture at Cambridge as the defining

difference between the "Classicists" and those who believe in "Progress." Unlike the Liberals

who are seduced by the emotional rhetoric of progress-talk, the "Classicists," Hulme

maintains, recognise human limitations; and while they accept Progress as an evolutionary

fact, "Classicists" do not postulate it as inevitable, or necessarily a good thing.

In "A Tory Philosophy," published in the *Commentator* in April 1911, Hulme associates

"classicism" with Conservatism in an even more explicit way that in "Anti-Romanticism and

Original Sin." He asserts that "behind the opposed attitudes" of Conservatism and Socialism

"lie two contrasted sets of prejudices and sentiments, two different points of view as to the

nature of man, which I am calling the romantic and the classical" (234). The "romantic" position, Hulme writes in "A Tory Philosophy," corresponds to the view that "man is rather something wonderful, and that so far he has been prevented from exhibiting any wonderful qualities by ... restrictions of order and discipline" (235). In contrast, the "classical" point of view postulates that "Man is by his very nature essentially limited ... incapable of attaining any kind of perfection" (234). What is significant here is that Hulme makes clear that in using "classicism" as a keyword, he is only trying to consolidate all the beliefs associated with Conservatism. In introducing the opposition, he thus argues in "A Tory Philosophy," his intention is "simply ... to show the connection between the sets of adjectives one uses to describe the difference when it becomes more concrete." The difference Hulme has in mind is that between Conservatism and the Liberal or socialist position, which he now argues is best represented by the antinomies "Constancy and Progress," "Order, Authority and Liberty," "Equality and Hierarchy," and "Nationalism and Universalism." These "contrasts," he maintains, "can be shown to follow logically from the fundamental difference of attitude I started with," by which he means the opposition between "romanticism" and "classicism" (239-40). Seen in the light of the demand he makes in his essays on political conversion for the Conservative Party to develop a "thought-out attitude," "A Tory Philosophy" becomes the place where Hulme has finally presented the coherent philosophical attitude for Conservatism which he wanted.

By describing Conservatism as Classicism, Storer and Hulme are able to present the policies of the Conservative Party as diametrically opposite to the Liberal-Romantic position, and thus answer the *Commentator*'s calls for a "decided distinction" between Conservatives and Liberals and for a "clear and defined" ideology ("The Question" 2). What separates the Liberals from the Conservatives specifically, according to the Romantic/Classical distinction,

is their different understanding of human nature. Unlike the "theoretical Radical," Storer writes in "The Stage Conservative and the Real One,"

> The real Conservative ... remembers that a similar condition of things has happened before, that in any organised society constant fluxes are inevitable, that the success of some naturally means the non-success of others … the genuine Conservative ... not only makes the best of things as they are, but accepts with joy the limitations of man. (155)

Hulme also argues that their view regarding human nature is what sets apart the Liberals from the Conservatives. In "On Progress and Democracy," he thus states:

> The Conservative does not believe in progress, of this kind at any rate. He believes that man is constant, and that the number and types of the possible forms of society are also constant…
>
> The Radical ... is the exact opposite of this. A good state of society, I take him to believe, cannot depend on what he would be pleased to call the artificial aid of restraints. It lies in the nature of things in themselves, and is a natural growth. There is a mysterious thing called Progress which is making for good. (222)

In contrast to Liberals, Conservatives, in Hulme's view, acknowledge that human nature is constant, recognising that humans' potential is limited.

For Hulme, nothing represents more accurately and more concisely the "classic" or Conservative attitude towards the world than the dogma of Original Sin. Much has been

written about Hulme's use of the doctrine of Original Sin, with some critics speculating that Hulme was using it in its religious sense, and others simply expressing their bafflement at the occurrence of this idea in his writings.[112] Yet in this context, it is clear that Hulme uses it in a political sense, to encapsulate the "pessimism" of the "classical" worldview which refuses to see humans as perfect creatures, a worldview he associates with Conservatism. Hulme's first known use of the term is in Ogden's report of the "Heretics" lecture. Based on Ogden's report, Hulme seems to have cited "Original Sin" in defence of the idea of human "constancy" and against ideas held by "Progressives from Rousseau to H.G. Wells." The crux of the lecture's argument, according to Ogden, is that with all the rhetoric about "progress," "it is easy to delude oneself into denying the truths of the doctrine of Original Sin amidst the mess of hypocritical Utopias, which ignore the principle of the constancy of Man" ("Original Sin – and Mr T. E. Hulme" 201). Hulme mentions "original sin" again in "A Tory Philosophy," now explicitly casting it as the defining characteristic of the modern Conservative. For the Conservative, he argues in "A Tory Philosophy," "Man is by his very nature essentially limited and incapable of nothing extraordinary"; moreover, "He is incapable of attaining any kind of perfection, because, either by nature, as the result of original sin, or the result of evolution, he encloses within him certain antinomies" (234).

By reducing the Liberal position to the "romantic" belief in Progress and also equating Conservatism with "classicism," Storer and Hulme have devised a complete Conservative reconversion strategy. On the one hand, the Liberal position is exposed as a "typical piece of romanticism," as Storer describes it in "The Romantic Conception of History" (170). There is nothing inherently good – or true – in Liberalism; it is simply a bi-product of a more general current of thought, based on an inaccurate interpretation of history and science. On the other

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[112] See Roberts, *T. E. Hulme* 134; Kishler 96-106; Brooker 62; L. B. Williams 94; and Levenson 84.

hand, by showing how the Conservative position corresponds to a diametrically opposite worldview – "classicism" – Storer and Hulme give the Conservative party what the *Commentator* argued it needed most: a solid and coherent system of beliefs. As Hulme puts it in "A Tory Philosophy," the value of the term "classicism" is that "supposing it is true, it does join up together in some kind of logical sequence all the epithets that one naturally uses in expressing a certain attitude, such as 'order', 'discipline', 'tradition', and the rest of it" (235). In more ways than one, then, Storer's and Hulme's distinction between Romanticism and Classicism emerged as part of a topical discussion in 1911 concerning the future direction of the Conservative party in England. That the opposition was originally employed as part of a call for a plausible conversion strategy for the Conservative party in England is important in two regards. First, it complicates the view that Hulme was "flirting" with the politics of the French radical Right. As I will now show, despite borrowing many ideas from the "classicists" Lasserre and Maurras, Hulme's politics is much closer to mainstream Conservatism than to the *Action Française* or to other proponents of the "radical Right." Secondly, Storer's and Hulme's distinction in the *Commentator* clarifies Hulme's argument in "Romanticism and Classicism," paying attention to the fact that, as Hulme emphasises himself in the lecture, "classic" is primarily a political term. I consider the thesis of "Romanticism and Classicism" in the final section of this chapter.

6. Two kinds of classicism: the *Commentator* and the *Action Française*

While Hulme's and Storer's understanding of romanticism and classicism as two opposing political philosophies was fairly original in the Britain of 1911-12, in France, Maurras and Lasserre, the two most prominent members of the *Action Française* group, had been campaigning for "classicism" in politics since the turn of the century. In *L'Enquête sur la monarchie* (1900) and *L'Avenir de l'intelligence* (1905), Maurras rallies against

"romanticism," an all-encompassing and deliberately vague term which Maurras associates

with everything that he thinks of as disorderly – in arts, philosophy, religion and politics.[113]

Maurras specifically vilifies Rousseau, whom he sees as the chief defender of the foreign

romantic (and republican) ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. In his usual xenophobic

fashion, he derides Rousseau as a "Genevan vagabond" and a "homeless individual," blaming

Rousseau for making romanticism a force in politics (qtd. in Curtis 84).[114] According to

Maurras, romanticism gives a "theology of the individual," which he sees as a threat to social

and political order (qtd. in Sutton 22). He also argues that the "romantic" democratic idea of

majority rule is "ridiculous in its origin, incompetent in practice, and pernicious in its effects"

(qtd. in Gwynn 23), and that "government by the majority," as he puts it in *La Démocratie*

religieuse, is "irréalisable" (82). As a remedy for the advent of foreign romantic democracy,

Maurras champions values that he describes as "classical": in politics, a monarch to replace

the individualism that has ruled France since 1789 and "protective and necessary

inequalities" (qtd. in Tannenbaum 67); in art and literature, pre-Revolution "classicism" to

combat away the "barbarian" influences and signal the return to the art and literature of

medieval Provencal France. Like Maurras, Lasserre also criticises Romanticism. In *Le*

romantisme français (1907), Lasserre berates the eudemonism ("eudémonisme lâche"),

individualism ("psychique de l'individu") and the sentimentalism ("chimerisme sentimental")

of romanticism (311), tracing all these characteristics, like Maurras, to Rousseau.

Romanticism, according to Lasserre, disregards the fact that humans can only prosper in

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[113] See Sutton 1-5, 63-64, 243-44; Curtis 84; Nolte 122-23; and Tannenbaum 48-49.

[114] Maurras' writings are littered with xenophobic and racist remarks, with Maurras rallying against Jewish prophetism, the God of the Jews, Bergson "the Scottish Jew," as well as Protestants, the "franc-maçons" and all "métèques," a neologism Maurras devised to refer to all those who were not French. On Maurras' xenophobia, see Curtis 61 and Nolte 139. There is no evidence that either Storer or Hulme embraced Maurras' xenophobia. Hulme, in particular, reacts angrily to comments made disputing Bergson's "Frenchness." Thus, when Gustav Hübener, a German reader of the *New Age*, endorsed Anatole France's rejection of Bergson on the grounds that he was not truly French, Hulme retorted that "All this racial gossip about philosophers is a little tedious" ("Bergsonism in Paris" 189). In "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics," he dismisses criticisms of Bergson as a "regular Tory sentiment ... that the 'landless man' is a dangerous person, who must be regarded with suspicion" (162-63).

ordered political environments (17-18), arguing that Rousseau is naive in choosing to believe in an ideal world where individuals are free to organise themselves (340; 71-74). Ultimately, Lasserre argues, Rousseau's romantic politics is based on a false belief in Progress (537), with Lasserre contending that Rousseau's views follow from the rejection of "le dogme du péché original [doctrine of original sin]" (325; cf. 16, 263-364) and proposing in place of this romantic interpretation of politics an "esprit classique" (475).

As already mentioned, both Storer and Hulme express in the *Commentator* their admiration for the success Maurras and Lasserre had in France in "restating an old dialect," as Hulme describes the propaganda methods of the *Action Française* in "The Art of Political Conversion" (217; cf. Storer, "The Conservative Ideal" 139). While in Storer's articles in the *Commentator* there is only this one solitary reference to Maurras and Lasserre, Hulme praises the *Action Française* on various occasions in his writings, admitting in "Romanticism and Classicism" that he "was very much in sympathy" with the anti-Romanticism of Lasserre and Maurras (60; cf. 164, 210, 217, 234, 251). A quick glance at Hulme's and Storer's articles in the *Commentator* shows that there are obvious similarities between Maurras' and Lasserre's classicism and Hulme's and Storer's version. Like Maurras and Lasserre, for example, Hulme and Storer side against the individualism of socialism, while, as their opposition to the Lords Reform Bill demonstrates, they are in agreement with Maurras' conviction that hereditary privileges are necessary for the function of the state.[115] More importantly, both Hulme and Storer argue, like Maurras and Lasserre, that the democratic demand for majority rule is based on a false belief in Progress.[116] While the majority of critics interpret Hulme's politics as heavily influenced by the "classicist" values of these French thinkers, however, on close

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[115] See Hulme 219-21; Storer, "The Romantic Conception of History" 170-71, "On Revolution and Revolutionaries" 202-03, and "Our Saviours" 203; Hulme, "On Progress and Democracy" 219-21.
[116] See Hulme 212, 222-24, 230, 242-43; Storer, "The Romantic Conception of History" 170-71 and "The Stage Conservative and the Real One" 154.

inspection it becomes clear that there are significant differences between the "classicist" programme of Maurras and Lasserre and the "classicism" advocated by Hulme and Storer in the *Commentator*.[117] Partly, this is because Hulme's and Storer's version of Conservatism cannot possibly include the Franco-centric classicism of the *Action Française* or its anti-Protestantism.[118] Yet, Hulme and Storer hold fundamentally different ideas to Maurras and Lasserre about how "classicism" should be applied in politics. The classicism which Hulme and Storer propose is not metaphysical in the sense that it is for Maurras, nor is it apocalyptic, like it is for Lasserre. To explain how the classicism of the *Action Française* can be said to be "metaphysical" and "apocalyptic," it is necessary to turn to Maurras' description of France as a "goddess," and Lasserre's discussion of the doctrine of Original Sin.

Unlike Hulme and Storer, Maurras is not satisfied with the hierarchical distribution of powers guaranteed by a strong House of Lords or similar. Rather, Maurras' aim, as he expresses it in *Romantisme et révolution*, is for a unification of reason and emotion under "Déesse France":

> For those who think naturalistically but who wish to bring order into their thinking, a Goddess France presents none of the difficulties inherent in other formulas. It satisfies reason, for, since it represents the fatherland, it resides, as Sophocles would say, in the great laws of the world. Yet this god who is so rational is by no means abstract. One sees and touches France. It has a body, it has a soul: its history, its arts, its charming natural beauties, the magnanimous society of its heroes. But since the goddess may

[117] See, for example, Levenson 85-87; Robinson 107-08; and Carr, "T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'" 101.
[118] Despite declaring himself an atheist, Maurras supported Catholicism on the grounds that "All our favourite ideas – *order*, *tradition*, *discipline*, *hierarchy*, *authority*, *continuity*, *unity*, *work*, *family*, *corporatism*, *decentralization*, *autonomy*, *worker organization* – have been conserved and protected by Catholicism" (qtd. in Arnal 20; emphasis in original). On Maurras' anti-Protestantism, see Arnal 20-23 and Nolte 138-39.

perish, she appeals to our devotion; and since her superhuman life may nevertheless be

extended infinitely, she shares in the eternal majesty … Among such diverse spirits,

only one good could exist: the cult of the fatherland. (qtd. in Nolte 103-04)

While it is easy to imagine how Hulme would object to Maurras' rhetoric here, a more

significant difference between his and Maurras' brand of classicism emerges, however, which

has to do with the metaphysic implied in Maurras' nationalism. As Nolte explains, Maurras'

nationalism can be described as "metaphysical" in that it "established itself in a vacuum

which was once filled with metaphysical convictions regarding the absolute"; according to

Maurras' definition of France as "goddess," Nolte argues, "the patrie becomes the final

absolute, thus simultaneously satisfying the age-old need for worship and the modern desire

for security and demonstrability" (103). Sutton makes a similar point to Nolte, stating that

despite Maurras' vocal opposition to the teleology of Comte's "natural laws," the

"fatherland" becomes in Maurras' nationalist classicism the absolute end towards which all

French people must gear (85-86). This is also true of Lasserre's version of Classicism.

Robinson correctly points out that Lasserre's appropriation of Nietzsche's "paralysis of the

will" in *Le Romantisme français* transforms Lasserre's anti-romanticism into an advocacy of

a model of a Hegelian government, whereby the subjects' common will is embodied in the

Spirit of the State that, for Hegel, is the Absolute goal (110).[119]

    In Storer's and Hulme's classicism there is no place for the "metaphysical" State

advocated by Maurras and Lasserre. Thus, even though Storer emphasises the important role

that the King and the aristocracy have to play in preserving the Empire, he opposes the

"dream of a highly centralised state" for fear that, as he explains, it might result in a

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[119] Robinson makes a persuasive case that Lasserre's reading of Nietzsche's "paralysis of the will" is entirely at odds with Nietzsche's suspicion of the Hegelian State. See 109-10.

"morbidly self-conscious state" ("The 'All-British Shopping Week' and Other Matters"

327).[120] In doing so, Storer reiterates the common right-wing position which treats the

organised welfare state with suspicion, yet, he also argues for what he describes as a "realist"

interpretation of politics: "Foregoing absolute values, either an absolutely right or an

absolutely wrong, to that we adhere" (327). Hulme also insists that the state should not

assume an "absolute" status, maintaining in "On Progress and Democracy" that the state

should always be "independent of the people governed," which is why he insists on a strong

House of Lords (220). In "On Progress and Democracy" Hulme rejects what he calls

"unrestrained" democracy (220-22) in favour of a democracy with restraining or controlling

powers. In his view, discipline and order are necessary in political organisation; as he puts it,

"There must be a hierarchy, a subordination of the parts, just as there must be in any other

organisation" (220). Discipline and order, however, as Hulme goes on to argue in "On

Progress and Democracy," would only ensure, not hinder, the harmonious cooperation

between the various parts of the state: for, "History shows us that it is only by the action of

certain checks that a democratic State can continue to exist in a healthy condition" (220).

Hulme's version of controlled or restrained democracy is built on the model of the United

States' Constitution, which distributes powers between two Chambers, and which Hulme

describes as a "prominent example" of a Constitution that "regulates" democracy by

imposing restraints on it, as "its Senate," Hulme notes, "is the strongest Second Chamber in

existence" (221). The invocation of the United States Constitution in "On Progress and

Democracy" is significant in understanding how Hulme's politics differs from that of

Maurras and Lasserre. As various historians have pointed out, the American Constitution is

"conservative" in the sense that it is based on the supposition that humans are imperfect.[121] In

one of the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison thus argues that any government must be "a

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[120] Storer expresses Imperialistic sentiments in "The Romantic Conception of History" 171, "Our Saviours" 140, and "The Evil of Democracy" 307.
[121] See Gray 33; Allen and Cloonan 55; and Muller, ed. 146.

reflection on human nature," adding that, owing to human nature, "external controls" and "auxiliary precautions" are necessary. Ultimately, the aim of the American Constitution is to minimise the agency of different powers of government. "Were this principle rigorously adhered to," Madison concludes Federalist Paper 51, "it would require that all the appointments for the supreme executive, legislative, and judiciary magistracies should be drawn from the same fountain of authority, the people, through channels having no communication whatever with one another" (319-20). According to Hulme, the American model works because it ensures a "centre of authority ... to a certain extent independent of the people governed" (220). This separation of powers cancels the possibility of populist decisions, while also guaranteeing that, as Hulme states in "On Progress and Democracy," "The wielders of authority must have a tenure which, while it may depend partially, must not depend entirely upon their popularity with the governed" (221). In stark contrast to the "metaphysical" State envisaged by Maurras and Lasserre, Hulme does not demand a return to a pre-Romantic (meaning pre-French Revolution) state in politics, but rather advocates the *preservation* of institutions, specifically the powerful House of Lords, and thus the continuation of constitutional monarchy.

In this sense, Hulme's politics is also not apocalyptic. That is, Hulme does not desire a new (or renewed) classicism. Because humans are limited creatures, any hope for victory of humanity over external and internal limitations, something which Hulme sees as the fundamental supposition of the Liberal belief in Progress, must be an illusion. As already suggested, the idea that humans are imperfect is what lies behind Hulme's use of the doctrine of Original Sin. This Augustinian notion is also evoked by Lasserre, and according to Robinson it is through the writings of Lasserre that we can understand best how Hulme uses Original Sin in his politics (110). There is a distinct difference between Lasserre's and

Hulme's use of the doctrine however, which Robinson fails to recognise. Lasserre discusses

Original Sin in *Le romantisme française*, where it is used as part of his attack on the French

Revolution. Citing Michelet's account of the Revolution as primarily a reaction against the

dogma of "original sin," Lasserre argues that it is time to restore the belief in Original Sin

and, in so doing, restore "les institutions religieuses, politiques et sociales de l'Europe [the

religious, political and social European institutions]" (325). In investing in the doctrine of

Original Sin his hopes for political renewal, Lasserre is using Original Sin in a similar way to

Sorel. Sorel's discussion of Original Sin in *Illusions of Progress* and in "Letter to Daniel

Halévy" is instructive here, for it shows how Lasserre (and Sorel) differ from Hulme in their

respective uses of Original Sin. Like Hulme and Lasserre, Sorel casts Original Sin as the

antithesis of the "optimistic" belief in Progress. From the Renaissance through to the Jesuits,

the "industrial civilization" and the modern bourgeoisie, Sorel argues in *Illusions of Progress*,

runs an "optimism" that is characteristic of the "aristocratic" belief that "permits the

enjoyment of the good things today in good conscience without worrying about tomorrow's

difficulties" (21; cf. 101). He makes a similar point in "Letter to Daniel Halévy," here

explaining that the "people of the West" do not discuss Original Sin because they are

preoccupied with the sense of "optimism" which they inherited from the ancient Greeks and

which "probably arose in the rich and commercial urban populations who were able to regard

the world as a gigantic shop full of excellent things that could satisfy their greed" (12).

Unlike Hulme, however, who invokes Original Sin in support of his argument about human

limitations, Sorel argues in *Illusions of Progress* that the "heroic" qualities currently

suppressed by democratic "optimism" can guarantee progress (48). In contrast to both Sorel

and Lasserre, Hulme uses Original Sin not as part of a revolutionary programme, but, on the

contrary, against it: for Original Sin is in Hulme's view the reason why we should all accept

the limiting and restricting parliamentary institutions and hierarchical organisation of the state.

Although Blanton rightly notes that the doctrine of Original Sin as expounded by Marx, Proudhon and Maurras is revolutionary (199), Hulme is using Original Sin in his essays in a radically different way. The doctrine of Original Sin has been used by many conservative thinkers in England throughout the years, who have alluded to the truth of Original Sin in defence of their beliefs, namely, the idea that humans are imperfect – at a biological, emotional and cognitive level – and that progress is neither inevitable nor necessarily a good thing. As Muller writes:

> Conservatives typically contend that human moral imperfection leads men to act badly when they act upon their uncontrolled impulses, and that they require the restraints and constraints imposed by institutions as a limit upon subjective impulse. Conservatives thus are skeptical of attempts at 'liberation': they maintain that liberals over-value freedom and autonomy, and that liberals fail to consider the social conditions that make autonomous individuals possible and freedom desirable. (10)[122]

This view of human nature and politics, Muller observes, is, in turn grounded in the doctrine of "original sin," which, even though a religious doctrine, is most of the times argued on entirely secular grounds (10). For Quinton, too, the doctrine is central in the work of all the influential British Conservatives, even if some, such as, for example, Hooker, Hyde, Johnson, Burke and Coleridge, use it in a more "religious" way than others – Saville, Halifax, St. John and Hume (10, 14). As the contemporary political philosopher John Gray argues, the doctrine

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[122] A similar point is made by Scruton, who states that whereas "The liberal seeks to emancipate the individual from authority, the conservative seeks to protect authority from individual rebellion" (Introduction to *Conservative Texts* 9).

of Original Sin has been used by generations of conservative thinkers, who understood politics "as a way of coping with the fact of human imperfection." For Gray, this is what guarantees this brand of conservatism its moderation: for, conservatism becomes aggressive only when it embraces the "pursuit of Utopia," a characteristic which Gray finds at the heart of neo-conservatism (32). This is not to say that Hulme is not "aggressive" in his defence of the preservation of the powers of the House of Lords – his declared sympathy, however tentative, with the *Action Française* suggests otherwise. The point, rather, is that Hulme's use of Original Sin, and its implications for politics, differ significantly from the way the doctrine is utilised by Lasserre.

The difference between Hulme's Conservatism and Lasserre's Classicism is also made clear by Hulme's reluctance to agree with Lasserre over Bergson's theories. While the majority of critics maintain that Hulme's meeting with Lasserre marks a turning point in his thought, signalling the beginning of his "authoritarian" phase, a close examination of Hulme's report of the meeting with Lasserre in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics" reveals that Hulme disagrees in a very important way with Lasserre's interpretation of Bergson. In April 1911, on his way back from Bologna, Hulme travelled to Paris where he met Lasserre (Ferguson 88). Reporting his conversation with Lasserre in the *New Age* in November in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics," he uses the occasion to also give a concise account of the *Action Française*'s main ideas. As he explains, the "intellectual discipline" behind the ideology of the *Action Française* is that "laws can be drawn by induction from the experiences of history or by deduction from the elementary knowledge that any man may have of human nature and the exigencies of life in society." Against Progress and the idea that "man is good," the *Action Française*, Lasserre told Hulme, supported the thesis that "there are such things as necessary laws governing societies, and more particularly that these

laws can be discovered from past history." One way in which the "progressives" tried to justify their beliefs in Lasserre's view was by employing Bergsonian phraseology to refute the idea that "there are such things as necessary laws governing societies, and more particularly that these laws can be discovered from past history" (164). According to Hulme's report, Lasserre explained:

> If we ask why, we are told that Bergson has now proved that *Time is real* – that is, that the present moment is a *unique* moment and can be paralleled by nothing in the past … If we point that history does or does not show us any prosperous, strong and conquering nation, which was at the same time a democracy, they retort, history would not be history if it were not change itself and perpetual novelty … To our judgments on politics in the name of reason interpreting experience, the Bergsonians oppose to us what they call 'Life' – life which is always creating and always incalculable. (165; emphasis in original)

"M. Lasserre," Hulme concludes his report, "endeavoured to prove to me that Bergsonism was nothing but the last disguise of romanticism" (165).[123] Hulme, who began writing for the *Commentator* eight months earlier, acknowledges in "Mr. Balfour, Bergson and Politics" that "If I thought this was true, I should be compelled to change my views considerably." Despite bemoaning the fact that "phrases like 'le continu', 'élan vital', and 'la durée réelle'" were being employed by the Liberals indiscriminately, however, Hulme is extremely uneasy with the view that "Bergson ... stands for Democracy" (165, 163). Rather than endorsing Lasserre's idea that Bergson allowed a theory of democracy, he argues that "I can find a compromise for myself … by saying that I think time is real for the individual, but not for the

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[123] On Maurras' and Lasserre's rejection of Bergson, see Curtis 61 and E. Kennedy 80-87.

race." While Bergson proves that it is possible through intuition to be free-creating individuals, Hulme seems to be saying here, it does not follow that an entire nation could possess free will.

