

**Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis,  
and the Crowd**

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# Abstract

While the work of Pound and Lewis has often been read as the expression of 'high' literary culture's desire to erect a barrier against the incursions of the masses, this thesis argues that if we place their work in the context of the early twentieth-century dialogue on the crowd, the relationship between modernism and the masses appears more complex. For both authors, their engagement with the apparition of the crowd, and the lessons they believed artists must learn from crowd culture, were key to their development.

Chapter 1 positions Pound's *Lustra* in the context of continental and American ideas about crowds and argues that this collection is best understood as an ambiguous response to a new world where engagement with crowds is essential. Chapter 2 argues that Lewis's early texts should likewise be read in the context of the crowd, and that his experiments of *Blast* can be read as attempts to show readers how to master the emerging 'crowd-mind'. Chapter 3 examines the impact of the war crowds, and shows how Lewis engages with post-war London where ideas about the death of the crowd had taken on an immediate cultural urgency. It argues that, as particular visions of crowd-being faded from the political scene, the crowd, too, faded from the focus of literary modernism. The thesis concludes by speculating on the fate and future—if any—of crowd writing.

An appendix presents a text of Wyndham Lewis's unpublished 'Cantelman: Crowd Master' prepared from the manuscripts in Cornell University Library.

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If they want it, then I dedicate this thesis to Kate, Jude, Jon, Pat, and, of course, to Clare Sinclair.

# Preface

Through the 1980's and 1990's, the old image of modernism as uniformly hostile to mass culture has increasingly been eroded. But while critics have enthusiastically delineated the avant-garde's co-option of dance-crazes, ad-layouts or café-culture, they have tended to follow Andreas Huyssen's distinction between this socially engaged 'historical avant-garde' and a paradigm of 'high modernism', autonomous and aloof, whose mission it was to salvage the purity of high art from the encroachment of mass culture. Such theoretical clarity is achieved at the expense of historical nuance; recent studies focussing on Eliot's interest in music hall and jazz, on Pound's receptiveness to the public theatricals of Futurism, or on popular reaction to Wyndham Lewis's paintings in the Cabaret Theatre Club, have strongly challenged those monolithic formulations of 'high modernism' and 'mass culture'. My study of the crowd in modernist writing (which is also a study of modernism in the crowd) follows on from this work in an attempt to complicate and enrich our understanding of the intercourse between modernist art and mass life.

'The age we are about to enter will in truth be the era of crowds,'<sup>1</sup> predicted Gustave Le Bon, in 1895. In many ways, the totalising formula instituted by Le Bon came to occupy the same space as recent critical formulations of 'mass culture'. But 'crowd' is the version that Pound, Lewis, and their contemporaries would recog-

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<sup>1</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, trans. (unaccredited) as *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (1896; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982), xv.



nise; they grew up with 'crowd theory' accounts of advertising and the influence of the press, in a political culture that was very much concerned with crowd control. Psychological models of consciousness, so important to the period's experimental prose, admitted crowd theorists' ideas about 'group minds'; foremost among the imported prototypes for London's emerging poetic avant-garde was Jules Romains' cult of the 'unanime', the city's 'crowd soul'.

Responding enthusiastically in the 1930s to the rise of governments that sought to master crowds and mobilise populations for totalitarian ends, Pound and Lewis represent particularly complex cases of Modernist approaches to the Crowd. Both, in different ways, were working with ideas of Crowd culture early in their careers: Lewis fostered his crowd book (printed in its entirety in my appendix) for over 20 years; Pound's career as an Imagist was launched on the back of a crowd poem, and his angle on the widely-discussed pre-war question of how art could express the new mass culture would be essential to the development of his mature aesthetic.

I show how their crowd-rhetoric evolved, mirroring historical developments in the political sphere; how political concerns with crowds became transformed as they were translated into aesthetic form; and how, as particular visions of crowd-being faded from the political scene, the crowd, too, faded from the focus of literary modernism.

The texts treated in this thesis signal key moments in the formation of an avant-garde in pre-war London, that avant-garde's maturity and arguable triumph, and its eventual dissolution in the complicated political climate of the 1930s. With the exception of *The Waste Land*, they are fragmentary, unfinished works or dead-ends which nevertheless, I argue, are key to their writers' careers. The crowd, in different ways, can be seen as central to each of them.

The disparate body of tentatively experimental writings which



Pound and Lewis, competing rabble-rousers of the art world, tried to form into one 'mental unity', draw on Edwardian concerns about the crowd's dangerous power. But the optimistic engagement with crowds in pre-war London never achieved coherence; when a Modernist canon began to emerge, circa 1922, the vital crowds that had energized the earlier writings were dead in a war. Interred in 'The Waste Land', enlisted in *Ulysses's* monumental act of remembrance, or repressed beneath *Mrs Dalloway's* trip to the florists, they would return in the 1930s to haunt the later writings of Pound and Lewis: the road not taken. The latter two chapters of this thesis constitute an attempt to exhume these crowds and ascertain the causes and consequences of their obscure disappearance.

Chapter 1 looks at Pound's *Lustra*; it details the raft of continental and American ideas about crowds and crowd-writing (Le Bon; Jules Romains' 'unanimiste' response; Vachel Lindsay's demotic futurism) which elicited excited responses in the journals and magazines of early twentieth-century London.

Chapter 2 focuses on Lewis's 'Crowd Master' texts (his *Blast* story, 'The Crowd Master', and related manuscript materials, as well as the revised version that eventually appeared in his autobiography) and his writings on 'giants', which figure the social body as a leviathan-like whole.

Chapter 3 examines the impact of the war, and the crowd as a haunting presence in Lewis's work of the 1920s. I show how Lewis engages with a contemporary London where ideas about the death of the crowd had taken on an immediate cultural urgency. I argue that Lewis's crowd-texts can be seen as an example of a literature which imagined it could represent itself as a science. I explore the origins of vorticism, and then returns to Lewis's pre-war crowd texts, reworked for the post-war in an attempt to find out what had become of the crowd.

My conclusion speculates on the fate and future—if any—of

crowd writing.

My appendix presents a text of Wyndham Lewis's unpublished 'Cantelman: Crowd Master', which is discussed in chapters 2 and 3, prepared from the manuscripts in Cornell University Library.

# Introduction: Re-entering the Era of Crowds

The crowd, crowds and crowding were central to the way people experienced the modern world. By 1900, there were twelve cities with more than a million inhabitants. The population of Paris had topped 4 million by 1890, more than half of whom were crammed into the historic heart of the city.<sup>2</sup> New York's population was approaching 4 million by the 1900s, having increased almost fivefold in the 50 years leading up to 1904.<sup>3</sup> London—the city helped shape the texts of Lewis and Pound that I'll be focussing on in the following chapters—had 5.6 million inhabitants by 1890, rising to 6.5 million by 1900.<sup>4</sup> This sheer force of numbers, with urban populations growing by almost 100,000 a year, had utterly to transform the ways people experienced the great cities, the ways they interacted with one another, and the ways that they saw themselves. This thesis considers how this new crowd culture, this immersion in massed humanity, influenced the ways that people made art? And what could the art they made tell us about the people of the crowd?

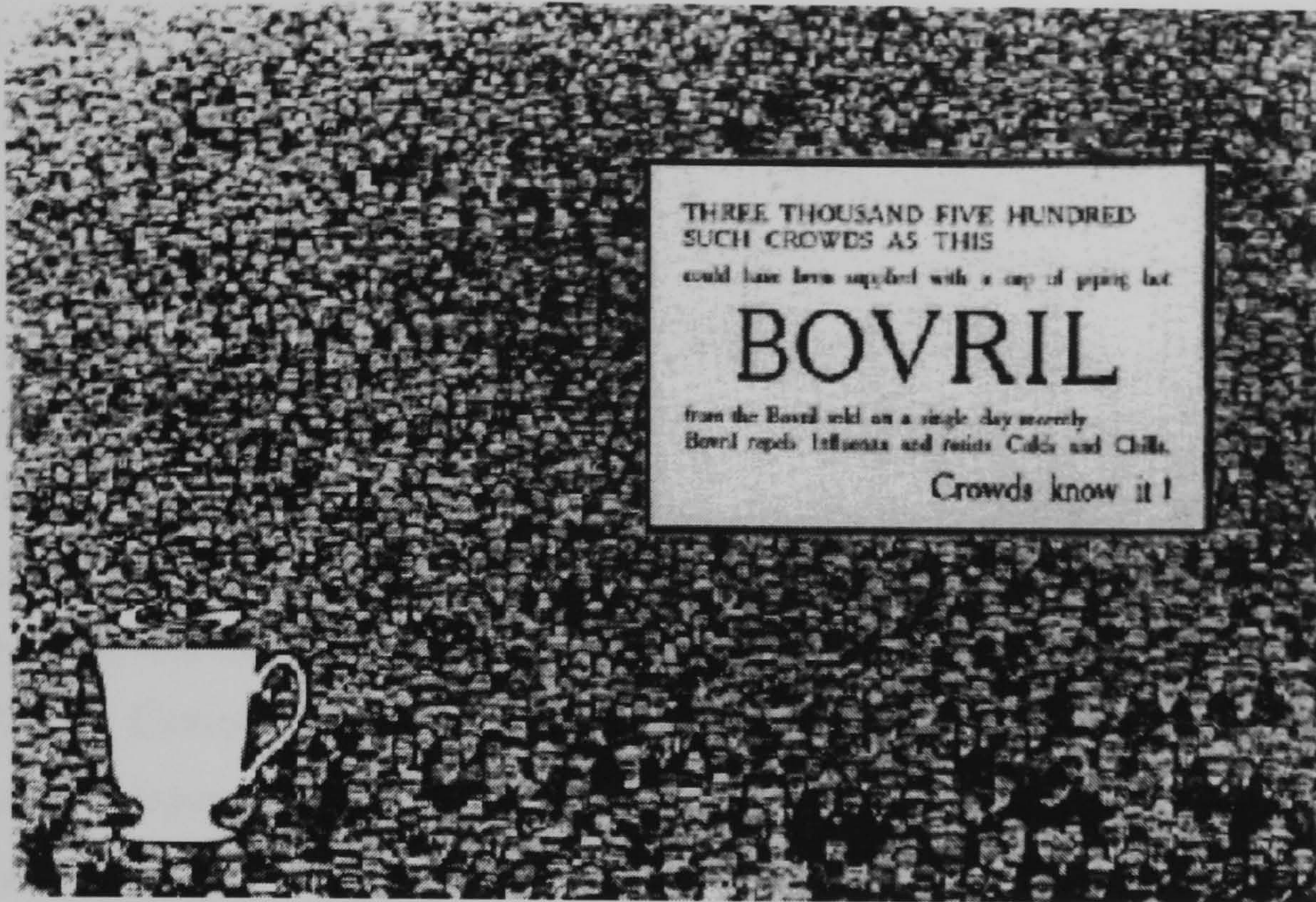
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<sup>2</sup>Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, Updated edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Brian J Cudahy, *Under the Sidewalks of New York: The Story of the Greatest Subway System in the World*, 2nd revised edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>*Cities of Tomorrow*, p. 31; Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 2001), p. 4.





**Figure 1:** 'Bovril', *Illustrated London News*, 1907; reproduced from Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.145.

In 1900, no word existed that could describe the massive celebrations exploding onto the streets of England's towns and cities on the day Mafeking was relieved—so they 'mafficked.' Other crowds were driven by more sinister forces than the flag-waving spirit. They were brought together, some said, by telepathy, or through mass-hypnosis; they were hysterical; they suffered collective hallucinations:<sup>5</sup> when the Bermondsey women took to the streets in 1911, a mysterious fat woman, whom no-one had actually seen, was rumoured to have triggered the strike. Such phenomena had become a threat to the stability of the nation: in 1911 alone, almost a million workers had been involved in the strikes and demonstrations; next year there would be more.<sup>6</sup>

When the crowd wasn't striking, it was spending. 'Thousands

<sup>5</sup>See William Macdougall, *The Group Mind*, Cambridge Psychological Library (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp. 28–30; Le Bon, *The Crowd*, pp. 24–26.

<sup>6</sup>George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London: Constable, 1936), p. 254, p. 269, p. 296.



of women besiege the West,' announced the Daily Express in the Spring of 1909—not referring (this time) to a suffragette blockade, but to the opening of Selfridge's in the West End.<sup>7</sup> While the headline-writers drew on the suffragettes' radical reputation, advertisers exploited the Trade Unions' notoriety: a 1907 advert features a mass of cloth-capped workers, agitating in favour of Bovril beef tea (plate 1). These, and similar mass-media images were suspected of conducting the energies which drew the crowds together. In 1915, the eminent art-historian turned crowd-psychologist, William Martin Conway (whose interpretation of the crowd we shall return to later in this introduction) picked up the theme: 'Printing, the telegraph, and the various modern developments and inventions which we are all familiar with, have made crowd-formation possible without personal contact.'<sup>8</sup>

These new phenomena, as we'll see, held a fascination for many writers and commentators. But for the modernists Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, striving to 'make it new' the crowd was a contradiction: it offered a vision of a new populist culture that was at odds with their cultural manifesto, but also a jolt, a shock, a model of the world transformed into something new. It is this contradictory relationship between Pound and Lewis and the crowd that the following pages seek to explore.

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Erika D. Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 142.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Conway, *The Crowd in Peace and War* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915), p. 15. For more on Conway's background, see Joan Evans, *The Conways: A History of Three Generations* (London: Museum Press, 1966)—Evans' biography of the family is, unfortunately, unsympathetic towards William Martin.

## THEORISING THE CROWD

The 'crowd' was, by the turn of the century, one of the more theoretically developed ways for conceptualising social groups; and from a scientific viewpoint, it was by far the most developed. Crowd theory had a currency and an influence far beyond its immediate source in continental psychology and neurology, which accounts for its fruitfulness as an entry-point to some of the darker areas of twentieth-century culture.

By far the best known of the crowd-theorists was Gustave Le Bon, whose *Psychologie des foules*, written in 1895, was immediately translated into fifteen foreign languages (and into English as *The Crowd: a study of the popular mind*), has never been out of print, and is, according to Le Bon's most sensitive contemporary commentator, 'certainly one of the best-selling scientific books of all time'.<sup>9</sup> An additional notoriety has accrued to the work today, given its reputation as a favourite of fascist dictators: Mussolini stated that, 'I have read all the work of Gustave Le Bon, and I don't know how many times I have re-read his *Psychologie des foules*. It is a capital work to which, to this day, I frequently refer.'<sup>10</sup>

Le Bon's writing was a late intervention in a lively and wide-ranging debate that had been going on in the science of the mind since the 1870s, when a major reorientation in psychiatry (a shift from the belief of Esquirol's generation that the causes of insanity were 'moral', lying in the passion of the soul, to the 'organic' model of Magnan and Charcot, which focussed on the neurological and physical degenerative causes of insanity)<sup>11</sup> coincided with the emergence of a positivist criminology that had interested itself

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Nye, 'Savage Crowds, Modernism and Modern Politics', in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist project and the culture of Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup>Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press), p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>See Robert A. Nye, 'II. The crowd', *Isis* 74:4 (1983), p. 570.



in the misdemeanours of mobs.<sup>12</sup>

At the centre of Le Bon's thought were two ideas: firstly, 'the law of the mental unity of crowds', which stated that people in a crowd 'combine to form a new body possessing properties quite different from those of the bodies that have formed it', so that crowds are 'in possession of a sort of collective mind'.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, Le Bon contributed a physiological explanation for this remarkable phenomena: because people find themselves in an anonymous situation in the crowd, their conscious brain now gives up on keeping lower, more primitive brain functions in check; hypnotic contagion intervenes; and crowd members, having entirely lost their conscious personalities, become suggestible. So, crowds will tend to obey their lower brain functions, and are easily influenced by suggestion.<sup>14</sup>

For our purposes—for the investigation of modernist aesthetic forms—it is perhaps helpful to relate these two ideas to two key themes that have a bearing on how a writer or an artist might approach the crowd.

Firstly, the idea that they are both one and many, a single being in which many individuals have been subsumed, gives crowds a strange formal quality pregnant with suggestion. In chapter 2, we'll look at Lewis's representation of the crowd as giant, an idea that many modernists have toyed with—consider H.C.E.'s existence half-way between collective representation (Here Comes Everybody) and more-or-less recognisable individual (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker) in *Finnegans Wake*, or consider 'The Delineaments of the Giants' section from William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*, with its (admittedly hastily dropped) figuration of Paterson,

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<sup>12</sup>Jaap van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology and Politics, 1871–1899*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 53; more generally, pp. 52–99 passim.

<sup>13</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (1896; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd*, pp. 9–11.

'only one man—like a city'.<sup>15</sup> The idea is older than Le Bon, owing a lot to the traditional idea of the body politic, but Le Bon's *Crowd* gave it a new status: it became biological fact, which, as we see in chapter 3, implies a new way of examining the collective.

The second of Le Bon's key ideas, the theory that members of a crowd lose their conscious personalities and fall under the control of a primitive lower-brain function can be related to the pervasive interest in the primitive: the crowd is important as it can be seen as a locus for the re-emergence of the primitive right in the heart of ultramodern spaces like London.

The preoccupation with the so-called primitive mind is as much a feature of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century psychology as it is of modernist art.<sup>16</sup> The theory of evolution had, for an earlier generation, seemed to have given the biological sciences a claim to the throne previously claimed by theology as chief explainer of how we came to be here. It may have seemed reasonable, therefore, especially given the promising experimental evidence being produced by the developing fields of reflexology and hypnosis, that further investigation of our evolutionary origins might have helped explain human behaviour.<sup>17</sup>

Le Bon's foremost British followers, Wilfred Trotter and William McDougall kept Crowd psychology on the agenda of the high-

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<sup>15</sup>James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992); William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 6–7. The giant theme is set up at the outset of book 1 as though it will be the defining trope of the whole sequence, but in several hundred pages, there is only one really strong image of the giant Paterson: '...the subtleties of his machinations / drawing their sustenance from the noise of the pouring river / animate a thousand automatons.' Indeed, much of the rest of the poem seems to refute the idea that the constituents of Paterson are water-mill-like automata.

<sup>16</sup>For the perspective on art, see William Rubin's landmark catalogue for the 1984 Museum of Modern Art show: *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

<sup>17</sup>See Jonathan Miller, 'Crowds and Power', *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 10 (1983), pp. 253–5.



brow reviews well into the post-WWI period. From around 1908, when McDougall published *An Introduction to Social Psychology* and Trotter published his article, 'Herd Instinct and Its Bearing on the Psychology of Civilized Man', both psychologists were interested in enumerating the finite set of instincts that underpin all human behaviour. Trotter's list was much narrower than McDougall's: sex, self-preservation and nutrition, Trotter argued, can account for most of the 'lesser' drives that McDougall puts forward.

But Trotter added a fourth instinct: gregariousness. In this drive, he argued, 'we may find the unknown "x" which might account for the complexity of human behaviour.'<sup>18</sup> The gregarious instinct, Trotter claimed, works through a process of inherited mutual suggestibility: people have an innate tendency to fall under the spell of their peers, imitating their behavior. Trotter was drawing strongly on the work of Boris Sidis, the Russian emigré psychologist, who saw hypnotic suggestion as the prime factor influencing a crowd's behaviour:

Susceptibility is the cement of the herd, the very soul of the primitive social group. . . [This suggestibility] consists in the impressing on the mind of an idea, image, movement, which the person reproduces voluntarily or involuntarily. Suggestibility, then, is natural to man as a social animal. Under certain conditions this suggestibility, which is always present in man, may increase to an extraordinary degree, and the result is a stampede, a mob, an epidemic.<sup>19</sup>

Trotter takes this principle even further: suggestibility doesn't just come into play in extreme situations like a stampede, a mob

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<sup>18</sup>William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (London: Methuen, 1908), Wilfred Trotter, 'Herd Instinct and Its Bearing on the Psychology of Civilized Man', *Sociological Review* 1 (1908): 227–248.

<sup>19</sup>Boris Sidis, *The Psychology of suggestion: A research into the subconscious nature of man and society* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), p. 310.

or an epidemic: it is the very organising principle of social life.<sup>20</sup> In doing so he is merely giving a proper biological explanation to an idea long established in English political thought. In his essay from the 1870s, 'Physics and Politics', Walter Bagehot had written that 'unconscious imitation is the principle force in the making of national characters.'

We may not think that this imitation is voluntary or even conscious. On the contrary, it has its seat mainly in the very obscure parts of the mind whose notions, far from having been consciously produced are hardly felt to exist.<sup>21</sup>

Pound's and Lewis's interest in tapping into this primitive part of the mind will be made clearer in the following chapters. But these ideas, as we have seen, pre-date the modernist interest in rediscovering the primitive. In the next section, we'll look back to earlier models of the crowd, and examine what made the modern view unique.

## THE SOVEREIGN MASSES

While the scope of this thesis is limited to the first thirty-odd years of the twentieth century, I was not unaware of the glamour that accrued to crowds during the period inaugurated by the French Revolution<sup>22</sup>—a glamour which certainly lasted until the defeat in

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<sup>20</sup>Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: Unwins, 1922), p. 26.

<sup>21</sup>Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956) p. 28, p. 68.

<sup>22</sup>Even as it tried to look forward to the new mass era of the twentieth century, crowd psychology began by looking back to 1789. According to Jaap Van Ginneken, the volumes of Hippolyte Taine's *Les origines de la France contemporaine* that explored the Revolution (published in 1878 and 1884) "contributed decisively to the emergence of political psychology, political sociology and political science in general, and more in particular to the analysis of the functioning



Russia of the modern era's other landmark revolution, and which isn't yet entirely exhausted.

In the century preceding my study, there was a sense that the crowd had emerged from passive reflection of the *ancient regime's* model of order, and had taken on an active role as primary agent in the remaking of the world. Into the eighteenth century, social thought was still coloured by the theological politics outlined in Kantorowicz's classic study, *The King's Two Bodies*, where the body politic was an extension of the king's person; not only a body himself, he was represented also as head and living sign of the collective body.<sup>23</sup>

Whether we choose to characterise the epoch following the French Revolution (as Burke did) as an 'age of sophisters, oeconomists and calculators',<sup>24</sup> or as an age of rapid technological progress and economic development, the world that emerged was interpreted by critics and thinkers *less* in the light of the will of kings and authority, and *more* as contingent on the ways people relate to one another socially. As the nineteenth century progressed, increasingly large demographic groups, from increasingly far down the economic scale—British examples include the Anti-Corn Law League, the Chartists, the Trade Union movement—seemed to hold the key to how events would be shaped. Masses, crowds, riots, big groups of common people, were big news—the most likely agents of change, it seemed in a rapidly changing world. So Marx, in *The German Ideology*, described the communist materialist who perceives, in 'a crowd of scrofulous, overworked and consumptive starvelings', the 'necessity, and at the same time

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of revolutionary movements and totalitarian governments'. See Van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics, 1871-1899*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 43, 48–9.

<sup>23</sup>Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 3–6.

<sup>24</sup>Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 170.

the condition, of a transformation of both industry and of the social structure'.<sup>25</sup>

By bringing in Marx here, I think we can skip to the crux of what I'm trying to say: that crowds or masses of consumptive starvelings or proletarians or whatever you want to call them came to take a central, indeed an almost *messianic* role in intellectual history. Marx's prophesy of a class that would stand for the whole of society, and whose emancipation would encompass the 'revolution of a people'<sup>26</sup> seems, as time has passed, to have inhaled to concepts like the mass, the crowd, the street assembly. What Marx called the proletariat was seen as consubstantial with 'the *dissolution of the existing world order*'; the proletariat itself 'is the *actual* dissolution of that order'.<sup>27</sup> And this is what I mean by the glamour of crowds: they have a stake in a projected revolution that goes far beyond what many people thought of crowds as normally doing (tearing up railings, for example, or smashing windows).<sup>28</sup> The revolution's goals would become identical to the goals of philosophy, the abolition and transcendence of the revolutionary masses' historic bonds would become identical to the abolition and transcendence of the problems of philosophy.<sup>29</sup>

Neither crowds, nor masses, nor the international workers' move-

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<sup>25</sup>Karl Marx, *Early Political Writings*, ed. Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 144.

<sup>26</sup>See Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', p. 254.

<sup>27</sup>Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', in *Early Political Writings*, pp. 256–257.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, the famous diatribe against 'doing as one likes' in Mathew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings* ed. Stefan Collini, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 85; Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 168.

<sup>29</sup>Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', p. 257.



ment, have brought about an end to alienation or any of the other problems of critical philosophy. Nevertheless, this notion that there was a possibility they may have done so has left a legacy, evident in, for example, our deep interest in whether or not Habermas's philosophy exhibits a 'fear of the masses';<sup>30</sup> or Derrida's countering of Marx and Engels's 'spectre of communism' with his own plurality of 'spectres':

'Why this plural? Would there be more than one of them? Plus d'un...: this can mean a crowd, if not masses, the horde, or society, or else some population of ghosts. . . some community without a leader—but also the less than one of pure and simple dispersion.'<sup>31</sup>

Even in its late, spectral form, then, the glamour of crowds, masses, the horde, continues to haunt modern thought. It was my assumption that this glamour would push 'the crowd' to the centre of writers' attempts to give the world literary form.

I was not alone in this assumption. John Plotz, for example, has looked at texts from the first half of the nineteenth century to ascertain 'the effects of these new crowds, riots, and demonstrations on the period's literature'.<sup>32</sup> Mary Esteve, in a study of American crowd-writing from the Antebellum to the Great Depression, has set out 'to track the implications of this emerging imagination of the crowd as a ubiquitous, culturally saturating phenomenon for the era's concomitantly evolving political and aesthetic commitments.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Warren Montag, 'The Pressure of the Street: Habermas' Fear of the Masses', in Mike Hill and Warren Montag, eds., *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere* (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 132–45.

<sup>31</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>John Plotz, *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup>Mary Esteve, *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature*

One of the things that interests me about these two recent studies is that they both tend to shift from specific literary-historic manifestations of 'the crowd' to a contemporary discursive model of 'the public sphere'. So Plotz argues that

between 1800 and 1850 there coexisted a huge variety of ways to talk about a crowd, its nature, its extent, its aims, and its actions. Accounting for that variety demands a model of public speech and action capable of showing how various discourses might interact to shape a public sphere within which such phenomena as crowds could be argued over. Constructing such an account seems to me impossible without reference to that hoary bogeyman, the 'public sphere'.<sup>34</sup>

His contention, convincingly argued, is that nineteenth-century authors writing about crowds were intervening in a hotly-contested debate about what kinds of acts constituted public speech within in an emerging democracy, and that they put forward their own models of how crowds might be incorporated into a public discursive realm.<sup>35</sup>

So Plotz's illuminating insights into nineteenth-century crowd-writing are framed within a wider argument whose focus is not on the specific literary crowd, but on the wider public sphere in which a writer's interventions were situated. In general, Plotz examines texts as an author's microcosmic model of what the public sphere ought to look like; in *Harrington*, for example, Maria Edgeworth puts forward a 'claim that she has found a way to incorporate an attractively attenuated version of [the crowd's] spirit into the novel itself.'<sup>36</sup>

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Plotz, *The Crowd*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup>Plotz, *The Crowd*, p. 10–11.

<sup>36</sup>Plotz, *The Crowd*, p. 11.



Mary Esteve, on the other hand, creates an opposition between 'the illiberal crowd mind and the liberal public square' as two distinct modes of collectivity—the crowd belongs to an aesthetic sphere, linked with notions of the sublime, while the public belongs to a political sphere, linked with notions of the rational.<sup>37</sup> For Esteve, the uses American writers made of the crowd are linked to the changing fortunes of the public sphere in American political life: Whitman implicated crowds in his attempt to create a radical democracy; Henry James implicated them in his dramatisation of the fall of the public sphere.<sup>38</sup>

All of this is very enlightening, and I don't want to suggest that theories about crowds can even begin to fill the vital role that Habermas's notion of the public sphere plays in furthering our understanding of the role of philosophy in a continuing project of Enlightenment. When I come to deal with modernist texts by Lewis, Eliot, Pound and others, though, I do want to retain the sense that things could have been different, because I think that is the sense in which these texts are meant to be taken. I find it interesting that, at the moment that they want to make sense of past literary manifestations of the crowd, the way that Plotz and Esteve choose to proceed is by pitting crowd-representations against the very model of collective action that has emerged triumphant in today's bourgeois-capitalist society and finding it wanting.

After Habermas, the burden of forwarding the Enlightenment project, which Marx placed on the shoulders of the proletariat, are carried by a notion of the public sphere. The task of philosophy of course, has shifted away from that *aufhebung* of which Marx wrote in his early articles;<sup>39</sup> there is nothing in the theory of communica-

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<sup>37</sup>Esteve, *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature*, p. 21; pp. 15–19.

<sup>38</sup>Esteve, *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature*, p. 29; p. 61.

<sup>39</sup>For example Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', p. 257.

tive action that retains the negative sense of Marx's *aufhebung*, the sense of abolition and annulment. But when I say that I miss this sense, it isn't because I want to ally myself with the young Marx; it is rather because I'm interested in an avant-garde art that was itself obsessed with this negative sense of *aufhebung*—an avant-garde art that imagined the abolition and transcendence of art itself.

And that's why I think that if one is interested in the imagination, then the crowd can sometimes be of more interest than the public sphere. Because, as we'll see, the crowd is all about radical breaks with the quotidian, about stepping outside of the Enlightenment, and entering a notional space of primordial irrationality. In the next few pages, I want to look at how people have conceptualised the crowd, and explain why I think it is a useful notion for understanding modernist writing.

#### CROWD VERSUS MASS

As well as Le Bon's scientific notions, sociological accounts of the human experience of crowds were beginning to emerge. For Georg Simmel, crowding and numerosness were important in accounting for the peculiar mental conditions of metropolitan man. Kurt Wolff's translation of the relevant passage reads rather awkwardly:

... the reciprocal reserve and indifference and the intellectual life conditions of large circles are never felt more strongly by the individual in their impact on his independence than in the thickest crowd of the big city. This is because the bodily proximity and narrowness of space makes the mental distance only the more visible.<sup>40</sup>

And there were numerous journalistic accounts of the new crowds, wonderstruck descriptions, being published in belletristic books

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<sup>40</sup>Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950) p. 418.



about London and the great cities:

London Bridge! It is the climax, the apotheosis, as it were, of all thus far seen. So crowded is the canvas, so full of movement, it dazes one. Life sweeps over the bridge like the rush of the sea by the sides of a ship—always Citywards. In thousands they advance, leaning forward, with long, quick strides, eager to be there! Swiftly they flash past, and still they come and come, like the silent, shadowy legions of a dream. Somehow they suggest the dogged march of an army in retreat, with its rallying point far ahead, and the enemy's cavalry pressing on its rear. Looking down upon the swarming masses, with the dark sullen river for a background, they fuse into one monstrous organism, their progress merges in the rhythmic swaying of one mammoth breathing thing. Stand in the midst of the mighty current of men! A wearied, languorous feeling creeps over you, as face follows face and eyes in thousands swim by. It is the hypnotic influence of the measureless, the unfathomable, the you-know-not-what of mystery and elusiveness in life, stealing your senses away.<sup>41</sup>

In these accounts, of course, we are already touching on one of the key issues in the history of aesthetic theory. Crowds had been complicit in the theory of the sublime since its first great reign over English literary thought in the eighteenth century. So Burke had written:

The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind,

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<sup>41</sup>P. F. William Ryan, 'Going to Business in London', in *Living London: Its Work and its Play; its Humour and its Pathos; its Sights and its Scenes*, ed. George R. Simms (London: Cassell, 1903), quoted in David Kynaston, *The City of London*, vol. II, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995), p. 241.



though we can observe no nicety or artifice in those sorts of music. The shouting of multitudes has a similar effect; and, by the sole strength of the sound, so amazes and confounds the imagination, that, in this staggering and hurry of the mind, the best-established tempers can scarcely forbear being borne down, and joining in the common cry, and common resolution of the crowd.<sup>42</sup>

With a return to art predicated on shock, on sheer force of wonder, so strong that it provoked physical excitement, the crowd was bound to feature prominently, particularly given that it was so politically prominent. In his foundational manifesto of the classical avant-garde, Marinetti set out his intention to 'sing the great masses shaken with work, pleasure, or rebellion'; and the machines the futurists glorified seemed 'to applaud like a delirious crowd'.<sup>43</sup> The new spirit in poetry foreseen by Apollinaire, too, would be shaped by crowds; it would shadow 'the speed and simplicity with which we've all become used to referring by a single word to such complex entities as a crowd.'<sup>44</sup> Tristan Tzara en-

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<sup>42</sup>Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, reissued 1998), pp. 75–6. See also David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. P.H. Nidditch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 373: 'It is evident that any very bulky object, such as the ocean, an extended plain, a vast chain of mountains, a wide forest; or any very numerous collection of objects, such as an army, a fleet, a crowd, excite in the mind a sensible emotion; and that the admiration which arises on the appearance of such objects is one of the most lively pleasures which human nature is capable of enjoying.'

<sup>43</sup>F. T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', trans. Lawrence Rainey, in Rainey, ed., *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2005), p. 5. Originally published in *Le Figaro*, 20 February, 1909, but for an early English translation, see *Poetry Review* 8 (1912), p. 411.

<sup>44</sup>'La rapidité et la simplicité avec lesquelles les esprits se sont accoutumés à désigner d'un seul mot êtres aussi complexes qu'une foule...' *Œuvres en prose complètes*, ed Pierre Caizergues and Michel Decaudin, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1991–3), ii, p. 945.



visaged an artistic revolution effected through a radical union of artists and masses: 'the wisdom of crowds. . . joined with the occasional madness of a few delicious beings'.<sup>45</sup>

For Walter Benjamin, the crowd had shaped and transformed the faculty of vision itself; modern art evolved to keep pace with the evolving human eye:

The daily sight of a lively crowd may once have constituted a spectacle to which one's eyes had to adapt first. On the basis of this supposition, one may assume that once the eyes had mastered this task, they welcomed opportunities to test their newly acquired faculties. This would mean that the technique of Impressionist painting, whereby the picture is garnered in a riot of dabs of colour, would be a reflection of experiences with which the eyes of a big-city dweller have become familiar.<sup>46</sup>

#### OPENING THE FIELD

What is there between these aesthetic and literary representations of the crowd, and the concrete, enormous presence of 'classical', LeBonite crowd theory in the social-scientific discourse of the early twentieth century?

Before we can begin to answer such a large question, I think we must be blunt, and spend a brief moment sidestepping questions which have been central to studies of the crowd and literature. Bringing these indistinct Anglo-American literary crowds into sharper focus will necessitate a shift of the gaze away from classical crowd theory—it will perhaps, in fact, entail that we dispense with the notion that the crowd in modern literary history

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<sup>45</sup>Tristan Tzara, *Approximate Man, and Other Writings* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p. 215.

<sup>46</sup>Charles Baudelaire: *A lyric poet in the era of high capitalism* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 130<sup>n</sup>44.

*came out of* any historical crowds, or any historical crowd theories at all. Certainly I don't think it's appropriate, in understanding the literary use of the crowd, to have to focus on whether these crowd theories were 'true' or not, and to adjudicate the modernist works on whether they succeed or fail in offering a rigorous model of mass social phenomena.

But to sidestep questions of crowd psychology it is not necessary to downgrade its place in an account of the development of Anglo-American modernism: to sidestep, rather, is to imply that the aesthetic and scientific ways of representing crowds exist side by side, occupying parallel spaces and moving toward different ends. For the remainder of this introduction, I'll be sketching out a larger frame, which I hope can contain both the 'crowd science' of the political journals, and the 'crowd aesthetic' of the literary journals, while preserving the autonomy and complexity of the literary crowds—their strange, flickering present-absence. Lewis planned a book called *The Crowd Master*; he never completed it (see chapters 2 and 3).

To accommodate this wider frame, though, it will be necessary to foreshorten our field of study. I shall leave any further detailed consideration of a European (chiefly French) theoretical background out of the following introduction, and try instead to reconstruct an insular English history of the ways that crowds have been understood. As numerous writers on the crowd have shown, much of the intense technical theorisation of crowd mind and behaviour grew out of debates within French scientific and political traditions; if we scrutinise them too deeply, we will be drawn into the politics of the Sorbonne and Third-Republic France and away from the politics of *The Waste Land* and *Blast*-era England. Instead, I set out a frame drawing on English crowd-history and crowd-psychology.

This is not merely bigotry and narrow-mindedness on my part; on the contrary, by remembering it, we are indirectly criticising



the very real insularity and bigotry that has long characterised English thought—the reality which a utopian discipline like intellectual history (paying little attention to the borders of intellectual geography, passport controls hindering the free flow of books and persons) too often obscures.

Consider, for example, the reception of Modern French poetry in Edwardian England. In any account, the ‘discovery’ of symbolist poetry by poets of Pound’s generation is central to the move towards experimentation, away from traditional verse forms.<sup>47</sup> When Pound, Aldington and HD inaugurated their avantgarde movement, they chose a French-sounding name (*les Imagistes*).<sup>48</sup> But as Flint himself was later to complain,<sup>49</sup> the *imagistes*’ version of what the French avangarde movements looked like was a mistranslation. Pound and Ford would argue about whether *Imagisme* was a French-style movement or a German-style movement—Pound never sympathised with Ford’s own mistranslations of a German poetic modernity, writing that ‘he invents a class of German lyricists, and endows them with qualities more easy to find among the French writers. He supposes a whole tribe of Heines, but no matter.’<sup>50</sup>

Something similar, then, holds good with French and German crowd theory. To take the most celebrated misprison, when James

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<sup>47</sup>This argument is made, for example, in Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), p. 20, and in Norman T. Gates’s annotations to *Richard Aldington: An Autobiography in Letters*, ed. Norman T. Gates (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 1992), p. 15. For the most detailed exploration of the influence of French verse on Anglo-American modernism, see Cyrena N. Pondrom, *The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry, 1900–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

<sup>48</sup>A concise account of the founding of Imagism is given in Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 69.

<sup>49</sup>F. S. Flint, ‘History of Imagism’, *Egoist* 2 (1915): 70–71.

<sup>50</sup>Ezra Pound, ‘Ford Madox Hueffer’, *The New Freewoman*, 15 December, 1913, p. 251.



Strachey translated Freud's *Massenpsychologie* (Freud consistently uses this emotive and unmistakable term, *mass*, whose English translation means much the same as the German original) as *Group Psychology*. The whole sense of the work is changed, as primordial massness cedes to the more civilised, 'normative' abstract, 'the group'.<sup>51</sup>

Another example—imagine how different the English reader's view of Le Bon himself must have been, coming across his 'Maxims and Sayings' in the *New Age*,<sup>52</sup> compared to, say, a French reader who had access to the original of his *Psychology of Socialism*, or a less specialist reader with a vague awareness of *The Crowd*. Le Bon's biographer, Robert Nye, has chided Susanna Barrows for not discussing his later writing, but he admits that 'Le Bon's *psychologie des foules* of 1895 was the only text of crowd psychology to outlast the heroic period of the *fin de siècle* and figure as a cornerstone in the huge literature on twentieth-century mass psychology.'<sup>53</sup>

An English 'common' reader alert to psychology may have been dimly aware of *The Crowd*, or at least of its influence in the work of a writer like Conway; she would be unlikely to know about the work that Nye is interested in. Another reader, coming across Le Bon's maxims in the idiosyncratic socialist forum, the *New Age*, may have gone away with a completely different idea of the writer than a French conservative reading his critique of socialism.

In the course of this thesis, we'll see several examples of the chinese-whispers versions of European thought that I'm talking about here. In the following chapters, I shall follow a path which allows us to trace the influences of theorists and poetic traditions, without making too many assumptions that ideas had al-

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<sup>51</sup>See Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Knopf, 1983).

<sup>52</sup>Gustave Le Bon, 'Aphorisms on Politics, Law, and Faith' *The New Age* 11 (23 May, 1912): 83–84; 'Some Modern Aphorisms' *The New Age* 12 (13 March, 1913): 449.

<sup>53</sup>Robert A. Nye, 'II. The crowd', *Isis* 74:4 (1983), p. 571.



ways to be thoroughly digested by those who sought to make use of them. In the remaining few pages of this introduction, I want to briefly sketch out the kind of approach to crowds that, I think, we can safely take—an approach that will prevent us from being too heavy handed, and from bringing in too much of what we now know about continental crowd psychology.

#### SPASMODIC AND RATIONAL THEORIES OF THE CROWD

E.P. Thompson's 1971 essay, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', has, at first sight, little to do with our field of enquiry. It focussed on a very particular type of crowd action, one that had long-since ceased by the time any remotely modernist crowd-literatures were being written: the gathering of the poor in the eighteenth century to 'set the price' of grain; 'the movement of the crowd from the market-place outwards to the mills and thence...to farms, where stocks were inspected and the farmers ordered to send grain to market at a price dictated by the crowd'.<sup>54</sup> ('It was not about all kinds of crowd,' Thompson later commented, 'and a reader would have to be unusually thick-headed who supposed it so').<sup>55</sup>

What interests me about this essay is the division that Thompson draws at the beginning between, on the one hand, a 'spasmodic view of popular history', and on the other, the view that the crowd's actions unfolded against 'some legitimising notion' of rational consensus.<sup>56</sup> According to the first of these views, the crowd is seen to move unconsciously, in spasms, from the basest of

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<sup>54</sup>E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 228.