Hulme does not elaborate on this statement. Had he done so, he could explain that such possibility is allowed for by Bergson's discrimination between the few – artists and philosophers – who can access their fundamental selves through intuition, and the many – those who cannot break through the practical necessities of the "intellect" on their own (cf. *Time and Free Will* 134; *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 27-29). Like Bergson, that is, we can take Hulme as arguing that the real truth of things is more accessible to some than to others; translated into politics, "truth" is not available to the masses, but requires a few select individuals to guide us there. Of course, if Hulme is indeed using Bergson's theory of duration as proof of the fact that human potential for freedom is limited, that would be turning Bergson's theory of duration – which aims ultimately to create a positive philosophy of time – on its head. However unorthodox it may sound, though, such a view is entirely consistent with Hulme's interpretation of Bergson's philosophy. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Hulme was far more interested in Bergson's method of intuition and in the French philosopher's theory of "intensive manifolds," according to which intuition provides a way into the "flux" of experience, than he was about Bergson's "conclusions," including the "cosmology" of *Creative Evolution* which Lasserre attacked (160). In this sense, it is perhaps significant that nowhere in the *Commentator* is Bergson attacked for harbouring anti-conservative ideas. On the contrary, both *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* are reviewed favourably, with Bergson praised for his decision "to study life as it is, and to substitute, in place of the false, prejudiced systems of his predecessors … a complete

revolution of philosophy" ("Review of *Creative Evolution*" 126).[124] In any case, Hulme

would not be the first to use Bergson's theory of duration against Liberal belief in Progress.

As Mead argues, mixing "free will" with a desire for order is one of the traits of the early

twentieth-century "vitalist" Right (253). Yet, Hulme's insistence that there is no "real time"

for the "race" sets him apart from the radical Right position of Maurras, whose political

programme may have shared much more with Bergson's metaphysics than he would be

willing to admit. As S. Schwartz has demonstrated, in the early twentieth century, vitalism

appealed to both ends of the political spectrum, with those on the Left and Right alike seeing

in the notion of an unfolding *élan vital* the promise for spiritual transfiguration ("Bergson and

the Politics of Vitalism" 278-79). In denying real time to the "race," Hulme rejects the

possibility of spiritual renewal, thus distancing himself from the anarcho-syndicalists of the

New Age group, who, as Mead shows, interpreted vitalism as evidence of a dynamic change

leading progressively to a "New Age" (251). Moreover, Hulme takes also a different stance

from Maurras, who campaigns for the creation of a common national identity under a

"natural, ordered and enlightened élan" (Curtis 250). Even though Hulme's argument in "Mr.

Balfour, Bergson, and Politics" remains undeveloped, it is tempting to think that he employs

Bergson in defence of his own brand of Conservatism, by carrying out a "pessimistic"

reading of Bergson's theory of duration.

7. "Conservative" Poetry

As well as discrediting the common critical view that in his political essays Hulme makes

similar demands to the *Action Française*, acknowledging the context in which Hulme's

notion of "classicism" originates illuminates his argument in "Romanticism and Classicism"

a great deal. Ever since Murray Krieger's "The Ambiguous Anti-Romanticism of T. E.

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[124] Cf. "Review of *Matter and Memory*" 239. The anonymous reviewer of *Matter and Memory* writes that "With extraordinary clearness and precision, the author gradually strips his problem of all unnecessary attributes until he is enabled to place it before his readers" (239).

Hulme" (1953), critics have been focusing on the way that, despite bemoaning romanticism, Hulme's conception of poetry in "Romanticism and Classicism" is in its essence romantic.[125] Specifically, critics trace the "ambiguity" of this lecture's anti-romanticism in the way in which Hulme's call for "sincerity," meaning the unity of the poet with his emotions, is the defining characteristic of the very theory of poetry he rejects, Coleridge's theory of the Imagination (69). What these critics fail to recognise, is that in "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme is using the terms "romantic" and "classic" predominantly in a political sense. Both his refusal to apologise in the lecture "for dragging in politics," and his insistence that his use of the term "romanticism" is justified in as far as it is understood as the view "associated with certain political views," suggest that the terms have a political valence (60). This complicates the "ambiguity" of Hulme's literary anti-Romanticism a good deal, allowing for the view that in "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme is rejecting not romanticism's creative method, but the ideology on which, in his view, it is based, and which also underwrites "utopian" politics. This, in turn, supports my argument in the previous chapter, according to which Hulme agrees with the basic tenets of Coleridge's theory of the Imagination, disagreeing only with its "idealist" metaphysic. While this leaves Hulme open to the charge of eclecticism, understanding "Romanticism and Classicism" as the place where Hulme applies his "classicist" politics onto poetics goes a long way to explaining the lecture's "ambiguous" anti-romanticism.

The argument in "Romanticism and Classicism" follows closely Hulme's and Storer's defence of Conservatism in the *Commentator*. The premise is that political ideologies fall into one of two contrasting worldviews or "attitudes": romanticism and classicism (62). As in the *Commentator* articles, in Hulme's lecture romanticism is defined as the worldview associated

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[125] See Krieger 300-14; Bayley 49-58; Kermode, *Romantic Image* 141-163; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 46; Primeau 1104-22; Harmer 175-77; and Howarth 34-44.

with Progress and with the belief in human perfection. It is a view, Hulme argues, that is premised on Rousseau's idea "that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him" and the concomitant belief shared by Rousseau's followers that "something positive could come out of disorder" (61). Classicism is its opposite. According to the "classical" view, "Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant"; moreover, "It is only by tradition that anything decent can be got out of him" (61). Explaining that he uses the terms as "political catchwords" (60), Hulme moves on in "Romanticism and Classicism" to "shirk the difficulty of saying exactly what I mean by romantic and classical in verse" (62). Romanticism has been the dominant ideology behind art for a century, he claims, and, as a result, it has come to be regarded as both the norm and the standard for poetry. The idea is the same as in his articles on political conversion: we do not make rational, independent decisions, but we are rather a product of a specific ideology suggested to us in an unconscious way (cf. 217-28). As in the *Commentator* articles, therefore, Hulme states in the lecture that "no one, in a matter of judgment of beauty, can take a detached standpoint," adding that "The amount of freedom in man is much exaggerated" (64). In a similar way to the *Commentator* articles, however, where, as I suggested earlier, Hulme is able to unravel the reasons behind Liberal beliefs through exercising a kind of "diremption," in "Romanticism and Classicism" he detects a unified Romantic ideology behind the poetry of the nineteenth century, made evident from nineteenth-century poetry's subject, language and tone:

> The romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite; and as there is always the bitter contrast between what you think you ought to be able to do and what man actually can, it always tends, in its later stages at any rate, to be gloomy. (62)

> [I]n romantic verse you move at a certain pitch of rhetoric which you know ... to be a little high-falutin [*sic*]. (63)

> The essence of [Romantic] poetry ... is that is must lead ... to a beyond of some kind. (66)

In contrast, what Hulme defines as "classical" verse proceeds from the exact opposite principles: "classical" poetry is not interested in evoking grand themes and epic subjects but only in the "earthly"; it does not use "vague" words; and it avoids sounding idealistic. Thus the "classical" poet "remembers always that he is mixed up with earth ... he never flies into the circumambient gas" (62); he never moves above "a certain pitch of rhetoric ... The kind of thing you get in Hugo or Swinburne" (63); and he also refuses to be sloppy and sentimental, keeping his poetry "always perfectly human and never exaggerated" (66).

As I discussed briefly in Chapter 2, many of the demands Hulme makes in "Romanticism and Classicism" anticipate ideas he expressed in "A Lecture." Like the modern poet of "A Lecture," for example, the classic poet in "Romanticism and Classicism" rejects idealised rhetoric and ridicules the belief that poetry is a "beyond of some kind" (66; cf. 52). Moreover, just like Hulme's modern poetry does not deal with "big things" and "epic subjects" (53), the classic poetry described in this late lecture aims to present the "earthly." Most importantly, the method followed by the "classical" poet is in essence the same as that of his "modern" counterpart, both using intuition to break through conventional language, thus achieving "direct communication" with the reader (55, 70). Unlike in "A Lecture," however, where the primary aim is that "some vague mood shall be communicated" (53), the

emphasis in "Romanticism and Classicism" is on "accurate, precise and definite description" (68). "Accuracy" and "precision" are, of course, the very qualities demanded by Hulme in "Bergson's Theory of Art." In fact, the "classical" poet is identical with the artist described in "Bergson's Theory of Art," who struggles with language in order to represent the "individual curve" which he sees in his mind, and whose "original sincerity" becomes the standard by which his success is measured (cf. 199-200; 68-69). The significant difference is that in "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme's "Bergsonian" poet is metamorphosed into the Conservative citizen of the *Commentator* articles: he is "always faithful to the conception of a limit" and "remembers ... the limits inside which you know man to be fastened" (63). This transformation is the reason why the lecture appears to contain incongruous aesthetic demands. In "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme rejects what he sees as nineteenth-century poetry's inclination to talk about the "infinite," interpreting it as the result of a specific romantic ideology based on "Progress" and human perfection. Re-valorising Coleridge's distinction between Secondary Imagination and Fancy, Hulme declares the "weapon" of classic poetry to be Fancy, not Imagination (59). In doing so, he applies a political meaning to these terms. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge allows that, while the Imaginative poet reflects the divine creator, the poet who uses Fancy is merely choosing the most appropriate literary devices in order to illuminate his experiences. In opposing romanticism as "spilt religion" (62), Hulme decries Imagination, instead privileging Fancy, which, as Coleridge describes it in *Biographia Literaria*, deals with the "fixities and the definites [*sic*]" (1: 305). As noted in Chapter 3, the method Hulme proposes for classic poetry adheres to Coleridge's definition of Imagination: like Coleridge's Imaginative poet, the classic poet aims for what Hulme describes as "vital or organic" perception (72). In the previous chapter, I explained how Bergson's metaphysics, insofar as it is based on empirical evidence, allows Hulme to uphold romantic notions of creation while, at the same time,

offering a method for poetry that is, in his view, more "definite" than Coleridge's

Imagination. That this "ambiguity" in his argument should not be read as a contradiction is

also made clear by the fact that Hulme's position in the lecture is not significantly different to

that of Coleridge himself. Indeed, no other poet resembles the "classical" poet of

"Romanticism and Classicism," at once "Bergsonian" and Conservative, more than

Coleridge. While in *Biographia Literaria* he asserts the freedom of the individual for

unhindered creation – "the infinite I AM" (1: 304) – in *The Friend* Coleridge advocates

politics as the art of the *possible*. He thus opposes any political theory that is rooted in the

speculative and the general, and for this reason he rejects the abstract principles of Rousseau

and the Rights of Man (165). Moreover, endorsing the view that human nature is limited,

Coleridge argues in *The Friend contra* Rousseau for a theory of government that does not

exaggerate human capacity for reason and, thus, for freedom (185-87).[126] By 1830, Coleridge

was of the opinion that metaphysics has no place in politics and that the priority for all

Englishmen should be to conserve the institutions that have, as he puts it in *On the

Constitution of the Church and State*, "formed themselves out of our proper needs and

interests" (23). In this way, as Calleo notes, Coleridge is able to stand his ground against the

utopian politics of Rousseau, Paine and Cartwright; but because Coleridge believed in

individual free will, Calleo adds, he was also able to refute the despotism of the Physiocrats

and the coercive politics of Hobbes, which exaggerates the maliciousness of humans in the

same way that Rousseau emphasises their capacity for freedom (64-71). Far from a slip,

therefore, Hulme's tacit approval of Coleridge in "Romanticism and Classicism" might be a

lot more indicative than it has so far been assumed.[127]

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[126] On Coleridge's conservative politics, see Coleman 107-31 and Magnuson 51-70.
[127] Hulme would not be unique in interpreting Coleridge to his own purposes. As Marilyn Butler shows, Coleridge's political thought has long been utilised by intellectuals of all political convictions (92).

 A similar connection between Conservative politics and "classicism" in literature is drawn

by Storer in the Introduction to his 1912 edition of William Cowper's poems. It is unfortunate

that this essay has been neglected by critics, for it is a great example of how aesthetics and

politics converged in the early twentieth century.[128] As such, Storer's essay helps us

understand Hulme's argument in "Romanticism and Classicism," which, I suggest, colludes

Conservatism with aesthetic "classicism." Tracing "literary romanticism" to "the Declaration

of the Rights of Man and the Social Contract" (xvi), Storer defines romantic art in this

introductory essay as art that "always prefers the extraordinary to the ordinary, the less

natural to the natural," complaining that Romantic poetry "would rather deal with the infinite

than with the finite," and arguing that by choosing to ignore the "finite" nature of man,

Romanticism creates "poetry of disorder and tumult" (vii, xx). In contrast, "classicism,"

Storer argues, "does not think to make a better world than its creator" (xv). A paradigmatic

"classic" poet for Storer is Cowper, who, Storer reminds his readers, "Whig though he called

himself ... had no love for revolutionaries" (xvi). Storer's use of Cowper as a model for the

modern "classic" poet is significant. According to Coleridge, Cowper is "the best of modern

poets" and the first to reconcile "the heart with the head" (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 6), an

assessment repeated by later critics including Davie and Newey, both of whom find among

Cowper's poetic achievements his combination of introspective remarks with realistic

presentation.[129] In his Introduction, Storer identifies similar traits in Cowper as these critics.

Unlike Shelley or Keats, he argues, Cowper avoids the "passion" and "ecstasy," the

"exaggerations and grandeurs" and the "tenderness and sentiment" of the Romantics, instead

choosing to describe "the obvious thing, the average thing, the ordinary thing," as he is "not

taken in by the attitudes of sublimity [*sic*], the impertinent assumptions of divinity with

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[128] As far as I know, the only critic who acknowledges Storer's 1912 Introductory essay is Carr, who notes in *Verse Revolutionaries* that Storer's "comments … predate the savage criticism that Pound himself, rather later, came to make" (380), without, however, Carr pursuing this observation further.

[129] See Davie 53-60 and Newey x-xi, 2-3.

which romantic art abounds" (xviii, xii, xv, xx). For Storer, therefore, Cowper has all the conservative traits described by Hulme in "Romanticism and Classicism." Moreover, like the classic poet in "Romanticism and Classicism," Cowper, in Storer's view, "manages to interrupt our staticism [*sic*] or state of non-vision by some commonplace, some minutia, some trifle by which he charms us through forcing us to admit its importance" (xii-xiii). Charting a process that recalls the artist in "Bergson's Theory of Art," Storer presents Cowper as moving inside an object and capturing its internal landscape. Through his "touches of poetic accuracy, the sureness of his observation, and the directness with which he conveys the impression to our minds," Storer explains, Cowper is able to present us with an accurate description of an object without any of the "distortion which makes and also mars so much romantic art" (xviii). Thus, in Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism" and Storer's Introductory essay on Cowper, the demand for undecorated language and the emphasis on accurate, precise and definite presentation of objects or ideas in the poet's mind gain a distinctly political valence.

8. Conclusion

By returning attention to the debate that took place in the pages of the *Commentator* in the second decade of the twentieth century, and by focusing specifically on Hulme's and Storer's contributions, we are able to understand Hulme's "classicist" politics in an informed way. The important part that Bergson plays in Hulme's formulation of a Conservative propaganda strategy discredits the common critical position that Hulme abandoned Bergson as he came closer to Maurras and Lasserre. As I have shown, in his essays on politics Hulme is drawing on the theories of the *Action Française* in order to develop a plausible reconversion strategy, but it is inaccurate to ascertain that his politics is similar to the politics of Maurras or Lasserre. Although he advocates a hierarchical form of government, Hulme's conviction that

human nature is limited does not allow him to make "utopian" demands which, according to Gray, is what leads to Conservatism in its most aggressive form. Rather, his belief in Original Sin leads him to become a proponent of the American constitution. Finally, acknowledging the context in which Hulme's famous distinction between Romanticism and Classicism originates, illuminates his theory of poetry a great deal, and highlights the extent to which in the early modernist period politics freely intersected with poetry.

Chapter 5

Essays on Art: Abstraction and Anti-Humanism

1. Introduction

Following a year's absence from journalism, in December 1913 Hulme published a review in the *New Age* of Jacob Epstein's exhibition at the Twenty-One Gallery in London. The article on Epstein was the first of eight essays on contemporary art that Hulme wrote for the *New Age*, his last piece of art criticism appearing in July 1914. During this time, he also delivered "Modern Art and its Philosophy," a lecture in which he elaborates on the characteristics of "geometrical" art, while his biographer gives evidence of an unfinished book on Epstein that Hulme began writing in late 1916 (Ferguson 247). Hulme had expressed an interest in the visual arts on a number of occasions earlier in his career. In "A Lecture," he refers to Whistler's recording of momentary impressions in his Impressionist paintings as an example of a distinctly modern method of art (53); in "Romanticism and Classicism," he credits Raphael, Titian, Turner and Constable with introducing original and innovative forms in painting (64); and, finally, in "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme refers to the art of Constable and Giotto, Binyon's "little book on Chinese art" and Berenson's study of the Florentine painters as part of a discussion about the nature of artistic creation (194, 196,

203).[130] Now, however, rather than drawing on the visual arts to sustain points he was making about poetry or Bergson's metaphysics, he was focusing his attention exclusively on the visual arts, directing all his energy to discussing the latest developments in the fields of painting and sculpture. From his position as a leading art critic for the *New Age*, in his essays on art Hulme launched one of the most combative defences of the artistic experiments of Epstein. Moreover, proselytising for "geometrical" art, Hulme became, according to Bomberg, a leading spokesman of modern abstract art in the London of 1913-14.[131]

The years immediately before the outbreak of the Great War were an exciting time for art in London. Critics and art historians have described in detail how during this time "Old" and "New" conceptions of art collided, with great repercussions for both visual and literary modernism (Scholes 34-35; Martin, *New Age under Orage* 134-37). Such was the force and pace of this collision, that Hulme's emergence as an art critic can in many ways be explained as the natural reaction of an intellectual to the events circumscribing the period. The years 1910-14 were also a time of friction among the various artistic coteries in London. As critics have stressed, in praising the art of Epstein, Lewis, Bomberg and their circle, Hulme is taking sides in the war that broke between the artistic factions of Roger Fry and Lewis.[132] At the

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[130] For a useful discussion of how Hulme's early references to art instruct his art criticism, see Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 62-65. In "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme claims that the aim of all art is "direct communication," citing in support of his argument Berenson's "book on the Florentine painters," specifically, "The part ... where he explains the superiority of Giotto to Duccio" (203). Csengeri (ed., 466n3), Robinson (249n32) and Beasley ("'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 71n4) take this as a reference to Bernard Berenson's *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1896), with Beasley rightly pointing out that in *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* Berenson does not compare Giotto to Duccio, but to Cimabue, and concluding that "Hulme misremembers." It is much more likely, however, that Hulme has another text by Berenson in mind. In vol. 2 of *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (1894-1907), an expanded version of *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, Berenson compares Giotto with Duccio (57), arguing that the essential element in Renaissance art is a "particular life-communicating quality" (33).

[131] Qtd. in A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 116. Cork goes as far as suggesting that artists such as Lewis and Epstein were putting Hulme's theories "into practice" (187). In *Blasting and Bombardiering*, Lewis claims that Hulme's art criticism greatly influenced Epstein's art (107).

[132] See Cork 55, 92, 130, 146-50; Tillyard 233; and Beasley "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 62. See also Fry's letter to Duncan Grant, probably from January 1914, in which Fry writes that "The Lewis group have got hold of the *New Age* critic" (378).

same time, though, Hulme's discussion of art exceeds purely artistic concerns. Drawing on the anti-materialist art theories of Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer, Hulme argues that art is always the expression of a particular worldview that also infiltrates politics, science and religion. While the old "vital" art is the expression of Renaissance humanism, the modern "geometrical" art, he maintains, signals a move towards anti-humanism and thus heralds the end of the Renaissance doctrine of Progress and the belief in human perfection. For Levenson, Hulme's praise of "geometrical" or abstract art marks yet another turning point in his thought, with Hulme seen as abandoning what Levenson describes as the "subjectivist poetic" of "A Lecture," which, inspired by Bergson's metaphysics, puts emphasis on the poet expressing his individual view of the world, in favour of "anti-subjectivism" or "objectivism" (80-84, 100). According to Levenson, this turn to "objectivism" shows that by 1913-14 Hulme substituted the aesthetic and political classicism advocated in "Romanticism and Classicism" with a more authoritarian, more radical anti-humanism (98-99). A. Jones, Robinson and Donahue all concur with Levenson, arguing that in his art criticism Hulme abandons Bergson's philosophy, embracing a much more severe form of authoritarianism.[133]

This chapter examines Hulme's art criticism in an effort to delineate the ways in which claims he makes in his essays on art relate to other ideas in his work. I begin by discussing the developments in art in early twentieth century. A survey of the contemporaneous art criticism reveals the proximity of Hulme's defence of abstract art to demands made by the Post-Impressionist critics, a connection which complicates the view that he himself promoted, according to which he had nothing in common with Fry or Bell.[134] Moreover, the

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[133] A. Jones, "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer, and the Urge to Abstraction" 1-7; Robinson 119-20, 127-28; Donahue, ed. 17.

[134] The proximity of Hulme's ideas to the criticism of Fry and Bell has been recognised by Beasley, who shows how Hulme "struggled to move beyond the critical framework so influentially coined by Fry and Bell" ("'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 67). For Hulme's attacks on Post-Impressionist criticism, see 263-64, 294 and 282.

fact that he participated in the general reaction of critics against Renaissance forms of art demonstrates that in rejecting the "Renaissance" he was as much protesting against its Humanist ideology as he was expressing the broader dissatisfaction of his generation against Renaissance representationalism. Finally, this focus also shows that Hulme agrees with the Post-Impressionists (whose debt to Bergson has been demonstrated by various critics) that the artist should, above all, aim at a personal and original expression; this goes some way to disproving Levenson's claim that Hulme's aesthetic was thoroughly "anti-subjectivist."[135] I then proceed to discuss Hulme's claim that the new geometrical art heralds the endpoint of the Renaissance "general attitude." *Contra* Levenson, I argue that Hulme's anti-humanism is in essence the same as the anti-romantic worldview advocated in the *Commentator* articles and in "Romanticism and Classicism," and that, therefore, Levenson's view that Hulme dismissed classicism as a "half-measure" and "insufficiently radical" is inaccurate (98-99). In the final part, I argue that Hulme's anti-humanism is not as "reactionary" as Levenson and Robinson insist. Both his defence of abstract art on the grounds that it enables the artist to achieve his personal expression, and his suspicion of extreme abstraction, demonstrate that, despite relying extensively on Worringer's theories, Hulme's theory of art is significantly different to that espoused by the German art historian. More crucially, Hulme's insistence that the artist always expresses his personality through archaic forms means that his conception of art eschews the severe ideological implications invested by Worringer in his model of abstract art.

2. Against the Renaissance: experimentation with "primitive" forms

In the early years of the twentieth century, visual artists were steadily abandoning representationalism in favour of abstract or "primitive" forms. Reacting to what Charles

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[135] On Post-Impressionism's debt to Bergson's philosophy, see Gillies 57, Goldman 3-7, and Randall 38.

Altieri has named the "logic of the window" (395), meaning the reproduction in art of equivalences in nature, modernist painters and sculptors turned to non-representational Asian and African art. The turn to "primitivism" that started years earlier with Gauguin and Cézanne reached new heights in the beginning of the century in the works of artists such as Modigliani, Picasso and Brancusi, whose works were a source of inspiration for the Paris-based Epstein, Lewis and Gaudier.[136] From 1910 onwards, painters and sculptors including Ginner, Gore, Lewis, Gill, Nevinson, Bomberg and Epstein, all began to experiment with archaic forms. Despite their different approaches to art and their later personal spats, what these artists had in common, as both Bullen and Beasley have shown, was that, joined together in opposition to Impressionism and Naturalism, they were seeking new mediums of expression.[137] Though not an artist himself, Hulme placed himself at the centre of this artistic reorientation towards abstract art. His famous Tuesday evening soirees at Frith Street were attended by artists from all the different coteries and featured extensive conversations about the latest developments in art. As Nevinson, Davies and Fletcher later remembered, Hulme provided a theoretical basis for the new movement of abstract art, while also playing an active role in bringing artists together and encouraging them to seek new forms of expression.[138]

When the formal experimentation of this new art was rejected by some as mere imitation, Hulme quickly took to defending the moderns' use of "primitive" forms, specifically the art of Epstein.[139] In his earliest known piece on art, an unpublished essay entitled "Jacob Epstein

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[136] See Cork 11, 176-77; Friedman 148-50; and Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* 176. Epstein discusses the influence of primitive art on his work in *Let There Be Sculpture* 35-39, 165 and *The Sculptor Speaks* 104-07. See also Bassani's and McLeod's fascinating discussion of Epstein's collection of primitive art and of what his collection of primitive art says about Epstein's own work (16-18).

[137] Bullen, ed. 32-34; Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 59-61.

[138] See Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 58.