<sup>55</sup>*Customs in Common*, p. 260. 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' was first published in 1971, but Thompson added nearly 100 pages of comments dealing with subsequent criticism when it was republished in this collection.

<sup>56</sup>*Customs in Common*, p. 185, p. 188.



physical motives—hunger—and to act in thoroughly irrational and counter-productive ways. On the other—that the crowds' moral assumptions 'supposed definite, and passionately held, notions of the common weal',<sup>57</sup> it is a body of rational people, working collectively towards a clearly defined objective.

We could view this, I think, as a master opposition for schematising the ways that crowds (and, indeed, other versions of 'massed' humanity—electorates, speculators on dotcom stock, or Manchester United supporters) have historically been conceptualised. This is not a unique way of understanding crowd theory's legacy: amongst those social psychologists to whom crowds are still an interesting category, the opposition of 'out-group' perspectives (that interpret crowd behaviour as instinctive, subconscious and irrational) with the crowd's own 'in-group' perspective (the self-understanding of crowd members in terms of their own rational aims) has become an orthodox way of schematising the discipline's failures. 'For over a century,' begins a study of British anti-road protests by two leading social psychologists of crowd identity, 'psychological analyses of crowds have stressed their irrationality and their destructiveness. In recent years, there have been a number of studies which argue by contrast that crowd action is socially meaningful'.<sup>58</sup>

Thompson, in any case, was interested in accounting for one of the major transitions in modern English history: the move from a 'moral economy'—upon which various controls, including crowd action were exerted to ensure the poor had grain in times of dearth—to a capitalist market economy. He schematised it as a shift from 'the eighteenth-century bread-nexus', to 'the cash nexus which emerged through the industrial revolution'.<sup>59</sup> Crowds had, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, guaranteed the functioning of

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<sup>57</sup>*Customs in Common*, p. 188.

<sup>58</sup>John Drury and Steve Reicher, 'Collective action and psychological change: The emergence of new social identities', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39 (2000), p.579.

<sup>59</sup>*Customs in Common*, p. 189.



the moral economy through punitive riots. By the century's end, they were discredited, and a new capitalist economy was dominant.

I think this is useful, because there is a case, persuasively put by Perry Anderson, for placing Anglo-American modernism at another critical juncture in the historical process of economic development:

European modernism in the first years of this century thus flowered in the space between a still usable classical past, a still indeterminate technical present, and a still predictable political future. Or, put another way, it arose at the intersection between a semi-aristocratic ruling order, a semi-industrialised capitalist economy, and a semi-emergent, or –insurgent, labour movement.

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The crowd, I want to end by suggesting, was, in this historical context, even more at issue. It became a way of imagining the insurgent labour movement, and an image of the alien world it could bring about; simultaneously, though, it could figure the world that had once belonged to the semi-aristocratic ruling order, the eighteenth-century world of traditional rule that Thompson discusses, and bring up memories of a traditional social order even in the heart of the city.

In the following chapters, we will explore some of these images of the crowd.

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<sup>60</sup>Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution' *New Left Review* 144 (1984), p. 105.

## CHAPTER 1

# 'The real stuff of the poetry of our day': Negotiating the Edwardian Crowd

I should say, to put a personal confession on record, that the very strongest emotion . . . that I have ever had was when I first went to the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition and came out on a great square of white buildings all outlined with lights. [. . . .] There were crowds and crowds of people—or no, there was, spread out beneath the lights, an infinite moving mass of black, with white faces turned up to the light, moving slowly, quickly, not moving at all, being obscured, reappearing. . .

I know that the immediate reflection will come to almost any reader that this is nonsense or an affectation. 'How,' he will say, 'is any emotion to be roused by the mere sight of a Shepherd's Bush exhibition? Poetry is written about love; about country lanes; about the singing of birds' . . . I think it is not—not now-a-days. We are too far from these things. What we are in, that which is all around us, is the Crowd—the Crowd blindly looking for joy or for that most pathetic of all things, the good time. I think that is why I felt so pro-



found an emotion on that occasion. It must have been the feeling—not the thought—of all these good, kind, nice people, this immense Crowd suddenly let loose upon a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground to pick up the glittering splinters of glass that are Romance; hesitant but certain vistas of adventure, if no more than the adventures of their own souls; like cattle in a herd suddenly let into a very rich field and hesitant before the enamel of daisies, the long herbage, the rushes fringing the stream at the end.

I think pathos and poetry are to be found beneath those lights and in those sounds—in the larking of the anaemic girls; in the shoulders of the women in evening dress, in the idealism of a pickpocket slanting through a shadow and imagining himself a hero whose end will be wealth and permanent apartments in the Savoy Hotel. For such dreamers of dreams there are.

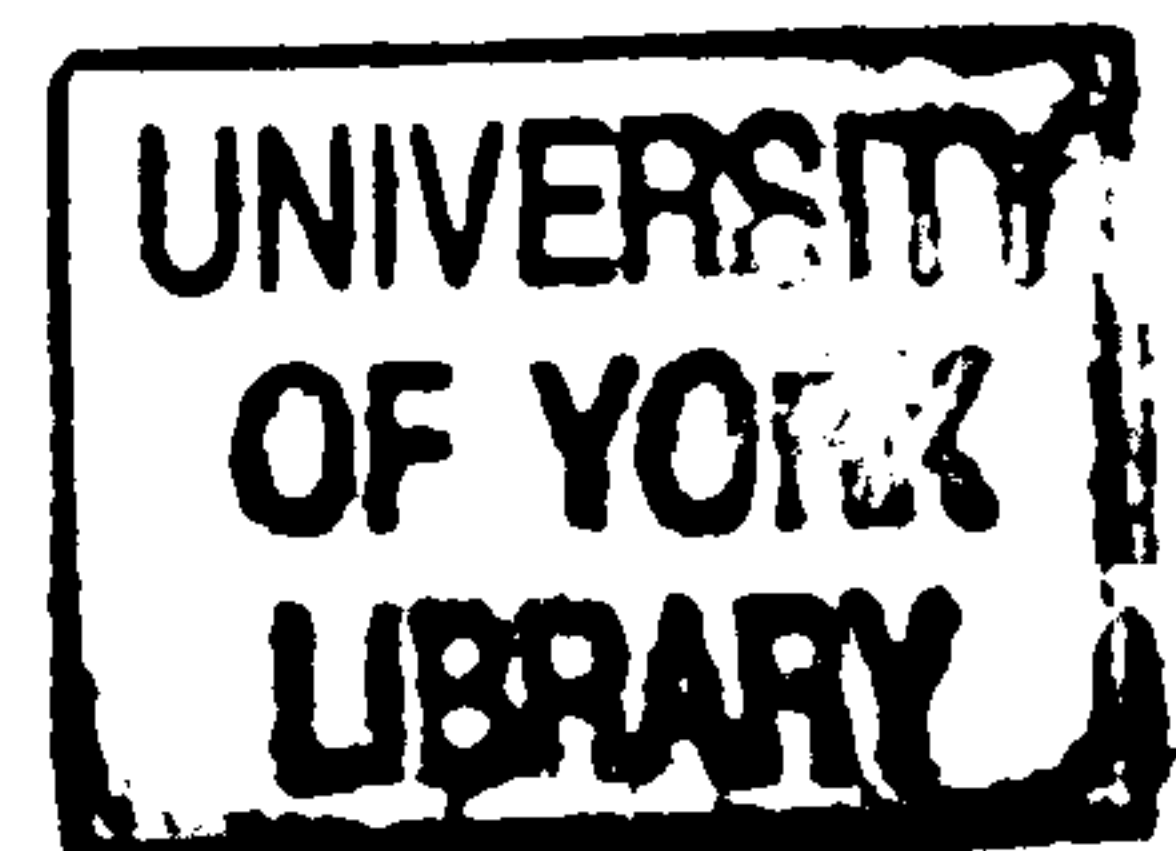
That indeed appears to me—and I am writing as seriously as I can—the real stuff of the poetry of our day.<sup>1</sup>

Baudelaire's 'painter of modern life', Walther Benjamin's *Flâneur*—they are familiar figures,<sup>2</sup> standing at the threshold of the modern, showing those who come after them how to be modernist.

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<sup>1</sup>Ford Madox Hueffer, 'Impressionism—Some Speculations [I]', *Poetry* 2 (August 1913), pp. 181–82.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. J. Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), pp. 1–41; Walther Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 1999), pp. 416–455, p. 895. I hardly need go into the familiarity of these figures here: T. J. Clarke, in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999) takes not only his title, but much of the books incidental argument from a reading of Baudelaire's work. The *Flâneur*, of course, is also a Baudelairian character, but as Deborah L. Parson's argues, (*Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* [Oxford: Oxford University





Ford Maddox Hueffer's poet of the crowd, visiting the busy exhibition ground at Shepherd's Bush for the first time (perhaps in the summer of its grand opening, 1908, when the west-London showground hosted the Franco-British Exhibition, and the visiting hordes could be counted in their hundred thousands)<sup>3</sup> is a less familiar figure.

And yet, reading Ford's hopeful manifesto for a poetry of 'that which is all around us', a poetry of the Crowd, I seem to sense the same moment of modern epiphany, a moment—albeit on a less ambitious scale—when new ways of relating to a changed world reveal themselves.

'What we are in now is the crowd': Ford's statement, I will argue, can be seen as a launching point for the modern movement in England. Writers would react to the questions (and answers) that he raises in different ways. In the case of Ezra Pound, those different ways of reacting could be combined in one poet: on the one

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Press: 2001] pp. 40–41) it's important to distinguish between the nineteenth-century *flâneur* and his or her more ideologically burdened twentieth-century descendent. Parson's intervention belongs to a huge body of *flâneur*-studies: see, for example, Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible *Flâneur*', *New Left Review*, 90–110; Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture and Society* 2:3 (1985), 37–46; Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>3</sup>Is Ford referring to a visit in 1908? He had the opportunity—at the time, he was 'rushing about London as busily as ever': see Arthur Mizener, *The Saddest Story: A biography of Ford Maddox Ford* (London: Bodley Head, 1971) p.137. Certainly, to speak of 'the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition'—suggests the Franco-British Exhibition. In the year he published the piece, there was no major Exhibition in London, and those held at Shepherd's Bush between 1909 and 1912 were on a considerably smaller scale than the 1908 Exhibition. For visitor statistics, see *The Times*, 14 September, 1908, p. 6: 'All records of attendance were broken at the Franco-British Exhibition on Saturday, when it is calculated there were half a million visitors. . . . In the evening every path and building was crowded. Long queues of people waited to enter every restaurant and attraction, and at one time 5,000 people were waiting to ride on the scenic railway. . . . Forty thousand people passed the turnstiles at the Irish village.'



hand, I will argue, Ford's image is pertinent to our understanding of Pound's imagist poems. But on the other, there is a very different Pound who we can dig up, who was working at the same time as the well-known imagist Pound, and who saw Ford's invitation to join the crowd as an invitation to engage with a popular Edwardian literary scene.

At the end of my introduction, I referred to E. P. Thompson's view of the crowd in the eighteenth century as the carrier of a traditional moral economy—this eighteenth-century crowd would later fade from view. It may be appropriate, in the following argument, to keep the idea of a 'traditional', and largely eclipsed model of a 'rational crowd' in mind: this is the kind of crowd that this second, very different Pound seems to be addressing—a crowd who seem to resist the transforming maelstrom of modernity.

#### 'WHAT WE ARE IN NOW IS THE CROWD': A NATIVE THEORY OF MODERNITY

Picture the scene: in later years, it was almost impossible to believe that the opening had been dampened by the weather: 'An exhibition must have blue skies to see it off; it is a depressing spectacle when the merry palaces that give it charm and character are all adrip.'<sup>4</sup> To Virginia Woolf, looking back from the 1930s, it seemed almost inconceivable that there could be 'trouble from this source. The area was too small; the light was too brilliant.'<sup>5</sup>

The White City, Shepherd's Bush, was built for the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908, and hosted that year's Olympic games.<sup>6</sup> The 'most fascinating attraction in the Amusement Section' was the 'Gigantic Flip-Flap' (plate 2); other attractions included an Irish

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<sup>4</sup>'The Franco-British Exhibition', *The Times*, 15 May, 1908, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Virginia Woolf, 'Thunder at Wembley', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, volume 3, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988), p. 411.

<sup>6</sup>For more on the White City, see Paul Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', *Art History* 8:4 (1985): 434-452.





**Figure 2:** *Flip-Flap, Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908, post-card, author's collection, London: n.p., 1908.*



Village, a Mountain Scenic Railway, and a wide variety of exhibition courts that could be brilliantly illuminated during the hours of darkness.<sup>7</sup>

Such exhibition grounds feature prominently in the modern imagination: in King Vidor's film, *The Crowd*, for example, we see the hero, John Simms, take his future wife, Mary, on a date to Coney Island, where the urban landscape of pleasure acts as a carnivalesque foil to the geometric order of the office sets.<sup>8</sup>

Ford's description has something of this fairyland quality: what does it mean though, to be 'in the crowd'? As a test-case, I want to look at Ezra Pound's famous crowd poem, 'In a Station of the Metro', and particularly at the narrative Pound built up about how he came to write it.

Ezra Pound, critics rarely remember, saw Ford's Shepherd's Bush essay as a central inspiration for 'In a Station of the Metro': in a later discussion of his experience on the Metro platform in Paris, Pound spoke of 'an interesting account of a similar adventure of his own', which Hueffer had written.<sup>9</sup> We'll return to the importance that Pound ascribed to Ford's vision of the crowd both at the time, and as he looked back later in his career, as the *Cantos* were under way.

But before we get there, I want to look at the kind of work Pound was producing in 1913, thinking about the various ways it might engage with Ford's declaration that 'what we are in now is the crowd'; how it might owe its success to a sort of fence-sitting strategy, simultaneously addressing a modern crowd world whilst imagining itself as having significance in a strange and ancient place, far from London's marketing bustle. By the end of the chapter, I'll work my way back to thinking about the *T. P.*'s readership,

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<sup>7</sup>*The Times*, 14 May, 1908, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>*The Crowd*, dir. King Vidor, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (1928).

<sup>9</sup>Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 89n.

and about the role of a crowd-art in forming their experience.

In 1912 and 1913, the popular literary magazine *T. P.'s Weekly* ran a series of short, autobiographical articles by some of the best selling writers of the day:

HOW THEY BEGAN. The series of autobiographies entitled 'How I Began,' has aroused so much interest among my readers that I have decided to continue it throughout the year. Already the following have contributed (and those waiting to appear are no less interesting):— A. St. John Adcock, William Archer, Marjorie Bowen, Hall Caine, W. H. Davies, George Edgar, Jeffrey Farnol, Charles Garvice, Frederic Harrison, Bart Kennedy, Neil Lyons, Oliver Onions, Stephen Phillips, Stephen Reynolds, Clarence Rook, Wilkinson Sherron, Edward Thomas, E. Temple Thurston, Katherine Tynan, Kate Douglas Wiggin, and Compton Mackenzie. It has occurred to me that many readers would like to collect the whole series, mount the articles on brown paper, and bind them into an album, calling it 'Authors I Have Read,' or some such title. They will not be published in book form, and some day when the less known are famous and the old favourites are gone, such a collection will be good to ponder over. Back numbers (so far) can be had for 1½ d. post free, from the manager.<sup>10</sup>

'The old favourites are gone'—who now would bother to read Charles Garvice, 'the most popular author of the moment', who sold more than seven million light romances between 1899 and 1920;<sup>11</sup> or Hall Caine, who could boast 'that as much money has

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<sup>10</sup>*T. P.'s Weekly* 21 (28 February, 1913), p. 263.

<sup>11</sup>'Jacob Tonson' [Arnold Bennett], 'Books and Persons', *New Age* 9 (15 June, 1911), p. 160; Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 32.



come to me. . . as ever came to anyone now living who followed the profession of the pen'; or Jeffrey Farnol, author of *The Broad Highway* (1910), 'the popular apotheosis of historical romance'?<sup>12</sup> These pasted-in people, cut off from the popular literary institutions which once gave them their significance, and from the network of readers to whom they were contemporaries and 'favourites', 'Authors I Have Read', seem irrelevant. The idea that some hobbyist might have fallen for T. P.'s sales ploy and tried to collect the whole series in a makeshift book seems mildly tragic, like the photograph album of a dead stranger. Attempting to invest scraps of ephemera with lasting personal value, the collector succeeds only in showing the dependence of value upon ephemeral audiences, upon fractured markets with fast turnarounds.

And yet there's more that can be said about these wastepaper remains of pre-war literary consumption, because the 'How I Began' series constitutes a small challenge to some versions of what literary modernism was supposed to have been: it presents one of the most discussed of modern poems in a surprisingly populist context. Thirty-two pages into 'Authors I Have Read' (assuming it's the full collection), sandwiched between Frank T. Bullen ('Novelist of the Sea, Author of "The Cruise of the Catchalot," &c.') and Bernard Capes (an author 'well suited to the stage of a tenth-rate music-hall, if there be one so low', displaying 'Board school wit and Board school manners at every turn'),<sup>14</sup> we'd find Ezra Pound's 'How I Began'. And at the end of the article, he rounds up with the first British publication of 'In a Station of the Metro'

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<sup>12</sup>Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A social history of the English novel 1875–1914* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989) p. 18; p. 354. For the impact of *The Broad Highway* see also Claude Cockburn, *Bestseller: The books that everyone read 1900–1939* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), pp. 93–107.

<sup>13</sup>*T. P.'s Weekly* 21 (30 May, 1913), p. 675.

<sup>14</sup>*T. P.'s Weekly* 21 (13 June, 1913), p. 739; unsigned rev. of *Jemmy Abercraw*, *New Age* 7 (27 October, 1910), p. 619; unsigned rev. of *Why did he do it?*, *New Age* 6, March Supplement (3 March 1910), pp. 6–7.



(less its title)—the poem had already appeared in the Chicago-based magazine, *Poetry*<sup>15</sup>—together with the famous account of the crowd-experience from which it arose:

For well over a year I have been trying to make a poem of a very beautiful thing that befell me in the Paris Underground. I got out of a train at, I think, La Concorde and in the jostle I saw a beautiful face, and then, turning suddenly, another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful face. All that day I tried to find words for what this made me feel. That night as I went home along the rue Raynouard I was still trying. I could get nothing but spots of colour. I remember thinking that if I had been a painter I might have started a wholly new school of painting. I tried to write the poem weeks afterwards in Italy, but found it useless. Then, only the other night, wondering how I should tell the adventure, it struck me that in Japan, where a work of art is not estimated by its acreage and where sixteen syllables are counted enough for a poem if you arrange and punctuate them properly, one might make a very little poem which would be translated as follows:—

“The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

“Petals on a wet, black bough.”<sup>16</sup>

The anecdote about how Pound came to write the poem (which he elaborated on in late 1914 in the *Fortnightly Review*)<sup>17</sup> has often been discussed; the implications of the venue where it first appeared for this ‘founding work’ have never been noticed.

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<sup>15</sup>‘Contemporanea’, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 2:1 (April 1913)

<sup>16</sup>‘How I Began—By Ezra Pound’, *T. P.’s Weekly* 21 (6 June 1913), p. 707.

<sup>17</sup>Reprinted in Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), pp. 86–89.



'If Imagism is to modernist poetry as cubism is to modernist painting, then Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is comparable to "Les demoiselles d'Avignon" as a founding work and icon.'<sup>18</sup> Picasso's painting, *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, had spent years sequestered and seen by only a handful of sympathetic artists, face to the wall or rolled up on the floor, in Picasso's studio; it later hung in an unobtrusive spot in the home of the collector, Jacques Doucet, occasionally spoken of but hardly seen until it was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in 1937.<sup>19</sup> It is, one might argue, iconographic primarily of the private nature of modernist art, divorced from the attentions of the public, the crowd. But here we have what DeKoven described as modernism's other 'founding work and icon', a poem about a crowd, placed before a huge audience.

*T. P.'s Weekly* reached half a million readers a week: the new working-class readership, created by the 1870 Education Act; clerks pursuing 'self-culture' ('practically every bank clerk', wrote one correspondent, read *T. P.'s*);<sup>20</sup> girls from the Association of Shorthand-writers and Typists.<sup>21</sup> It's been characterised as 'little more than a

<sup>18</sup>Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 188.

<sup>19</sup>See Judith Cousins and Hélène Seckel, 'Éléments pour une chronologie de l'histoire des Demoiselles d'Avignon', *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* 3, 2 vols. (Paris: Musée Picasso, 1988) 2:547–623 (trans. as 'Chronology of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907 to 1939', in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Studies in Modern Art 3, ed. William Rubin, Hélène Seckel and Judith Cousins (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 145–205). It had, though, been reproduced; once in *The Architectural Record* 5 (1910), p. 408, and then in *La Révolution Surréaliste* 4 (1925), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>For a discussion of the social composition of *T. P.'s Weekly's* readership, see Peter D. McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 97. For the correspondent, see 'T. P.'s Letter Box', *T. P.'s Weekly* 6 (3 March, 1905), p. 284.

<sup>21</sup>'Frances', 'Five O'Clock Tea Talk. The Typist on Typists', *T. P.'s Weekly* 2 (28 August, 1903), p. 408. The author of 'Five O'Clock Tea Talk' (effectively *T. P.'s* 'womens page') had been fairly vituperative about typists, but its evident from



pennyworth of rambling anecdotes about literature'; 'a more literary and instructive version of *Tit-Bits*',<sup>22</sup> the hugely popular 'snippet' paper with which Bloom, visiting his jakes near the beginning of *Ulysses*, 'wiped himself'.<sup>23</sup> It's clearly not the kind of magazine that one would normally locate anywhere near the foundations of Anglo-American modernism. It is no *Egoist* or *Little Review*, a loss-making enterprise, elite, experimental and exclusive; on the contrary, it's a part and parcel of the literary mass-market it promotes, offering an audience the pleasures of cheap, available print: Hall Caine, *The Broad Highway*, and the dignity of 'self-culture'.

But although Pound, in his 'How I Began' piece, has to think about how he'll relate his work to this literary mass market, he clearly isn't entering into the spirit of it. Something more complicated is going on: Pound imagines 'In a Station of the Metro' being sequestered far away in Japan, because 'there, or in some other, very old, very quiet civilisation, some one else might understand the significance'. He obsesses over money, over the marketing of his verse, reeling out what would become one of his favourite anecdotes, about how Elkin Mathews agreed to bear the expense for publishing his poems, and going on to describe how,

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subsequent letters pages they formed a significant fraction of her readership: see especially *T. P.'s Weekly* 2 (2 October, 1903), p. 570; (23 October, 1903), p. 666; and (November 20, 1903), p. 810. We shall return to the theme of typists in chapter 3, below.

<sup>22</sup>Keating, *Haunted Study*, p. 77; McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice*, p. 97. Arnold Bennett, however, thought that *T. P.'s* was of 'a slightly higher order of intelligence than the *Tit-Bits* class' (*How to Become an Author: A Practical Guide* [London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1903], p. 67), and by 1913, though it no longer published any fiction, the standard of articles was higher still.

<sup>23</sup>James Joyce, *Ulysses: the corrected text*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (London: Bodley Head, 1986), 4:537. Lawrence Rainey suggests that this incident 'epitomises the modernist contempt for popular culture': *Institutions of Modernism: Literary elites and public culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 2.



having written 'The Ballad of the Goodly Fere' (perhaps Pound's only unqualified popular success, and a poem which supposedly 'set the Thames on fire'<sup>24</sup>) he 'peddled the poem about in Fleet Street, for I began to realise that for the first time in my life I had written something that "everyone could understand" and I wanted it to go to the people.'<sup>25</sup>

Such Grub-Street tales were bread-and-butter to the 'How I Began' series, fitting in with the kind of late-Victorian and Edwardian ideas about writing as a profession which Peter Keating has described.<sup>26</sup> The series (and especially articles like Compton Mackenzie's and Oliver Onions's, working-class heroes who 'rose' to literary fame), would undoubtedly have fired the literary ambitions of *T. P.*'s readers, the aspiring writers who, as advertised in every issue, paid one shilling per thousand words proofread (or, in the case of poetry, sixpence for every twenty lines) for the magazine's 'literary help' service.<sup>27</sup> But Pound struggles to reconcile his hedging of the literary market with his far from practical, everyday view of creative forces. He ascribes to his poems a mysterious 'impulse', like a 'new and strange adventure'; 'I have come in touch with the tradition of the dead': such hints seem to prepare his readers for the powerful, strange and ancient qualities which he claims for his little Metro poem.

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<sup>24</sup>Ford Madox Ford, 'Ezra', *New York Herald Tribune Books*, 9 Jan. 1927, reprinted in Eric Homberger, *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 218. In another, more humorous version of the story, Ford suggested that 'The Ballad of the Goodly Fere' was Pound's first appearance in a periodical since 'the age of say two', when he'd published a poem with the refrain 'Cheer up, Dad!' in the *Butte Montana Herald* (a reference, perhaps, to the juvenile 'Ezra on the Strike'). Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999), p. 291.

<sup>25</sup>Pound, 'How I Began—By Ezra Pound', p. 707.

<sup>26</sup>Keating, *Haunted Study*, p. 31. See also Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 127.

<sup>27</sup>*T. P.'s Weekly* 21 (6 June, 1913), p. 734.



## APPARITIONS OF THE CROWD

### IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.<sup>28</sup>

Of all the tense, terse, metropolitan poems that Ezra Pound produced during 1913 and 1914—the poems which would eventually form the first part of his volume *Lustra* (1916)—‘In a Station of the Metro’ has stood out as a striking testament to the transformative power of the modernist art work. The spectral, shifting crowd, in which these disembodied faces appear (we should probably expect them to dissolve, too, as quickly as they appeared), is given, in what seems like a moment of aesthetic inspiration, a fixed form. It’s suddenly made to fit the ‘natural’, recognisably ‘poetic’ shape of a spring bough, and as if by magic, the contingencies and vaguely sinister underground infrastructures of modern city life seem to cohere in the form of a carefully-crafted lyrical object.

This apparent organic wholeness is achieved through considerable artifice. Pound has invented a wonderful new verbless language which is able to capture fleeting, mysterious relationships. The now-famous first printing of the poem, which carefully controlled the positioning of typographic signs on the page, intensifies (through what one influential scholar called its ‘extreme performativity’)<sup>29</sup> our sense of the bringing-into-relation of discrete poetic units:

The apparition    of these faces    in the crowd  
:  
Petals    on a wet, black    bough .<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*, revised edition, ed. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 111.

<sup>29</sup>Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, Princeton Studies in Culture / Power / History, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 155.

<sup>30</sup>‘In a Station of the Metro’, in ‘Contemporania’, *Poetry* 2 (April 1913), p. 12; reprinted in *Personæ*, p. 251.



Because it is built up from simple prepositional phrases—‘of the metro’, ‘of these faces’, ‘in the crowd’, ‘on a...bough’—which describe the precise relation of one thing to another, of station to metro, petals to bough, the poem suggests that other, seemingly nebulous things—a crowd-apparition, imaginary blossoms; ‘primary forms’ as Pound calls them<sup>31</sup>—could stand in a similarly precise ‘grammatical’ relationship. Each reader seems intuitively to discern some internal logic in this new language of ‘primary forms’; we’ve only to follow it and we shall have apprehended the ‘apparition’, we shall have got Pound’s ‘Metro-emotion’ fast-frozen. ‘In a Station of the Metro’ invites us to read the relation between crowd and bough not as something mysterious, to be questioned and puzzled over, but as something to be seized in an instant, terms boldly conjoined; by extension (a long shot, perhaps, to claim such portentousness for such a tiny poem), it suggests that we might completely apprehend the relationships between things out there in the world as though they were signs in one of these new artworks. The poem thus effects a change in the way that crowd-life can be seen and described: it asks us to imagine a world where the fleeting, vertiginous psychological states of modern mass life become miraculously transformed, replaced by an aesthetic condition in which things are made measurable and recordable, invested with a lasting value.

For such a tiny poem, ‘In a Station of the Metro’ raises lots of questions. My sketchy account, I know, leaves most of them unanswered, emphasising just those qualities which make ‘In a Station of the Metro’ seem to me an archetypally ‘modernist’ artwork. I’ve been very vague and mysterious about the ‘precise relationship’ that I say the poem seems to capture, and have ignored, for the time being, any other critical voices which might justify my claim that the poem ‘has stood out’ from others in *Lustra*. But

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<sup>31</sup>Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 88.



the poem's insistence that, by revolutionising the materials with which it works, it can transform the unaccountable 'apparition' of dissevered, crowding faces into something rooted and vital, seems to me to provide a way into a question which (as that sense of revolutionary possibility becomes a matter of literary history) has been increasingly central to our critical attempts to understand and re-evaluate 'cultural modernism'.

Namely, how does this transformation, effected by the modernist artwork, relate to the station-platform jostle itself, to the experiences which it affects to transform? Does 'In a Station of the Metro' suggest some affinity between new art and crowd life?; is its new way of seeing inherent to the new conditions of mental life which, in the fashionable pop-psychology of the day, found their apotheosis in the crowd? Or is it a *subjective* vision, occasioned and maybe even energized by a crowd, but lifted out of the everyday, appreciable only to the sensitive few who understand its special logic? Do these fluxile faces only achieve coherence in an autonomous realm of aesthetic experience—of liberation, in Pound's frequently quoted phrase, 'from time limits and space limits'?<sup>32</sup>

I want to bring together Ford's model of modernity-as-crowd with a reading of Pound's Metro poem—I think this will help to clear up these inconsistencies, and enable us to better understand the Metro poem's place in the development of a modern Anglo-American crowd-aesthetic, and the crowd-aesthetic's place in the development of the schools of Anglo-American poetry in which Pound took a central role.

#### BEFORE THE GREAT DIVIDE

Through the 1980s and 1990s, this line of questioning has been brought into tighter critical focus by Andreas Huyssen's distinc-

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<sup>32</sup>Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 4.



tion, in *After the Great Divide*, between 'classical modernism' and the 'historical avantgarde'.<sup>33</sup> Yes, argues Huyssen, there was a tradition in early twentieth-century art which embraced the revolutionary potential of urban, technological mass culture; which tried, and ultimately failed, to free art from its 'aestheticist ghetto' and to create 'at the interstices of high art and mass culture', an 'avantgarde art for the masses': this, he calls the 'historical avantgarde'.<sup>34</sup>

But the 'modernist' tradition, Huyssen argues, was 'more like a reaction formation' which sought to set up a *cordon sanitaire* against 'the spreading ooze of massification', against the 'haunting spectre' of the crowd. 'Modernism constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other'—and this repressed 'other' returned in images of the crowd as 'nature out of control', in the theories pedalled by *fin-de-siècle* scientists like Gustave Le Bon, who saw the crowd as an irrational, hysterical, all-devouring threat to the bourgeois order, in which the boundaries of the rational self are dissolved away.<sup>35</sup> The abstraction of modernist high art—the sense, in 'In a Station of the Metro', that Pound can call the irrational crowd to order, transforming it into an identifiably 'poetic' flower-image—would thus be less a 'liberation... from time limits and space limits', than a fortification against 'the encroachments... of modern mass culture,' a fear of 'the loss of identity... in the mass'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Post-modernism*, Language, Discourse, Society (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). This argument is most cogently summarised on vii; Huyssen is building on Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, Theory of History and Literature 4 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). According to Bürger's thesis, though, the 'other' which modernist art seals itself off from isn't mass society and mass culture, but 'the everyday praxis of life' in bourgeois society.

<sup>34</sup>Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 60.

<sup>35</sup>Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, vii, pp. 52–53.

<sup>36</sup>Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 163.



Such theoretical clarity, I think, is achieved at the expense of historical nuance. Huyssen admits that ‘there are areas of overlap between the tradition of the avant-garde and that of modernism (e.g., vorticism and Ezra Pound...).’<sup>37</sup> But a close look at the career of any one candidate for ‘modernism’ will reveal more complex and less consistent links than the ‘running feud with mass society and mass culture’ that Huyssen suggests: think of Eliot’s enthusiastic interest in music hall and jazz (he ‘would have loved *Cats*’, according to Frank Lentricchia—an opinion which David Chinitz, in his landmark study of the popular Eliot, almost goes along with: ‘he would have been only too happy to collaborate on the most popular Broadway musical of all time’),<sup>38</sup> or of *Kill that Fly*, the popular variety show ‘based on’ Wyndham Lewis’s paintings in the Cabaret Theatre Club, which were themselves ‘based on’ dances popularised in variety shows.<sup>39</sup> ‘Mass culture’, for the modernists, was not one monolithic formation.

This, for me, is the point about 1913: back before the First World War, the commodified sphere of leisure that we call ‘mass society and mass culture’ and other, more marvellous aspects of the mass, couldn’t be so easily lumped together: they represented competing theories of society, which were hotly debated in the very magazines where Pound published. One example: an article in a 1913 copy of the *New Age* (where Pound’s articles on the importance of ‘propaganda’ to an American Renaissance would shortly appear, and his series on London politics, that ‘continuous torrent process’, had just finished)<sup>40</sup> characterised mass civiliza-

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<sup>37</sup>*After the Great Divide*, p. 163.

<sup>38</sup>Frank Lentricchia, *Modernist Quartet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 280; David E. Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup>Lisa Tickner, ‘The Popular Culture of Kermesse: Lewis, Painting, and Performance, 1912–1913’, *Modernism/Modernity* 4:2 (1997), 67–120.

<sup>40</sup>‘America: Chances and Remedies... I’, *New Age* 13 (1 May, 1913), pp. 9–10; ‘Through Alien Eyes... IV’, *New Age* 12 (6 Feb, 1913), p. 324.



tion as 'log rolling commercialism, the bane of artists', pedalled by journalists and 'feuilletonistes' (and primarily by the *Daily Mail's* 'Mr. Hamilton Fyfe', the 'mob's 'model of a halfpenny ambassador, consolidating stupidity the world over') for a 'neutral class' of 'menials and tradesman' who demand the debased comforts of 'material assurance'.<sup>41</sup> So far, so familiar. But a few pages earlier, in the same magazine, Gustave Le Bon's 'Modern Aphorisms' offer a compellingly different reading of the mass, not as something material, a newish commercial institution of halfpenny scribblers and marketing menials, but as dynamic mental energy: a collective 'revolutionary soul', 'a mental structure built upon a long past' and guided by 'sensitive, mystic and collective elements' that are 'quite independent of reason'—conflicting 'psychological forces' whose 'material exteriorisation', like an ectoplasmic fist, will revolutionize the world.<sup>42</sup>

The kind of art that might be appropriate to a 'mass culture' would thus be very different, depending on which model one accepted: a public who responded only to 'material assurance' would have to be approached very differently to one which could be transfused with 'sensitive, mystic and collective elements'. Pre-war, then, a theoretically-inclined writer looking to engage the larger audience might possibly reject the 'serialized feuilleton novels, popular and family magazines, the stuff of lending libraries,

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<sup>41</sup>'Present Day Criticism', *New Age* 12 (13 March, 1913), pp. 454 and 453. Henry Hamilton Fyfe (as the biographer of that ultimate expression of mass mentality, Lord Northcliffe) would play the fall guy again in a much better known account of mass culture's dangers: F. R. Leavis's *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930), p. 9. (Note, too, that Hamilton Fyfe wrote a biography of the 'new journalist', T. P. O'Connor, who is an important figure later in this chapter.) For Fyfe's career, see Dennis Griffiths, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422–1992* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 256.

<sup>42</sup>Gustave Le Bon, 'Some Modern Aphorisms', trans. J. M. Kennedy, *New Age* 12 (13 March, 1913), p. 449.



fictional bestsellers and the like' (to use Huyssen's specimens)<sup>43</sup> which nowadays lie uncovered as exhibits from which to build an account of mass culture. Instead, they might enthusiastically embrace the psychological dark-matter of the irrational, atavistic 'crowd'.

Before the war (which provoked a batch of native publications on crowd psychology, whose indebtedness to continental psychologists like Le Bon seem to have largely passed nonspecialist reviewers by),<sup>44</sup> Le Bon was the best-known writer on crowds, and the securing of translation rights for his two sets of 'Aphorisms' (another lot had been published back in May 1912)<sup>45</sup> is typical of the *New Age's* ability to keep up with even the most unlikely (for a socialist British weekly) intellectual fashion. His *Psychology des foules* (1895) 'was immediately translated into fifteen foreign languages, has never been out of print, and is certainly one of the best selling scientific books of all time';<sup>46</sup> by the nineteen-tens, Le Bon's scientific conclusions were so widely diffused in social and political commentary that they'd become almost, in Patrick Brantlinger's words, 'intellectual kitsch'<sup>47</sup>. Le Bon ascribed to the

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<sup>43</sup>After the Great Divide, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup>See, for example, Leonard Woolf's review of Martin Conway's *The Crowd in Peace and War*, 'Miscellany: Crowds and their Leaders', *The New Statesman* 6, 29 January, 1916, pp. 398–399; unsigned review of *National Welfare and National Decay*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 December, 1921.

<sup>45</sup>Gustave Le Bon, 'Aphorisms on Politics, Law, and Faith', trans. J. M. Kennedy, *New Age* 11 (23 May, 1912), pp. 83–4. For Le Bon's celebrity, see Robert A. Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the Crisis of Democracy in the Third Republic* (London: Sage, 1975), e.g. p. 88.

<sup>46</sup>Robert Nye, 'Savage Crowds, Modernism, and Modern Politics', in Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds., *Prehistories of the Future: The primitivist project and the culture of modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 47. A useful summary of Le Bon's impact on psychologists, dictators, and political thinkers of the left and right can be found in Steven Reicher, "'The Crowd' century: Reconciling practical success with theoretical failure', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 35 (1996), 535–553.

<sup>47</sup>Patrick Brantlinger, 'Mass Media and Culture in *Fin-de-Siècle* Europe', in



crowd a 'mental unity': 'the psychological crowd is a provisional being formed of heterogenous elements which for a moment are combined'. And thus combined, its elements take on 'new characteristics,' so that its properties are 'quite different from those of the bodies that have served to form it.'<sup>48</sup>

If this sounds a little like the technique of 'In a Station of the Metro'—the way discrete elements are brought together into a formal whole, assuming 'new characteristics'—then such superficial resemblances can be developed a little further. 'The ideas suggested to crowds. . . present themselves in the guise of images,' Le Bon wrote, 'and are only accessible to the masses under this form. These imagelike ideas are not connected by any logical bond or analogy or succession, and may take each other's place like the slides of a magic-lantern which the operator withdraws from the groove in which they were placed one above the other.' Pound as magic-lanternist, flipping from a crowd-image to a bough-image as the diapositives, 'placed one above the other' slip from the cartridge of his poem-projector: he seems to have conceived imagism in rather similar terms. 'The "one image poem"', Pound had written, discussing 'In a Station of the Metro', 'is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another.' Such image-presentations possess a power beyond the merely 'cinematographical' presentation, though; they are said to direct 'a certain fluid force against circumstance,' and should be understood 'as *conceiving* instead of merely reflecting'<sup>49</sup>. The Metro poem reconfigures the world, much as Le Bon's images, which are said to

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Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter, *Fin de Siècle and its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 109.

<sup>48</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, trans. (unaccredited) as *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (1896; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982), pp. 5–6.

<sup>49</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 47; Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 89. The italics are Pound's own. Pound first began discussing this 'fluid force' in his 'Psychology and Troubadours' essay, *Quest 4* (Oct. 1912), p. 44.



leave 'strong impressions' in the crowd's unconscious mind, do.<sup>50</sup>

Michael Tratner, in *Modernism and Mass Politics*, holds the same passage from Le Bon up to 'In a Station of the Metro', commenting that 'many of the most distinctive modernist effects seem to be described here: the juxtaposing, overlapping and rapid shifting of disparate images, the overlay of one image on top of another, the rapid shifting of images [sic]. Conversely it is not an accident that the most famous imagist poem... is about a crowd.' But once one has noted the similarities, where does one go? Images... imagelike ideas... Pound's 'doctrine of the image'...: one is in danger of thinking like a crowd, of 'reasoning' through 'the association of dissimilar things possessing a merely apparent connection between each other, and the immediate generalisation of particular cases.' It's one thing to note an apparent similarity between Pound's 'images' and Le Bon's; it's quite another to go on and say, as Tratner does, that the Imagists were out to reforge the crowd-soul—that modernist poets wanted 'to operate in the medium of the unconscious crowd mind itself', impressing it, through 'contradictory flows of images', with a new 'cultural unity', a 'restored cultural center'<sup>51</sup>.

Pound's 'images' tended to be found a long way from the 'unconscious crowd mind itself'; nor did the cliquey, specialist publishing ventures that he mainly associated with in 1913 do much to promote cultural unity (or when they did, when *Poetry's* editor, Harriet Monroe, used a Whitman quote about 'great audiences' on the masthead, Pound protested loudly, distinguishing the 'few intelligent spirits' from the 'rabble... aimless and drifting')<sup>52</sup>. *Poetry*, the Chicago magazine where 'In a Station of the Metro' first appeared that April, is typical of the little magazines where mod-

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<sup>50</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 55–6.