[139] Hulme refers specifically to the criticisms of "C.B." in the *Athenaeum* on 6 Dec. 1913 and the article by "E.M." in *Illustrated London News* for 13 Dec. 1913 (255). For the press' reaction to Epstein's exhibition, see Cork 185. For critics' reaction to the new "primitive" art, see Martin, *New Age under Orage* 131-32; Cork 15-

at the 21 Gallery," Hulme praises the artist's experimentation with "archaic elements" (8135.351). Epstein's turn to African and Polynesian work and his use of "the simplifications of those arts in the past," Hulme argues in this unpublished essay, constitutes a break from "naturalistic arts, like the Renaissance and classical art." As he goes on to claim, it is this break that has enabled Epstein to achieve the much more interesting "expression" that is only made possible through the use of "primitive" forms. Hulme has in mind specifically a drawing by Epstein that was on show alongside Epstein's Flenite carvings at the Twenty One Gallery.[140] The drawing, Hulme maintains, achieves an "atmosphere" that is effective, because wholly anti-Impressionistic: "There is nothing vague about this atmosphere," he writes; "it is as rigid and definite as the figure itself." Hulme concludes that, if used in the right way, the "monumental art of the past" can be used to a "thoroughly modern" effect, thus liberating the modern artist from the restrictions of Renaissance art (8135.351-53). In "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," largely a revision of this unpublished essay, he again claims that the "use of formulae taken from another civilisation" has a liberating effect on modern artists. Epstein's Flenite sculptures, Hulme asserts, are not imitations of "Easter Island Carvings" indicative of a "lack of individuality in the artist"; rather, they represent "a constant and permanent alphabet," used by the artist to achieve the "natural expression of the feeling" he wanted (256-57). More crucially, Epstein's work in Hulme's view is a refutation of the "modern feeling" of the Renaissance, and thus a step towards a different kind of art. A similar point is raised in his second essay on art, a review of the Grafton Group show at the Alpine Club, published in January 1914, in which Hulme praises the works of Roberts, Gaudier and Epstein. These artists, he writes in "Modern Art I: The Grafton Group," and Epstein in

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18; Bullen, ed. 13-21; Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* 64-67; and Gruetzner Robins 15-16.

[140] Different titles for this drawing are given by Beasley and Scholes. While Beasley suggests that the drawing Hulme is describing in the unpublished essay on Epstein is "Creation," Scholes refers to it as "Generation." See Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme" 66 and Scholes 50. Such drawing is not listed in Silber's catalogue *The Sculpture of Epstein*.

particular, have achieved "a new direction" and "an intenser perception of things" by re-employing archaic formulae and in this way, they have managed to break away from the "dregs of the Renaissance" (265-66).

Hulme's suggestion that in 1913-14 modern art was moving away from "Renaissance" art must be seen as part of a broader aesthetic shift occurring in early twentieth-century art in Britain. Like Hulme, other critics were rallying against what they saw as "Renaissance" arts at this time, a broad term used to describe representational or "naturalistic" arts, such as Impressionism. Even though, as I explain further below, Hulme's campaign against the Renaissance was driven by ideological reasons, it was also in line with the contemporaneous attempts of Victor Reynolds, Roger Fry and Clive Bell to develop a new aesthetic for modernity and to break from what they interpreted as the "Renaissance" conception of art. Turning to these critics' defence of experimentation with "primitive" forms helps us see how in praising the art of Epstein, Hulme was aligning himself with Reynolds and the Post-Impressionist critics; this, in turns, complicates the common critical view that Hulme's rejection of the Renaissance was motivated by purely ideological reasons.

Reynolds's contribution to the turn away from representational art in early twentieth century has been regretably overlooked by critics. However, as Scholes has recently pointed out, Reynolds was among the first in Britain to present a programme for "radical Modernism," calling on artists to experiment with archaic forms (36). Reynolds' defence of anti-representationalism was part of the debate that started in the *New Age* in April 1910, the venue which hosted Hulme's art criticism. When Huntly Carter, the resident art critic of the journal, recommended an art supplement to discuss "all that concerns the welfare and prospects of art" (1), Reynolds declared representationalism, which he described as "the

fundamental principle of impressionism," "deader" than the Pharaohs. "Nothing is more

hopeless than a moribund tradition," Reynolds wrote, "while on the other hand the oldest,

most 'primitive' sources ... have ever been the seeding ground and the hope of future

progress." He thus went on to rebuke critics' sneers at Picasso's work in what, as Scholes

notes, is the first full-length appreciation of Picasso in English.[141] In Picasso, Reynolds

argues, "one sees an almost isolated instance of the power to react against the current

tradition." More specifically, Picasso's achievement for Reynolds lay in the way in which in

his decorations "all element of representation is thrown overboard, and an attempt [is] made

to express emotion of form by the use of an extremely large and simple curve" (7-8).

As well as Reynolds' defence of Picasso, Hulme's praise of modern artists'

experimentation with "primitive" or archaic forms echoes Storer's derision in the *New Age* in

late 1910 of the artists who "imagine that the object of a picture is to represent accurately, or

at least plausibly, some material object ... As if there could be any artistic merit in the mere

multiplication of inadequate representations of material objects" ("Post-Savages" 215).[142]

Here, Storer is responding to the controversy caused by Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist

exhibition which opened in November, by endorsing the Post-Impressionists' argument that

the future of art lies away from representationalism. "Manet and the Post-Impressionists," as

this exhibition was called, was a significant step taken towards the development of abstract

art in Britain, introducing to the London public the works of artists who refuted, according to

the exhibition catalogue, the "dogma" of the "close imitation of nature" (MacCarthy, "The

Post-Impressionists" 96). The Post-Impressionists, MacCarthy writes in his Introduction to

the show, rediscovered the "fundamental laws of abstract form" that naturalistic art had

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[141] See Scholes 37.

[142] Storer repeatedly praises Gauguin in his articles in the *Commentator*, while he also expresses his fascination with Picasso's experimentation with primitive forms. See "The Renaissance of the Nineties" 108 and "Art Notes" 18 Oct. 1911: 348; 20 Dec. 1911: 76; 3 Apr.: 299; 1 May 1912: 364; 23 Oct. 1912: 347; and 4 Dec. 1912: 43.

entirely neglected and thus show the way to "a return to primitive, even ... barbaric art" ("The Post-Impressionists" 98).

Similar ideas were expressed by Fry. In "The Grafton Gallery" in November 1910, Fry rejects the "photographic vision," "the tempered realism" and the "science" of Impressionism, interpreting Impressionism as the culmination of the Renaissance aesthetic (121). Modern artists in Britain, Fry argues in this essay, should embrace the aesthetic of the Post-Impressionist masters – Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, Matisse and Derain – whose work, as Fry puts it, constitutes "the latest, and ... the most successful, attempt to go behind the too elaborate pictorial apparatus which the Renaissance established in painting" (121). Praising specifically Cézanne and Gauguin for re-introducing "primitive" forms in art, Fry thus urges the modern artist to "throw away all the science with which the Renaissance and the succeeding centuries have endowed mankind" (121). As he explains:

> Why should he wilfully return to primitive or, as it is derisively called, barbaric art? The answer is that it is neither wilful nor wanton but simply necessary, if art is to be rescued from the hopeless encumbrance of its own accumulations of science; if art is to regain its power to express emotional ideas, and not to become an appeal to curiosity and wonder at the artist's perilous skill. (121)

That is, if modern artists want to retrieve the essence of art, according to Fry, they have to incorporate "primitive" forms in their works; as he writes, "we must begin at the beginning, and learn once more the A.B.C. of abstract form" (122).

The Post-Impressionists' emphasis on the use of "primitive" forms by modern artists formed a central part of the argument presented by Clive Bell, Fry's long-term collaborator, in *Art*. Published in March 1914, in *Art* Bell argues for "a return to first principles" (43-44). According to Bell's scheme of art history, the development of art constitutes a downhill movement from the "heights" of primitive art to the "flats" of the Renaissance. Thus Bell traces the "long ... imperceptible fall" of art from Sumerian sculpture, pre-dynastic Egyptian and archaic Greek art, the "Wei and T'ang masterpieces," "early Japanese works," the "primitive Byzantine art of the sixth century" and "the mysterious and majestic art that flourished in Central and South America," to the "Classical Renaissance" of Giotto and Leonardo and the way it has survived in the works of Pater and Symonds (23; 123-29).[143] This reversal of the traditional hierarchy aims at refuting what Bell sees as the dominant critical standards in early twentieth-century art, specifically the common understanding of art history as the history of representational ability. Like Fry before him, who holds that it is wrong to dismiss primitive art as lacking in technique (cf. letter to *Burlington Magazine* 375), stressing that non-naturalistic art "must be judged in themselves and by their own standards" (qtd. in L. B. Williams 119), Bell argues in *Art* that the simple forms of primitive art cannot be dismissed as mere proof of primitives' inability to produce skilful representations. Rather, "primitive" artworks in Bell's view are the result of a conscious deliberation, "a passionate desire to express their sense of form" and, thus, to provoke through this form their emotion (39; cf. 62). Claiming that the primitives lacked skill or ability was therefore simply a "wilful distortion" (24). Ultimately, Bell's point in *Art* is that whether it is "from want of skill or want of will" that primitive art was created is irrelevant: for what matters most is that the "primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful – the creation of form" (25; cf. 8, 154).

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[143] See also Fry's review of Bell's *Art*. Fry agrees with Bell's account of art history, arguing that the "Renaissance merely prolonged putrefaction" ("A New Theory of Art" 491).

The desire to create "significant form," which Bell famously defines as the fundamental aim of all art, explains why "primitive" art is valuable: because "significant form," as Bell maintains, is "universal and eternal ... stable and unobscure [*sic*]" (36-37).[144]

While agreeing with Reynolds, Fry and Bell that the return to primitive forms is both justified and necessary, Hulme's defence of formal experimentation is carried out from a markedly different standpoint. Unlike Fry and Bell, Hulme does not define art as "significant" or "expressive" form and therefore does not defend experimentation with archaic forms on the grounds that it returns attention to form. Instead, his point is that the modern artist shares a common "sensibility," "emotion" or "outlook" with his primitive counterpart and that it is this shared view of the world that legitimises the use of old formulae by modern artists (cf. 257, 263). This is an argument which, as Hulme himself acknowledges in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," owes a lot to the anti-materialist conception of art history of Riegl and Worringer (cf. 268, 271). Given Hulme's open acknowledgement of Riegl's and Worringer's influence on his thought, it is pertinent to examine briefly these critics' theories.

Riegl and Worringer argue in *Problems of Style* (1893) and *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907) respectively that what determines artistic production at any period is a consciously purposeful *Kunstwollen* or "will to art."[145] As conceived by Riegl, first, and then Worringer, art is not a casual activity, but an instinctive struggle with external surroundings. "*Human artistic creativity*," Riegl writes in the Introduction to the 1899 edition of *Problems of Style*,

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[144] Bell first uses the term "significant form" in the Introduction to "The English Group," an essay he wrote for the catalogue of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1912 (cf. 350). Fry had used similar terms in May of the previous year, praising Cézanne for revealing "a new world of significant and expressive form" ("Post Impressionism" 178).

[145] Here, I follow Bistock's translation of the term "*Kunstwollen*." For problems relating to the translation of the term into English, see Bistock 253n38.

"*is a contest with nature*" and its ultimate aim is that "of bringing to expression a harmonious worldview" (298, 300; emphasis in original). Riegl's anti-materialist analysis of art is above all an attack of the idea that non-representational art is the work of unskilful people and that is therefore inferior to representational art. In a similar way to Fry and Bell after him, Riegl dismisses the conventional view of art history as the history of representational ability. In contrast to Fry and Bell, however, Riegl's emphasis is not so much on the way "primitive" art valorises form over content, but on the reasons why the primitive artist uses simplified forms, with Riegl arguing that this is because the primitive artist "yearns incessantly for harmony" (299). Riegl explains:

> [The primitive artist] sees ... harmony constantly disrupted and threatened by things and phenomena of nature that exist in a state of perpetual struggle, both with one another and with humanity. If nature were really the way it appears in the individual human senses, man would never be able to attain harmony. Consequently, man creates a vision of nature in his art that frees him from nature's perpetual instability; he imagines nature to be better than it looks. He seeks to bring order to the apparent chaos, to push aside those raw random occurrences to which he is otherwise subject and vulnerable. (299-300)

The idea is that in the primitive artist's hands art becomes a means of achieving harmony and order in a world viewed as foreign and chaotic. This explains the geometric nature of primitive forms, as through geometry the primitives seek to impose permanence or fixity on what they perceive as a hostile environment. Gradually, as humans become able to "master" nature, they stop feeling vulnerable and become part of it – hence the emergence of "naturalistic" or "anthropomorphic" art. Thus Riegl concludes in *Problems of Style* that art

history is a process of development beginning from an objective or "haptic" conception of things towards a subjective or "optic" perspective of things, with Egyptian art and Impressionism standing at the opposite sides of this trajectory (10, 71).

Building on Riegl's work, in *Abstraction and Empathy* Worringer presents a history that similarly conceives art as primarily a contest with nature. "Primitives" such as "Oriental" people, Worringer maintains, experience "the unfathomableness of being that mocks all intellectual mastery," which is why, according to Worringer, they produce art that is instinctively abstract. The "pure geometric abstraction" of primitive art, Worringer argues, is "free from all external connections with the world" and represents "a felicitation whose mysterious transfiguration emanates not from the observer's intellect, but from the deepest roots of his somato-psychic constitution" (35). Like Riegl, Worringer sees this "urge to abstraction" as "the outcome of a great inner unrest"; or, as he puts it otherwise, the "urge to abstraction" finds its source in "an immense spiritual dread of space" (46, 15). The primitives' aim, Worringer argues in line with Riegl, is to create a work of art that, as a "closed material individuality," provides a refuge from the flux and the "relativity" of the world (16). By contrast, more "advanced" peoples, who achieve a familiarity with the world that primitive people never had, produce "empathetic" or "naturalistic" art. This positive feeling, Worringer claims, is usually expressed in art that is three dimensional and representational, like Classical and Renaissance art (101-03). In a similar way as Fry and Bell, therefore, Worringer criticises the understanding of primitive art as inferior to representational art. It is inaccurate, Worringer writes in "Transcendence and Immanence in Art," an essay appended to the 1910 edition of *Abstraction and Empathy*, to reduce artistic evolution "to an easily surveyed undulatory [*sic*] motion" according to which "that which precedes the Classical zeniths in question is regarded as an imperfect endeavour, but

important as an indication of the heights to come" (124). For, the history of art, Worringer insists, is not the history of representational ability, but rather the history of two antithetical artistic volitions: abstraction and empathy.

Hulme acknowledges the influence of Worringer on his art criticism first in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," in which he describes his argument as "practically an abstract of Worringer's views" (271), and then again in "A Preface Note and Neo-Realism" from February 1914, now reiterating that in Worringer he finds "an extraordinary clear statement ... of a view very like the one I had tried to formulate" (287). In "Modern Art and its Philosophy," Hulme follows Worringer (and, thus, in effect, also Riegl) in postulating a strong anti-materialist interpretation of art. He defines art as the "satisfaction of some specific mental need, and so ... in looking at a work of art ... it is necessary not only to think of the object itself, but of the desire it is intended to satisfy" (272). As Hulme explains, it is therefore wrong to claim that the use of geometric forms indicates lack of technical ability. It is also wrong, he argues, to hold that the art created by a nation is determined by which materials are available to that people: even "If Egypt had been inhabited by people of Greek race," Hulme explains by reiterating Worringer's claim, "the fact that the material was granite, would not have made them produce anything like Egyptian sculpture" (284; cf. *Abstraction and Empathy* 99). The anti-materialist view of art put forward by Riegl and Worringer enables Hulme to claim that the source of art is always, as he puts it in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," a certain "feeling for form" (284; cf. 273). This in turn allows him to defend modern geometric art on the basis that the modern artist must be left free to choose any form deemed best-suited to accommodate his expression. Thus the adverse critical reaction to Epstein's use of archaic formulae, Hulme argues in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," can be explained by the fact that most critics fail to recognise that "form follows the need in

each case," or that the need of an artist for a specific form may be "divided by many civilisations" (257). In other words, it is entirely legitimate for a modern artist such as Epstein to use archaic formulae, given that the emotion that he wants to express is better mediated through primitive forms, and that these emotions are "entirely alien and unnatural to the critic" does not prove that Epstein's art was inferior to naturalist art (258). A similar point is made both in Hulme's review of the "Grafton Group," as well as in "Modern Art: Preface Note and Neo-Realism." In the former, he asserts that Epstein's experimentation with archaic forms is entirely justified, as it is needed to achieve a "new direction" and a specific "intensity"; as Hulme puts it, Epstein's art "quite naturally and legitimately finds a foothold in these archaic yet permanent formulae" (265-66). In the article on "Neo-Realism," Hulme likewise defends the use of archaic forms, reiterating that the "geometrical character of modern art is essential to the expression of the intensity they are aiming at" (287). Finally, in his essay on the "London Group" from March 1914, he again claims that Epstein's Flenite carvings are in "no sense imitative," but that, rather, the artist takes from African and Polynesian works those elements that enable him to evoke "a certain effect" (298).

Despite their different approaches, then, Hulme's defence of experimentation with primitive forms is consonant with the demands made by Reynolds and the Post-Impressionist critics. Like Reynolds, Fry and Bell, Hulme maintains that in the early twentieth-century representational art reached its endpoint, proposing a return to archaic forms as a way out of what he, like these critics, perceives as stagnation in art. Moreover, like Reynolds, Fry and Bell, Hulme holds that the modern artist should use primitive forms in an expressive way. Indeed, in its essence, Hulme's insistence on modern artists using archaic forms to express their emotions was the same as Fry's belief that primitive forms, as Fry puts it in "The French Group," affords artists "a pictorial language appropriate to the sensibilities of the modern

outlook" (353), but from a different standpoint. In this essay, which Fry wrote for the second Post-Impressionist exhibition prospectus, Fry criticises the art which subordinates the "direct expression of feeling" to skill, maintaining that, above all, art should be "an attempt to express by pictorial and plastic form certain spiritual experiences" (352). Therein lies for Fry the success of Cézanne, the French master using archaic forms in an "expressive" way (354). In a similar manner to Fry, Hulme hails Cézanne in his review of the "Grafton Group" as an example of a modern artist who "seeks expression through forms that are to a certain extent archaic" (266), an attitude he also finds in Epstein. As he puts it in the unpublished essay "Mr. Epstein at the 21 Gallery," Epstein's art is characterised by "an entirely personal and modern method of expression" (8135.352). Hulme discusses the subject of expression through archaic forms in more detail in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," where he writes that "the formula used must be a natural expression of the feeling you are getting at and not a mere imitation of an exotic or romantic past" (257), and in his article on the Grafton Group, in which he argues that "the persistence of a feeble imitation of archaism ... is an absolutely unnecessary survival" (265) and that archaic forms should be viewed as a "medium of expression" (266). He returns to it once more in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," now claiming that the aim of the modern artist is to "utilise some already existing methods of expression and work from them to the one that expresses his own personal conception more accurately and naturally" (280).

In employing the anti-materialist conception of art as theorised by Riegl and Worringer Hulme is therefore primarily defending his contemporaries' experimentation with archaic forms. Artists such as Epstein who turn to "primitivism," he claims, are not only justified in doing so, but by expressing a feeling for form, they are able to reach an "intenser" expression, only made possible through primitive forms. Agreeing with the Post-

Impressionists about the expressive use of archaic forms, Hulme is in effect returning to the idea of art he articulated in "Romanticism and Classicism" and in "Bergson's Theory of Art." For, insofar as the modern abstract artist aims to achieve an "intenser perception of things striving towards expression" (266), he resembles the Bergsonian poet-artist who avoids "conventional means of expression" (199; cf. 68-69), as well as the classic poet in "Romanticism and Classicism," who strives to express with "intense zest" a specific personal emotion (70; cf. 194). This is significant because, as we will shortly see, the kind of abstract art Hulme advocates in his essays on art combines an "inhuman" detachment from nature while giving the artist freedom of expression. This distances Hulme's theory of abstract art from that of Worringer, thereby also separating his politics from the politics with which Worringer implicates his theory of art.

3. "Humanism" and "anti-humanism"

The fact that Hulme carries out his defence of abstract art from the standpoint of Riegl's and Worringer's anti-materialist history of art means that he can make broader claims than either Reynolds or the Post-Impressionists ever did. While using the anti-materialism of Riegl and Worringer to defend his contemporaries' experimentation with primitive forms, Hulme also employs Riegl's and Worringer's analyses to claim that the advent of the new art signalled a new cultural attitude, a different *Kunstwollen*. A similar idea underwrites his earlier work. In "A Lecture," Hulme claims that a new form of art is needed to accommodate the modern "spirit" or "character" that had changed dramatically (cf. 50, 52, 56), while in "Romanticism and Classicism" he announces that "the romantic tradition has run dry" and called for a modern "classical revival" (65, 59). Now, in his essays on art, Hulme argues that a new form of art is needed to capture the moderns' "general attitude" towards the world (269). At the same time, he uses the notion that art represents a specific feeling towards the

world to campaign against "Progress" and the belief in human perfection. Drawing on Riegl's differentiation between "haptic" and "optic" art and Worringer's distinction between "abstraction" and "empathy," Hulme defines modern "geometric" art as art that rejects the "rational humanistic attitude" and that, as such, represents a completely different, anti-humanist, attitude (286; cf. 269). The essays on art, therefore, are where Hulme's aesthetics meets his politics, his defence of "geometrical" art transforming in them into a polemic against what he terms in the *Commentator* articles "romanticism."

In "Modern Art and its Philosophy," Hulme explains the process by which modern artists turn to primitive forms. In the same way as he argued years earlier that the modern poets, experiencing the stagnation of having to write poetry in regular metre, rhythm and rhyme, sought new forms of poetry, Hulme is now maintaining that modern artists, seeing representational art as unsatisfactory, turned to alternative methods of expression. This "feeling of dissatisfaction with, and reaction against, existing art," he explains, has coincided with a much more fundamental change in the way that modern individuals conceive of themselves and the world (280). As he put it in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics" the previous month, "in the peculiar conditions in which we find ourselves, which are really the breaking up of an era it has again become quite possible for people ... to have the attitude expressed by these [primitive] formulae" (258). In "Modern Art and its Philosophy," Hulme thus explains that artists' turn to "geometric" art should be seen as part of a more general change of sensibility taking place in artistic circles that is evident from the way artists and critics alike are speaking and thinking of art along formalist lines:

The change of attitude betrays itself by changes in the epithets that a man uses ... to express his admiration for the work he admires. Most of us cannot state our position, and

we use adjectives which in themselves do not explain what we mean, but which, for a group for a certain time, by a kind of tacit convention become the 'porters' or 'bearers' of the complex new attitude which we all recognise that we have in company, but which we cannot describe or analyse. At the present time you get this change shown in the value given to certain adjectives. Instead of epithets like graceful, beautiful, etc., you get epithets like austere, mechanical, clear cut, and bare, used to express admiration. (278)

The reason why the shifting attitude is particularly evident in art, Hulme argues here, is because art, which, as Hulme insists in his lecture, is largely an unconscious process (278-79), possesses the power of exposing the dominant intellectual and cultural trends that may be hidden from us. He thus writes in "Modern Art and its Philosophy" that "So thoroughly are we soaked in the spirit of the period we live in, so strong is its influence over us, that we can only escape from it in an unexpected way, as it were, a side directional like art" (269-70). Or, as he puts it otherwise, again in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," "one's mind is so soaked in the thought and language of the period, that one can only perceive the break-up of the period in a region like art which is ... a kind of side activity" (276).

That art can break through normative modes of thought and expression is an idea that Hulme, as I explained in Chapter 3, found in Bergson. Bergson's artist, by using a creative method similar to intuition, suspends the practical orientation of the intellect and is therefore able to "tear aside" the "curtain" or "veil" of conceptual abstractions, thus revealing immediate experience (cf. *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 27-29). A similar idea also features in Riegl and Worringer. For Riegl, an investigation of the art of a certain people could reveal a great deal about that people's *Kunstwollen* and, therefore, its corresponding general attitude. As Riegl explains in *Problems of Style*, because "The comforting view of

nature is something man creates in his mind," it follows that it "affects man's relation to every object in the world without exception" (300). The same worldview that instigates art is therefore evident, Riegl claims, in all corresponding human activities: "not only in religion, philosophy, science, but also in government and law" (12).[146] Worringer also holds that art instructs the general outlook of a people. As "a disputation of man with nature," for Worringer art is the "same with religion and metaphysics"; what this means, Worringer argues, is that there is always a strong "inter-relationship between the absolute artistic volition and the general *état d'âme*" (12-13, 47).[147]

What is this change that Hulme detected in the general worldview? The new "geometric art," Hulme states repeatedly, heralds the end of the "humanist" worldview, and is "the precursor ... of the break up [*sic*] of the Renaissance humanistic attitude" (286; cf. 257, 263, 276). Hulme's introduction of the term "anti-humanism" has been interpreted by critics in terms of a radicalisation of the already authoritarian position he expresses in "Romanticism and Classicism."[148] For Levenson in particular, Hulme's campaign for "anti-humanism" marks a turn in his thought towards objective ethics and an increasingly reactionary politics (98-99). Hulme's advocacy of anti-humanist ethics in "A Notebook" is discussed at length in the next and final chapter, where I challenge the claim that his anti-humanism entails a reactionary politics. Here, my focus is "anti-humanism" as it appears in Hulme's art criticism. On close consideration, Hulme's "anti-humanism" is revealed to be entirely consonant with the "classicism" pronounced in the *Commentator* articles and in "Romanticism and Classicism." This becomes obvious once we recognise that by "humanist attitude" Hulme has

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[146] Riegl makes a similar claim in "Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen*" 95.

[147] Cf. Worringer's claim in *Form in Gothic*: "Form changes in will ... cannot be purely arbitrary or fortuitous. On the contrary, they must have a consistent relation to those spiritual and mental changes which are clearly reflected in the historical development of myths, of religions, of philosophical systems, of world conceptions" (12).