<sup>51</sup>Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 29–30; Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 52; *Modernism and Mass Politics*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>52</sup>Pound, 'The Audience', *Poetry* 5 (October 1914), p. 30.



ernist poems were usually seen first, by a small handful of readers. Paid subscriptions for volumes one and two, 1912–13, were 1,030 ('fit audience though few' was Harriet Monroe's typical comment), and while a few of these made it to London, they were mostly going to writers in Pound's clique<sup>53</sup>. A few months later, when it appeared in London's *New Freewoman*, its readership was even tinier: in August 1913, the guaranteed circulation was just 266 copies per issue (of which 24 went to America), and sales of individual copies amounted to about 120 per issue.<sup>54</sup> Even when it crops up in *T. P.'s Weekly*, not quite presented as a finished poem, there's no suggestion that Pound sees himself as a crowd-mastering orator; the poem is merely let fall, in the hopes that 'in some... quiet civilisation, some one else might understand the significance.'

The crowd-energies are all *inside* the poem. 'In a Station of the Metro' doesn't attempt to impose order on a 'real' crowd; it presents an image of a crowd in order to arrive, through a formal practice that suggests the mental processes of crowd-minds, at an idea of *aesthetic* unity apprehended in shifting disorder. It's an experiment in evoking the same unconscious, irrational power, the tearing down of boundaries of perception, and the fusing together of disparate elements in a new whole, that were suggested by crowd-theory, and using them to drive a new form of poetic presentation. As Robert Nye, the foremost historian of crowd theory has shown, modernist advocates of a 'regeneration', that would revitalise the culture, valued accounts of the 'crowd mind' for their acknowledgement of 'both the manic energy of crowds and the boundless, eternally renewable source of their power.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ellen Williams, *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance: The first ten years of Poetry, 1912–22* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 84, p. 88, p. 78.

<sup>54</sup>Jane Lidderdale and Mary Nicholson, *Dear Miss Weaver: Harriet Shaw Weaver 1876–1961* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 69.

<sup>55</sup>Robert Nye, 'Savage Crowds, Modernism, and Modern Politics', in Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds., *Prehistories of the Future: The primitivist project and the culture of modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 48.



The source of their power, the scientific accounts argued, is located in their spines: there, we've a kind of primitive mind which, when alone, we keep in check. It carries an 'unconscious substratum' made up of the 'innumerable common characteristics handed down from generation to generation, which constitute the genius of a race',<sup>56</sup> and, in a crowd, this nervous unconscious commandeers our bodies, driving us to behave in savagely new, deeply primitive ways:

[A] crowd. . . is guided almost exclusively by unconscious motives. Its acts are far more under the influence of the spinal cord than of the brain. In this respect the crowd is closely akin to quite primitive beings. . . . A crowd is at the mercy of all external exciting causes, and reflects their incessant variations. It is the slave of the impulses which it receives.<sup>57</sup>

And these impulses, the irrational powers which flow through the crowd—'mysterious forces which the ancients denominated destiny, nature or providence'—turn out to be nothing less than 'the voices of the dead'. The images, sensations, and abstract forms which accumulate in the spinal cord are made up of ancestral memories, throwbacks to our primitive origins which nevertheless carry the whole 'power of the race'.<sup>58</sup>

Gerald Stanley Lee, a New England pastor who was widely seen as another prophet of 'the Crowd-Man, or Hero, or Saviour', restated these ideas rather more poetically in his book, *Crowds*, in 1913.<sup>59</sup> *Crowds* made a big splash: Pound's friend Allen Upward very strongly affirmed the book's worth in a review essay

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<sup>56</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, viii; p. 70.

<sup>59</sup>Gregory W. Bush, *Lord of Attention: Gerald Stanley Lee & the Crowd Metaphor in Industrializing America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), p. 126; Gerald Stanley Lee, *Crowds: A study of the genius of democracy and of the fears, desires, and expectations of the people* (London: Methuen, 1913), p. 587. The



in the *New Freewoman*—a rare honour in a journal which didn't usually do review essays.<sup>60</sup> The book topped the American 'best-seller' lists well into 1914, and was cheerfully plugged in the penny weeklies.<sup>61</sup> According to Lee,

Every man has, according to the scientists, a place in the small of his back which might be called, roughly, perhaps, the soul of his body. All the little streets of the senses or avenues of knowledge, the spiritual conduits through which he lives in this world, meet in this mighty little brain in the small of a man's back.

About nine hundred millions of his grandfathers apparently make their head-quarters in this little place in the small of his back.

It is in this one little modest unnoticed place that he is supposed to keep his race-consciousness, his subconscious memory of a whole human race, and it is here that the desires and delights and labours of years of other people are turned off and on in him<sup>62</sup>.

For Lee, then, this 'place in the small of his back' is a metaphorical Rome; it is the main concourse of the body where all roads meet, and millions of ancestors are huddled.

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American edition was called *Crowds: A moving-picture of democracy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Paige, 1913), which perhaps better accounts for Lee's Méliès-like prose-trickery.

<sup>60</sup>Allen Upward, 'Gerald Stanley Lee', *New Freewoman* 1 (15 July, 1913), pp. 50–51. Allen Upward was a friend of Lee's, too; in the *New York Times*, Lee had fulsomely praised *The New Word*, Upward's book on the Nobel Prize and 'idealism', saying 'Shakespeare might have done it': quoted in advertisement, *New Age* 7 (27 October, 1910), p. 624.

<sup>61</sup>'The "Best Sellers"', *Little Review* 1:2 (April 1914), p. 56, and 1:3 (May, 1914), p. 55; 'John O'London' [Wilfred Whitten], 'Crowds and Crowd Men. Mr Gerald Stanley Lee's Scheme of Salvation for Democracy', *T. P.'s Weekly* 22 (4 July, 1913), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup>Lee, *Crowds*, p. 270.



Pound had, in 1912, proclaimed his concern with the relationship between poetry and 'the universe of flowing force,' suggesting that the 'current' of a poetic energy affected the 'flowing' of minds who came into contact with it.<sup>63</sup> The unconscious impulses that flow from spine to spine in the crowded city, seem to offer a model for imagining how a poet with such interests might evoke memories repositied in the 'race-consciousness'; how they might link the contingencies of everyday experience with a deeper, more rooted experience charged with its own intrinsic ancestral power. Through the irrational flux of images, 'the apparition' which clouds out the nebulous crowd, one can arrive at a common, stable bedrock of tradition, 'the desires and delights and labours of years of other people.' At the end of a sequence of louche, modern little metropolitan epigrams and lyrics that Pound published in the New York 'little magazine', *Others*, in late 1915 ('a naughty little group', *Others'* editor, Kreymbourg called it)<sup>64</sup>—poems which, like 'In a Station of the Metro', attempt to 'fix' the transient, modern faces of girls, giving them a rooted, poetic, visionary life—a 'Coda' draws attention to the dead shadows of the race mind that play over the face in the crowd:

O my songs,  
 Why do you look so eagerly and so curiously  
 into people's faces,  
 Will you find your lost dead among them?<sup>65</sup>

'Shop Girl', which preceded the 'Coda', had been full of lost

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<sup>63</sup>'Psychology and Troubadours', *Quest* 4 (October 1912); reprinted in *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Peter Owen, 1952), pp. 87–100.

<sup>64</sup>Alfred Kreymborg, *Troubadour, An autobiography* (New York: Liveright, 1925), p. 235; p. 237. The sequence comprised 'The Tea Shop', 'Phyllidula', 'The Patterns', 'Shop Girl', 'Another Man's Wife' and a 'Coda'; in *Lustra*, where it was published in 1916, and in *Personæ* where it appears today (p. 106), the 'Coda' concludes a slightly different grouping, following 'Ladies', 'Phyllidula' and 'The Patterns'.

<sup>65</sup>Pound, 'Coda', *Others* 1 (November 1915), p. 85.



dead, 'Swinburne's women, / And the Shepherdess meeting with Guido, / And the harlots of Baudelaire'<sup>66</sup>. Other girls flash across the mind, brought up by mysterious voices, in this instant of intensely evocative connection with a bird-like shop girl. 'And they talk of Swinburne's women... ', runs the verse, suddenly shifting direction, caught like the swallow in a momentarily turn. Who talks of Swinburne's women? Could 'they' be connected to Le Bon's 'voices of the dead', to the unconscious store of images which has been passed down 'from generation to generation'? (Strangely, Swinburne makes another mysterious appearance in *Lustra's* phantasmagoric London: 'Why does the horse-faced lady of just the unmentionable age / walk down Longacre reciting Swinburne to herself, inaudibly?').

This is pretty much the question that is being asked in 'Coda'. Can the intense kind of experimental 'looking' that these songs engage in, 'eager', 'curious', and yet implicitly anxious (what if they *can't* find their lost dead?), really gather up a cultural past, a tradition—their 'lost dead'—in one intense, visionary moment, outside everyday time and inside an eternal 'collective mind'? Crowd theory offered a suggestion that they could. Images disrupt history's rational, cause-and-effect sequence: 'formed by suggestion and contagion, they are', according to Le Bon's theory of the image, 'always momentary; they crop up and disappear as rapidly on occasion as the sandhills formed by wind on the sea-coast'.<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup>'Shop Girl', *Others* 1, p. 85; reprinted in *Personæ*, p. 116, where the comma after 'Guido' becomes a full stop, signalling the essential difference between Swinburne's and Cavalcanti's bird-girls ('Itylus', and the Lesbian birds and Sea-Swallows from the first series of Poems and Ballads; the pastorella in 'Ballata IX' who, hearing the sudden birdsong, wanted a lover), and the more materialistic 'harlots of Baudelaire', with whom we come crashing down to earth, back to the tea-shop world where everything's for sale. Pounds first attempt at translating Cavalcanti's 'Ballata IX' can be found in the *New Age* 10 (14 December, 1912), p. 156.

<sup>67</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 150.



marvellous psychopathological terrain from which they're formed, though, exists outside time, buried figuratively 'under' the everyday city world, beneath the conscious mind, down 'In a Station of the Metro'. 'Swinburne's women, / And the Shepherdess meeting with Guido, / And the harlots of Baudelaire' are thrown up in that order, confounding our chronological expectations, all equal in that great, tiny mind in the small of our backs, free 'from time limits and space limits'<sup>68</sup>.

## FISSURES AND PINNACLES: THE EDWARDIAN SOCIAL SUBLIME

1909: class society in Britain was at its zenith, its stratifications more clearly marked than ever before<sup>69</sup>. Rich and poor were no longer seen as Disraeli had seen them, as 'two nations'—that did not go far enough: 'to-day, even national distinctions seem less estranging than the fissure between the summit and basis of society.'<sup>70</sup> Punditry was rife; did this fissure augur some cataclysm?—was there a rational, material explanation, or was society cracking up under pressure from the primitive, irrational urges of democracy? Those who had looked into it, C. F. G. Masterman (the liberal politician and journalist, and eventual head of the British War Propaganda Bureau) among them, had spoken of the 'people of the abyss'<sup>71</sup>. If you were up early enough, and made the perilous trip

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<sup>68</sup>Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>69</sup>Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 27

<sup>70</sup>C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen, 1909), p. 111.

<sup>71</sup>Peter Keating, ed., *Into Unknown England 1866–1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (Glasgow: Fontana-Collins, 1976) presents a representative sample of these 'abyss' writings, including C. F. G. Masterman, *From the Abyss* (1902), Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (1903), and Mary Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss* (1906).



down from summit to base, you would catch the whiff of sulphur that surrounded them: the crowd, which at any moment might boil over.

You may see it in the dim morning of every London day, struggling from the outskirts of the city into tram-cars and trains which are dragging it to its centres of labour: numberless shabby figures hurrying over the bridges or pouring out of the exits of central railway stations. You may discern in places the very pavements torn apart, and tunnels burrowed into the bowels of the earth, so that the astonished visitor from afar beholds a perpetual stream of people emerging from the middle of the street, seemingly manufactured in some laboratory below.<sup>72</sup>

In part because of their distance from the daytime London of C. F. G. Masterman's affluent friends, and in part because of their inherent darkness, the dim, infernal, shades of the crowd appear very obscure. The eyes of Masterman's 'astonished visitor from afar' (accustomed to the bright light at the summit) can't focus; everything is seen as though in a smudged impressionist canvas: LeBon's agglomeration of minds finds its visual equivalent in the nebulous blur of the crowded street.

It is in the city Crowd, where the traits of individual distinction have become merged in the aggregate, and the impression (from a distance) is of little white blobs of faces borne upon little black twisted or misshapen bodies, that the scorn of the philosopher for the mob, the cynic for humanity, becomes for the first time intelligible.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>*The Condition of England*, p. 119–20.

<sup>73</sup>*The Condition of England*, p. 121.



Masterman, though, sees through the scornful cynicism of crowd psychologists. These new forms of city life are vaster than the eye can compass, but if you move up close and focus on the detail, 'you will find Humanity in its unchangeable and abiding existence'. Looking hard into one of these 'little white blobs of faces', one realises that each one masks a tiny, fragile individual, capable of 'resistance, courage, aspiration', and worthy, even, of mawkish poetical sentiment: 'a "child's white face to kiss at night," a "woman's smile by candle light"'.<sup>74</sup>

Thus encouraged, Masterman suggests that this resistance, this courage and aspiration—even the sympathetic lyricism of women and children's faces—might one day pass into the aggregate body of the crowd, transforming the subterranean serpent into a 'dignified and noble thing'<sup>74</sup>. He anticipates the development of a new communal politics and communal intellect that, one day, might deliver London's underclass from its present abyss; a time will come when the entire mass of 'white blobs' he'd seen emerging from the bowels of the earth, and their 'little black twisted or misshapen bodies', shall be brought into a sharper focus.

And the spirit of a collective mind, 'the spirit of the hive,' residing in the various industrial cities, may find expression and a conscious revelation of itself, in something more beautiful and also more intelligible than the chaotic squalor of uniformly mean streets and buildings which make up the centres of industrial England.<sup>75</sup>

This revelation of something beautiful and intelligible, apprehended in the crowds boughlike 'black twisted or misshapen bodies', which bear 'little white blobs of faces', is precisely what is being attempted in Pound's *Metro* poem. The idea of the crowd as a chaotic pattern of black and white anarchy, its visual anarchy standing as a signal of its political threat, had been used, too,

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<sup>74</sup>*The Condition of England*, p. 140.

<sup>75</sup>*Condition of England*, p. 141.



by Pound's friend, Ford Madox Hueffer. Hueffer, describing the terrible dissolution of the London mass in one of his own state-of-the-nation books, *The Soul of London* (1905), had spoken of an 'apparently indissoluble muddle of grey wheel traffic' banded above by the frames of 'grimy upper windows through which appear white faces', and below by the 'black knot of faces leaning a little over the kerbstone'.<sup>76</sup>

#### FREEDOM FROM THE LIMITS OF TIME AND SPACE

I want to return, now, to the distinction, which I began by drawing, between materialistic ideas of 'mass-culture' which focussed on the commercialism of popular books and magazines, and psychologically based, irrationalist theories of 'the crowd.' Psychological theories which saw modernity as 'the era of crowds',<sup>77</sup> freed artists, not only from time and space limits, from the tyranny of *things*. In a reified, tin-pan-alley culture of mass-produced, mass-consumed commodities—the system of 'products which are tailored for consumption by masses', that Adorno branded the 'culture industry'; the kitsch perversions of folk art that Clement Greenberg supposed provided 'vicarious experience for the insensitive'<sup>78</sup>—artists became wage-slaves. 'As the factory owner wants one man to make screws and one man to make wheels and each

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<sup>76</sup>Ford Madox Ford, *The Soul of London: A survey of a modern city*, ed. Alan G. Hill (London: Everyman-J. M. Dent, 1995), p. 16.

<sup>77</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, xv.

<sup>78</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, 'Culture Industry Reconsidered', *New German Critique* 6 (1975), p. 12; Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in *Art and Culture: Critical essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 15. For Huyssen's reading of Adorno and Greenberg as paradigms of the 'ideology of modernism' as regards mass-culture, see *After the Great Divide*, pp. 55–58. For another account which conflates crowd-theory and Frankfurt-school cultural theory as aspects of the same 'negative' account of mass culture, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), see esp. chaps. 5 and 7.



man in his employ to do some one mechanical thing that he can do almost without expenditure of thought,' Pound had written, 'so the magazine producer wants one man to provide one element, let us say one sort of story, and another articles on Italian cities and above all nothing personal.'<sup>79</sup> His work becomes a commodity; connected to a market which he can't control, it instead controls him, robbing him of his personality: 'the instruments of labour', as Marx argued, 'employ the workman'.<sup>80</sup>

In 1913, Pound showed himself willing to risk this loss of personality, reprinting a poem—'Portrait d'une Femme', a poem about the loss of personality in a world of things—in the 'frivolous' American magazine, the *Smart Set*.<sup>81</sup> This excursion into the world of magazines seems quite different from the kind of tentative hovering on the edge of the marketplace, toying with creative forces which could occlude the day-to-day material world, which we saw in the *T. P.'s Weekly* 'How I Began' article. Here, he throws himself full square into the materialistic spirit of the mass-magazine.

*Smart Set* was at that time considered 'the sort of periodical one reads while waiting for the doctor or dentist.'<sup>82</sup> The magazine's new editor, Willard Huntingdon Wright, was trying to find a more upmarket niche; to monopolize London's stock of modern writing, which he could import (or, in Pound's case, reimport) to America, and sell as a chic prestige product. Wright (better known today under his pseudonym S. S. Van Dine, author of the preposterous Philo Vance detective stories) visited England in June, 'determined to buy up the best stuff he could find'—'all the best stuff then on the London market'.<sup>83</sup> 'He rather expected to find Mr. Thomas

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<sup>79</sup>Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose 1909–1965* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 111. This passage has been discussed by Frank Lentricchia, 'Lyric in the Culture of Capitalism', *American Literary History* 1 (1989), pp. 63–88.

<sup>80</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital : a critique of political economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth : Penguin in association with New Left Review, 1990), p. 423.

<sup>81</sup>*Smart Set* 41:3 (November 1913), p. 88.

<sup>82</sup>E. A. B., 'American Notes', *New Age* 14 (27 November, 1913), p. 114.

<sup>83</sup>Raoul Root [Ezra Pound], 'Three Views of H. L. Mencken', *Little Review* 4:9



Hardy sitting behind a ticket window passing out manuscripts at so much per thousand', Pound later recalled.<sup>84</sup> He got, among other things, Pound's 'Portrait d'une Femme':

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,  
London has swept about you this score years  
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:  
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,  
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares  
of price.  
Great minds have sought you—lacking some-  
one else.<sup>85</sup>

The lady's salon (she is nameless, unidentified), where she is sought by 'great minds', has been washed over by images of maritime trade, by the fluid market in rare exotica and bric-a-brac on which London was built. The 'ideas' and 'spars of knowledge' brought by her visitors become marketable *things*, to be understood contractually, 'left...in fee', or objects of commerce, 'wares of price'; their bearers 'great minds' become mercantile vessels, 'bright ships.' Relationships between people turn out to be commercial ('And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay. / You are a person of some interest, one comes to you / And takes strange gain away); and a word like 'interest' blurs the boundaries between human emotions and material accumulation. The poem's title suggests Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, and James's critique of aestheticism's 'reifying vision' (Osbert tends to see everyone as a potential 'figure in his collection of choice objects', and his relation with Madame Merle, to use an extreme example is

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(January 1918), p. 11; For the date, see Ellen Williams, *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance: The first ten years of Poetry, 1912–22* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 47.

<sup>84</sup>Ezra Pound, 'Small Magazines', *English Journal* 19 (November 1930), p. 693.

<sup>85</sup>*Smart Set* 41:3 (November 1913), p. 88. See also *Personae*, p. 57.



fetishised in the form of a cracked cup)<sup>86</sup> provides a background to Pound's own criticisms, which will reach their fullest development in his 'attempt to condense the James novel', *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (where Mauberley's coldly objectifying vision is just as apt to turn people into things as is the commodity culture he rails against). By the end of 'Portrait d'une Femme', it's clear that the poem's subject is reduced to nothing more than a drifting convergence of junk and weed. Even her material remains don't seem, in any meaningful way, to be 'quite her own': they form a 'whole and all' among themselves, meaningless and complete.

... and yet For all this sea-hoard of deciduous  
things,  
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter  
stuff:  
In the slow float of differing light and deep,  
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,  
Nothing that's quite your own.  
Yet this is you.