[148] See, for example, Spanos, "Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique" 93-94; Robinson 120; and H. Carr, "T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'" 102-04.

in mind the worldview based on Progress and the belief in human perfectibility, two ideas that Hulme associates with romanticism in the *Commentator*. Indeed, there is no difference between the claims Hulme makes in his political articles and the position he defends in his essays on art, except that now, instead of dating Progress and the belief in human perfection back to the French Revolution and Rousseau, he argues that this set of beliefs originates in the Renaissance.

In "Modern Art and its Philosophy," "Progress" is thus traced back to Copernicus' rejection of the doctrine of Original Sin which inaugurated, Hulme argues, the idea of man as "the centre of the world" (270). Hulme also maintains in "Modern Art and its Philosophy" that this humanistic tradition, spanning from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards found "its first stage of decay in Rousseau" (271). He makes the same claim in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," here postulating that there has been "a certain state of mind which has lasted from the Renaissance till now, with very little variation," and which, "taking at first the form of the 'humanities', it has in its degeneracy taken the form of a belief in 'Progress' and the rest of it" (257). Finally, this idea also features in the Preface to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*, where Hulme states that "Humanism contains the germs of the disease that was bound to come to its full evil development in Romanticism" (250). What is defined in the *Commentator* as "romanticism," therefore, in 1913-14 is viewed as the last phase of a longer – and on-going – tradition beginning with the Renaissance. In a similar way to his *Commentator* articles, in his art essays Hulme contrasts this attitude with an antagonistic view, which he associates with the "religious attitude." The "stark uncompromising bleakness" of this attitude, he asserts in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," is the antithesis of Rousseau's optimistic outlook and what he describes as the "modern progressive conception of life" (257-58). As he puts it otherwise, this time in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," by

contrast to "the flat and insipid optimism of the belief in progress," the anti-humanist attitude

is "pessimistic" and "world-rejecting" (277). In the review of the "Grafton Group," Hulme

likewise explains that this attitude is a "genuine expression of abhorrence of slop and

romanticism," asserting that it is "the exact opposite of romanticism and nostalgie" (265).

To understand the sense in which Hulme uses the terms "humanism" and "anti-humanism"

in his art criticism, it is useful to turn to Worringer, specifically, Worringer's contention that

Classical, Greco-Roman art constitutes a humanisation or "anthropomorphisation" of the

external world, while primitive, abstract art is based on a contrasting view of the world.

According to Worringer, the chief characteristic of Classical art is its naturalism, which, in

Worringer's view, is the result of the close connection the Classical artists feel to their

environment. As he explains in *Abstraction and Empathy*, the feeling of familiarity with the

world achieved by "advanced" peoples, their "unproblematic sense of being at home in the

world," leads them to create naturalistic artworks, while in religion it results in "a naive

anthropomorphic pantheism or polytheism" (45). Unlike abstract art that is "life-denying" (cf.

4), Classical naturalistic art for Worringer represents "the most intimate union between ego

and work of art" (23), as the "urge to empathy finds its gratification in the beauty of the

organic" (4). Worringer elaborates on this idea in "Transcendence and Immanence in Art,"

describing the Classical condition as a "state of equipoise ... in which man and world were

fused into one." As he goes on to explain:

> In the field of the history of religions, this state is marked by religions which start from
>
> the principle of immanence and which, wearing the various colours of polytheism,
>
> pantheism or monism, regard the divine as being contained in the world and identical
>
> with it. At bottom ... this conception of divine immanence is nothing other than a total

anthropomorphisation of the world. The unity of God and world is only another name

for the unity of man and world. The parallel in the province of art history is not far to

seek. The Classical feeling for art has its basis in the same fusion of man and world, the

same consciousness of unity, which is expressed in humanity's attribution of a soul to

all created things. (128)

This state of immanent self-objectification is what Worringer has in mind when he refers to

"empathy," a notion he associates with the theory of Theodor Lipps – it "no longer takes the

aesthetic as the starting-point of its investigations but proceeds from the behavior of the

contemplating subject," he writes in *Abstraction and Empathy* (4) – and which, as Waite has

pointed out, has a long history in romantic thought, running from Novalis through to Vernon

Lee (24). In "Transcendence and Immanence in Art," Worringer locates this belief in the

unity of man and God in Rousseau's idea of "a lost Paradise of humanity in which all created

things dwelt together in happy innocence and harmony," contrasting Rousseau's paradise

with the state of the primitives really: not a "reverent devotion to the world, but fear of it ...

[a] kind of spiritual agoraphobia in the face of the motley disorder and caprice of the

phenomenal world" (129).

Worringer's distinction between the "Classical" and the "primitive" worldviews

corresponds to that drawn by Hulme and Storer between romanticism and classicism in the

Commentator. Just as in Hulme's and Storer's romanticism, in what Worringer calls the

"Classical" era humans operate as if in unity with God; to use the terminology of

"Romanticism and Classicism," Classical art for Worringer is a form of "spilt religion" (62).

Moreover, in what Hulme and Storer referred to as "classicism," a state Worringer associates

with that in which the primitives find themselves, humans acknowledge the absolute duality

between themselves and God, stoically accepting their inherent limitations. Thus in *Abstraction and Empathy* the primitive artist is portrayed as someone who possesses an "awareness of the limitations of human knowledge" and who acknowledges "the absolute dualism of God and the world" (16). In this sense, Worringer's primitive artist in *Abstraction and Empathy* recalls Hulme's classic poet in "Romanticism and Classicism," both recognising that human nature is "limited" (70). Worringer's primitive artist also resembles the Conservative citizen in "On Progress and Democracy" and "A Tory Philosophy" – aware of his human fallibility, he realises that he is incapable of achieving perfection (cf. 222, 234-35) – as well as the "classical" revolutionary described in the Preface to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*, who, unlike Rousseau's romantic individual, does not believe in "something wonderful, of unlimited powers" (249). It is likely that what accounts for the change in Hulme's terminology is the distinction Worringer draws between "Classical" Greco-Roman art and primitive abstract art. In claiming that Hulme abandoned classicism for anti-humanism in 1913-14, Levenson mistakes the classic, anti-romantic attitude of his *Commentator* articles for Hulme's rejection in his essays on art of the emphasis put by artists in the Classical period on anthropomorphism. There is no contradiction in Hulme rejecting Classical art in "Modern Art and its Philosophy" and asserting in the review of the "Grafton Group" that "By temperament I should adopt the classical attitude myself" (263), because he uses the term "classical" in two distinct ways.

4. The politics of anti-humanist art

Worringer's critique of Lipps and the distinction he draws between immanence and transcendence go beyond a mere rejection of Rousseau's optimistic view of human nature. The severe political implications that underwrite Worringer's theory of art have been discussed by various critics, most famously by Georg Lukács and William V. Spanos. Unlike

Lukács, who sees Worringer's theory of art, specifically as it was executed in Expressionism, as subjectivist and nationalist at its base, and thus deeply reactionary, or Spanos, who critiques Worringer's anti-humanism from an existentialist position, here, I am more interested in the way Worringer's developmental scheme of art can be read as a critique of modernity and in terms of a propagation of authoritarian politics.[149] Because accusations of anti-humanist authoritarianism are customarily waged against Hulme, with his reliance on Worringer cited as evidence of his reactionary politics, it is instructive to briefly examine the immediate political implication of Worringer's theory of art and compare them to Hulme's beliefs.[150]

Worringer's suspicion of modernity is evident in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and in *Form in Gothic* (1911). Both begin with the aim of examining the development of European art, but end up depicting Southern, Classical art as a foreign invader that has regrettably suppressed (though crucially, as Bushart notes, not completely eradicated) the racial disposition of Nordic or Germanic people, who, according to Worringer, have always displayed an urge to abstraction.[151] Indeed, in his discussion of abstract art, Worringer appears to lament the loss of the collective consciousness of prior times, which he thinks has disappeared with the advent of modernity and the surrender of the modern individual to empirical knowledge (*Abstraction and Empathy* 121). This is an idea that, as Bushart

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[149] Lukács critiques Expressionism's fascination with inorganic forms and irrational formalism, a fascination which, Lukács argues, betrays an ideology that is subjectivist and nationalistic at its base and thus deeply reactionary, with Lukács implicating Worringer in this critique – for *Abstraction and Empathy*, he writes, is "a book of fundamental importance for expressionist theory" (89). Spanos puts forward an existentialist critique of Worringer's definition of art. In distinguishing between abstract and empathetic art, Spanos argues, Worringer is in effect promoting a specific worldview, as geometric art is "a microcosm of an essentially Gnostic macrocosm ... a universe in which the temporal world (alive and changing objects) is discontinuous with the world of eternity (dead and permanent form) and qualitatively inferior, infected ... by the corrupting (i.e., evil) powers of time." By rejecting (or subduing) the temporal world of human existence, Spanos concludes, Worringer's vision of the world ignores the human in favour of absolute, i.e. absolutist, values (93).

[150] See, for example, Spanos 94; Levenson 97-98; and Robinson 127.

[151] Cf. *Abstraction and Empathy* 106 and *Form in Gothic* 114-16. For a discussion of the severe nationalistic and racialist implications of Worringer's model, see Bushart 74-75. Bushart demonstrates how within Worringer's developmental scheme of art, we find writ small the nationalistic and often racist programme of "German classicism" that had already been put in place by Lamprecht and Dilthey.

demonstrates, recurs throughout Worringer's writings. In an article on modern architecture from 1911, for instance, Worringer likens the modern individual to a woman surrendering herself to "female receptivity," describing "This feminine surrender" in terms of "the will to lose one's self" (qtd. in Bushart 73). Earlier, in *Lukas Cranach* (1908), he diagnoses a change in worldview, expressing the hope that "The raging pathos of youthful individualism, confident of victory, has shrunk pitifully" and that, moreover, the cultural values of the Renaissance will be rejected, giving way to the "great, old styles" and "the desire for great, necessary values that elevate beyond all the individual noisemaking" (qtd. in Bushart 73). For Worringer, the renunciation of Renaissance sensibility ultimately carries the hope of a complete transformation of values. He explains the process by which a return to pre-Renaissance forms of art will herald a will to self-assertion in "Moderne Idealisten," an article dating from 1907-1908:

> We stand today in the middle of a crisis, in which the young generation with its unconsumed energies and its restless need for activity breaks through all restraints, as they are *ankered* [sic] in an all too differentiated hyperconsciousness, in an all too sensitive receptivity, and, unconcerned about yesterday's truth, this young generation creates for itself a new truth from its own flesh and blood. It appears that we have matured for a second, other naiveté that will restore to us the happiness and unself-consciousness of an active individual. (qtd. in Bushart 74; emphasis in original)

Read in the light of these remarks, Worringer's "urge to abstraction" as theorised in *Abstraction and Empathy* is revealed to be politically-charged. In Worringer's own terms, the primitive artist seeks "happiness" by "taking the individual thing of the external world out of its arbitrariness and ... eternalizing it"; he must "wrest" the object out of its natural context

and its "unending flux" and thereby give it an "*absolute* value" (16-17; cf. 18, 37, 42). By depriving himself of individualism and self-consciousness, Worringer's primitive artist exists in a state of transcendence and collective consciousness. Thus, abstract art becomes in *Abstraction and Empathy* both a model for art and a microcosm for society. This idea, according to which the modern individual in the twentieth century is as lost and helpless in the world as his counterpart is in the "primitive" world, as Kramer and Jennings separately note, became the cue for the Expressionism of the "Brucke" circle and Kandinsky.[152] According to Bushart, it also forms the fundamental premise of the nationalist "conservative reform" of Benz, Hamann and Barthels which, as Bushart shows, was so "characteristic of the climate of the time" (74-75).

Even though in his art criticism Hulme makes similar claims to Worringer, he distances his theory from Worringer's in several important regards. Having presented a scheme of art which adheres to Worringer's distinction between abstraction and empathy, in "Modern Art and Its Philosophy" Hulme declares that "a new geometrical art is emerging" and that, furthermore, "this change from a vital to a geometrical art is the product of and will be accompanied by a certain change of sensibility, a certain change of general attitude" (276). Unlike Worringer, however, Hulme is careful not to draw a direct link between the condition of the modern artist and his primitive counterpart. Thus admitting that "these sweeping statements run a good deal ahead of the facts," he makes it clear that, "Though both the new Weltanschauung and the new geometrical art will have certain analogies with corresponding periods in the past ... it is not for a moment to be supposed that there is anything more than an analogy here." The difference, as he explains, is that the "pessimism" of the new attitude "will not be world-rejecting in the sense in which the Byzantine was" (276-77). Moreover,

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[152] Kramer, ed. xii; Jennings 89.

while, like Worringer, Hulme detects a general "confusion" in modern times, he locates this confusion not in politics or in society, but in art:

> You get at the present moment in Europe a most extraordinary confusion in art, a complete breaking away from tradition. So confusing is it that most people lump it altogether as one movement and are unaware that it is in fact composed of a great many distinct and even contradictory elements, being a complex movement of part that are merely reactionary, parts that are dead, and with one part only containing the possibility of development. (277)

Hulme's reference to an "extraordinary confusion in art" should not be taken out of context. This was a time when the various artistic factions in London, broadly described as "Post-Impressionists," were organising themselves in different groups, with Rutter, Hind and Lewis all complaining that the term "Post-Impressionism" was too vague. That Hulme is using Worringer's scheme and his distinction between naturalism and abstraction to defend the art of those around him is not only indicative of the larger attempt of artists to define themselves as a movement, but also of the way he depoliticises Worringer's thesis.[153] Marinetti's Futurism, he goes on to argue in "Modern Art and its Philosophy," falls into the category of "naturalism," while the Post-Impressionism of Fry and the Cubism of Metzinger and Gleizes must be seen as only a "preliminary and temporary stage of experimentation" that has reached its full force in the art of "Mr Epstein and Mr Lewis" (280-82).

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[153] For a historical account of how various artists were forming themselves into different groups in 1913-14, and for an discussion of the friction between Fry's and Lewis' groups, see Bullen 32-34 and Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning'" 62. Hulme was not alone in finding "Post-Impressionism" a vague term in need of refining. See, for example, Rutter, "An Art Causerie" 397 and Foreword to the *Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition* catalogue 461-62; Brooke 403-08; Lewis, "Cubist Room" 8; and Hind 3.

The difference between Hulme and Worringer is made even clearer when we compare the art which Hulme advocates in his essays to the abstract art described by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*. As already demonstrated, Hulme is adamant that archaic or primitive forms should be used in an expressive and therefore personal way. Unlike the abstract artist in *Abstraction and Empathy* who suppresses individual expression by creating a self-objectified work, therefore, Hulme's modern artist uses archaic forms to enable personal expression. In his article on "The London Group," Hulme sides against the extreme abstraction of artists such as Kandinsky who create art "based simply on the idea that abstract form, i.e., form without any representative content, can be an adequate means of expression" (295). Although Hulme's criticism of Kandinsky can be read as an attempt to show that the art of Epstein is superior to all other contemporaneous artistic experiments (Hulme goes on to explain why Epstein's art is also more interesting than the art of Lewis, Wadsworth, Hamilton and Gaudier), his claims that form must have a "representative content" and that it must be a "means of expression" cannot be dismissed as propagandising for Epstein's art.[154] Hulme is even more adamant that art should have a "representative element" in "Modern Art: Preface Note and Neo-Realism," now arguing that "the artist cannot work without contact with ... nature" (288, 292). As Thistlewood argues persuasively, Hulme could not have endorsed a type of visual art that is based exclusively on abstract forms "offering little indication as to the nature of an original intuition, or to that aspect of the outside world from which it had derived," because, despite stressing his preference for anti-humanist art, Hulme's aesthetic remained in 1913-14 largely Bergsonian (29). Thistlewood's claim is consonant with the assessment made earlier in this chapter, according to which Hulme's expressive visual artist shares something with the artist in "Bergson's Theory of Art." By

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[154] Hulme claims that Lewis' work "lacks cohesion and unity" and argues that Wadsworth's work is "Equally abstract." Although he finds Hamilton's work interesting and Etchell's drawings "firm and hard in character," and despite the fact that he praises Nevinson's work for being "very solid," singles out Gaudier-Brzeska's ability and finds Bomberg's "sculptural treatment ... admirable," he states that "the only really satisfying and complete work ... is that of Mr. Epstein" (296-97).

contrast to the primitive artist who in *Abstraction and Empathy* strives to produce a "closed

material individuality" (21-22), Epstein, seen by Hulme as a paradigmatic abstract artist, uses

primitive forms in a creative, personal, way: his "design," Hulme writes in "Modern Art: The

London Group" is in no sense empty, but gives a most impressive and complete expression ...

of its subject" (298).

    Hulme's insistence that artists use primitive forms in an expressive way is what lies at the

heart of his notorious attack on Anthony M. Ludovici in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics."

Fascinated by the polemical tone and the swaggering language in which Hulme responded to

Ludovici's negative assessment of Epstein, critics have paid little attention to the argument

put forward by Ludovici and the reasons why Hulme is so firmly against it.[155] "Mr. Epstein

and the Critics" gains a completely different significance once we recognise the

fundamentally different notions of art proposed by Hulme and Ludovici. Although certainly

defending the art of his friend Epstein, in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics" Hulme is also

articulating an important aesthetic and ideological objection to Ludovici's notion of art and,

by consequence, to Worringer's model of abstract art, on which Ludovici built his art theory.

A Nietzsche scholar and art critic, Ludovici is, as far as I know, the first English critic to have

taken note of the work of Worringer.[156] With the notable exception of Robinson's discussion

of Ludovici in *Poetry, Painting and Ideas*, the connection between Ludovici and Worringer

has gone largely unnoticed by critics. According to Robinson, Ludovici gives Worringer's

argument in *Abstraction and Empathy* a "'Nietzschean' admixture in the cause of political

propagandism" (100). Mixing ideas from Worringer with Nietzsche's distinction between

"will to live" and "will to power," Robinson argues, Ludovici uses Worringer and Nietzsche

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[155] Critics who discuss Hulme's verbal attack on Ludovici include A. Jones, "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer, and the Urge to Abstraction" 2; Levenson 122; and Garver 131.

[156] Critics who have taken Hulme as the first critic in England to have discussed the work of Worringer include Read, Introduction to Worringer's *Form in Gothic* x; Cork 140; Holdeim 343; Kramer, ed. viii; and Kimball 46.

to campaign for a stratified and radically anti-democratic society, concluding that, insofar as

Ludovici uses art to make authoritarian demands, his argument is aligned with Hulme's

"reactionary intransigent" aesthetics and politics (106).[157] Robinson is right in highlighting

Ludovici's fascistic credentials: in later years, Ludovici openly embraced both the anti-

Semitism and the social and economic programmes of Mussolini and Hitler.[158] What

Robinson fails to notice is the proximity of Ludovici's argument to that of Worringer and,

more crucially, the significant difference that exists between Ludovici's (and Worringer's)

positions and that of Hulme.

In *Nietzsche and Art*, published in 1911 and advertised in the *New Age* in September,

Ludovici launches a fierce ideological critique of "democratic" art, which he associates with

the art movements of Realism and Naturalism (vii).[159] Ludovici detects in post-Reformation

Europe a general social, political and moral malaise that has also infiltrated the arts (46). He

thus complains that in modern art "There is neither a direction, a goal, nor a purpose" (15), a

claim he repeats in his 1912 "Introductory Essay" to the *Letters of Van Gogh*, where he

berates the "bankrupt, impoverished, democratized, and futile" work of modern artists

(xxxiv). As he puts it in this essay, in order for art to be truly "great" it needs "some higher

purpose and direction, some universal aim and aspiration" (xx). Drawing an explicit

connection between art and politics, Ludovici suggests in *Nietzsche and Art* that the "highest"

kind of art is only possible in rigidly stratified, aristocratic, ordered societies, such as that of

ancient Egypt, where, according to Ludovici, all the citizens were in awe of a ruling authority

(v, 116). As it turns out, therefore, the reason Ludovici favours primitive art in *Nietzsche and*

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[157] Other critics who claim that Ludovici and Hulme share a common agenda include Scholes 47 and Stone 38.
[158] Ludovici expresses his anti-Semitism in *Jews, and the Jews in England*, published under the pseudonym "Cobbett." On Ludovici's appreciation of Mussolini and Hitler and his racist politics, see Stone 50-61.
[159] *Nietzsche and Art* collects lectures Ludovici delivered at the University College in London during December 1910. Ludovici discussed *Nietzsche and Art* in the *New Age* in September 1911. See "Nietzsche and Art" 454-55.

Art is because he views the works of primitive people as generated by a feeling for order and a desire for discipline, a desire which regrettably, in Ludovici's view, does not exist in twentieth-century Britain. In support of his anti-democratic agenda, Ludovici cites Riegl, whose *Problems of Style* he describes as an "excellent work" (104), as well as Worringer, whose importance lies in the way he

> points out that there is not only a difference of degree, but actually a marked difference of kind, between the intensely realistic drawing of the Madeleine finds and of some Australian cave painting and rock sculptures, which are the work of the rudest savages, and the rhythmic decoration of other races; and that whereas the former are simply the result of a truly imitative instinct which the savage does well to cultivate for his own self-preservation – since the ability to imitate also implies sharpened detective senses – the latter is the result of a genuine desire for order and simple and organised arrangement, and an attempt in a small way to overcome confusion. (107)

Drawing on Worringer and freely appropriating Nietzsche's distinction between "will to live" and "will to power," Ludovici argues that, whereas advanced or modern people display a "will to live," the primitives are guided by a "will to power." Naturalistic and Realistic art from Monet to Lavery, he maintains, portrays "the universal paralysis of will that has overtaken the Art-world," a paralysis which Ludovici sees as the result of modernity's insistence on "personality" and which is thus characterised by "Exaggerated individualism and anarchy" (8, 52, 100). Ludovici is specifically opposed to the free formal experimentation of his contemporaries, something which he finds symptomatic of the modern subjective consciousness and lack of self-control (cf. 99-100; 43, 45-48; 116-17). "[This] tremulousness, this plebeian embarrassment, this democratic desire to please, above all, this

democratic disinclination to assume a position of authority," he writes in *Nietzsche and Art*,

"are things which contradict the very essence of Art, and these are the things which are found

in the production of almost every European school to-day" (16-17). By contrast, primitive art

for Ludovici is characterised by "that order, simplicity and transfiguration which the artist's

mind imparts to the content of his production" (125). In mastering the hostile world, Ludovici

claims, the primitive artist resembles Nietzsche's Ruler-Artist expressing a "will to power" in

both art and politics: "Stimulated by disorder, which he despises, he is driven to his work;

spurred by the sight of anarchy, his inspiration is government; fertilized by rudeness and

ruggedness, his will to power gives birth to culture and refinement" (118). Attracted to

disorder and confusion, this primitive Nietzschean artist aims to "make Life simpler, more

orderly and better adjusted" (117); his "will to power and his determination to prevail ...

involves all kinds of things which are antagonistic to democratic theory ... Command,

Reverence, Despotism, Obedience, Greatness and Inequality" (99).

    As is the case with Worringer, in Ludovici's conception art becomes a model for society.

While Worringer never formulated a specific political programme in the way Ludovici did,

their art criticism carries similar political implications. Ludovici's derision of modern

individualism shares something, even if only in spirit, with Worringer's rejection in *Lukas

Cranach* of "individual noisemaking" (qtd. in Bushart 73). Moreover, despite the fact that

Ludovici appropriates Worringer's theories a good deal in order to uphold his aristocratic

elitism, his suspicion of a foreign "woman-ridden European" modernity in his Introduction to

Letters of Van Gogh (xxxv), his racially-charged critique of the "Sick" modern culture, his

insistence that art ought to restore the order that is lacking in modernity (a notion that

Scholes, writing on Ludovici's Ruler-Artist, compares to what Benjamin describes as the

"fascist aestheticization of politics" (44)), and his desire for a ruler-Artist, all rather

unnervingly recall Worringer's argument in "Moderne Idealisten." Specifically, Ludovici's

claims echo Worringer's idea in "Moderne Idealisten" that art should aim to reinstate in the

Germanic people "the happiness and unself-consciousness of an active individual," and bring

to mind the essay's overarching demand for "self-assertion" in place of "self-surrender" (qtd.

in Bushart 74). Finally, in a way not too dissimilar to Ludovici's appropriation of Nietzsche's

philosophy, Worringer's antagonistic model of art history, as Waite and Masheck have

separately demonstrated, draws on the Nietzschean idea of a chthonic struggle between the

Apollonian and Dionysian in *Birth of Tragedy*, a relation which suggests further common

ground between Worringer and Ludovici.[160]

In the years after the publication of *Nietzsche and Art*, Ludovici continued to promulgate

his political and aesthetic ideas in the pages of the *New Age*, becoming from July 1912

onwards the journal's chief art critic. In his articles for the *New Age*, Ludovici repeatedly

berates modern art, launches numerous attacks on the Post-Impressionists and campaigns for

"ordered" art. A week before Hulme's "Mr. Epstein and the Critics" appeared in the *New

Age*, Ludovici published an article in the *New Age* reviewing three exhibitions: Maurice

Asselin's show at the Carfax Gallery; the exhibition by members of the "New English Art

Club" at the Royal Society of British Artists; and Epstein's solo show at the Twenty-One

Gallery. Reiterating the point he made in *Nietzsche and Art* years earlier, Ludovici begins his

review by arguing that all works of art ought to be animated by a sense of "order":

> when the graphic artist is animated by the spirit of no great order or scheme of life,
>
> graphic art loses its vitality, the subject picture dies, or better still is killed, and painting
>
> becomes one of two things, either a medium in which new tricks of technique are

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[160] Waite 25-28; Masheck 48-53.

attempted for their own sake, or a means of expressing simply the idiosyncrasies of individuals divorced from any great vital arrangement or scheme. ("Art: The Carfax, the Suffock Street, and the Twenty-One Galleries" 213)

Turning first to the show on at the Carfax, Ludovici states that he could see this "order" in the nature paintings of Maurice Asselin, though not in Asselin's nudes because "frankly," as he admits, "I do not like the nude save when it is clothed in the spirit of some ruling order" (214). He can also see it in a few works on at the Royal Society of British Artists, specifically Augustus John's "Cartoon – The Flute of Pan" and Paul Wilson Steer's "Sunset." What Asselin's, John's and Steer's works have in common, in Ludovici's view, is that they avoid formal experimentation: in all these cases, the artist does not try to impose his personal expression on the audience but, on the contrary, tenders all authority to outside sources. Asselin's oil paintings are thus "highly simplified transcripts" of nature, while the "beautiful boy" in John's "Cartoon" depicts, according to Ludovici, a beautiful and virtuous "brand of human being" (214). In any case, Ludovici definitely cannot see this "order" in the work of Epstein. One detects in the sculptures exhibited at the Twenty-One Gallery, he argues, "the idiosyncrasy or individual angle of the isolated ego." Epstein's art, Ludovici goes on to claim, is the art of a "minor and non-value-creating" individual and the result of modern individualism; it is of "no interest whatsoever," he concludes, "save for cranks and people who have some reason of their own in abetting or supporting purposeless individualism à outrance" (215).