The poem has been read as a retrograde step in Pound's career, falling back on the traditional blank-verse forms he'd been moving away from in *Personae* (1909). The *New Age's* reviewer seems to have found it hilarious that the self-professed 'interpreter of contemporary French verse' (Pound's controversial 'Approach to Paris' series had just finished its run in *The New Age*) and essayer of 'Unanism, paroxysm, cliqueism and all these wonderful discoveries', should, after his Frenchified title, 'descend... immediately to

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<sup>86</sup>For a discussion of these issues, see Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and commodity culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 146–166. For 'reifying vision' see p. 153, where Osbert is also discussed. For the cracked cup, see p. 161; Freedman links this passage with George Du Maurier's extraordinary satires on aesthetic commodity fetishism (see also p. 149).



common English' and to such traditional images<sup>87</sup>. But 'magazine technique', Pound had written, 'consists of conforming to certain formulae', and the 'Portrait's familiar form got him '25 cents more per line', the huge *Smart Set* audience of 75,000, and (with 'The Ballad of the Goodly Fere', Pound's most emphatically 'popular' poem, which he'd 'hawked... about Fleet Street,' having realized 'that for the first time in my life I had written something that "everyone could understand," and I wanted it to go to the people') a provisional place in Edward Marsh's blockbuster *Georgian Poetry* anthology.<sup>88</sup>

Against 'Portrait d'une Femme's vision of reified human effort, it's traditionally been argued that Pound tendered another class of woman, 'the goddess, radiant with a *virtú* which organizes the world about her'.<sup>89</sup> By 1913, Pound was experimenting with a persona who, the midst of the commercial city, walking round the crowded city streets—latching on to passers by, loudly enumerating their symptomatic qualities and conditions, giving out marks of civil censure, subtly sketching them in a few fluid lines—is apt at any moment to find himself transported into a natural world of petals and boughs, coming face to face with such a goddess. By abandoning the world of commodities, and the limits of time and space, was there not a danger that a poetry organised by the *virtú* of radiant goddesses would transport its supporters out of the world of actual crowds and underground railways, out of the modern world altogether?

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<sup>87</sup>Donald Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), p. 56; 'E. A. B.', 'American Notes', p. 114.

<sup>88</sup>Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 111; *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 56; Pound, 'How I Began', *T. P.'s Weekly* 21 (6 June, 1913), p. 707; Christopher Hassall, *Edward Marsh, Patron of the Arts: A biography* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1959), p. 193.

<sup>89</sup>Hugh Witemeyer, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and renewal, 1908–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 111.



In her recent account of the propaganda activities with which Pound ushered in his new 'imagist' style, Janet Lyon argues that he 'held to a premodern ideal of artistic aristocracy', writing from and for a 'cloistered coterie, bound by aristocratic codes and largely unconcerned with the contemporary world'.<sup>90</sup> James Longenbach makes similar claims: cloaking the crowd 'within the resonant obscurity of the static Image', 'In a Station of the Metro' becomes, not a crowd-poem, but an example of 'a kind of poetry that excluded the "mob"'. An agent of the pseudo-courtly 'secret society of modernism', Pound wrote 'unpopular poems designed to nourish an aristocratic "state of mind"; the commoners, having no other choice, he reasoned, would follow.'<sup>91</sup>

These feudalist readings of Pound might link the 'organic' image of society that 'In a Station of the Metro' seems briefly to reveal—the crowd as a tree's massy limb, with a few faces as its 'petals'—with the image of 'organic' wholeness supposedly re-

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<sup>90</sup>Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 124. Lyon's idea of an 'aristocratic modernism' is explicitly linked to a line of argument developed by Perry Anderson and Raymond Williams in the 1980s. Williams suggested that, as capitalism encroached into their workshops and a 'cultural market' emerged, artists, who didn't occupy any fixed class position, could identify with the anti-bourgeois grievances of both worker (whose labour has been reduced to a traded commodity) and aristocrat (whose values are outraged by the marketeer's vulgarity); some (like Pound, Lyons asserts) fixed on the latter position, and their anti-bourgeois complaints 'did not have to be made very often to extend to a wholesale condemnation of the "mass" that was beyond all authentic artists' ('The Politics of the Avant-Garde', in *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth-century Europe*, ed. Edward Timms and Peter Collier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 5–6. The line I quoted is also quoted by Lyon, p. 136). These arguments, though, leave a third term between socialism and contempt unspoken: the possibility that modernism could learn to negotiate commodity culture; that Pound's exclusive style was a strategy to drum up publicity for his new imagist school.

<sup>91</sup>James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 202, p. 51, xiii, p. 95.



flected in the stratifications of medieval society: peasants at the root and the nobility as flower. 'Organic' though, is a slippery concept: as Jonathan Rose has shown, many eminent Edwardians, working in 'settlements' in London's East End, looked for a new organic integrity in the dark heart of the modern crowd.<sup>92</sup> Pound's own view of the 'organic' human stuff out of which his poems came was odder and more complex than a nostalgia for Old England.

Humanity is the rich effluvium, it is the waste and the manure and the soil, and from it grows the tree of the arts. As the plant germ seizes upon the noble particles of the earth, upon the light seeking and the intrepid, so does the artist seize upon those souls which do not fear transfusion and transmutation, which dare become the body of the god.<sup>93</sup>

Yes, this is a damning characterization of the human mass: at best a resource, a nourishing ductile clay, some of which can be consumed in the artists work, transmuted as he enchants his golem. But the 'noble particles' that enter into the germ, making the aesthetic God's body in a biologically perverse communion of rising sap and seed, seem to represent, not an aloof, aristocratic state of mind, but the image of the crowd-master, ploughing his audience to unleash their latent fertilising energy. It's the kind of communion with 'the unconscious genius of crowds' which, for Le Bon, is evident in the conscious works of 'great men' and in the marvellous creation of language itself:

What, for instance, can be more complicated, more logical, more marvellous than a language? Yet whence

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<sup>92</sup>For the tangled history of ideas that coagulates around the word 'organic', see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press-Harper Collins, 1988), pp. 227-9. Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament 1895-1919* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986) pp. 55-57.

<sup>93</sup>Ezra Pound, 'The Audience', *Poetry* V (Oct. 1914), p. 29.



can this admirably organised production have arisen ,  
except it be the outcome of the unconscious genius of  
crowds?.... Even with respect to the ideas of great men  
are we certain that they are exclusively the offspring of  
their brains? No doubt such ideas are always created  
by solitary minds, but is it not the genius of crowds that  
has furnished the thousands of grains of dust forming  
the soil in which they have sprung up?<sup>94</sup>

This commerce between the 'tree of the arts' and 'the soil in  
which they have sprung up', between the demos and the 'great  
men' who can channel them, is made clearer in Pound's poem  
for Whitman, 'A Pact'. In the series of 'Contemporania' where  
'In a Station of the Metro' was first published, 'A Pact' directly  
precedes the Metro poem: the final two steps in a trajectory that  
moves tentatively, as the sequence progresses, from the high crags  
of egoism, down into the crowd. In the first poem, 'Tenzone',  
Pound had asserted his autonomy, making free love in 'hidden  
recesses', far from the procuring, white-slaver critics:

I beg you, my friendly critics,  
Do not set about to procure me an audience.  
I mate with my free kind upon the crags;  
the hidden recesses  
Have heard the echo of my heels<sup>95</sup>.

Immediately, though, he about-turns in a mock-indignant palin-  
ode:

O my fellow sufferers, songs of my youth,

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<sup>94</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, ix.

<sup>95</sup>'Tenzone', in 'Contemporania', *Poetry* 2 (April 1913), p. 1; the poem can also  
be found in *Personæ*, p. 83. The numbers in brackets in this section represent  
the page number of the poetry 'Contemporania', followed by the page number  
in *Personæ*.



A lot of asses praise you because you are "vir-  
ile,"  
We, you, I! We are "Red Bloods"! ('The Con-  
dolence', 2/83)

Perish the thought!—but, obsessing about the critics, the poet is unable to concentrate; he's quite open about it, foreshortening 'The Condolence' by saying 'Let us leave this matter, my songs, / and return to that which concerns us'.

The recurrent concern of the 'Contemporania' poems turns out to be the poet's attempt to apprehend a sense of organic whole-ness in the fleeting insubstantial images which surround him—a stream and a shadow' ('Ortus', 4/86); an elusive tree-girl whose 'arms are as a young sapling under the bark' ('Dance Figure', 5/92: note the recurrent tree image). 'Ortus' finds the poet steeling himself, to fuse the incomplete 'bound and entwined' elements, birthing them in a new formal 'whole': 'To give these elements a name and a centre!' ('Ortus', 4/85-6). But no: he seems unable, yet, to find an appropriate tone; a way to 'rejuvenate things' ('Salutation the Second', 7/87) without recourse to 'quaint devices' (6/87). He reels between rarified, overly-aestheticised visions, which exclude the modern world they're supposed to rejuvenate, and shrill, direct roll-calls and rants—all those paroxysms and manifestoes that begin, 'Go, my songs...', and 'Come, my songs...', expending an awful lot of energy on grabbing my attention, and then, in a way I find rather embarrassing, just keeping on grabbing me and not seeming to 'go' anywhere ('Salutation', 'Salutation the Second', 'Pax Saturni', and 'Commission'). As Richard Aldington said of them, 'Mr Pound's reiterated "Instructions" to his personified "songs" rather lose point when the songs somehow fail to get written.'<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>[Richard Aldington], 'An American Poet', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 January, 1928, rept. in John Gross, ed., *The Modern Movement*, TLS Companion (London: Harvill-HarperCollins, 1992), p. 17.



And then, in 'A Pact' and 'In a Station of the Metro', they do get written. The 'pact' with Walt Whitman—while self consciously playing on Pound's anxiety about his 'half savage' (*Personæ*, 185) American roots—acknowledges, allusively, in a tone which veers between the grudging and the solemn, the utility of Whitman's dynamic, democratic vision of an organic society:

It was you who broke the new wood,  
Now is the time for carving.  
We have one sap and one root—  
Let there be commerce between us. (12/90)

Again, the tree image. For Whitman, in a poem like 'Song of the Broad-Axe', the felling of trees had been a way of figuring human creativity, 'the power of my own race, the newest largest race'; the axe looses 'forms' and 'fluid utterances', and from the trees, the logs, are projected the dynamic, organic shapes of the American nation:

The axe leaps!  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey. . .  
. . . . .  
The shapes arise! Shapes of the using of axes  
anyhow, and the users and all that neighbors them,  
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the  
Penobscot or Kennebec,  
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains  
or by the little lakes, or dwellings in  
Columbia. . .

By the song's end, the shapes, the natural forces that flow from the broad-axe and from the solid forest, have become a medium



of total cosmic intercourse, flowing through and bodying both the 'turbulent manly cities' and their natural base, the earth:

The main shapes arise!  
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
Shapes of the friends and home givers of the  
whole earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the  
whole earth.<sup>97</sup>

Though Pound's view of the democratic 'sap' and 'root' turns out to be much darker than Whitman's, his rejection of Whitman's expansiveness evincing a desire to constrain the crowd, to 'carve' them into an ascertainable shape, there is an obvious connection between Whitman's 'main shapes' and 'the universe of fluid force' that Pound had started to explore in his 'Psychology and Troubadours' essay.<sup>98</sup> At last, Whitman's 'sap', broken from the tree of the body social, provides Pound with the medium, 'the manure and the soil', which will nourish his vision of natural order, 'bring her soul to birth.'

#### THE CROWD AND 'THE BUSINESS OF POETRY'

'Now-a-days, the craze is for social theory or crowd psychology,' wrote Pound, in 1913, distancing himself from all that 'fine and intoxicating rhetoric'. 'I, personally,' he added, a little later in

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<sup>97</sup>Walt Whitman, 'Song of the Broad-Axe', *Leaves of Grass: Reader's edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (London: University of London Press, 1965), pp. 192-193; p. 195.

<sup>98</sup>'Psychology and Troubadours', *Quest* 4 (October 1912), pp. 37-53. See esp pp. 44-5: 'We have about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germanial universe of wood alive, of stone alive. . . . [And some minds] affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth.'



the year, 'may prefer the theory of dominant cell, a slightly Nietzschean biology, to any collectivist theories whatsoever'.<sup>99</sup> He was trying to get a theoretical foothold on this crowd-craze; to work out his approach. Other poets, futurists and the representatives of other advanced schools, were getting noticed for their experimental approaches to the crowd. The foregoing discussion has only sketched out some of the tentative, experimental approaches that Pound's poetry made to the crowd; now I want to try and give my argument a little more substance by mapping out a wider context, giving a sense of what other crowd-artists were doing in 1913, and how Pound related to them.

'The business of poetry', Ford Madox Hueffer had argued, in the same issue of *Poetry* where Pound noted the crowd-craze, is to render the reality and pathos of 'modern life': 'What we are in, that which is all around us, is the Crowd—the Crowd blindly looking for joy, or for that most pathetic of all things, the good time.'<sup>100</sup> The crowd was being pushed from both sides of the Atlantic: Gerald Stanley Lee (whose description of the brains in the small of our backs I discussed above) argued that the next phase of urbanisation would be the creation (by individuals) of a crowd-art: 'The only way to make the thirty-one-story block beautiful (the crowd expressed by the crowd) is to make the crowd beautiful. The most artistic, the only artistic, thing the world can do next is to make the crowd beautiful.'

By the end of 1912, Lawrence Rainey has shown, Pound's anxiety about the remarkable 'outbreak of publicity' surrounding the London visits of Marinetti—who, in his 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' had pledged to 'sing the great crowds agitated by

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<sup>99</sup>Ezra Pound, review of Jules Romains, *Odes et Prières*, *Poetry* 2 (August 1913), p. 188; 'The Approach to Paris... III', *New Age* 13 (18 September, 1913), p. 608.

<sup>100</sup>Ford Madox Hueffer, 'Impressionism—Some Speculations', *Poetry* 2 (August 1913), p. 183, pp. 181–2. The essay also appeared, very slightly modified, as 'The Poet's Eye', *New Freewoman* 1 (1 September, 1913), pp. 107–110.



work, pleasure or revolt'<sup>101</sup>—had forced him 'to come to terms with the role of new institutions of mass culture and assess their bearings on the place of art in a cultural marketplace'<sup>102</sup>. As Rainey notes, Paige's edition of Pound's *Selected Letters* includes two letters that refer to the Italian Futurist by name, 'the first of which is presented without the sentence which mentions Marinetti, and the second is given with Marinetti's name disfigured into "Menetti".' Both of these references occur during discussions of the American poet, Vachel Lindsay, who Pound believed to be 'of the race of Marinetti': 'I don't say he copies [Marinetti]; but he is with him, and his work is futurist'<sup>103</sup>. Like Marinetti, Vachel Lindsay's 'futurism' had suggested how powerful (and how popular) an art might be which could harness the energies of the crowd. 'A poet such as Lindsay', James Longenbach suggests, 'haunted Pound.'<sup>104</sup>

Right at the beginning of the year, *Poetry* had published one of the most celebrated and lively experiments in harnessing crowd-energies to drive a poem: 'General William Booth Enters into Heaven'. Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army and an important 'social explorer' of London's underworld, had died in August 1912. A hundred thousand mourners had paid their respects when his body lay in state at the Clapton Congress Hall; an 'immense crowd' overflowed into the precincts of Olympia for his memorial service; his equally 'immense funeral procession' seemed to the *Times's* correspondent like a 'religious procession 500 years ago'. Booth, when alive, had seen himself as the Henry Morton Stan-

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<sup>101</sup>Much of the manifesto had been translated by F. S. Flint in his startlingly successful 'Contemporary French Poetry' issue of *Poetry Review* 8 (1912); for this phrase, see p. 411. Pound said of Flint's number, 'Everybody had to get it; it was the first large article on contemporary stuff.'

<sup>102</sup>Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 29; p. 38.

<sup>103</sup>*Institutions of Modernism*, p. 12 and p. 177n9; D. D. Paige, ed., *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 49.

<sup>104</sup>Longenbach, *Stone Cottage*, p. 136.



ley of the great primaeval crowd, heading into its dark interior in search of souls, discovering 'within a stone's throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest'; he approached the horror, though, in the same 'spirit of scientific investigation' that Le Bon would take to the savage crowd, hoping thereby to discover a 'comprehensive method of reaching and saving the perishing crowds'<sup>105</sup>.

Vachel Lindsay's poem, 'General William Booth Enters into Heaven', is an attempt to amplify this great crowd event. It isn't interested in saving the crowds from their crowdness; it evokes all of their primitive, untameable, grotesque power, for the sheer, visceral pleasure of it. 'Minds... passion ridden', 'soul-powers frail', 'Vermin-eaten saints': the Salvationist's confusion of crowd-ecstasy and redemptive religion lends Lindsay's phrases a wonderfully compelling incongruence. The poem's crashing rhythms are amplified by imaginary percussion, hypnotising its reader, Le Bon fashion, into an ecstatic state of crowd-communion—a communion that's given an extra ironic force by the confused religious proclamations:

(To be sung to the tune of the blood of the lamb with indicated instruments.)

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.  
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?  
The saints smiled gravely and they said, 'He's  
come.'  
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?  
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,  
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,

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<sup>105</sup>General Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: Salvation Army, 1890), p. 12, p. 17 [n.p. :2?].



Drabs from the alleyways and drug-fiends pale—

Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail!  
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,  
Unwashed legions with the ways of death—  
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?<sup>106</sup>

Lindsay improvises on the rhythms of Elisha Albright Hoffman's evangelistic hymn, that sounds like a hard-sell soap ad, a cleansing-cream commercial, but which links directly back to primitive rites of blood sacrifice (to the cleansing 'blood of the sin offering' in Leviticus 4) and forward to the 'great multitude, which no man could number', that the apocalypse would loose ('These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb):<sup>107</sup>

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?<sup>108</sup>

Eventually, Lindsay effects a transformation of the crowd into something organic and healthy, executing a miraculous deliverance of them from their degenerate condition:

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!  
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl;  
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,  
Rulers of empires and of forests green!

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<sup>106</sup>Vachel Lindsay, 'General William Booth Enters into Heaven', *Poetry* 1 (January 1913), p. 101.

<sup>107</sup>Revelation 7:9, 7:14.

<sup>108</sup>Elisha A. Hoffman, *Spiritual Songs for Gospel Meetings and the Sunday School* (Cleveland, Ohio: Barker & Smellie, 1878)



## INTO THE ABYSS

Since the *succès de scandale* of W. T. Stead's schlocky minotaur-hunt, *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* (1885), journeys into the mythical underbelly of the city had become strikingly common. London's social geography had changed since then: there were places even in the city's bright commercial heart where the pavements had been breached, and, from holes in the street, a new, homogenous army of white-collar clerks and typewriter girls would emerge daily. The chthonic horrors of the primitive, underground world were often ironised even as they were exploited: works like C. F. G. Masterman's *From the Abyss* (1902), Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903), and Mary Higgs' *Glimpses into the Abyss* (1906) all draw attention to the abysmal metaphor by which the gap between richest and poorest in Edwardian society was dissolved into a misty, mysterious chasm. Their authors, though, had crossed this chasm, in disguise or hansom carriages, and sent back clear reports of the real material conditions of the East-End working class.

While the dramatic social crises of early twentieth-century London were being mythologised, the Cambridge anthropologists were beginning to trace ancient myths back to their social bases. In *Themis: A study of the social origins of Greek religion* (1912), Jane Harrison saw the hero's descent into Hades as a ritual action, undertaken to ensure 'the permanent life of the group.' From cultic representations of Greek kings and culture-heroes, in which they'd frequently sprout serpents' tails, Harrison deduced that they were originally revered because, having died and joined 'the throng of vague ancestors' in the earth, they had absorbed the mask of the 'Eniautos-Daimon', the demon of the ritual year—a Frazerian fertility god who re-emerges yearly, bringing back as flowers and fruit the buried seed; guaranteeing next years crop, and thus the survival of the collective. But the fertility myths of Frazer are read



in the light of Durkheim's belief that myth and ritual reflect, rather than determine, the sentiments of a society. Harrison's 'all important point' is 'the general principle that social structure and the collective consciousness which utters itself in social structure, underlie all religion.'<sup>109</sup>

It was against this background that Pound published 'In a Station of the Metro'. The line of criticism, developed by Guy Davenport and Hugh Kenner, and recently revived by Marianne DeKoven,<sup>110</sup> sees Pound's image as presenting the hero's mythic descent into the underworld, where the dead spring goddess is hibernating. The poem is 'like a face Odysseus sees in Hades, reminding him of the springtime above in an image combining tree and girl: *petals on a wet, black bough*.'<sup>111</sup> It contrasts the world of machines to a vegetal order: 'flowers seen as if against a natural gleam, the bough's wetness gleaming on its darkness, in this place where wheels turn and nothing grows'; the Metro traveller's encounter is set in relation 'to that of Koré in the underworld.'<sup>112</sup>

Pound's mythical underworld, encountered on a visit to Paris, seems to relate to the modern mythologies of primitive, autochthonous crowds that haunted the reformers and classicists of Edwardian England. Why were Pound's readers, like the those of London's social explorers, so willing to accept the overlaying of a fabulous world of ancient and ghostly apparitions on top of the big-city life of the 1910s? And what happens if one applies the 'general prin-

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<sup>109</sup>Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: a study in the social origins of Greek religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), xiv, pp. 315–16, xviii. See also, Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), ch. 7.

<sup>110</sup>Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, history, modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 188–89.

<sup>111</sup>Guy Davenport, 'Persephone's Ezra', in *New Approaches to Ezra Pound: A coordinated investigation of Pound's poetry and ideas*, ed. Eva Hesse (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 152.