In "Mr. Epstein and the Critics" the following week, Hulme reacts angrily to Ludovici's article. He calls Ludovici a "charlatan," a "little Cockney intellect," "a light weight superman" and a "little bantam" (259-60). Mocking his "very comical little book on

Nietzsche," moreover, he likens Ludovici's interpretation of Nietzsche to the reaction of "a child of four in a theatre watching a tragedy based on adultery" (259) and dismisses it as "stupid and childish" (260).[161] What frustrates Hulme the most, however, is Ludovici's attack on Epstein's art: apparently lost for words, Hulme fumes that "The most appropriate means of dealing with him would be a little personal violence," adding sarcastically that "the unworthy sentiment of pity for the weak, which, in spite of Nietzsche, still moves us, prevents us dealing drastically, with this rather light-weight superhuman" (260). Although Hulme's "bashing" of Ludovici may be, as Garver argues, paradigmatic of the "belligerent" swagger that we find in many modernists (131), with Trotter adding that this "bashing" is a fundamental component of modernism's "polemical armoury" (232), Hulme's polemical tone should not detract us from the point he makes in this essay. Ludovici's conception of art as the expression of a "greater" and impersonal "order" is antithetical to the art Hulme is advocating in his essays on art in that it suppresses creativity and originality. John's "The Flute of Pan," Hulme argues in "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," "is the result of no personal creative idea, but is entirely a derivative conglomeration of already existing pretty ideas" (260). As discussed earlier, for Hulme it is important that the modern artist uses primitive forms to achieve a feat of new and personal expression. Ludovici's dismissal of originality as "purposeless," means that he is advocating imitation. Furthermore, whereas Ludovici insists that art should never express the "idiosyncrasies of individuals," Hulme holds, like the Post-Impressionists, that artists do not merely reproduce primitive forms, but that they use these forms as a mode of personal expression. Thus "The formula used," he writes in "Mr. Epstein

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[161] By the time when Hulme wrote "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," Ludovici had published, as well as *Nietzsche and Art*, two books on Nietzsche: a collection of lectures delivered at the University of London in the winter of 1908 and published under the title *Who is to be Master of the World?* (1909), and a short introduction to Nietzsche's philosophy entitled *Nietzsche, his Life and Works* (1910), and to which Hulme is more likely referring when he describes it as a "comical little book." Ludovici uses this hundred-page introduction to Nietzsche to attack Christianity and Democracy – "the grandmother and the mother of what is called 'progress,' 'modernity'" (34) – and makes a case for "a complete transvaluation of all values" needed in order to "alter man and make him more worthy of his past" (73). He concludes that the lesson from Nietzsche is that society can only function through "the rearing of a select and aristocratic caste" (81).

and the Critics," "must be a natural expression of the feeling you are getting at and not a mere imitation of an exotic or romantic past" (257).

Because Hulme puts such great emphasis on artists using primitive forms in a new, personal and expressive way, the art which he advocates is significantly different to the kind of art favoured by Ludovici. This, in turn, guarantees that his aesthetic programme has different ideological implications to that of Ludovici. While Ludovici's campaign for "primitive" art is part of a larger project aiming to introduce "order" into what he views as the modern individualistic society, the same cannot be said of Hulme. For Hulme is adamant that the modern artist should use primitive forms only as a medium for his own personal expression, an idea also fostered by the Post-Impressionists, whose art Ludovici views as a prime example of what he describes as "democratic" art ("Art: the Pot-Boiler Paramount" 66-67). In insisting on primitive forms being used as a mode of personal expression, Hulme sets himself apart both from Worringer and Ludovici, who, as we have seen, argue for the complete suppression of the individual in favour of a higher "ordering" authority in a similar manner. Finally, Hulme does not envisage, like Ludovici (or Maurras), a return to a past form of art. Thus, whereas Ludovici and Maurras long for a return to the "order" of Egyptian and Provencal art respectively, in "Romanticism and Classicism," citing Maurice Denis' claim that the Post-Impressionists consider themselves "Classics," Hulme contends that the "classical" attitude is more likely to find its expression as Post-Impressionism rather than as a "return to Pope" (65).[162] A similar claim is also made by Storer, who writes in the *Commentator* that "The first signs of the anti-romantic reaction will come ... from the young

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[162] Hulme is probably referring here to Denis' article entitled "Cézanne" and translated by Fry for *The Burlington Magazine* in 1910, in which Denis argues that Cezanne is a "classic" (63). In December 1910, Fry had described Cezanne's use of form as "of a supremely classical temperament" (131), while in 1912 he spoke of the "Classic spirit" of Post-Impressionism and explained that "I do not mean by Classic, dull, pedantic, traditional, reserved, or any of those similar things which the word is often made to imply … I mean that they do not rely for their effect upon associated ideas, as I believe Romantic and Realistic artists invariably do" ("The French Group" 354-55).

men now occupying themselves with the violent and individual methods of Post-Impressionism" ("Art Notes" 26 Apr. 1911: 375). Both Robinson's claim that Hulme and Ludovici share a common agenda and Levenson's assessment that by defending abstract art Hulme is, in effect, promulgating an "anti-democratic" politics, must be considerably revised.

5. Conclusion

Hulme's campaign against the "Renaissance" is best understood in terms of the broader shift in the early twentieth century against representational art, which artists and critics such as Fry and Bell associated with the Renaissance tradition. Like the Post-Impressionists, in his art criticism Hulme argues for a break from existing art forms, advocating experimentation with primitive, archaic art forms. In doing so, he returns to the idea he first expresses in "A Lecture" and which he further develops in "Romanticism and Classicism," namely that art ought to be in tune with the "spirit" or "general attitude" of its time. Elaborating on this notion, he tries to show that there is evidence in the second decade of the twentieth century of a new anti-romantic or anti-humanist era. Despite mixing aesthetics and politics in a fashion similar to Worringer and Ludovici, however, Hulme's conception of art is significantly different to both the art advocated by Worringer and by Ludovici. On the one hand, it is a lot more compatible with the theory of art promulgated by the Post-Impressionists than it is with Worringer's brand of German Expressionism or Ludovici's "aristocratic" art. On the other hand, the fact that, like Fry and Bell, Hulme argues that modern artists' experimentation with archaic forms is justified only insofar as the artists employ these forms as a vehicle to achieve their own mode of personal expression, suggests that the political implications of his version of abstract art differ in important ways from those of the art advocated by Worringer and Ludovici, who do not allow space for individual expression. In this sense, Hulme's turn to abstraction cannot be understood merely in terms of a larger shift in his thought in 1913-14

towards authoritarianism. Perhaps most importantly, acknowledging the way in which Hulme draws on the anti-materialism of Worringer to defend the formal experimentations of his contemporaries goes a long way to showing that he does not, as is often assumed, endorse Worringer's ideas uncritically. Rather, Hulme's interpretation of Worringer's theories is paradigmatic of the way that he also freely appropriates the ideas of Kahn, Bergson and Lasserre and Maurras elsewhere in his work. As we will see in the next and final chapter, in his war writings Hulme returns to many of the questions he addressed in his essays on art, challenging the "romantic" and "humanistic" tradition in arts, ethics and politics and offering a far more detailed exposition of anti-humanism. As such, it is impossible to understand Hulme's "anti-humanism" without examining in detail these war writings.

Chapter 6

War Writings: War, Anti-pacifism and Objective Ethics

1. Introduction

On 10 August 1914, less than a week after the Liberal government declared war on the Central Powers, Hulme enlisted in the army. During his service, which lasted until his death in battle in September 1917, Hulme wrote prolifically. In a number of letters addressed to his family from the front and published by Hynes in *Further Speculations* in 1955 under the title "Diary from the Trenches," he described his experience of trench warfare, while in articles published in the *New Age* and the *Cambridge Magazine* as "War Notes," he contributed to topical debates relating to the military and political handling of the war campaign, as well as discussing the more general question of the moral righteousness of war. In "War Notes," Hulme is firmly in support of the war, repeatedly stating the political and moral case for military intervention, berating the "humanism" of those who oppose war on ethical grounds. He explains the reasons for his disagreement with the pacifist ethic in more detail in "A Notebook," his last known work, in which he distinguishes between two contrasting conceptions of ethical values, arguing that while pacifism rests on an "anthropomorphic" ethic, ethical values are in reality objective and, therefore, absolute.

Critics tend to focus on Hulme's defence of war and on the ethics he promulgates in "A Notebook," citing both as evidence that he was an ardent militarist with absolutist or

authoritarian politics.[163] The problem with this view of Hulme as a militarist who supported

war on moral principle, is that it ignores the context and the circumstances in which Hulme

formulated his war-time arguments. A comprehensive reading of his war writings, I show in

this chapter, discredits the common interpretation of Hulme's views on the war as extreme or

radically reactionary. Beginning with an examination of the letters from the trenches and

moving on to the anti-pacifism essays and, finally, his argument for objective ethics in "A

Notebook," I explore Hulme's reaction to fighting in the trenches, the reasons that led him to

support the war, and the political implications of his conception of ethical values as objective.

As it becomes clear, Hulme was not a militarist, nor was his politics authoritarian. Moreover,

contra critics who see the years 1915-17 as marking a distinct phase in Hulme's career, in his

war writings Hulme proffers an ideological renunciation of "humanist" politics and ethics and

a philosophical critique of intellectualism that are utterly in step with claims he made

elsewhere in his writings.

2. Trench warfare: desperation and perseverance

As many critics and historians have shown, the Great War had a tremendous emotional

impact on those who fought in it.[164] As is conveyed in his letters from the front, Hulme was

no exception. At first, he was enthusiastic. Quick to enlist in the army, Murray remembered

him "bubbling over with delighted anticipation" at the prospect of joining the war effort,

while Hulme himself admitted to Marsh that he was "excited about the thing" (qtd. in

Ferguson 183, 217-18). This enthusiasm was shared by many poets and artists close to him,

including Aldington, Hueffer, Gaudier-Brzeska, Pound and Lewis, but, also, as military

historians stress, by millions of volunteers who were driven to war by a genuine, however

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[163] See, for example, Read, Introduction to *Speculations* x; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 143; Levenson 100; and Susser 360.
[164] Hynes, *A War Imagined* 57; Eksteins 170-91; Fussell 8; Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* 18-21.

naive, patriotism.[165] There is evidence of this "naive" excitement in many of Hulme's letters from the front. He finds, for example, the feeling of being waved off the dock "thoroughly" enjoyable; knowing that he is being seen by "the girls at the windows," he confesses, makes the whole event "very amusing" (313). Once at the front, he writes home that having to sleep in stables "sounds dreadful but it's really all right" (313). In fact, he describes his first experience of war as rather pleasant: the shed that makes the army's Rest Camp is "quite nice" and the "piles of food" being prepared for the soldiers are "impressive" (314). Eager to go to the trenches and to experience, as he tells his father, the "real thing" (qtd. in Ferguson 188), Hulme volunteered to carry large bundles of wood up the front line because "I wanted to see what the trenches were like" (318). That it was taking so long to be finally deployed was, he writes on 16 January 1915, "to my annoyance" (320).

As the war went on, though, Hulme's initial excitement was severely tempered; Ferguson's claim that "trench warfare seems neither to have horrified nor greatly surprised him" is difficult to believe (211).[166] Finally making it to the trenches, Hulme immediately found himself in "a kind of nightmare, in which you are in the middle of an enormous saucer of mud with explosions & shots going off all round the edge" (319). Crawling in the mud, marching on "uneven ground in the dark," "walking across a flat heath or common at night" (319) – he had, of course, depicted all these scenes earlier in "Cinders," where he described the world around him as a "primeval chaos" (13) and had made references to a "fringe of cinders" (17), a "white moonlit field" (18), "the cinders and the mud" (18), "a great desert lifeless" (22), "a floating heroic world," an "ash-pit of cinders" and "cold walks, of the lines that lead nowhere" (17). Yet, even if he had written about cindery landscapes and the

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[165] On the attitudes towards the war of those in Hulme's circle, see Hynes, *A War Imagined* 5-8; Peppis 98; and Moody 260-61. For civilians' reaction to the declaration of war, see Winter 29; Stevenson 201-02; and Joll and Martel 271. According to Ferguson, Hulme did not expect the war to last more than a few weeks (cf. 183).
[166] A. Jones makes a similar point to Ferguson. See *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 132-33.

existential anxiety of facing a universe without any order or structure before, something that, as many critics rightly noticed, must have at least made the experience of the desolate landscapes of the Western Front look somewhat more familiar, nothing could have prepared him for the harsh reality of trench-warfare.[167] The operation at the Belgian front, he was soon to realise, was different to his preconceptions about warfare. "The first thing that looked characteristic of war (in the old Boer War scene)," he writes in one letter, "was where we were overtaken by a transport wagon taking food, guarded by men on horseback with rifles slung across their shoulders" (316-17). Fighting in the trenches must have struck him as a completely different "scene."

The Honourable Artillery Company was stationed in the areas around Kemmel and St Eloi. During Hulme's brief tenure at the front, lasting from January to April 1915, the Company's military focus was to take over the German stronghold of Spanbrock Moelen in the Petit Bois area (Ferguson 209-11). The task was proving especially difficult, and the attempt was marred by successive failures, culminating in the disasters of March and April 1915. Continuously losing ground to the much more efficient and better-equipped German army, the Allies, exposed to continuous shelling and gunfire, were forced to spend lengthy periods of time in the trenches or in retreat. The harsh weather conditions – there was frost, snow and incessant rain – meant that soldiers were perpetually soaked in the mud. Hulme describes the Company's Rest Camp as "a large space of clayey earth, no grass ... all pulped up into mud" (314). He recalls how on his first day at the frontier, he had to sleep in "a pool of black mud ... with continually feet fighting all the night" (315); then, marching towards the trenches, "It was pouring with rain," the roads were "simply fearful with mud" and the men were "exposed to shelling" (316-17). Stuck in a "circular reserve trench" near the Company's

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[167] McGuinness xvi-xvii; Ferguson 211-12; H. Carr, "T. E. Hulme and the Spiritual Dread of Space" 105-06.

headquarters in Vermizeele, he writes of how he had "to crawl along on my hands & knees, through the mud in pitch darkness & every now and then seemed to get stuck altogether," confessing that "I don't think I've been so exasperated for years" (320). In the trenches, the mud was worse and there was also the unremitting shelling. Unlike the much more comfortable German trenches, the Allies' trenches were shoddy, smelly and extremely unsafe. Lacking both in height and in fencing, they provided little refuge from the rain, the enemy fire and the shelling.[168] Hulme found them "fearfully muddy" (324; cf. 318) and "miserable" (325), complaining that they could be more accurately described as "ditch[es] with sandbags on top" (325); lying in them, he claims, "felt just like being in your grave" (323). The soldiers' exposure to German shelling meant that the whole experience was not only, as Hulme describes it, "uncomfortable," but also life-threatening: the shells, he writes, "seemed to burst just over your head, you seem to anticipate it killing you in the back, it hits just near you and you get hit on the back with clods of earth" (322).

Like so many other soldiers fighting in the trenches, Hulme found it hard to convey his experience of fighting at the front in writing; as he tells his family, "It's very difficult to describe anything to you, to at all make you realise what is *actually* like" (327; emphasis in original). Not that he knew himself what to make of what he was seeing. Digging trenches under a "very clear starry night" in January, he notes that everything looked "picturesque"; but, then again, "In reality," he reflects, "there is nothing picturesque about it" (321); instead, "It's the most miserable existence you can conceive of" (321). On another occasion, German shells landing around him, Hulme describes how the landscape was "absolutely peaceful," the nearby town appearing "absolutely white in the sun and immobile as if it would always be like that ... out of time and space altogether" (323). This was not to say that it was really a

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[168] For a description of living conditions in the trenches, see Fussell 42 and Ferguson 209.

pleasant experience; at times like these, he admits, "You've got to amuse yourself ... and romanticising the situation is a good way as any other" (323). In truth, as he wrote to his father in February describing the same event, he felt that he "shall be very pleased indeed when the whole thing is over" (qtd. in Ferguson 199).

In March, the attack on the spur of Spanbrock Moelen proved catastrophic. The Allies came under "friendly fire" and after suffering heavy casualties the operation had to be eventually aborted. Describing the event to his family, Hulme appears particularly moved. He remembers soldiers "creeping along the road," a scene which he finds "extremely depressing" (328), and "Enormous red flames, exactly like a poster of war & destruction & then miserable looking black figures & probably very tired people crawling out" (329). After the attack, he "saw a man come staggering across a field as if he were drunk, holding his head, finally falling down just outside our barbed wire entanglement. It turned out to be a Tommy," he states, "who had been blown right out of our trenches by our own artillery" (328-29). Eventually, the Company was forced to retreat in the trenches, the soldiers turning their attention to the "RB" trenches opposite St Eloi mound (330). But they were again unsuccessful, and following a spell in Dickebusch, they finally returned to the trenches on 29 March, this time to defend the trenches stretching from Viertstraat-Wytschaeete Road to the mound of St Eloi. The weather was dreadful, the soldiers were under continuous attack, and Hulme was tired, desperate and frustrated. He writes home that on one occasion "We were marched onto a chateau all blown to pieces" only to be made to "wait about 2 hours outside"; "That's how they do things in the army," he complains, adding that the authorities "never seem to think 5 minutes before they do a thing." When the soldiers returned to the trenches, "There were no shelters and it poured continually for several hours"; he was "absolutely tired out" (329). The operation lasted until the end of May and resulted in 127 personnel killed or

wounded. Hulme was among those shot; wounded from a bullet that hit him on the elbow, in April 1915 he was moved back to London for recuperation.

Hulme's experiences from the front formed the basis of "Trenches: St. Eloi," a poem published under Pound's name, first in *Catholic Anthology* in November 1915, and then again in *Umbra* five years later.[169] Given that the poem was most likely composed by Pound, it is perhaps unsurprising that it has received so little attention from Hulme critics. Yet, used speculatively, a brief analysis of the poem sheds light on Hulme's feelings and thoughts about the war and, as we will see, reveals a lot about his general attitude towards the war. According to Pound, "Trenches: St. Eloi" is an "abbreviation of some of [Hulme's] talk made when he came home with his first wound in 1915" (*Umbra* 123). Pound's claim is supported by the fact that the images depicted in the poem correspond directly to events described in Hulme's letters:

> Over the flat slope of St Eloi
>
> A wide wall of sandbags.
>
> Night,
>
> In the silence desultory men
>
> Pottering over small fires, cleaning their mess-tins:
>
> To and fro, from the lines,
>
> Men walk as on Piccadilly,
>
> Making paths in the dark,
>
> Through scattered dead horses,

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[169] See *Catholic Anthology* 22 and *Umbra* 125. A handwritten copy of the poem is found in Hulme's papers at Hull University Library. As far as I can tell, it is not in Hulme's writing and it is much more likely that it was copied by Kate Lechmere. See DHU/9. For details concerning the composition of the poem, see Schuchard "Eliot and Hulme in 1916" 1092n20 and *Eliot's Dark Angel*, 226n19. See also A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 151 and Comentale, "Hulme's Feelings" 188.

Over a dead Belgian's belly.

The Germans have rockets. The English have no

  rockets.

Behind the line, cannon, hidden, lying back miles.

Before the line, chaos:

My mind is a corridor. The minds about me are

  corridors.

Nothing suggests itself. There is nothing to do

  but keep on.

There are references to the "ditch[es] with sandbags on top" (325) that Hulme found so uncomfortable to live in while at the front, the peaceful yet nerve-wracking silence at night – "Its [*sic*] fairly quiet up in the trenches," he writes in one letter, adding that "The only thing that makes you feel nervous is when the star shells go off & you stand out revealed quite clearly as in daylight" (319), and the soldiers trying to keep warm by lighting a brazier, "i.e. an old bucket with holes knocked in it, burning charcoal & coke" (320). The "desultory men" in the poem bear a stark resemblance to the soldiers in Hulme's battalion, whom he describes in the letters as marching in the dark through a field "full of dead things, dead animals here & there, dead unburied animals, skeletons of horses destroyed by shell fire" (321; cf. 319, 327, 329), as well as the "troops" who "going always in the same direction make definite paths" (330). Finally, the poem recalls the experience of the sniper in Hulme's battalion who "discovered one of the paths that we walk over led right over the chest of a dead peasant (Belgian)" (330).

The scene opens at St. Eloi, the place where he was fighting in the trenches between March and April 1915. The soft intonation of "flat," "slope," "wide" and "wall" creates an almost serene atmosphere and the alliteration of "l" in "flat," "slope," "Eloi" and "wall" achieves a slow, slurring effect. The scene is however quickly interrupted by the advent of "Night," as the poem switches abruptly to a silent and dark place (emphasised by the complete absence of vision), where "desultory men" potter and aimlessly clean "their mess-tins," and, in an image that is reminiscent both of the crowd floating over London Bridge in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the living dead in Pound's Canto VII, "walk as on Piccadilly," cruising over "scattered dead horses."[170] In having men "pottering" and walking purposelessly "to and fro" in silence, the poem evokes what Hulme describes in the letters as the "curious" effect of war: "this continuous shelling and the apprehension of it," he writes in February, "has altered some men. They keep very quiet all day long & hardly say anything" (325). In many instances in the letters, Hulme expresses his inability to convey the total reality of the experience and the poem's presentation of the soldiers working in silence can be seen to be playing to this idea that war can only be experienced, but that it can never be reproduced in words.[171] At the same time, by rendering Piccadilly into a dystopic non-place and portraying the soldiers walking on a dead land, the poem captures the anomie and deracination of war: "there is nothing certain or fixed"; "You never come back to the same billets," Hulme notes in his letters, but, rather, "You have no place that belongs to you. You really are as nomadic as an animal" (326).

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[170] See Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many / I had not thought death had undone so many" (lines 63-64) and Pound's *Canto* VII: "Life to make mock of motion: / For the husks move, before me, move, / The words rattle: shells given out by shells" (lines 106-08).

[171] Both Binding and Leed have described how war, as a form of ritual, is necessarily a nonverbal event. See Binding 60 and Leed 74.

The opening vignette is succeeded by two brief insertions returning attention to the reality of war by presenting the following two incontestable and irreversible facts: "The Germans have rockets. The English have no / rockets." The break at the end of the line both highlights the destitution of the English army – they "have no" – and mimics the rocketing suffered by the soldiers in the trenches: just as the word "rockets" drops uninterrupted in the poem, shelling was, as Hulme describes it, unexpected, seemingly arbitrary, and nothing could be done to stop it (cf. 322). The advantage of the German army over the English forces is reflected in the structure of the sentence that follows: it is the longest line of the poem and its polysyllabic nuance is prolonged through the use of commas helping spell out the fact that the Germans had an organised, efficient trench line that stretched for miles. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the English camp that becomes one with the "chaos" of the dead man's land. The weakness of the English army, the fear of the unknown, the desolate landscape that, as Hulme puts it in the letters, makes the experience of walking seem that it is always leading "up to an abyss" (326) are all summed up in the word "chaos."

The colon at the end of "chaos" suggests that a description or explanation will follow and, indeed, the poem switches to a first-person voice for an unnamed speaker to exclaim: "My mind is a corridor. The minds about me are / corridors." The break serves to re-enact the sense of being lost, the lines forming a visual labyrinth. As the narrow trenches which Hulme describes in his letters become "corridors" in the minds of the speaker and those around him (cf. 321, 322), any distinction between the topography and its perception by the subject disappears. Fussell, Leed, Das and Harvey have all demonstrated the ways in which the experience of trench-warfare altered the perception of topography, with soldiers having to endure an almost complete lack of vision and restricted movement.[172] There are many

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[172] Fussell 76; Leed 77; Das, *Touch and Intimacy* 73; Harvey 87.

references in Hulme's letters to instances when the experience of fighting in the trenches causes him to have a distorted and claustrophobic picture of the landscape, as well as to moments when lack of vision affects his thinking. Crawling on his hands and knees in a narrow trench, for example, he was made to "feel shut in," while in a dug-out that was "just deep enough for us to crawl through," he felt like he was in "a rabbit hole" (320, 329). In another letter, he describes the desperation of waiting in the trenches for reserve, spelling out the agony of not being able to see at all: "You listen & think you hear voices & feet ... Then it turns out that you were mistaken [and] a German shell reveals them to you half-way across the field" (325). The absence of vision makes him reflect that "It's curious to think of the ground between the trenches, a bank which is practically never seen by anyone in the daylight" (321; cf. 324). On his first visit to the trenches, one January night, Hulme experienced the landscape as a labyrinth, noting in his letters that "You simply must keep up, because if you once lost the man in front, you wouldn't know what on earth to do, you might even walk up to the German lines" (319); and, when he was able to go on a hill to see the view, the landscape appeared endless and hostile: "we can see for miles our own & beyond the German lines ... then later see, it seems miles away, the white smoke of the shell bursting" (320). He was thus led to admit that "the mere fact that in a certain direction there really are the German lines, seems to alter the feeling of a landscape," because, as he explains, "You unconsciously orient things in reference to it" (326). This experience of the "inescapability" of the landscape is conveyed in the poem through the "Night" prohibiting clear vision; the depiction of men "Making paths in the dark," lacking panoramic view; the condensation of the landscape into "chaos"; and the description of the minds of men as "corridors." By the end of the poem, it becomes extremely difficult to separate the physical properties of the landscape from the mental attitude of those in it, a situation in which the subject appears

robbed of both agency and purpose.[173] This feeling of inanition is intensified in the following line, with the speaker conceding that "Nothing suggests itself / There is nothing to do..." The line, however, breaks and the stoic acceptance of the fact that a tragic fate awaits is complemented by the determination to "keep on." The speaker must somehow find a way of dealing with the harsh reality of trench warfare and the physical and mental destitute; he must find the power, that is, to continue in adversity, in a way not too dissimilar to the determination shown by Hulme when he was "floundering" in the dark to "simply keep up" (319).[174]

The reason why a close study of "Trenches: St. Eloi" is pertinent here is because both its tone and theme relate Hulme's experience of fighting in the trenches, thus discrediting the idea that he was not affected by the war; more importantly, the poem's message is in line with Hulme's assessment in "War Notes" that war is a necessary evil requiring sacrifice. This idea, as we will see further on in this chapter, is one of the reasons why Hulme supported the war. Most of the war poems at the time were written by civilians and it is easy to imagine how Hulme, just like any other soldier who experienced the harsh reality of war first hand, would have rejected idealistic representations of war by civilian authors and journalists.[175] Rejecting what Yeats called in his 1936 Introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* the "passive" suffering of so many war poems (xxxv), "Trenches: St. Eloi" avoids evoking the heightened emotions we find in Sassoon, Owen, Grenfell, Thomas, Seeger or Blunden, and, like Hulme's "classical" poet, the narrator in the poem "never flies away into the

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[173] This point is made by Das, who argues in "War Poetry and the Realm of the Senses" that the volatile life at the front denied soldiers both agency and purpose, as their survival depended on factors over which they had no control (75).

[174] This willingness to never be discouraged when faced with an impossible task is most famously articulated in Eliot's "East Coker," where "each venture / Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate / With shabby equipment always deteriorating / In the general mess of imprecision of feeling, / Undisciplined squads of emotion" (lines 180-83). According to Josipovici, this passage is "almost ... a manual of Modernism" (77).

[175] In *A War Imagined*, Hynes demonstrates that the idealistic representation of war at home was at odds with the reality of war as experienced by soldiers (119). In a letter to John Quinn, Pound pays tribute to Hulme for avoiding getting "maudled into the rubbish of 'war art'" (160).

circumambient gas" (62-63).[176] Rather, the poem's "tempered" tone accommodates the view that war requires sacrifice and endurance. Unlike Owen or Sassoon, who reject the vanity of war and openly criticise its inhumanity, in "Trenches: St. Eloi" war is presented as a struggle which one must simply "keep on." As Moody and Longenbach have separately observed, the poem's undertone shares something with the Japanese and Chinese poems that Pound was translating at the time for *Cathay*.[177] "Song of the Bowmen of Shu," for example, is told, like "Trenches: St. Eloi," from the perspective of soldiers and depicts the conflicting emotions of fighting men as they are forced to acknowledge that "we have no comfort / Our sorrow is bitter, but we would not return to our country" (ll. 12-13). In a similar manner, "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" concludes almost in resignation that "Men's fates are already set / There is no need of asking diviners" (ll. 10-11), while "South Folk in Cold Country" stoically asserts that "Hard fight gets no reward / Loyalty is hard to explain" (ll. 10-11). In this last poem, Pound found a "classical and poetic matter-of-factness" and a "sort of rugged endurance" ("Webster Ford" 11). This "endurance" can also be seen in Hulme's "War Notes," to which I now turn.

3. The argument for war

The declaration of war against Germany in August 1914 sparked a vociferous and ultimately very divisive battle of opinions among the British public (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 10). Throughout the duration of the war, politicians, intellectuals, journalists and other social commentators of all political affiliations discussed issues relating to the day-to-day political and military handling of the war in the press, as well as debating broader questions concerning Britain's moral stance and its future position in a post-war Europe. Hulme

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[176] Cf. Sassoon, "Lamentations," "Does it Matter?"; Owen, "The Dead-Beat," "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Anthem for Doom Youth"; Grenfell, "Into Battle,"; Thomas, "Rain"; Seeger, "Rendezvous"; Blunden, "Third Ypres".
[177] Moody 257-62; Longenbach 112-16.

published his first article on the war question in November 1915, at a time when the terms of the debate were already set.[178] Asquith's government had presented the war as an act of self-defence; in order to preserve the liberty of Britain and of Europe at large, it was necessary, so the story went, to put an end to Germany's aggressive foreign policy. The government did its best to communicate this narrative to the people. Under the directorship of Charles Masterman, the Department of Information recruited prominent members of the Edwardian regime, urging them to publicly proclaim their support for the war and to remind the people that the war was being fought in defence of civilisation against the "barbarous" German people.[179] Despite initial scepticism about the war, the vast majority of the national presses finally rallied to the government's support (Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* 35). The war was opposed by individuals of various convictions, including Labour and women activists, Christians and socialists, radical Liberals and Bloomsburyites. Although the views of these individuals varied considerably, the two most common pacifist lines of argument were that the war departed from the fundamental internationalist values of Liberalism, and that war was morally wrong and unnatural.[180] Many disillusioned Liberals, maintaining that there was a common, transnational Liberal ideology shared between the Anglo-Saxon peoples, argued that the altercation with Germany hindered the prospects of creating the pan-European Liberalism for which they strived.[181] At the same time, humanist pacifists, such as Russell and Bell, made the case that the war was both irrational and barbarous.

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[178] For a discussion of the terms of the debate that had being going on since July 1914, see Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* 32-36.

[179] Cf., for example, "Britain's Destiny and Duty: Declaration by Authors, A Righteous War." On war propaganda, the behaviour of the press, and the intellectuals' support of the war, see Hynes, *A War Imagined* 26-27, 79; Stevenson 272; Peppis 99; and N. Ferguson 231.

[180] For an overview of the pacifists' arguments, see Vellacott 32-36.

[181] See Sherry, "The Great War and Modernist Poetry" 195.

In a series of squibs published concurrently in the *New Age* and the *Cambridge Magazine*, Hulme sided firmly in favour of the war, attacking those who opposed it in his usual polemical manner. Hulme's vocal support of war has led many critics to read his "War Notes" as radically pro-war, with some going as far as finding his argument thoroughly in line with the extreme Right.[182] Several recent critics have qualified this reading considerably, yet the consensus remains that Hulme was an enthusiastic militarist.[183] In this section I revisit Hulme's argument in favour of the war, demonstrating that Hulme was much less radical in his support of the war than often assumed and also showing that, despite claims to the contrary, his politics during this time did not shift to the extreme Right. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, even though Hulme certainly rejected pacifism on ideological grounds, it is inaccurate to claim that he was in principle pro-war. Rather, Hulme presents war as a necessary evil, deemed to be the right course of action only insofar as it protected British Liberal democratic institutions.

On the eve of the declaration of war, Britain's Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, outlined the government's rationale for joining the war against Germany in a speech to the Parliament. The British government, Grey argued, had always been "working for peace not only for this country, but to preserve the peace of Europe." The decision to fight Germany, he added, was made in view "of British interests, British honour, and British obligations, free from all passion as to why peace has not yet been preserved," thus assuring the House of Commons that the decision to go to war was made "without sentiment, and from the point of view of British interests." Grey's point was that, unless Britain sought to halt Germany's aggressive expansionism, the liberty of Britain in particular and of Europe more broadly would be in

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[182] See, for example, Read, Introduction to *Speculations* x; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 143; Roberts, *T. E. Hulme* 139-40; Griffiths 168; and Olsen 98.

[183] Critics who argue that Hulme's "War Notes" displays a mind that is assertive yet also tolerant include Csengeri, ed. xxv-xxvi; Comentale, *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-garde* 144; L. B. Williams 187-88, 193; and Muller 250.

danger: "We are in the presence of a European conflagration; can anybody," Grey asked, "set limits to the consequences that may arise out of it?" (qtd. in Butler 307-09). In his first of a series of "War Notes," Hulme puts forward an argument in favour of Britain's involvement in the war that, in many ways, constitutes only a reiteration of the case for war as put forward by Grey and the rest of the Liberal government. The war, Hulme claims, is a necessary measure for preserving democracy in Britain and for guaranteeing freedom in Europe at large. The British Liberal democratic institutions and the "human ideals" on which the British way of life is based, he argues, must be protected from the threat posed by the "bureaucratic" and "anti-Liberal" Germany (334). Even for someone who is otherwise extremely critical of Liberal democracy, the dilemma is simple:

> All we mean by democracy will certainly take a second place in our daily lives if the Central Powers have their way. It cannot be otherwise ... For German bureaucracy to succeed is to ensure the failure of English democracy, and with it of all the secondary variations dependent upon it. (334)

It was these "secondary variations" or, as Hulme also called them, these "realities which will affect very strongly the life of the ordinary citizen" (399) in case of a German victory that, he maintains, make it imperative for Britain to go to war: for, "the consequences of defeat are such as nobody in England can face with his eyes open" (335). In keeping with Grey's argument, Hulme also asserts that, as well as defending "our liberties" (398), fighting against the Central Powers is important for all democratic European countries, as the emergence of Germany as a militarist state with expansionist ambitions means that no country would be left "unaffected" (385). He thus stresses that German victory would mean "an end of Europe as we know it, as a comity of nations" (386) and "would result in a tyranny" (386-87). The war,

therefore, is not only vital for the preservation of basic liberties enjoyed by the democratic peoples of Europe, but, more importantly for Hulme, it would decide the future political and cultural direction of Europe (332). Europe is in a state of "flux," Hulme argues, that would "settle after the war into a physical structure which will probably endure for a century" (385; cf. 333, 401-02). As he puts it otherwise, in a metaphor taken directly out of his experiences at the front, Europe is "a creation" as "fixed" as the "the trench-lines, between the Allies and the enemy" (333; cf. 402). Precisely because the war is a "highly critical intensification" (332) of this state of flux, if the European countries want to prevent German hegemony in Europe, Hulme concludes, then all European countries have a responsibility to fight Germany, for "the liberties of Europe ... can only be preserved by fighting" (349; cf. 383).

That was precisely Hulme's objection to pacifists: that they did not recognise the severity of the threat posed to both Britain and Europe by Germany. The "pacifist scepticism," Hulme writes in January 1916, springs from two sources: "the fatuous belief that liberty cannot ... be permanently endangered, for 'Germany herself will *inevitably* develop towards democracy'"; and the "inability to see that Europe will be really altered in structure by this war" (384; emphasis in original). In both cases, he protests that the pacifists get it wrong. In the first case, "evolution towards democracy," he argues, "is not only not inevitable, but it is the most precarious, difficult and exigent task political man has ever conceived," adding that whatever the Liberals wish to think, "the mind of Germany is neither Liberal nor even Liberalising, that is, disposed to become Liberal" (333). Regarding the pacifists' belief that Europe is under no immediate threat, the danger of losing the war, Hulme insists, would signal the "end of Europe as a new Hellas" and the beginning of "a Europe under German leadership" (384; cf. 397). In other words, Hulme accuses the pacifists of political naivety and also of political ignorance. To prove his point, he refers pacifists to the writings of Max Scheler and Werner

Sombart, two contemporary German political thinkers, whose nationalist views appealed to many in Germany.[184] Drawing attention to the writings of Sombart and Scheler, Hulme thus claims that Germany is plotting "a European Empire, a Macedonian military empire, in which Germany would play the same part that Prussia plays to-day in Germany itself" (336).

In defending the Liberal government's decision to go to war, Hulme is, to a certain extent, also offering an apology for the Parliament's introduction of emergency measures. On 8 August 1914, a series of laws aimed at "securing the public safety and the defence of the realm," as stated in the Parliament's official announcement, was passed (qtd. in Hynes, *A War Imagined* 79). As Hynes explains, the Defence of the Realm Act or DORA, as it was commonly referred to, appeared initially to be only designed to "prevent persons communicating with the enemy or obtaining information ... to assist the enemy" and "to secure the safety of any means of communication, or of railways, docks or harbours" (*A War Imagined* 79). However, some of the amendments introduced afterwards constituted serious violations of basic civil liberties. For example, "His Majesty's Government" was granted the right to suppress any report or statement "by word of mouth or in writing or in any newspaper, periodical ... or other printed publication ... intended or likely" to subvert the King's authority and to imprison objectors without trial (qtd. in N. Ferguson 219). Hulme supported both DORA and compulsory conscription, arguing that "the danger to liberty involved in this Act, and in the use of compulsion, is infinitesimal in comparison with the loss of liberty that would follow our defeat" (383). In his view, those who opposed DORA and conscription were choosing to fight for the principle of liberty over the fact of liberty. For Hulme there was, thus, a distinction to be drawn between "principle," which is of an "absolute, infinite character ... not a quantity and, consequently, it cannot be measured," and

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[184] On Scheler's and Sombart's nationalism, see Gerhard 74-80 and 91-93. Hulme is here probably referring to Sombart's *Helden und Händler* and Scheler's *Der Genius des Krieges unde der deutche Krieg*, both published in 1915.

"fact." The difference, as he explains, is that, by contrast to "principles," "facts can be measured and compared," meaning that the pragmatic realities of Europe in 1915-16 made it clear that war was necessary (383).

   Despite lending his support to the emergency measures imposed by the Liberal government, it would be inaccurate to claim that Hulme supported the suppression of individual freedoms or that he collaborated with the government. While we must be careful not to diminish the violation of human rights that propaganda and censorship necessitate, it is important to remember that, in comparison to other European states, Britain did not make excessive use of censorship or propaganda, while, during the time when Hulme was expressing his support for DORA, the freedom of expression was largely unchallenged. As Stevenson writes in his authoritative *History of the First World War*, "Although the Defence of the Realm Act provided sweeping powers to intervene by decree, in practice the government made little use of them, and Britain even more than France 'self-mobilized' for war" (271). More importantly, even though Hulme sides in favour of DORA and conscription in "War Notes," he remains critical of politicians and members of the Cabinet for "not making up their minds sooner either definitely for or definitely against Conscription" and for misleading the public with their "downright trickery" (344). He also recognises that DORA poses a "considerable danger to liberty" (383), warning against the suppression of freedom of speech, describing war tribunals as "sham," "crude and formless" (343; 409, 410) and declaring that "If I were a pacifist I should certainly refuse to appear at all" (410). Furthermore, he demands that the government guaranteed "that they will repeal the whole of the "Defence of the Realm" Acts on the day the war ends" (382). Hulme was also extremely sceptical of the Liberal government's anti-German propaganda. Despite being wary of German foreign policy and what he called the "diabolonianism" of the German state (336), in

"War Notes" he dissociates himself with those "crude" people – the "Crude Colonels in club armchairs and the editor of the 'National Review'" – who "expressed very crude opinions on the German dangers," stressing that "the contrast between the justness of the Allies' cause and that of Germany is not so simple as it is painted by the Crude People" (349-50). As he makes it clear, "We are not concerned with some eternal principle of the German nature which makes them eternally different from us and dangerous to us," but, rather, as he continues to claim, "with quite ordinary people, who, as the result of a *certain* history and under the influence of *certain* ideas, form part of a mechanism that, directed by *certain* hands, is ... capable of doing permanent injury to the liberties of Europe" (352; emphasis in original). In fact, the Germans, Hulme argues, are merely displaying the same "calculation and brute force" that the British themselves used in their colonial excursions. The British people, he thus complains, "find it difficult to realise the fact, that at the present moment others may be thinking of creating a *European* empire by similar methods."[185] Finally, Hulme is extremely critical of the military conduct of war. He condemns the slowness with which the Allies reacted in Serbia and bemoans their "criminal stupidity" that, in his view, led to a "lamentable failure" (342; 372; cf. 337, 356); describes the Allies' strategy as "inadequate" and "fatuous" (339, 346); berates the general inefficiency of army Generals and Staff officers, the "bungling asses who direct our operations" (345, 371); attacks the "prejudice" and "the sentimental wish of a section of opinion to beat the Germans … where they are strongest" (342); exposes the Allied army as underfunded and lacking in discipline (358); and criticises the political and military hierarchy for putting the lives of soldiers at risk, as in the disasters of Sulva Bay and the Dardanelles (345-46, 358; 370).

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[185] Hulme added this passage to the *Cambridge Magazine* version of his article for 2 March 1916. It is reprinted in *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* 475n64.

Hulme's defence of British democratic institutions and the British "human ideals" (334) cannot be dismissed as propaganda. As made clear by his vocal criticism of the government's handling of the war and his refusal to participate in the anti-German frenzy of the time, unlike intellectuals such as Wells, Murray, Powys or Hueffer, Hulme is not interested in offering unconditional support to the government, or in regurgitating the Department of Information's propaganda.[186] On the contrary, his insistence that his support for the war does not imply that he favours authoritarianism politics, but that the war against Germany is necessary for the preservation of democracy, suggests that he was in fact keen on preserving the British democratic institutions. In attacking the pacifists, therefore, Hulme, as we will now see, was keen on arguing that anti-pacifism and democracy are not mutually exclusive.

4. Anti-pacifism and democracy

Against Bell's and Russell's claims that support for the war amounts to support for the establishment or "an admiration for *Prussianism*," Hulme argues in "War Notes" that he is neither siding with the forces of "reaction," nor harbouring German authoritarianism (362).[187] On 10 February 1916, he thus declares that "I have no disguised reactionary motives," adding that "I am not in favour of the war, because I think all wars favour reaction" (400). His support for the current war, he claims, is based on the hope that it would "hasten the disappearance of the rich" and that it would bring about a "new order of society ... different from the old" (400, 392; cf. 363). Moreover, while admitting of once being attracted to the "'organic' theory of the State" and "the theories of this kind to be found in Taine, Barrès, and in Maurras," he makes it clear that he supported such theories only inasmuch as he deemed them to be "diametrically opposed," as he puts it, to utilitarian democracy, claiming that he

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[186] Cf. Murray 339; Powys 69; and Hueffer's *When Blood is Their Argument*, which was, in fact, commissioned by Masterman. For discussion of anti-German propaganda and the role of the intellectuals in disseminating the government's views, see Hynes, *A War Imagined* 67 and Stevenson 272.
[187] Cf. Bell, "Peace at Once" 12 and Russell, *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* 42. In "War Notes," Hulme attacks Bell, Allen and the rest of the no-conscription activists. See 376, 352.

has now come to reject this "organic" conception of the State, realising that it is "the characteristic German theory of the State" (365). Eager to dissociate democracy from pacifism and to show that "There is no essential connection between pacifism and democracy" (362; cf. 395, 363-64), Hulme argues that there are two different kinds of democracy. On the one hand, there is pacifist democracy, which, in his view, is ineffective and corrupt and which, based on a humanist ethic, can "never develop the force which is likely to radically transform society" (362-63). On the other hand, there is for Hulme a completely different conception of democracy which, as he describes it, "like the democracy of the seventeenth century in England, or the Socialism of Proudhon [is] founded on the idea of Justice" (363). Even though Hulme does not elaborate on what he means exactly by these systems and does not explicitly propose either of them as a substitute for the existing political system, it is interesting to investigate possible reasons as to why he might have been drawn to these particular political orders. As a brief examination of "the democracy of the seventeenth century" and the anarchism-socialism of Proudhon reveals, Hulme is not prescribing a system of governance; rather, he is using these political orders to demonstrate how one could support the war and be a democrat, in the broadest sense of the word possible.

In invoking seventeenth-century democracy, Hulme counteracts a common interpretation of Civil War as a vindication of "liberal" ideas. As Whitworth has noted, at least two articles in the *Nation*, a Liberal pacifist newspaper mentioned by Hulme in "War Notes" (380), compared anti-conscription activists and pacifists to Cromwell's army at the time Hulme was writing (442). Hulme was certainly not the only one at this time to be contesting the *Nation*'s interpretation of the Civil War. The Conservative politician Hugh Cecil argued in *Conservatism* in 1912 that the Civil War was in reality "a triumph of conservatism," signalling "a general rejection of Puritanism and military tyranny ... in favour of the familiar

forms of the ancient constitution" (32). The historian G. P. Gooch, offered a similar interpretation of the Civil War, first, in *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (1898) and, later, in *Political Thought in England* (1914-1915). Drawing from the Clarke Papers, Gooch re-examines in *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* the roles of key figures involved in the Civil War. Among those who receive special attention by Gooch are Milton and Ireton. Gooch demonstrates that, despite popular belief, "Ireton was not a radical and he did not want to kill the King, [but] only to protect England against future despotism" (159). According to Gooch's analysis, Ireton rejects the notion that there are "Natural Rights" as ultra-individualistic (162) and "in its essence anarchic" (205), with Gooch quoting Ireton's remark that "Men as men ... are corrupt and will be so" (164). "[L]ike all who shared Hobbes' view of human nature and therefore of the primitive condition of mankind," Gooch concludes in *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, "Ireton traces the origin of society uniquely to the necessity of securing order" (164), a belief that, as Gooch argues, was also held by Milton, who even though believed in "Natural Rights" endorsed Hobbes' view of human nature (179-81). Gooch is equally categorical about the Civil War's conservative credentials in *Political Thought in England*, where he reiterates the view that "the opinions of Ireton were by no means revolutionary" (88), welcoming the publication of the *Clarke Papers* that "has at last rendered it possible to reconstruct the evolution of Cromwell's philosophy and to recognise the conservative stamp of his mind" (91).[188]

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[188] The *Clarke Papers*, which document the notes taken by William Clarke during the Civil War, were made available by C. H. Firth in 1891-1901. For Ireton's remark on the corrupt nature of humans, see *The Clarke Papers* 2: 176.

Gooch's analysis of Ireton is significant here because it is from Gooch's *Political Thought in England* that Hulme gets his information about Ireton.[189] Quoting Gooch's *Political Thought in England* almost in verbatim, Hulme declares in "War Notes":

> I am opposed to *pacifism* as a *democrat*, but I beg leave to point out that democracy is a little older than the tabernacles in which these people imbibed it. If I could correct their tenets by Ireton's belief that 'men are born corrupt and will remain so', I should prefer to call myself a *Leveller*; for not only did they think '*liberty* a right inherent in every man ... meaning by liberty ... definite participation in whatever political arrangements the community finds it desirable to make', but they were prepared themselves to fight for this right. (362; cf. Gooch, *Political Thought in England* 90, 86-87)

The attraction of this version of democracy for Hulme is, as he goes on to explain, that it "had a certain virility and had not ... fallen into the sentimental decadence of *humanitarianism*" (362). Ireton's conception of human nature chimes with Hulme's conservative conviction, discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, according to which humans are "limited" creatures. At the same time, however, the lesson from the Levellers here is that it is often necessary to fight for liberties. Seemingly drawing a parallel between the Levellers in the seventeenth century and those who support Britain's involvement in the war against Germany, Hulme reminds his readers that the Levellers did not take liberty as granted but fought for it. He is thus able to turn the Levellers against the pacifists, whom he portrays as not seeing liberty as an "*achievement*," but, as he puts it, as "an inevitable constituent of the world" (352; emphasis in original). That was also, according to Hulme, the great lesson from Milton, who supported

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[189] Whitworth correctly identifies Gooch as the source of Hulme's quotations, but wrongly attributes Hulme's source as Gooch's *English Democratic Ideas*, a claim also made by Ferguson (240). Hulme, in fact, quotes directly from Gooch's *Political Thought in England* (cf. 80, 90, 86-87). Had Whitworth read *Political Thought in England*, he certainly would not have argued that Hulme adapts his quotations from Gooch "considerably" and that his quotations are "not completely accurate" (442-43).

democracy, but who "had a thoroughly realistic conception of the means by which it could be achieved" (362).