<sup>112</sup>Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 185, p. 186.



ciple that social structure and the collective consciousness which utters itself in social structure, underlie all religion', to this particular complex of mysterious ideas?

Pound's 'apparition of these faces in the crowd', London's 'people of the abyss' and Harrison's idea of a mysterious 'collective consciousness', dragging its culture-heroes down into the earth's belly, all emanate from a structure which, in the words of Franco Moretti, 'no longer seems endowed with an intrinsic rationality; it is no longer an organic system of relations capable of holding all its elements together and of giving them a *function* and a *meaning*.'<sup>113</sup> Masterman's voyage into the East-End abyss joins Le Bon's 'law of the mental unity of crowds' in a complex of modern mythology which serves to mask the dysfunctionality of England's pre-war class society. With the Labour Crises and the Lords Crisis that preceded the war, London's nineteenth-century social order came close to being torn apart by class antagonisms within. But rather than address the rational causes of this great rupture, the middle classes, fearful of socialism and of the new unions, fell deeper into their enchantment: they literally demonised the discontented masses, inventing fantastically irrational collective-mind impulses to explain the crowd's assertion of (in E. P. Thompson's analysis) a traditional moral economy. Myth, as T. S. Eliot would put it much later, in his article '*Ulysses, Order and Myth*',<sup>114</sup> became 'a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.'

## THE FAILED ORPHEUS

Pound, then, had glimpsed in the Metro-Crowd a sense of freedom from time limits and space limits

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<sup>113</sup>Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 183.

<sup>114</sup>T. S. Eliot, '*Ulysses, Order and Myth*', *Dial* 75 (November 1923), 480–83.



To close this chapter, I want to look at a strange journey that Pound made, after *Lustra* had been published, and he'd begun publishing drafts of *The Cantos*, in search of 'The Great Heart of the People', the great mass who, Pound thought, were 'unacquainted with energy', unexpressed as yet in art. 'Far from the Expensive Veal Cutlet'<sup>115</sup> was one of the 'Studies in Contemporary Mentality' that he published in the *New Age* in 1917 and 1918, a series of what are really media-studies articles in which, every week or so, he bought a respectable journal or a popular magazine, and close-reads it, adverts and all, in an attempt to understand the group-mentality of its readership.

The 'Studies' represent a refinement of Pound's original idea, articulated in a 1914 essay on Wyndham Lewis, that newspapers and magazines represent mass 'states of mind': 'The really vigorous mind might erect "The Times," which is of no importance, into a symbol of the state of mind which "The Times" represents, which is a loathsome state of mind, a malebolge of obtuseness.'<sup>116</sup> These ideas find their poetic expression in 'Salutation the Second' and 'Salutation the Third' ('Let us deride the smugness of "The Times": / Guffaw!'), two of Pound's most disliked early works. They rest on his misreading of Lewis's alternating magnetic field (the subject of my second chapter), which serially repulses him from and drawn him toward the energies of mass-communication. Pound sees Lewis as occupying a high-ground that opposes unanimism: 'Unanimism would counsel me to regard "The Hibbert" as

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<sup>115</sup>Ezra Pound, 'Studies in Mentality... VII. Far From the Expensive Veal Cutlet', *New Age* 21 (27 Sept. 1917) 464-66.

<sup>116</sup>'Wyndham Lewis', *Egoist* 1 (15 June 1914), p. 234. 'Malebolge' is an interesting word. Referring to the rock-bound trenches in the eighth circle of Dante's hell, the citations in the *OED* reveal that it was commonly used by journalists in the late nineteenth century as a metaphor for the brick-bound misery of the modern city, e.g. quot. 1894: 'The channels that feed this devouring malebolge are the newspapers and the telegraph offices.'



a personality or "un dieu"<sup>117</sup>, he wrote; the Vorticist, on the other hand, sets mediocre magazines up as his 'mass and opposition', and he is the god, who damns them to the malebolge, ravaging them mercilessly in his 'struggle of driving the shaft of intelligence into the dull mass of mankind.'<sup>118</sup>

While these earlier convictions had led him to crucify the *Times* with a violence that seemed out of measure, 'Far From the Expensive Veal Cutlet', like his engagement with the readers of *T. P.'s Weekly*, shows him in a more ambiguously sympathetic pursuit of the popular readership. He isn't interested in the Galsworthian classes, 'the slightly pathetic "aristocracy," some of whose "photos" appear in the illustrated Press', nor in the 'hog-class, depicted by Belloc', nor the 'followers and companions of Mr Shaw'. He has heard rumours of a magazine called the *Quiver*, which is supposed to express the secret heart of the underground mass, and he's thus going in search of the millions 'beyond the scope of Conan Doyle, or Hall Caine, millions indifferent to Mr. Wells' views upon God; millions unexpressed in the pages of Bennet, and even in the pages of Jacobs'.

His search parodies the opening of Jack London's *People of the Abyss*. London's order that his cabby drive 'to the East-End' is replaced by Pound's random bus journey through London's wild East to the border-country of Clapton. Seeing a sign that says 'LEA BRIDGE', Pound dismounts.

Here, beneath the rain stretched northward a desolate, flat and more or less Dutch landscape. Below the west side of the bridge was a yard and dock for regenerating canal boats. It was not unlike a Venetian *squero*.

Hereabouts, he decides, the *unanime* of the people must be hiding:

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<sup>117</sup>Ezra Pound, 'Studies in Contemporary Mentality. I—"THE HIBBERT."', *New Age* 21 (16 Aug. 1917), p. 348.

<sup>118</sup>'Wyndham Lewis', *Egoist* 1 (15 June 1914), p. 234.



There must be, in all this waste of low dung-coloured brick, 'the people' undependable, irrational, a quicksand upon which nothing can build, and which engulfs everything that settles into it; docile, apathetic, de-energised, or, rather, unacquainted with energy, simply The Quicksand. About them we are ignorant...

Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. The heart of darkness, it seems, is here so dark that it doesn't even allow us a glimpse of 'the people'. Perhaps they are hiding somewhere; it doesn't really matter because we won't learn anything from seeing them anyway. The descent into the underworld, unlike that in the Metro poem, offers no glimpse of the blossoms of spring; neither life nor love are gained from the descent. We remain ignorant, and the people remain correspondingly mudlike and worthless. Even the guardians of the portal are absurd: 'The bridge was largely surmounted by a policeman. He decided that my wife was innocent, and warned me in a glooming and ominous silence, with a sort of projected taciturnity of the eye, that I was to commit no foul play in that neighbourhood.' Pound's conclusion is glib and deflating: 'Certain social gulfs are unbridgeable.' The story is, like Stephen Dedalus's 'Parable of the Plums', the meaningless fable of a failed journey (Pound's underworld replacing the ascent described by Dedalus) to understand the newest configurations of the modern city.

Rather than finding beauty in the crowd as we heard Ford and Pound suggesting at this chapter's outset, it seems we have arrived at another model of the crowd: The Quicksand, utterly obscure, 'about them we are ignorant' because to face them is to be swallowed up.

This is the other pole of *Lustra*: there are the poems that find life in the mechanistic city, and there are the those that find exhaustion and extinction in the ravenous undead quicksand:



... round about there is a rabble  
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the  
very poor  
They shall inherit the earth.<sup>119</sup>

'The Garden' represents Pound at his most denigrating: the woman, the symbol of rarefied beauty ('Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall'), is also an exhausted symbol. Worn out stock, a degenerate, she carries within her 'the end of breeding.' She is clearly a high-status person, but carries the ambiguous disease of cultural exhaustion: 'dying piece-meal / of a sort of emotional anaemia'. The poem is pregnant with the language of biologised exhaustion.

The 'Era of Crowds' is dawning: it is the rabble who 'shall inherit the earth' (the biblical reference is unusual, even this early in Pound's career; the cliché, not the image, is adequate for this rabble), the 'unkillable infants of the very poor.'

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<sup>119</sup>*Personae*, p. 85.



## CHAPTER 2

# Blast: Crowd Master and Crowd Medium

### BANK HOLIDAY 1914

The newspapers had brought the maffickers onto the streets back in 1900, and as news spread of the ultimatum delivered by the British government to Germany on 4 August 1914, a new crowd gathered in London. The journalists revelled in it. Trafalgar Square to Parliament Square was a 'solid mass of people.' The plinth of the Nelson Column, the windows of the Government offices, and even the gilded splendour of the new Victoria Memorial 'served as grandstands for the demonstrators'; white marble was 'black with people.' As Big Ben struck midnight, and the new war began, 'a vast cheer burst out and echoed and re-echoed for nearly 20 minutes.'<sup>1</sup>

Far away, in a Berwickshire country house, Wyndham Lewis had been recuperating. He'd had a venereal infection; Mary Borden Turner, American millionairess, had taken him in. She was having a house-party, an exclusive affair, and Ford Madox Ford, Violet Hunt and E.M. Forster had been invited.<sup>2</sup> 'We sat on the

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<sup>1</sup>*The Times*, 5 August 1914, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>See Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, rev. edn. (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun, 1982), pp. 56–59; Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp.



lawns in the sunlight and people read aloud,' remembered Ford, '—which I like very much.' Ford read from his contribution to *Blast*, *The Saddest Story*, which would eventually become *The Good Soldier*, and Mary Borden read from the serialization of the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>3</sup> As dark and historical crowds gather, Lewis and his companions enjoy "the calm before the storm": 'a charmed occasion, a last, magical Edwardian pause before the crash of the war.'<sup>4</sup>

Removed from the life of London's gathering crowds, these 'writers on holiday' symbolise a more general removal of art from mass-life—or a myth of removal?—which has obsessed recent critics of modernism. Wyndham Lewis's case has been particularly controversial: at one extreme, when skim-read by John Carey, he emerges as a self-deluding, Schicklgruberish madman, whose fear of women led to an obsession with 'his own personal selection of hates, which for him characterized democratic society.'<sup>5</sup> Revisionists, however, have seen Lewis's art as trafficking 'between high culture and popular entertainment'; as 'a phenomenon in the public world of newspapers, cabaret, decor and fancy dress.'<sup>6</sup> His prose heralds a new 'satire-collage'—a form which in some way 'worked to meet the challenge' of the new technological and consumer culture.<sup>7</sup> At stake is the characterization of 'modernism' it-

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72–73; Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), I, 466 & n.; Arthur Mizener, *The Saddest Story: A biography of Ford Madox Ford* (London: The Bodley Head, 1972), pp. 248–49 & n.; *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*, ed. Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank, 2 vols. (London: Collins, 1983–1985), I, 210–211

<sup>3</sup>Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999), p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Mizener, *The Saddest Story*, p. 248.

<sup>5</sup>John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and prejudice among the literary intelligentsia, 1830–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp. 184–5, p. 189.

<sup>6</sup>Lisa Tickner, 'The Popular Culture of *Kermesse*: Lewis, Painting and Performance, 1912–1913,' *Modernism/Modernity* 4:2 (1997), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Languages of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 73–75, p.



self. Is it a monolithic, antidemocratic institution, or can modernist art and popular culture (as Jeffrey Weiss suggests) 'be appreciated as part of a single train of thought'?<sup>8</sup> Does it sit reading in the garden, or can it also function out in the street?

An influential way of approaching this question of a 'great divide' between mass culture and 'high' culture, has been to draw a distinction between 'modernist' practice—which seeks to preserve the autonomy of art, emphasizing the formal qualities of the artwork, and spurning the inferior mass-culture—and the avant-garde, which is art's self-criticism, attacking its institutions and reintegrating it with the activities of life.<sup>9</sup> Lewis, according to Andreas Huyssen, falls on the modernist side:

The powerful masculinist mystique which is explicit in modernists such as... Wyndham Lewis... has to be somehow related to the persistent gendering of mass culture as feminine and inferior—even if, as a result, the heroism of the moderns won't look quite so heroic any more. The autonomy of the modernist art work, after all, is always the result of a resistance, [and] an abstention...—resistance to the seductive lure of mass culture, [and] abstention from the pleasure of trying to please a larger audience...<sup>10</sup>

Certainly, in the texts which I shall be focussing on, mass culture is feminine; the man in the crowd experiences a sensation of

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<sup>8</sup>Jeffrey Weiss, *The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and avant-gardism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), xvii.

<sup>9</sup>See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, *Theory of History and Literature* 4, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 47–54, and Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism*, *Language, Discourse, Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 7–8.

<sup>10</sup>*After the Great Divide*, p. 55.



'marriage,' losing his independence.<sup>11</sup> And the eponymous hero of Lewis's first novel, *Tarr*, seems obsessed with this 'autonomy of the modernist art work,' preferring 'the *artist* to be free, and the crowd not to be "artists"'; he argues that 'life is art's rival and vice versa'—ideas which inform the aesthetic of his painting, which he describes as 'ascetic rather than sensuous, and divorced from immediate life.'<sup>12</sup>

But these long lectures on Art, Life and the Crowd, that Lewis's characters are often so punctilious about delivering, don't necessarily have to be privileged as 'the idea' behind the work. For a start, Tarr is very drunk, or highly emotional, when most of the speechifying occurs; more significantly, the nihilistic ambiguities of the narrative, and baroque complexities of the language undermine the claims of Tarr's straightforward 'explaining.' The reader's understanding of Kriesler's motivations, for example, is likely to be much richer (although perhaps more confused) than Tarr's drunken analysis of him as a man who wanted 'to get out of Art back into Life again,' interesting though it is.<sup>13</sup>

A personal 'theory of the crowd' can easily be delineated from Lewis's essays, and from some of the essayistic things that his characters say: it's been done several times, most recently by Paul Edwards.<sup>14</sup> In the short play, 'The Ideal Giant,' John Porter Kemp (following Le Bon's 'law of the mental unity of crowds,' which states that individuals in a crowd situation form a 'collective mind,' a 'single being')<sup>15</sup> argues that 'a hundred men is a giant'—and that, like a giant, the crowd is 'always rather lymphatic and in-

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<sup>11</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, rev. edn. (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun, 1982), p. 81.

<sup>12</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1996), p. 234, p. 298, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup>*Tarr*, p. 302.

<sup>14</sup>Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2000), pp. 175–6, 290–93.

<sup>15</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 2.



clined to be weak intellectually.<sup>16</sup> The Artist, however—along with the heroic, revolutionary crowd—is an ‘Ideal Giant or Many.’ He incorporates the ‘assaults,’ the energies or voices of Mass Life into his work, while maintaining his Egoistic integrity: ‘Art is never at its best without the assaults of Egotism and of Life.’ In *Blast*, Lewis makes a similar appeal to the group-mind; the artist draws on it, but doesn’t necessarily become a part of it: ‘we need the unconsciousness of humanity—their stupidity, animalism, and dreams’.<sup>17</sup> Even Tarr concedes that in ‘the Latin countries’ (although not in England and Germany), ‘the best things of the earth are in everybody’s mouth and nerves. *The artist has to go and find them in the crowd.*’<sup>18</sup>

But just following these abstract, polemical imperatives won’t lead very far. Ideas about what Art ‘should’ do can become tedious: the relations between Art, Life and the Crowd are, I believe, best demonstrated in the textures of Lewis’s writing itself. I shall attempt, in reading Lewis’s , to demonstrate what his art takes from the Crowd, and how it channels the ‘unconsciousness of humanity.’

### THE ‘CROWD-MASTER’ TEXTS

Paul Peppis has convincingly argued that we should read the War Number of *Blast* in the context of contemporary patriotic discourse, bringing out the extent to which its perceived failings—its lack of punch when compared to the first issue—are due to Lewis and his contributors’ attempts to support the war effort. Lewis’s contribution, he argues, should be

understood as a work that elucidates the conflicted responses of Lewis and his comrades to the huge crowds

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<sup>16</sup>Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Ideal Giant,’ *Little Review* VI,1 (1918), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Wyndham Lewis, ed., *Blast* 1 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1997), [7]. Hereafter referred to in the text as *B1*.

<sup>18</sup>*Tarr*, p. 234. Lewis’s emphasis.



that rallied to support the British cause in late July and early August 1914, and the attendant claims of wartime patriotism: fictionalizing Vorticism's initial response to the stirrings of war, the story stages a stylistic and thematic competition between mass patriotism and avant-garde critique, corporate action and intellectual elitism, conformity to state narratives and formal experiment.

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His analysis is cogent, but I feel that he accepts too easily the distinction that has always been drawn between the two issues of *Blast*: the first, overly-boisterous avant-garde issue, with its boisterous typography, and the second, less formally interesting issue.

In the following pages, I want to examine the 'crowd' elements of 'The Crowd Master' while paying close attention to its formal literary qualities—its attention to printed matter, to presentation—in an attempt to show how the crowd might be approached as a *formal* rather than a straightforwardly *social* entity.

'*The Crowd Master*', published in the *Blast* War Number in late July, 1915, a year after the visit to Berwickshire, was to have been the first part of a long story; *Blast* 3 never materialised, so it is left hanging with the unfulfilled promise of 'further parts.'<sup>20</sup> It begins with a threatening, headline-style depiction of the London war-crowd, of July 1914, as 'it serpentine every night... all over the town, in tropic degustation of news,' while the evening press bangs out the 'ULTIMATUM!' (B2,94). Meanwhile, Thomas Blenner is staying in Scotland with friends, recovering after a fall from a horse. He follows the international situation in the popular newspapers; as they begin to sell out, 'Blenner felt the need of the great Crowd' (B2,95). He takes a train to London, study-

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<sup>19</sup>"Surrounded by a Multitude of Other Blasts": Vorticism and the Great War.' *Modernism/modernity* 4:2 (1997): p. 47.

<sup>20</sup>Wyndham Lewis, ed., *Blast* 2 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1993), p. 102. Hereafter referred to in the text as B2



ing the faces and characters of naval reservists who've received their mobilisation orders. In London, Blenner recognises a man in the crowd: Brown Bryan Multum—his surname marks him out as somebody who belongs in the multitude. Later, at home, looking at himself in the mirror, Blenner is reminded of Multum, who, it gradually becomes clear, is an American writer, author of an intellectual self-help book and 'ingenious tirade against hair' called 'THE CROWD MASTER' (outsized, upper-case type features extensively in 'The Crowd Master', as it does elsewhere in *Blast*; popular-press typography, as we shall see, is a vital resource in Lewis's attempt to transcribe the crowd mind). Blenner remembers reading Multum's book, and his first meeting with the author in a railway carriage.

In 1937, Lewis revisited the *Blast* period in his autobiography, *Blasting and Bombardiering*. After describing the visit to Berwickshire—Ford speculating about whether there would be a war, then going off to play golf; reading 'the first yard-high newspaper headlines, announcing the first ULTIMATUM'<sup>21</sup>—Lewis suddenly announces,

I will hand over the controls to Cantleman. For a chapter or two I will abandon my narrative in the first person singular. You shall see these things as I saw them, yes, but out of the eyes of a mask marked 'Cantleman'. When he stops speaking (which will be after the declaration of war, in London) I shall take up the narrative again.<sup>22</sup>

Cantleman reads the newspapers, and, yearning for the crowd, travels down to London, pretty much as Blenner had before him. The threatening descriptions of the War-Crowds from the beginning of the *Blast* story, making serpentine, necrophile and aquatic

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<sup>21</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 65.



analogies, come later in the *Blasting and Bombardiering* version: they are presented as Cantleman's first impressions of London. Once he has arrived, we are suddenly told that 'Cantleman's crowd-experiments began at once'.<sup>23</sup> And the rest of the section is taken up with a description of these 'crowd-experiments': Cantleman becomes a medium, attempting to persuade the crowd to enter him, and to speak through him, assiduously taking ridiculous, scientific notes. The experiments culminate on the plinth of Nelson's Column, the focus of British Crowd-life in times of war, when Cantleman achieves a vision of Nelson's mistress, Lady Hamilton, in 'tight fitted bathing drawers,' and with 'scented limbs'.<sup>24</sup>

Lewis claims that Cantleman was his 'colleague of "Blast"'; his account of the London crowd has supposedly been 'dug up' from the *Blast* War Number, registering 'with surprising sharpness first hand impressions of the opening stages of a great war'.<sup>25</sup> Lewis lies: Cantleman *didn't* appear in *Blast*—but how many of his readers in 1937 would have had a copy to hand, to check against?

A man with the same name appeared in the story 'Cantleman's Spring Mate' (first published in the *Little Review* in 1917, and suppressed for alleged obscenity, it was later included in the revised edition of *Blasting and Bombardiering*).<sup>26</sup> The Cantleman of the War-Crowds sections of *Blasting and Bombardiering*, though, seems to be a conflation of Blenner and Multum: he first turns up in the manuscript revision of the *Blast* story, known as 'Cantelman Crowd-Master' (his name is spelt inconsistently as either 'Cantelman' or 'Cantleman').

These texts are so important to my argument below that I have been compelled to prepare a reading text, included as an appendix

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<sup>23</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 63–64.