Although Hulme is in many ways using the Levellers in "War Notes" strategically, in order to show that pacifism does not amount to democracy, as Gasiorek argues, Hulme's invocation of seventeenth-century politics cannot be dismissed as merely a rhetorical ploy.[190] Rather, Hulme's invocation of the Levellers' sheds light on the kind of politics in which he believes. Both Aylmer and Farr have demonstrated how, even though the Levellers were for "Government and Against Popular Confusion," they did not want the complete abolition of government because they held it to be a good and necessary system – as Ireton put it, "the pravity and corruption of mans [*sic*] heart is such that there could be no living without it" (qtd. in Aylmer 154; cf. Farr 148, 179-81). At the same time, the Levellers valued civil liberties above everything else, seeing it as their sole purpose to bring equality and social justice to the people. Thus, the Levellers' brand of democracy seems to tie together Hulme's argument in the *Commentator* articles and in "Romanticism and Classicism," according to which some form of order and discipline is needed for society to function harmoniously, and the defence of British democratic institutions and "ideals" in "War Notes" (Cf. 61, 70, 164, 220, 230, 239-40, 334). Moreover, the Levellers' emphasis on duty resonates with Hulme's idea in "War Notes" that the preservation of liberties requires selfless sacrifice. According to Gooch, Ireton's Levellers held that liberty was "not merely a freedom from the restraint of others, but a conscious and deliberate share in such arrangements as the community finds it necessary to make" and that, moreover, "From this the right of the individual springs as a corollary the sovereignty of the people, a sovereignty bounded ... by social duty and by

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[190] According to Gasiorek, Hulme's mention of the Levellers is significant as it reveals that, in his later writings, Hulme is "moving away from the anti-democratic sentiments … and trying to develop a hybridized theory of democracy that combined aspects of anarchism, syndicalism, and classicism all at the same time." Gasiorek concludes that by invoking the Levellers, Hulme is attempting to break away from "secular modernity" (158-59).

justice."[191] Hulme echoes Gooch's description of the Levellers when he argues that, while

pacifist democracy is "founded on *sympathy*," an alternative brand of democracy is possible

that is "founded on the conception of *Justice*, leading to the assertion of equality" (362;

emphasis in original). Because this latter version of democracy places duty at its centre, he

concludes, the participating citizens must fight to preserve their liberty, just as the Levellers,

as he puts it in the passage cited above, "were prepared themselves to fight for this right"

(362).

It is this same insistence on the importance of duty that Hulme finds in Proudhon and

which, in turn, explains why he links the "Socialism of Proudhon" with seventeenth-century

democracy, offering both as alternatives to "pacifist" democracy (cf. 362-63). As Gasiorek

correctly points out, it is extremely difficult to summarise Proudhon's political philosophy

into a consistent account, as Proudhon kept on changing his views over time (158). Yet, there

is a recurring element in Proudhon's work that ties in with Hulme's interpretation of Leveller

democracy and that is thus helpful to consider here. Proudhon holds that no political system

is worthwhile unless it has Justice as its central component, a notion that in Proudhon's work

includes both individual liberty and economic equality. To understand what Proudhon means

by "Justice," it is helpful to consider his critique of the French Revolution. Rejecting the idea

that societies change organically or immanently from within, Proudhon claims that the

problem with the French Revolution is that, though it successfully spread liberty and equality

in politics, it failed to do so in the economic sector and, therefore, failed to deliver Justice,

which could be achieved only once the working classes were rewarded with the full value of

their labour (52, 66-67, 113-22).[192] Despite making Justice the final absolute towards which

the working classes should strive, however, Proudhon also adds an essential component to it,

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[191] *English Democratic Ideas* 204; cf. *Political Thought in England* 86-87.
[192] Unless otherwise stated, all page references to Proudhon correspond to Stewart Edwards' compilation of Proudhon's writings, *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*.

without which Justice is not possible: duty. Thus, once Justice is achieved, relationships among people would cease to be based on authority, but, instead, they would be based on a mutual contract, according to which each party would have a duty to participate in the community in a collaborative spirit. In this sense, by invoking Proudhon's "Socialism," Hulme is emphasising the important part that duty plays in society and using Proudhon's political order to argue in an even more poignant way that British citizens, living in a democratic country, have a duty to fight Germany to preserve their liberties.

Hulme's mention of Proudhon alongside Leveller democracy is also explained by the fact that, although making liberty the cornerstone of his theory of society, Proudhon insists, like Ireton and Hulme, that individual liberty should not be unrestrained. There are two ways in which individual liberty is controlled in Proudhon's system. In the first place, Proudhon's non-dialectical system precludes a synthesis. This means that, rather than leading to a state of individual liberty, Proudhonian society is construed around two antagonistic forces or "laws," liberty and authority, that cancel each other out in a kind of a balancing act (102-04; cf. 121, 140, 194-95). In the second place, as Stewart Edwards notes, Proudhon does not believe in human improvement; because human nature is fallible, Proudhon, according to Edwards, must concede that humans must always be kept in check (27). Proudhon's view of human nature is very close to the "pessimistic" worldview Hulme presents in the *Commentator* articles, according to which human nature is limited and fallible and, as such, like the political order that Hulme advocates in the *Commentator*, it is best represented in the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Thus, as well as guaranteeing liberty, the social order that Proudhon hopes will replace the reign of capitalism has also to act as a restraining force, controlling humans' egotistical and evil tendencies. It is in this sense that Edwards argues that Proudhon is "closer to conservatives such as de Maistre than to socialist or liberal

writers"; for, he calls for control over humans' vices and aims not to banish authority, but to balance it with liberty (27; cf. Stanley, ed. 9).

Finally, there is another way in which Hulme's mention of Proudhon in "War Notes" can be understood. While arguing for a conception of democracy based on duty and the recognition of human limitations, the French thinker also shows how democracy and anti-pacifism are not antithetical.[193] War is an important part of Proudhon's political system in two respects. On the one hand, Proudhon maintains that militancy helps preserve a society's liberties from enemies within and from the outside. War, according to Proudhon, has always "tempered morals, maintained the balance of power between States, aided progress, established the reign of justice and guaranteed liberty" (203; cf. 207). On the other hand, in Proudhon's political order, fighting or action guarantees Justice and Liberty in society, stimulating humans to fight for their ideals. The idea is that Justice can only be achieved through action. Action, in Proudhon's view, "is the principal condition of life, health and strength in an organized being ... [It] enables it to develop and increase its faculties and to fulfil its destiny; and "For there to be action," Proudhon explains, "there must be some ground that exists in relation to the acting self," concluding that "Action ... is a struggle," and that "To act is to fight" (204). Proudhon's militant social programme allows Hulme to challenge in "War Notes" the argument against the war. Citing Proudhon in one of his jibes against Russell, Hulme argues that the problem with those who oppose the war is that they do not understand it (cf. 391). Moreover, in a way not too dissimilar to Proudhon, he maintains that "certain actions, though good, may involve sacrifice of life; a sacrifice which," he writes, "may be impossible to *rationalise*, by showing that it furthers life in other ways" (412), contending elsewhere that the problem with the pacifists is that they are reluctant to act upon

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[193] Proudhon often refers to his theory of politics as democratic. Cf. 63-64, 103, 105, 116, 141. As Stanley shows, Proudhon does not oppose democracy in principle but, rather, he rejects what may be described as "humanist" democracy. See *The Sociology of Virtue* 205-12.

their beliefs (359; emphasis in original. Cf. Proudhon, *La guerre et la paix* 40). Despite evidently drawing on Proudhon in "War Notes," however, it is difficult to imagine Hulme agreeing with Proudhon's claims that, for example, "war ... enabled man to assert his majesty and *valeur*" or that "Death is the crown of life" (204; emphasis in original). Rather than inaugurating war as the driving force of human progress, it seems more plausible to argue that in "War Notes" Hulme appropriates Proudhon's theses, using them in support of the view that a democratic society that guarantees economic equality and individual liberties and that sees it as its duty to fight for its liberties is indeed possible and that, therefore, there is no necessary connection between democracy and pacifism.

In understanding how Hulme is using Proudhon in "War Notes," it is instructive to consider Hulme's discussion of Sorel in the Preface to *Reflections on Language*. It is no accident that Hulme associates Proudhon with Sorel in "War Notes," for what attracts him in Proudhon is also that which he finds in Sorel (cf. 395, 409). Following Proudhon, Sorel blames what he interprets as the failure of modern societies on the "quietism" of the dialectical processes involved in political analyses and on the theories of progress, arguing for activism achieved through "violence" and a "heroic ethic" as a remedy (Stanley 238-40). Furthermore, like Proudhon, Sorel admires the heroic values revealed only in conflict, contending that war plays a fundamental part in the success of class struggle, particularly "The ardent desire to try one's strength in great battles, to submit to the test which gives the military calling its claim to superiority, and to conquer glory at the peril of one's life" (*Reflections on Violence* 160). More importantly, in line with Proudhon, Sorel offers a critique of bourgeois democracy, not on the grounds that capitalist democracy privileges individual freedoms but, on the contrary, as Stanley points out, because middle-class democracy is based on centralism, force and unity against local liberties, law and plurality

(205). In doing so, in "Materials for a Theory of the Proletariat" Sorel adopts Proudhon's view when he states that "The Revolution consecrated the word 'democracy' as a lodestar" and that it ended up "masking the most horrible tyranny" (249-50; Cf. Proudhon, *De la justice* 2: 116, 120-21). Like Proudhon, therefore, Sorel insists that any theory of society must strive after absolute Justice while, at the same time, sustain individual liberties (Stanley 245-47).

It is "difficult" for liberal democrats, Hulme writes in his Preface to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*,

> to understand a revolutionary who is anti-democratic, an absolutist in ethics, rejecting all rationalism and relativism, who values the mystical element in religion 'which will never disappear', speaks contemptuously of modernism and *progress*, and uses a concept like *honour* with no sense of unreality.
> As a rule such sentiments, when the *democrat* meets with them, are conveniently dismissed as springing from a disguised attempt to defend the interests of wealth. But this obviously will not fit the case of Sorel. (247; emphasis in original)

As with Proudhon in "War Notes," here Hulme chooses to portray Sorel as an anti-reactionary, anti-capitalist, and anti-pacifist democrat, a claim he repeats in "War Notes" when he describes Sorel (and Proudhon) as "real as distinct from the dilettante democrat" (395). In the Preface, defending Sorel against charges that he is a mystic, a neo-royalist and a sentimentalist, Hulme maintains that Sorel's contribution to democracy is that he shows how "democratic romanticism" has no necessary connection with democratic values. By rejecting Rousseau's belief in the natural goodness of humans and in Progress, on which the "pacifist,

rationalist, and hedonist" version of democracy, according to Hulme, is based, and by adopting in its turn a conception of human nature that is, as Hulme describes it, "classical" and "pessimistic," Sorel demonstrates for Hulme how "classicism" is compatible with democracy. Even though Sorel's opponents argue that his belief in Original Sin is "reactionary," and despite the fact that Sorel's opposition to pacifist democracy and his reaction against Romanticism explains the "sympathy between Sorel and ... *L'Action française*," a link which Hulme notes is "so eagerly fastened on by those anxious to discredit him," Hulme insists that there is nothing reactionary in Sorel's politics (249, 251). In contrast to other opponents of pacifist democracy, Sorel, Hulme asserts, "expects a return of the classical spirit through the struggle of the classes" (251). In other words, rather than defending the status quo – aristocracy, oligarchy or monarchy – as is the case with Maurras, Sorel desires a revolution of the proletariat. "It is this," Hulme notes, "which differentiates Sorel from other attacks on the democratic ideology. Some of these are merely dilettante, having little sense of reality, while others are really vicious, in that they play with the idea of inequality" (251). For all those people "who begin to be disillusioned with liberal and pacifist *democracy*, while shrinking from the opposed *ideology* on account of its reactionary associations," he concludes, "Sorel, a revolutionary in economics, but classical in ethics, may prove an emancipator" (252).

Despite the way in which Sorel's or Proudhon's theories, as both Benjamin and Arendt have showed, lend a helping hand to the very authoritarian ideologies they purport to oppose, it is clear that Hulme is using them in his war writings in an attempt to dissociate anti-pacifism from reactionary politics.[194] Thus throughout "War Notes," he repeatedly stresses that there is nothing reactionary in his support of the war. "[T]his war," he claims, "has

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[194] See Benjamin 245-52 and Arendt 325, 328. On Sorel's authoritarianism, see also Stanley 288 and Weisbord 586-87.

greatly, to their own surprise, converted many men to democracy," maintaining that "the right

theory of society is to be found ... *not* in the *reactionaries*" (365). The value of Proudhon and

Sorel, Hulme writes in the last of his "War Notes," is that they make it "possible to

completely *dissociate* the reactionary spirit, and the rejection of a rationalist humanitarian

ethic" (413; emphasis in orignal).

5. The ethics of anti-pacifist democracy

In the February-March instalments of "War Notes," Hulme turns his attention to

explaining in more assertive terms the fundamental ethical difference which he argues exists

between the pacifist and the anti-pacifist positions. His aim is to challenge the ethics of

Humanism, while, at the same time, providing a philosophical basis to his claim that there is

no necessary connection between pacifism and democracy. To fully comprehend Hulme's

critique of what he interprets as the ethics of pacifism, it is necessary to examine his very

public spat with Russell. This is because it is largely in response to Russell's political

philosophy that Hulme develops his notion of "objective" ethics.

In 1915-16, Russell was one of the most vocal opponents of war. Once a prominent

Fabian, Russell's disagreement with the foreign policy of the government eventually led him

to turn his back on the Liberals and align himself with the Union of Democratic Control. In

November 1914, he joined Clifford Allen and Fenner Brockway in forming the "No-

Conscription Fellowship," an organisation that, held together by what Allen called "a belief

in the sanctity of life," saw as its solitary aim to stop compulsory conscription (qtd. in

Vellacott 29). From his position as a member of the UDC and the NCF and as a respectable

academic philosopher, Russell campaigned tirelessly against the war. Russell's objections to

war included the typical Liberal charge that war violates the fundamental principles of

Liberalism; the idea that the confrontation came as a result of pressure exerted on the European governments by capitalist warmongers who would be the only ones to benefit from it; the notion that war constitutes a complete disregard of human life; and the belief that, as Russell puts it in "Philosophy of Pacifism," war with Germany could have been prevented, as it was based on "false and fallacious arguments by which men are induced to believe that war is inevitable and even often beneficent" (2).[195] Perhaps Russell's most significant contribution to the argument against war, however, was his discussion in early 1916 of "the springs of human action" in a series of lectures published as *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* (9).[196] The crux of the argument in *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* is that reason has little power over humans' impulses and desires so that, therefore, even though reason helps guide us to any goal we contemplate, unless we want to take notice of the calculations of reason, we do not have to. This is the essence of Russell's distinction between desires and impulses. In the realm of desire, humans can easily make use of reason, as "All desire involves an interval of time between the consciousness of a need and the opportunity for satisfying it" (11). Impulses, however, resist reason as they impel us to act on them without calculation: they are, according to Russell, "erratic and anarchical, not easily fitted into a well-regulated system" (14). That is precisely why Russell argues that impulses are both important for human life and potentially destructive: having no purpose, impulses supply the driving force for our emotional life and ensure creativity; yet, at the same time, unless they were directed towards creative and life-enhancing paths though, they could easily lead to "destruction and death" (14-15). As Ryan has pointed out, Russell ultimately uses this theory of the nature of impulses to discredit war as an irrational, and therefore morally wrong, activity (72-74). The reason why so many people support the war, Russell can claim, is because, living in a society that does not nurture their impulses, people are bored and

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[195] See Vellacott 12-13, 55 and 60-72; Monk 367-68; and Ryan 64.
[196] The lectures published as *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* were delivered by Russell in London between 18 Jan. and 7 Mar. 1916.

frustrated. As he puts it in "Disintegration and Principles of Growth," borrowing Wallas'

term, "Many causes contributed to bringing the war; but 'balked disposition' was certainly

the chief cause of the enthusiasm with which urban populations everywhere greeted its

outbreak" (309).[197] The desire displayed by so many young men to fight in the war is

explained in *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* as social malaise: through mischievous

education and propaganda, the society encourages aggressive and anti-social impulses, rather

than creative and sociable ones.

In "War Notes," Hulme accuses Russell and the rest of the prominent pacifists, Allen and

Bell, of being naive and unable to perceive the imminent danger of German hegemony in

Europe (387-388, 392-393). Russell and his pacifist friends, Hulme maintains, base their

beliefs on a sentimentalist view of life (391) and have a false sense of "intellectual

superiority" (404; emphasis in original).[198] Focusing specifically on Russell's distinction

between impulse and desire, Hulme protests in February 1916 that it is:

> a delightfully simple picture of the true nature of the controversy. On the one hand, the
>
> bellicose, moved in reality by the 'impulses of aggression and resistance to aggression',
>
> fondly imagining, however, that they are acting under the influence of reason, and, on

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[197] Russell alludes to Wallas' term in the opening section of the first lecture on Social Reconstruction, titled "Disintegration and the Principle of Growth." This is the lecture by Russell which Hulme attended (Ferguson 238). When Russell published his lectures in 1916, he chose not to include Wallas' term. Russell draws on Wallas' ideas in "On Justice in Wartime" 171, 176 and 178 and "The Ethics of War" 63.

[198] In "War Notes," Hulme blasts what he describes as the "certain general attitude towards life" expressed in the "report on a conference on Pacifist Philosophy of Life" (391). This pacifist Conference was organised by the League of Peace and Freedom and the report features Russell's "The Philosophy of Pacifism," as well as articles by well-known pacifists including Edward G. Smith, Herbert Burrows, Caroline Playne and Edward Grubb. On the back cover of the pamphlet, entitled *Towards Ultimate Harmony*, it is stated that "War is the result of a false attitude towards life in the individual and the community," the League's declared purpose being "to further by steady propaganda the idea that all movements for the higher and freer development of life are necessary to bring about Peace." A number of critics have noted that Russell's early pacifist writings are characterised by a religious and romantic tone that it is easy to imagine Hulme would not have approved. See, for example, Vellacott 4 and Ryan 52-54. Cf. Russell's rhetoric in "The Free Man's Worship," an essay Russell described in July 1918 as "merely the expression of the pacifist outlook when it was new to me" (*Autobiography* 318).

the other hand, the wise and tolerant pacifists, seeing things by the light of their

disinterested intelligence. (393; cf. 405)

In attacking Russell's distinction between impulses and desires, Hulme is keen on stressing

that his defence of the war effort is based on reason and not on impulse. Admitting that "it is

certainly true that such impulses do play a considerable part," he thus adds that "my attitude

as a whole is not determined by such impulses, although it may be reinforced by them" (394;

cf. 399). The problem with Russell's view, Hulme contends, is not that Russell shows

impulses and desires to play an important role in decisions – because they do – but that

Russell excludes the possibility that the anti-pacifists can support the war on "other 'reasons',

which may *also* be disinterested, ethical, and not emotional" (395; emphasis in original).

When Russell replied the following week complaining that "North Staffs"

"misrepresented" his thesis, his grievance was certainly justified. For, rather than arguing that

only those who support the war are moved by impulse, Russell made it clear in *The*

Principles of Social Reconstruction that everyone is moved by impulse. As he reminds

Hulme in his rejoinder in the *Cambridge Magazine*, what he really wants is "not the

weakening of impulse ... but the direction of impulse towards life and growth rather than

towards death and decay" ("Mr. Russell's Reply" 408; cf. *The Principles of Social*

Reconstruction 15). Hulme retorted that it was Russell, not him, who misinterpreted his

opponent. He is only making the rather obvious point, he objects, that "Mr. Russell gives

many *Reasons* why wars are evil, and only deals with the *Impulses* that made men think them

justifiable." Russell, Hulme goes on, was guilty of bias, as "He ought ... to have dealt with the

Reasons on both sides" (405; emphasis in original). Accepting Russell's claim that both sides

are motivated by impulse, an observation with which, as he writes, he "entirely" agrees (405),

Hulme thus argues that his problem is with Russell's insistence to explain the support for the war in terms of impulses, remaining unwilling to allow "than any real Reasons exist on this side" (405).

In later years, critics declared Russell the victor, generally concluding that Hulme's misrepresentation of Russell's thesis exposes Hulme's philosophical weaknesses and also claiming that his choice of Russell as a target is populist, motivated by his inclination towards polemical confrontation.[199] To condemn Hulme's criticism of Russell as amateurish or populist, however, is to risk missing the point.[200] Responding to Hulme's claim that the difference between the pacifists and those who supported the war cannot be explained by different impulses, but was due to a difference in ethical valuation (cf. 394, 401), Russell maintains in his rejoinder in the *Cambridge Magazine* that this is only "true on the surface." Quoting from his analysis in *The Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Russell explains:

> ethical differences usually spring from differences of impulse. 'Whole philosophies, whole systems of ethical valuation, spring up in this way: they are the embodiment of a kind of thought which is subservient to impulse, which aims at providing a quasi-rational ground for the indulgence of impulse.' 'This difference of opinion will seem to be ethical or intellectual, whereas its real basis is a difference of impulse. No genuine agreement will be reached, in such a case, so long as the differences of impulse persists.' ("Mr. Russell's Reply" 305)

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[199] See, for example, Roberts, *T. E. Hulme* 116; A. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme* 139; Ryan 72; and Comentale, *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-garde* 146. According to Garver, Hulme's attack on Russell is "populist in inspiration," a claim which Garver does not pursue further (146). In later years, Russell claimed that Hulme "was just seizing an issue rather than speaking out on a subject especially close to his heart" (qtd. in Ferguson 242).

[200] It is not within the scope of my argument here, but it is significant that we recognise how, despite their significant ideological differences, Russell and Hulme share certain similarities, the most striking of which is perhaps that, like Hulme, Russell expresses considerable admiration for "heroic" or "tragic" values, singling out in "The Philosophy of Pacifism" "the value of courage" as one of the most important human qualities. For a discussion of Russell's ideas about courage, see Ryan 71.

In "War Notes," Hulme explains that he finds Russell's reply extremely revealing, as it confirms his suspicion that Russell changed from postulating a theory of ethical values as objective to now maintaining that ethical values are subjective: "Mr. Russell," he writes, "has completely changed his views on this matter" (408).[201] Russell's suggestion that ethics are simply a "quasi-rational ground for the indulgence of impulse," Hulme argues, leads directly to "ethical scepticism" and to "a relativist view of ethics" (407-09); more crucially, it undermines Russell's reasoning against war: for "all he can say," Hulme remarks, "is that he *prefers* pacifist instincts" (408).[202] Russell's second reply confirms Hulme's suspicion, but the philosopher remains unapologetic. Russell writes:

> I do certainly mean to maintain that *all* ethics is subjective, and that ethical agreement can only arise through similarity of desires and impulses. It is true that I did not hold this view formerly ... Observation of ethical valuations leads me to think that all ethical valuations can be so accounted for, and that the claim of universality which men associate with their ethical judgments embodies merely the impulse to persecution of tyranny. ("North Staffs' Praise of War" 386)

Hulme was not sympathetic. Even though he did not send a response to Russell's "North Staffs' Praise of War" to the *Cambridge Magazine*, he makes it clear in the version published

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[201] Hulme wrote to Ogden in February 1916 that Russell's letter "quite gives him away" (qtd. by Csengeri in *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* 474). It is generally acknowledged that Russell's thought underwent a dramatic change in 1914 (Vellacott 24). Russell himself attributed his strong reaction to the outbreak of the war to a "mystical experience" (qtd. in. Atkin 7). For a discussion of how Russell's anti-war activism changed and shaped his ethics, see M. Potter 2-14. In "War Notes," Hulme regrets the fact that in his pacifist writings Russell does not display the "great originality" or the "ingenuity" of his earlier work (392). Invoking Lasserre's description of Condorcet, he asserts that it is a pity that Russell's move from mathematics to politics leads him to "une sorte d'éblouissment [a sort of bewilderment]" stemming from a lack of knowledge of "la nature humaine" (393). Cf. Lasserre, *Le romantisme français* 432.
[202] In a way, Hulme here employs Russell's argument in "The Elements of Ethics" to refute Russell's pacifism. See Russell, "The Elements of Ethics" 13, 53.

in the *New Age* on 24 February that he views Russell's change of heart as symptomatic of an

"uncritical acceptance of the *liberal* ideology that had prevailed since the eighteenth century"

(408; emphasis in original). In the version he revised for Ogden, Hulme speculates that

"Perhaps suspecting instinctively that the *objective* conception of ethics might lead to the

establishment of values he would call reactionary ... [Russell] dropped the *objective*

conception."[203] For Hulme, not only does the "objective conception" of ethics not entail anti-

democratic politics, but, on the contrary, it can be used as a basis of an alternative version of

democracy: anti-pacifist democracy. To understand what Hulme means by "objective

conception of ethics" in his 24 February instalment of "War Notes," it is helpful to turn to "A

Notebook," where he proposes a theory of ethics based on the philosophical endeavours of

Husserl, Moore and Russell in the early years of the twentieth century to achieve a "truly

scientific philosophy" (435). A quick overview of the basic theses of Husserl, Moore and

Russell will be helpful in understanding Hulme's argument in "A Notebook."

In "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," Husserl makes the case that philosophy should not

be naturalistic, nor historicist, meaning that philosophy should not reduce phenomena to

physical states or to particulars. Rather, Husserl argues that philosophy should be an inquiry

into the invariant features of pure consciousness.[204] The problem with philosophy, according

to Husserl, is that it does not live up to its claim of being a "rigorous science," by which he

means "the science that satisfies the loftiest theoretical needs and renders possible from an

ethico-religious point of view a life regulated by pure rational norms" (166). Insofar as "Each

and every question is … controverted [*sic*]," and "every position is a matter of individual

conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, of a 'point of view'," Husserl maintains,

philosophy cannot claim to be a beacon of humanity (167). That was precisely the aim of

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[203] Hulme's revisions to the *New Age* article are reproduced by Csengeri in her edition of *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* 475n68; emphasis in original.
[204] Cf. Husserl's Abstract to *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1 and *Logical Investigations* 1: 181.

Husserl's brand of phenomenology: to create a philosophy that "will by means of critical reflection and by ever more profound methodological investigation constitute itself as rigorous science" (166).

In Britain, Moore and Russell were making similar demands. In "Nature of Judgment," which marks Moore's movement from Idealism to Realism, Moore launches an attack on "psychologism," meaning the philosophical view that reduces concepts and principles of logic to states of mind or phenomena occurring in the mind, by maintaining that the world is composed of ideas consisting of concepts that are irreducible to anything else in the world. "The concept," Moore argues, "is not a mental fact, nor any part of a mental fact" (4). Put simply, Moore's argument is that we cannot understand our judgment as being dependent on the relations of our ideas to reality, as this would involve a vicious circle.[205] Four years later, in *Principia Ethica*, the work Hulme describes in "A Notebook" as heralding "the only philosophical movement of any importance in England" (440), Moore transfers his rejection of psychologism onto the field of ethics, now cautioning against committing what he calls the "naturalistic fallacy," by which Moore means the error of "identifying the simple notion which we mean by 'good' with some other notion" (58). Rejecting both evolutionary and utilitarian ethics, Moore thus proposes that ethical values are "non-natural," objective and "never analytic" properties (7, 20-21).

Finally, following Moore, Russell also demands that philosophy studies the methods of science, arguing in "On Scientific Method in Philosophy" for a more objective, more scientific method (8, 57).[206] "Human ethical notions," Russell maintains in "On Scientific Method in Philosophy," "are essentially anthropocentric, and involve, when used in

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[205] For a more detailed discussion on this point, see Hutchinson 40-44.
[206] On the impact that Moore's argument against Idealism had on Russell, and on Moore's influence on Russell in general, see Hylton 152-66.

metaphysics, an attempt ... to legislate for the universe on the basis of the present desires of men. In this way," Russell goes on to argue, "they interfere with that receptivity to fact which is the essence of the scientific attitude towards the world" (63). As Husserl, therefore, Russell argues in "On Scientific Method in Philosophy" for a "scientific philosophy ... which aims only at understanding the world and not directly at any other improvement of human life" (64). Ultimately, this "scientific philosophy" would not take into account "Special and accidental facts," but would "make only such assertions as would be equally true however the actual world were constituted" (65; cf. "The Elements of Ethics" 13).

According to Levenson, Hulme "enthusiastically endorses" the views of Husserl, Moore and Russell because they allowed him to "purge the last vestiges of humanism from his thought" (92-93). Although Hulme certainly sanctions these philosophers' attitude towards philosophy, the way in which he uses their ideas is much more complex than what Levenson allows. Hulme employs the theories of Husserl, Moore and Russell in two respects, one "negative" and the other "positive." On the one hand, he finds Husserl and Russell as the two philosophers who "most clearly insisted on the necessity for an absolute separation between *Pure* Philosophy and *Weltanschauung*," Husserl's term for subjective, relativistic, philosophy (435; emphasis in original; cf. Husserl, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science 191).[207] Citing from Husserl's essay on Rigorous Science and Russell's "On Scientific Method in Philosophy," Hulme uses Husserl and Russell to show that there is a distinction between *Weltanschauung* and "pure philosophy." He then moves on to argue that, even though the two

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[207] Here, I do not mean to suggest that Hulme uses the term "*Weltanschauung*" exclusively in the sense given to it by Husserl. As Kamerbeek has shown, Hulme's definition of *Weltanschauung* in "War Notes" as an "expression of an attitude towards the world" (428), "a particular view of the relation of man to existence" and an "interpretation of life" that was "by no means connected to a philosophy" (433), may also be understood through Dilthey. See Kamerbeek 194-202. Even though it is not my intention here to extrapolate on Kamerbeek's argument, it is possible that Hulme is drawing on both Husserl and Dilthey. Despite the fact that Husserl's "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" is a rebuke of Dilthey's position, it is now accepted that Husserl and Dilthey are intellectually closer than critics in the past assumed. On Husserl's and Dilthey's similarities and on the genesis of Husserl's essay, see P. McCormick 161-164.

are closely connected, it is possible to dissociate the former from the latter. This is important in Hulme's attempt to discredit humanism as a "standpoint" or "a particular view of the relation of man to existence" (429, 433). In other words, drawing on Husserl and Moore, Hulme aims to dissociate what he sees as the humanist "prejudices" of philosophers from pure, "objective" thought (430). The fact that philosophers offer their personal views as facts, Hulme maintains, is a "scandal" and the only solution is to "recognise that actual Philosophy is not a pure but a *mixed* subject" (428; emphasis in original). What Hulme means by "*mixed* subject" is that, rather than attesting to impersonal standards, philosophy has become a "pale substitute for religion," concerned with "matters like the nature and destiny of man, his place in the universe, etc., all matters which would, as treated, fit very well into a personal *Weltanschauung*" (429). The problem for Hulme, therefore, is that results gathered through the "scientific" method are "moulded" "nearer to the heart's desire," and they thus give an infelicitous picture of reality. The "final pictures" presented in philosophy of this kind, Hulme writes in "A Notebook," are designed only to satisfy the philosopher who expresses them. It is in this sense that Hulme argues that these "results" are made to "conform to the same probably unconscious *standards* or *canons* of what is *satisfying*" (429; emphasis in original). The possibility for a scientific, impersonal approach offered by Husserl and Russell allows Hulme to perform a "critique of satisfaction" (429), aimed to prove that the humanist canons are both "demonstrably false" (436) and "*unsatisfactory*" (438; emphasis in original). In the "final pictures" given by philosophers, Hulme thus concludes, there is a "family resemblance," as "They are all satisfied with certain conceptions of the relation of man to the world" (429). Harking back to the theme of his essays on art, Hulme traces in "A Notebook" this standpoint back to the Renaissance, which he describes as "the most obvious example of the emergence of a new *weltanschauung*" (433), claiming that the most striking characteristics of this worldview are "an attitude of acceptance to life" (433), "the putting of

the Perfection into man," "the development of the conception of personality," and "the establishment of the new conception of man as good" (450; cf. 445). The ideas of Husserl, Moore and Russell thus become in "A Notebook" the tools with which Hulme invalidates humanism, conceived as personal *Weltanschauung*, not pure philosophy.

On the other hand, in Husserl, Moore and Russell, Hulme finds an "attitude" diametrically opposite to what he calls "humanism" (441). This is evident from the way Hulme presents the "objective" philosophy advocated by Husserl, Moore and Russell as free from the "anthropomorphism" and the "empirical prejudice" of humanist ethics (443). Moore's and Russell's "Neo-realism" proves that logic – propositions and concepts – is "not something relative to the *human*" and, similarly, Hulme goes on, that "ethics can be exhibited as an objective science ... purified from anthropomorphism" (443). In this sense, Hulme argues, "Neo-realism," just like Husserl's Rigorous Science, constitutes a departure from humanist philosophy; as he puts it, "the school of Moore and Husserl break the humanist tradition" (452). Most crucially, Husserl, Moore and Russell, according to Hulme, disprove the empirical explanation "which reduces all the 'higher' concepts to combination of more elementary ones" (442). For Hulme, this means that it is now "possible to think of certain 'higher' concepts ... as, at the same time, *simple*, and not necessarily to be analysed into more *elementary* (generally sensual) elements" (443; emphasis in original; cf. 422). This is important for Hulme's overarching aim in "A Notebook," which is to sketch out an anti-pacifist democracy relying not only on the existence of "objective," non-relativistic values but, more importantly, on a "scale," "order," or "hierarchy" of values (cf. 409, 452). "In as far ... as they free ethical values from the anthropomorphism involved in their dependence on human desires and feeling," Hulme writes in "A Notebook," "Moore and Russell ... have

created the machinery of an anti-humanist reaction which will proceed much further than they ever intended" (452).

For Hulme, the problem with Moore, Russell and Husserl is that they did not go far enough towards discrediting the "humanist" *Weltanschauung* that is based on relativistic values (419), remaining rapt in what he describes as "uncritical humanism" (436). "A complete reaction from the subjectivism and relativism of humanist ethics," he writes in "A Notebook," "should contain two elements: (1) the establishment of the *objective* character of ethical values, (2) ... an order or *hierarchy* among such values, which it also regards as absolute and objective" (451-52). This remark helps us understand Hulme's objection to Husserl, Moore and Russell: while they succeed in defeating relativism and in proving that ethical values are objective or unanalysable, they do not establish a hierarchy of ethical values. Hulme is not clear in "A Notebook" why he thinks such "hierarchy" of objective values is so important, but seen in the context of his defence of the war, a hierarchy of ethical values allows him to defend his argument in favour of the war in a cohesive way. For, if objective or absolute values exist, and if the citizens of Britain had an absolute moral duty to defend their country against Germany, then that would prove *contra* Russell that the war is not fought for impulsive reasons. Describing this hierarchy of ethical values in "A Notebook," Hulme argues that it is based on absolute "gaps" or "chasms" (423) between "(1) The inorganic world, of mathematical and physical science, (2) the organic world, dealt with by biology, psychology and history, and (3) the world of ethical and religious values" (424). It is the failure to understand the division between the organic world and religion and ethics that, in Hulme's view, underpins ethical relativism, the ethic on which humanism (and thus pacifism) is based (cf. 427). It is in this sense that the recognition of the existence of the sphere of absolute values "breaks the whole Renascence [*sic*] tradition" (426).

Objective and absolute truths, Hulme explains in "A Notebook," can be revealed only through a "logique du Coeur [a logic of the heart]," a reference to Pascal's idea that "Le coeur a son ordre [the heart has its own order]," meaning that, unlike the intellect, the heart does not analyse the world by principle and demonstration. Hulme's turn to Pascal instructs his argument in "A Notebook" in two ways. First, Hulme's interpretation of Pascal as a thinker who recognises the fundamental division between ethical/religious values and the inorganic and organic world, provides for Hulme a way to "remove the difficulties of comprehension engendered in us by the humanism of our period" (449). As we will remember, one of Hulme's objections against Russell in "War Notes" is that in his pacifist essays Russell fails to distinguish between absolute and relative values. Hulme makes a similar claim in "A Notebook" when he accuses the "Liberal pacifists" of "taking relative things for absolute" and, thus, for precluding the possibility of a "real absolute," something which, according to Hulme, leads to "sceptical rationalism" (419). Through a "logique du coeur," Pascal, as Hulme explains in "War Notes," allows that certain values or "feelings" are "absolute, *not relative* to human life, and in certain respects a priori," while, moreover, Pascal's "logique" makes it possible to "range the ethical values in a certain order or hierarchy" (414). In other words, Pascal is not a scepticist, nor is he a relativist.

There is a second way in which we can understand Hulme's turn to Pascal and that is as betraying Hulme's enduring debt to Bergson. In "A Notebook," Hulme criticises Bergson's philosophy for failing to recognise the chasm between organic and ethical/religious values and thus falling "easily in line with humanism" (426). Yet, Pascal's "logic of the heart" is in its essence the same as Bergson's method of "intuition" that is designed to privilege the prowess of instinct over the efficiency of the intellect. It is precisely for this reason that

Bergson acknowledges Pascal in "La Philosophie" as a source of inspiration for his intuitionist metaphysics (cf. 21).[208] Like for Bergson, for Pascal reason alone cannot guide us to truth but, rather, "instinct" is needed; as Pascal puts it in fragment 282 of *Pensées*, "We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles; and reason, which has no part in it, tries in vain to impugn them." In using Pascal's anti-intellectualist method to explain the process of arriving to objective truths, Hulme is, in fact, following Bergson's appropriation of Pascal's metaphysics. In "War Notes," he describes what he sees as two contrasting systems of ethics: on one side, that of "rationalist humanitarians," whose ethic, as he explains, dictates that "the fundamental values are Life and Personality"; on the other, there is the "more heroic or tragic system of ethical values," wherein values are "objective and absolute." This second ethical order, Hulme contends, "may be called *irrational*, if we give the word rational the narrow meaning given it by the first ethic, i.e., those values are rational which can be reasonably based on *life*" (411; emphasis in original). As he makes it clear in "A Notebook," however, where he returns to the subject of the "unconsciousness" through which the "religious attitude" arrives at "judgments of value," there is nothing sentimental or mystical involved in this process:

> I want to emphasise as clearly as I can, that I attach very little value indeed to the *sentiments* attaching to the religious attitude. I hold, quite coldly and intellectually as it were, that the ... categories which ultimately make up the religious attitude, are the *true* categories and the *right* way of thinking. (455; emphasis in original)

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[208] On Bergson's interpretation of Pascal, see Chevalier 118, 111 and 122-124 and Eastwood 37-47. The intimate connection between the thought of Bergson and that of Pascal is recognised by Scheler, who, like Hulme, uses both Bergson's intuition and Pascal's "ordre du coeur" in order to argue that pure emotional acts cannot be based simply on rational understandings. In fact, Hulme's choice of the word "logique" instead of "ordre" suggests that a possible source for his use of Pascal in "A Notebook" is Scheler, who as Owens shows, discusses in his work the "a priori 'ordre du Coeur' or 'logique du Coeur' as Blaise Pascal succinctly phrases it" (qtd. in Owens 60). The anti-intellectualist methods of Pascal and Bergson are jointly acknowledged as a source of inspiration by Sorel. See *Illusions of Progress* 20-22 and "Letter to Daniel Halévy" 16.

Not only does Hulme's interpretation of Pascal echo his interpretation of Bergson discussed in chapter 3, but it is also identical with Bergson's reading of Pascal. Like Hulme, Bergson is keen on making it clear that there is nothing mystic, non-rational, or even anti-rational in arriving at truths by intuition. As he argues in "La Philosophie," intuition can only be called "sentimental" if the word is understood in the sense given to it by Pascal, "including in it all knowledge that is immediate and intuitive" (qtd. in Chevalier 118).[209] Although Hulme criticises Bergson's vitalist philosophy, therefore, his turn to Pascal shows that he still holds intuition to be the only satisfactory method of philosophy.

Where does this leave his argument in "A Notebook"? By arguing that ethical values are objective and explaining that they can only be reached through an intuitive method, Hulme can argue against the pacifists that the moral righteousness of war is necessitated by a higher ethical order, which, even though it cannot be rationalised, it cannot be dismissed as impulsive. At the same time, by distinguishing between objective and relativistic values, Hulme is able to reject Russell's argument against the war as sceptical rationalism. Most importantly, the distinction between the "religious" and the humanist attitudes allows Hulme to demonstrate how anti-pacifism and democracy are not mutually exclusive. For, even though the "religious attitude" leads to a political order that includes order and discipline, this "order," as Hulme explains in "A Notebook," "is ... not merely negative, but creative and liberating" (444). The "religious attitude," he insists, "is a possible one for the 'emancipated' and 'reasonable' man at this moment," because it does not constitute the creation of "new medievalism," but preserves the "honesty in science and a certain conception of freedom of thought and action" developed in the humanist period (444, 449).

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[209] Cf. Bergson, *La philosophie* 15-35, 21.

6. Conclusion

A comprehensive reading of Hulme's war writings discredits the two most common interpretations of his late work. Hulme was neither a militarist, nor did he endorse the pro-war views of the extreme Right. The letters he wrote at the front reveal a side of his thought that has remained neglected by critics and which complicates the claim that he was an enthusiastic supporter of the war. These letters are revealing because his attitude towards trench warfare is in line with the argument he presents in "War Notes" in favour of the war: the First World War, according to Hulme, was an unfortunate but necessary resort, a step towards securing the conservation of British institutions. Likewise, setting "A Notebook" in the context of his "War Notes," illuminates his anti-humanism a good deal, for it allows us to see his thesis of a hierarchy of objective values as an attempt to provide firm philosophical backing to his defence of the war. Finally, that Hulme argues for an intuitive method of understanding ethical principles in "A Notebook" suggests that he continued to value Bergson's intuition, thus confirming my argument in Chapter 3, according to which, despite finding intuition as the most plausible philosophical method, Hulme rejected Bergson's cosmology – what in "A Notebook" he describes as Bergson's "vitalism" (425).

Epilogue

"Fire away": Re-interpreting Hulme's work

There is a letter in the Hulme Archives at Keele University that, tucked away between Hulme's manuscript notes, greets the visiting scholar. Dated May 1937, it is addressed to Hulme's first biographer, Michael Roberts, and is signed by Ezra Pound. Presumably responding to Roberts' request for information about Hulme's life, Pound, in his usual rampant manner, questions Roberts' desire to write a book on Hulme. Pound's point is that if Roberts wants to reiterate other critics' interpretations of Hulme in order to "harmonize" Hulme's thought with existing criticism, then he should abandon his project, cautioning Roberts not to "use retrospect to blanket and damp down the active thought ... of the time." But if he thinks that he can approach Hulme's work in a way that both takes into account the literary activity of the time in which Hulme was writing and is relevant for future scholarship – if, as he puts it, he feels that "Hulme has anything CONstructive [*sic*] for tomorrow" – then, Pound goes on to say, Roberts should "Fire away."[210] Pound's advice to Roberts seems like a good point on which to end my examination of Hulme, precisely because it is as true today as it was in 1937. As an Epilogue to my re-examination of Hulme's work, I want to briefly explain how my study addresses both of Pound's concerns.

At the outset of this thesis, I sought to re-examine the work of Hulme by returning attention to the context in which he was writing. The investigation of the intellectual context in the early twentieth century allows us to understand the reasons why Hulme, for example,

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[210] HUL 36.

describes modern poetry as "Impressionist" and the modern spirit in poetry as "relative" in "A Lecture," why he was attracted to Bergson, and the sense in which he uses the terms "romanticism" and "classicism." Moreover, a survey of the artistic developments in the Britain of 1910-14 clarifies Hulme's defence of abstract art a great deal, while recognising that his defence of Britain's involvement in the war was in line with the Liberal government's moral justification for the war goes some way to dispelling the claim that he was a militarist. This emphasis on the context in which Hulme was writing helped to challenge four common interpretations of Hulme's work: that his arguments are incoherent; that his thought underwent dramatic transformations; that he endorsed other thinkers' ideas uncritically; and that he promulgated authoritarian politics.

In Chapter 1, we saw how, when examined through ideas in the works of Nietzsche, Bergson and Ribot, three thinkers whose ideas were being popularised in the Britain of the early twentieth century, the rudimentary notes in "Cinders" and "Notes on Language and Style" give a coherent "anti-intellectualist" philosophical view of reality and an account of the nature of language that adheres to Nietzsche's, Bergson's and Ribot's mistrust of conceptual language. In Chapter 2, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry" was revealed to present a lucid argument for the introduction of a new verse form in English poetry in 1908 that is in line with the contemporaneous demands on poetry made by Flint, Storer and Pound. Chapter 4 explained how Hulme's thesis in "Romanticism and Classicism" becomes considerably less ambiguous once we recognise that Hulme's distinction between romanticism and classicism originates in the debate held in the *Commentator* about the future of the Conservative Party. Finally, Chapter 5 made clear that, understood in the context of the general shift taking place in early twentieth-century art away from representationalism, Hulme's twin demands for abstract art which is also a mode of personal expression turn out to be much less incongruous

than critics in the past have assumed. The critical view of Hulme's work as incoherent must accordingly be revised.

The critical position that divides Hulme's work into distinct periods or phases has also been exposed as inaccurate. Chapters 2 and 5 chart the way in which the artist who uses primitive forms as a mode of personal and individual expression in Hulme's essays on art resembles the modern poet in "A Lecture," described as seeking "the maximum of individual and personal expression" (53). Moreover, the distinction which Hulme draws in the notebooks between "poetry" and "prose" recurs not only in "A Lecture" and in his writings on Bergson, but also, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, in his essays on politics. Finally, the idea that any historical period is characterised by a specific worldview or attitude underwrites all of Hulme's writings, from "A Lecture" and "Romanticism and Classicism" to "Modern Art and its Philosophy" and "A Notebook."

Likewise, even though Hulme drew extensively on the views of Kahn, Guyau, Ribot, Maurras, Lasserre, Husserl, Russell and Moore, and despite the fact that he helped popularise the ideas of Bergson, Sorel and Worringer, it is simplistic to propose that he endorsed any of these thinkers' theories uncritically. Chapter 2 documents how the ideas of Kahn and Guyau are freely appropriated by Hulme in "A Lecture" and employed as part of a discussion on the future of modern verse in Britain. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Hulme was critical of many aspects of Bergson's philosophy, remaining hesitant about embracing what he described as Bergson's "conclusions." In a similar way, as explained in Chapters 4 and 5, Hulme distanced himself from the political opinions of Maurras, Lasserre and Sorel, as well as Worringer. In "A Notebook," as argued in Chapter 6, Hulme uses the ideas of Russell, Moore

and Husserl to discredit Russell's argument, according to which those who, like Hulme, supported the war did so on impulsive, not rational grounds.

Finally, while Hulme may fit the profile of the modernist critic who holds anti-democratic beliefs, is repelled by the "femininity" of Liberal Britain, and is enthusiastically pro-war, an understanding of the intellectual context in which he developed his political views proves that such assessment of his politics is very far from the truth. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Hulme's advocacy of discipline and order in politics is best read as a moderate Conservative position, Hulme's Conservative thought emphasised in the way he defends the classicist ideology as a response to the specific debate in the *Commentator* about the future of the Conservative party. In Chapter 5, Hulme's anti-humanism is revealed to have different political implications to the anti-humanism of Worringer and Ludovici, while Chapter 6 demonstrates how Hulme was eager to show how by arguing in support of Britain's involvement in the war, he was not making anti-democratic demands. Thus, although Hulme was suspicious of Liberal democracy, and despite the fact that he argued for a rigidly "ordered" and "controlled" society, claiming that he embraced authoritarian politics is inaccurate.

In showing how Hulme refuses to take the role that critics have mapped for him, my thesis is first and foremost a contribution to Hulme studies. By challenging a series of "myths" surrounding Hulme's work, it paves the way for a reinterpretation of Hulme's work. As demonstrated in this study, for many years it has been common practice among critics to use Hulme as a paradigmatic "modernist" critic whose thought encapsulates the intellectual idiosyncrasies of modernism. Yet, as critics including Susan Stanford Friedman and Peter Nicholls have stressed, "modernism" is a vague – and plural – term, requiring continuous

defining.[211] Hulme's brand of "modernism" thus adds to the plurality of modernisms

identified within "modernism," as well as to the various contestations that exist within these

modernisms. The crux of my argument has been that it is only by examining Hulme's work

without a predetermined interpretative or anachronistic bias that we can begin to determine

his position in twentieth-century literary history. In this sense my study is best seen as a

response to the recent shift within modernist studies to return attention from the "general" to

the "particular." As Ann Ardis argues in *Modernism and Cultural Conflict* (2002), in re-

thinking modernism it is useful to return to the early "territory" on which the various

modernisms developed. Even though I do not share Ardis' idea that it is necessary to

determine "when" modernism began, I share her anxiety about constantly challenging

traditional interpretations of "modernism" (4-8).

How is this study "CONstructive for tomorrow"? There are two important ways in which

my project contributes to modernist studies more widely. On the one hand, while primarily a

study of Hulme's work, my thesis has also been a study of the intellectual context in the early

twentieth century. Seeing Hulme as someone who debated the arrival of "foreign" ideas into

the literary and artistic circles of London, the political "crisis" of 1910, the shift from

representational art to experimentation with "primitive" forms and the advent of the First

World War not only helps us to re-interpret his work, but it also testifies to the significant

cultural impact of all these events on the literary criticism and production of this time. On the

other hand, and much more importantly, as the last Modernist Studies Association

Conference has reminded us, the study of modernism in the twenty-first century must seek to

chart new vectors of influence and must inquire into the dynamic relationships between

different "networks," meaning different literary movements, as well as different fields of

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[211] Nicholls vii, 1-3, S. S. Friedman 493-513. Friedman made a similar argument in her plenary address to MSA 11 in November 2009. A version of this paper has recently been published as "Planetarity: Musing Modernist Studies." See 471-99.

cultural production. A deeper understanding of Hulme's work informs the study of various

"networks." I do not have time to elaborate on all the different ways in which Hulme

"participates" in modernism here, but three areas that merit further investigation can be

identified. First, in view of the fact that, as demonstrated in this project, Hulme's and Storer's

rejection of nineteenth-century rhetoric is politically-charged, what are we to make of

Imagisme's critique of vague symbolisms? Read through Hulme's "Romanticism and

Classicism" and Storer's Introduction to his compilation of Cowper's poems, Pound's

insistence that the only "adequate symbol" is the "natural object" and his desire to turn to the

classics Daniel and Cavalcanti in order to find a way out of the "blurry, messy ...

sentimentalistic" nineteenth century gains a distinctly political valence ("Retrospect" 246,

261-62). Secondly, both Hulme's relationship to Storer and Eliot deserve more attention.

Storer's part in the Imagist network has received little attention, something which is revealed

to be all the more surprising given the proximity of his ideas to those of Hulme. Regarding

Hulme's relation to Eliot, even though a plethora of critics have already noted how Hulme's

critique of "romantic" verse and politics in "Romanticism and Classicism" and his rejection

of "humanist" ethics in "A Notebook" inspired the social and political programme of Eliot, a

connection which Eliot himself acknowledges on various moments in his writings, the

publication of vol. 2 of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* in 2009 has invited us to re-examine

Hulme's influence on Eliot.[212] These recently published letters document how Eliot thought

that there is a lot in common between *Speculations* and *The Waste Land* (letter to Sydney

Schiff 30 Dec. 1923: 287). Moreover, Eliot disagreed with the view that Hulme is an "un

original [*sic*]" thinker, whose thought is "amorphous," insisting that Hulme "set down in

essentials the only alternative directions that I can see to the directions of the nineteenth

century" (355-56). Finally, this study urges a more detailed investigation of the intimate –

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[212] See, for example, Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* 149; "To Criticize the Critic" 17; "Mr. P. E. More's Essays" 136; "The 'Pensées' of Pascal" 416 n.2; and "Second Thoughts about Humanism" 489-90.

and intricate – ways in which academic philosophy was appropriated into literary theory in the early years of the twentieth century and of the manner in which early modernist literary critics became interested in organised politics. These are all questions which I am hoping to address in the future.

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