<sup>26</sup>Wyndham Lewis, 'Cantelman's Spring Mate,' *Little Review* IV,6 (1917), 8–14; note the variant spelling of 'Cantelman.' For suppression see 'Judicial Opinion,' *Little Review* 4:8 (1917), 46–9; *Blasting and Bombardiering*, pp. 304–311.



at the end of my thesis. They are important, I would argue, not only to my thesis—they give us the clearest view available of the crowd art that was conceived, experimented with, and eventually abandoned in early twentieth-century London.

On first reading the *Blast* story, shortly after rereading *Blasting and Bombardiering*, I found myself recognising and skipping over large sections, which seemed barely to have been reworked. The two texts, in their overall shapes, seem similar enough. Yet the significant changes that Lewis did make—the conflation of Blenner and Multum as Cantleman (which, obviously, necessitates the removal of the long flashback where Blenner and Multum meet) and the transposition of the opening crowd-scenes to the end section, where they lead into a new section describing Cantleman's 'crowd-experiments'—transform the text completely. The *Blast* story, I will argue, represents the opening chapter of an avant-garde 'novel of education,' where a young man, Blenner (a twentieth-century Julien Sorel or Eugene Rastignac), goes out into the world, learning how to read it, how to negotiate it. The crowd, in this context, is a readable, understandable, negotiable phenomenon: 'mastery,' or at least a kind of understanding of the crowd, is attainable. But, as I will argue in chapter three below, the 'Crowd-Master' sections of *Blasting and Bombardiering* are a completely different kind of text—they are satirical: they appropriate, exaggerate and eventually undermine the science of crowd behaviour. Cantleman can't 'master' anything; all he can do is jump between scientific discourses, whose bottoms, like the ideological discourses of *The Revenge for Love*, are always false.

## CROWDS, BLAST, AND PRINT CULTURE

Lewis's blunt claim that the first number of *Blast* was 'not unlike a telephone book'<sup>27</sup> in its general appearance seems at odds

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<sup>27</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 37.



with the sensation of 'shock' described by more recent readers, the sense of *Blast* as displaying a 'hardness, violence and... worship of energy.'<sup>28</sup> But the blocky, commercial 'telephone book' styling, with free-floating lists of names and numbered clauses printed on heavy brown paper, signals *Blast's* connectedness to the channels of mass communication. Like the 'telegraphic images' of Marinetti's *parole in libertà*,<sup>29</sup> this is a modern art whose energies are transmitted and intensified through the overhead wire and the Linotype machine. Perloff suggests that the noisy, overbold manifesto at the beginning of the first number, recalls 'the advertising poster or billboard rather than the page to be consecutively read from top to bottom and from left to right.'<sup>30</sup>

The heavy monotone Grotesque in which *Blast's* headings and manifestoes are set, is a direct descendent of the earliest sans-serif typefaces, cut by Thorowgood in the 1830s.<sup>31</sup> The explosion in such 'peculiar fancy jobbing types'<sup>32</sup> towards the end of the nineteenth century represented a kind of typographic arms-race. More and more arresting type-forms were needed to fulfil the requirements of competing advertisers, whose new, more visually striking adverts shouted against one another for the attention of consumers.<sup>33</sup> Newspapers used bigger and heavier headline styles,

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<sup>28</sup>William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 165. Perloff uses the same vocabulary—'energy, force, dynamism'—in her discussion of Vorticism (*The Futurist Moment*, p. 174).

<sup>29</sup>F. T. Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax—Imagination without Strings—Words-in-Freedom 1913', trans. R. W. Flint, in Umbro Appollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 100.

<sup>30</sup>*The Futurist Moment*, p. 181.

<sup>31</sup>See W. Turner Berry, A. F. Johnson and W. P. Jaspert, *The Encyclopaedia of Type Faces* (London: Blandford Press, 1962), pp. 230–233, p. 198. The closest sample I've found is Stephenson Blake's Grotesque No. 9, but there are noticeable differences in some of the numerals, p. 231.

<sup>32</sup>'Grotesque,' *Southward's Dictionary of Typography, with its auxiliary arts*, ed. John Southward (London: E.W. Allen, 1872).

<sup>33</sup>Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Markets, magazines and class at the turn of the century* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 175–76



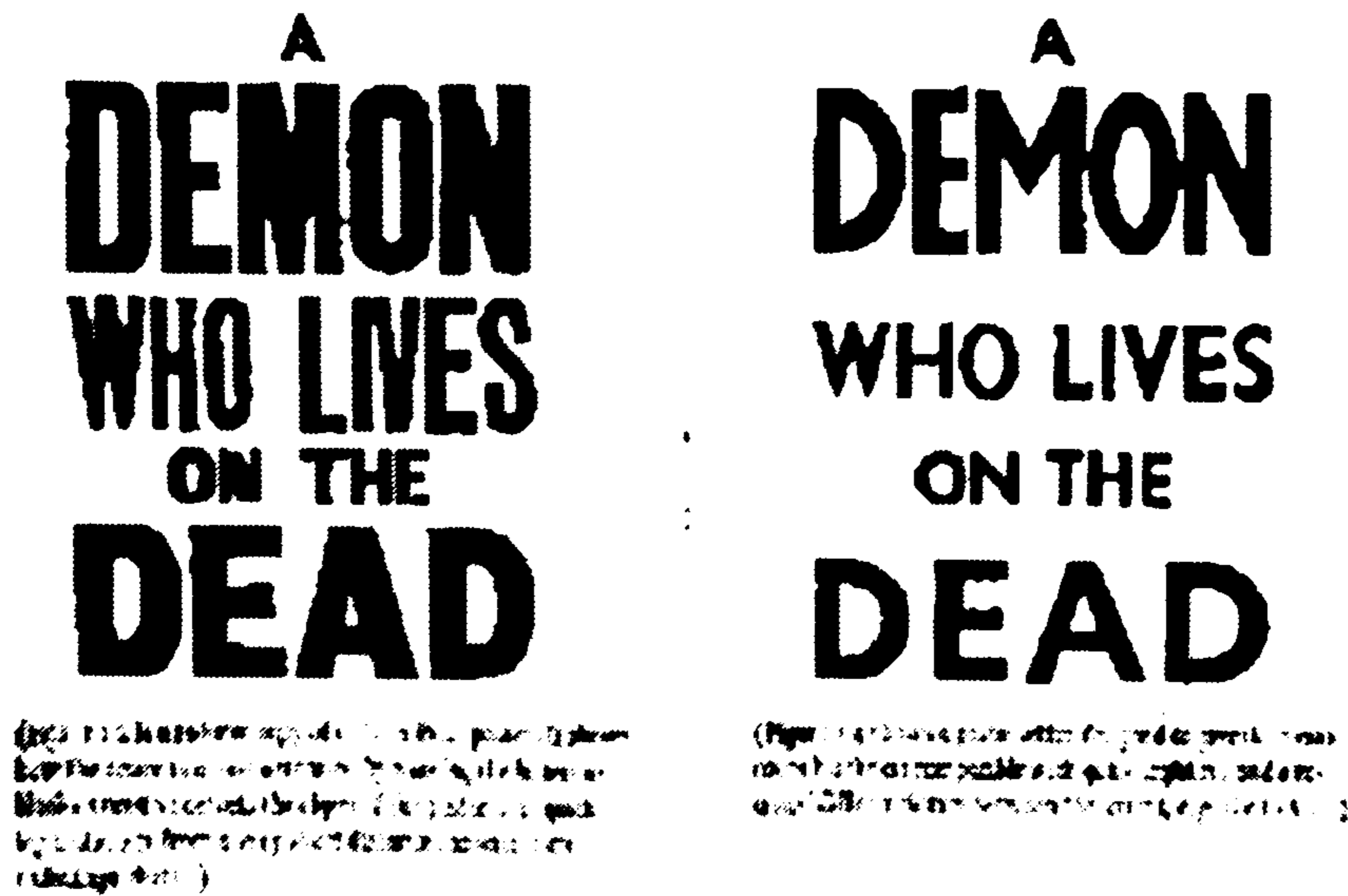


Figure 3: 'John Bull' poster, with Eric Gill's more legible alternative version. Reproduced from Eric Gill, *An Essay in Typography* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1941), pp. 50–51.<sup>13</sup>

and more flamboyant banners and splashes, in an attempt to suggest that *their* news was more sensational than anyone else's. Like the dreadnought-race, these headline-contests reached a climax in 1914: Heinrich Straumann, a German grammarian studying the English press, wrote that 'the War was *the* great opportunity of the journalist to cultivate at home that atmosphere of numberless sensations which, in spite of the lack of paper, raised the psychological function of the headline to an importance never before obtained. Once this height was reached reduction became practically impossible.'<sup>34</sup>.

Eric Gill (whose celebrated Monotype Sans would go some way towards decommissioning sans-serif typefaces from this shouting match), in his *Essay on Typography*, discusses a poster for *John Bull* magazine, an extreme example of the overboisterousness which afflicted the press early in the century (plate 3). *Blast*, scattering its words across the page, appears even busier than the *John Bull* poster, but there is an obvious similarity of style (plate 4); a will-

<sup>34</sup>Heinrich Straumann, *Newspaper Headlines: a study in linguistic method* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), p. 32.



**their weeping whiskers—hirsute  
RHETORIC of EUNUCH and STYLIST—  
SENTIMENTAL HYGIENICS  
ROUSSEAUISMS (wild Nature cranks)  
FRATERNIZING WITH MONKEYS  
DIABOLICS—raptures and roses  
of the erotic bookshelves  
culminating in  
PURGATORY OF  
PUTNEY.**

Figure 4: Detail from Blast manifesto, *Blast* 1, p15.

ingness to use the same commercial poster letters that were used to shout 'buy me' to the crowd—despite the fact that Lewis, in *Blast*, was attempting to 'kill John Bull with Art'.<sup>35</sup> Gill complained that 'the business of poster letters, has not yet been extricated from the degradations imposed upon it by insubordinate commercialism. Mere weight and heaviness of letter ceases to be effective in assisting the comprehension of the reader when every poster plays the same shouting game.'<sup>36</sup>

But for Lewis's 'Crowd-Master,' I shall argue, 'comprehension' means understanding the rules of this shouting game: a game which, in July 1914, is intricately tied in with the deadly seriousness of the war. The strategies of commercialism are not in themselves subordinate; indeed, Lewis appropriates them to advertise his avant-garde project. The story we shall be looking at is full of newspaper headlines; the newspapers, it is explicitly stated, 'allow

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<sup>35</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 36.

<sup>36</sup>Eric Gill, *An Essay in Typography* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1941; 1st ed. High Wycombe: Hague & Gill, 1931), p. 49.



themselves almost BLAST type already' (B2, 94). Blenner's 'bright astonished eyes' are caught by the lettering on advertising posters (B2, 99); the papers fill him with surges of Crowd-energy. All of this upper-case shouting, though (like Marinetti's shouting, which Lewis claims prepared him for the thumping of the Big Berthas on the Western Front; *B&B*, 33), has a different end—and of course, a different intellectual context—to the usual shout in the street. Lewis is attempting to teach the crowd an avant-garde reading strategy; a *self-aware* approach to the dangerous energies of mass communication: 'To be of the Crowd and individually conscious' (B2, 99)—not subordinate to the crowd-voices of the '*Mails and Expresses*, the loudest shouters of the lot' (*B&B*, 66)—that is the 'special privilege' of the Crowd-Master.

The press-poster (of which Gill's *John Bull* poster is an extreme representative) simultaneously advertises news and newspapers: the hot story is displayed in large letters, at the point of sale, to entice prospective readers. Thomas Blenner, going to town in the 'The Crowd Master' to get the latest papers, might have expected to see press-posters advertising the worsening international situation. What he in fact finds, is rather different:

The 'Northern Dispatch' poster was the first he saw,  
violet on white ground, large letters:

MORPETH OLYMPIAD  
RECORD CROWD

Wonderful Crowds, gathering at Olympiads! What is the War to you? It is you that make both the wars and the Olympiads. When War knocks at the door, why should you hurry? You are busy with an Olympiad! So for a day War must wait. Amazing English Crowds!

This crude violet lettering distillation of 1905 to 1915: Suffragism. H. G. Wells. Morpeth Olympiads. (B2, 95)



There seem to be three distinct 'levels' of voice here. First, we have the poster-copy, incorporated into the text pretty much as it would have appeared to Blenner. The visual equivalence between the bold capitals of the commercial, ephemeral press-poster (with its 'crude violet lettering'; 'violet on white ground, large letters') and the bold capitals which define the *Blast* house-style is difficult to ignore: the Morpeth Olympiad poster even uses a bright, shocking colour, similar to the 'puce' or 'magenta cover' of *Blast's* first issue. The poster speaks with a crude, mechanical voice: it doesn't tell us what a Morpeth Olympiad is, or why the Crowd are there. It advertises the idea of loud newspapers; its bare technology represents the stripped-down apotheosis of Crowd-communication.

Violet, we are of course reminded, is the colour of the suffragette crowds—they have already been evoked, by way of a self-consciously 'dramatic Suffragette analogy' in the story's opening section (*B2*, 94), as an extreme form of Crowd.<sup>37</sup> The textuality of the Crowd, its reducibility to simple signs or colours, is a recurrent theme in all of the 'Crowd Master' texts. In the *Blast* story, the Crowd's peculiar noise—a glottal, illiterate 'AR'—has already been represented as a fragment of text, which the narrator can play around with, reading out its hidden significance: 'For days now wherever you are you hear a sound like a very harsh perpetual voice of a shell. If you put W before it, it always makes WAR!' (*B2*, 95).

A second level of voice seems to describe the effect that the poster-lettering or '*Blast* type' of the morpeth olympiad poster has on a less imaginative kind of reader—or, rather, the kind of hysterical reverie which it seems to induce in the field of the text. With

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<sup>37</sup>Green, white and violet (standing for 'give women the vote') were worn by the suffragettes to advertise their cause; violet quickly became the predominant 'brand' colour of suffragism, as red was of socialism: see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907–14* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), p. 7



its gratuitous rhymes ('when War knocks at the door') and alliteration ('War must wait'), and its pattern of rhetorical questions and ironic exclamations, the short section reads like an exaggerated journalese, spontaneously generated from the headline. Has it, like the poster itself, issued from some imaginary ephemeral printing press? Perhaps it's an ironic parody of the gushing, war-themed adverts that were so popular at the time of *Blast* 2: 'THE BRITISH EMPIRE the land of beauty virtue valour truth. Oh! who would not fight for such a land! follow the drum. In Sad Times, or Glad Times, and All Times, take ENO'S "FRUIT SALT."'38

Such adverts, of course, anticipate the kind of effect that a powerful patriotic image might induce in a reader, at a time of national hysteria. Le Bon had suggested that 'the power of words is bound up with the images they evoke, and is quite independent of their real significance.'<sup>39</sup> Newspapers have long been wise to the power of the headline to evoke emotions: analysing the *Daily Mail's* headline to a story about a disgraced financier, Heinrich Straumann notes that it 'consciously underlines the emotional aspects of the affair. The news of the shock which Lord X.'s sentence produced in the city is calculated to produce a similar resonance among its readers.'<sup>40</sup> The words 'record crowd' on the Morpeth Olympiad poster, seem to set somebody—some individual who has entered Le Bon's 'crowd-mood' (Blenner, perhaps?)—resonating, flooding their mind with patriotic images. Of course, there is an ironical mismatch between the provincial insignificance of the poster, and the grand images which it is supposed to represent. But such is the nature of the Crowd. Having 'become Crowd in the house,' excited by the War's 'gay Carnival of fear,' the country house guests later stick the Morpeth Olympiad poster up in the hall, as 'an adequate expression of the great Nation to which they belonged' (B2,

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<sup>38</sup>*Illustrated London News*, 3 July 1915, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup>Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup>Straumann, *Newspaper Headlines*, p. 29.



95).

The third voice is oblivious to this Crowd-hysteria, and immune to the hypnotic impact of crude display-types. It's a voice which coldly analyses what it reads, breaking down the poster's 'distillation' into its constituent elements. It draws the reader to see the 'suffragist' significance of the colour violet, and coldly alludes to H. G. Wells' romances of modern mass-culture, of technology and *Tono-Bungay* (or Eno's-Fruit-Salt-style) cures; a northern neo-pagan sports event is idiosyncratically chosen as symptomatic of years 1905 to 1915. 1905 to 1915? For Blenner, looking at the poster, it's still July 1914, so this clearly can't be his reaction (although the crowd-paeon possibly is). The style, however, is familiar. Its telegraphic distillation of a decade, 'Suffragism. H. G. Wells. Morpeth Olympiads,' recalls the loud, brief injunctions against the Victorians in *Blast* 1: 'BLAST years 1837 to 1900' (*B1*, 18), or the lists of the Blasted, 'Codliver Oil St. Loe Strachey Lyceum Club' (*B1*, 21).

The editor of *Blast*, looking back in his story to mid-1914, from the vantage-point of mid-1915, is demanding a new kind of reading. Assembling a disparate selection of textual fragments, torn from everyday life, he suggests that, in combination, they have a certain significance. He demonstrates how, by a simple act of addition, the 'ARs' of the crowd's 'harsh perpetual voice' can make 'WAR.' What is Codliver Oil doing next to St. Loe Stachey in the *Blast* manifesto? Why are they being blasted?—Codliver Oil (which wasn't identified as a rich source of vitamins A and D until Edward Mellanby's experiments with rickets in puppies, in 1922)<sup>41</sup> was still an anachronistic quack remedy for various degenerative diseases. Strachey was the editor of the *Spectator*, a journal which, according to Ezra Pound, 'was a sort of parochial joke, a "paper printed in London for circulation in the provinces".' A similar aura

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<sup>41</sup>Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A medical history of Humanity from antiquity to the present* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 555.



pervades both products, of quackery or provinciality, and comical stodge. It's a difficult kind of reading, requiring us to tease out the connotations in a name, placing it in a cultural system—almost the kind of reading that advertisements require of sophisticated consumers, 'who can read across fissures and discontinuities in the semantic field.'<sup>42</sup>

Neither the poster, nor the crowd-paeon, demanded that we thought about what a 'Morpeth Olympiad' might be: the first simply named it; the second repeated it back like a baby, displaying a dewy-eyed delight in the record size of the crowd. But the sudden, incongruous citing of it as somehow symptomatic of the years 1905–1915 alienates the reader from the sing-song panegyric: how is this crowd representative? The word 'Olympiad' may well bring to mind the neo-pagan, nationalist amateurism of Coubertin's Olympic revival; a Blastable sentimental Hellenism. But the Morpeth Olympic Games had been held since 1871:<sup>43</sup> they represent a different tradition. Local sports festivals, consisting of folk-contests like 'pitching the bar throwing the hammer, jumping and wrestling,' had been revived sporadically since the seventeenth century, and were frequently 'dignified with the appellation "Olympic Games."' <sup>44</sup>

By 1897, boxing and wrestling were the main events in Morpeth; looking back at the 1914 Olympiad, Ford Madox Ford describes how it was billed as a 'northern boxing competition.'<sup>45</sup> In the years leading up to the war, boxing had become a national obsession; Lewis gave its heroes—Bombardier Wells, Bandsman

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<sup>42</sup>Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, markets and class at the turn of the century* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 264.

<sup>43</sup>*The Twenty Sixth Great Annual Meeting: Morpeth Olympic Games, programme* (Morpeth: J. James, 1897).

<sup>44</sup>Richard D. Mandell, *Sport: A cultural history* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 198.

<sup>45</sup>*The Twenty Sixth Great Annual Meeting*; Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday*, p. 325.



Rice, Petty Officer Curran—the highest accolade, blessing them in the pages of *Blast* (1, 28; 2,93). On 17 March, 1914, a display-match between Bombardier Wells and Pat O’Keefe, attended by the King, occasioned a celebratory series of articles in the *Times*, discussing ‘The Revival of Boxing.’ ‘Boxing is once more a national pastime,’ declared the introduction, ‘watched by crowds as inclusive as those which attend the Boat Race or keep festival at Derby’<sup>46</sup> But these inclusive, holiday crowds have come to watch a spectacle that approximates to war: the stereotypical boxer of c.1914 was, as a name like ‘Bombardier’ Wells or ‘Bandsman’ Rice implies, an army man. The Morpeth Olympiad crowd, then, isn’t very different from the crowd that gathers in London, rejoicing in the ‘gay carnival of fear’ (B2, 95), the coming military spectacle which H. G. Wells had predicted. ‘It is you that make both the wars and the Olympiads’: subtle links are drawn between the various crowd-forms, 1905–1915. Suffrage, leisure and technological advancement—all militate to war.

I shall take this brief reading of a press poster as my paradigm for reading ‘The Crowd Master.’ These three voices, on three levels, recur throughout: a poster, or other ephemeral piece of text is incorporated into the story; it generates a spontaneous, hysterical reaction; a third voice then dissects, or otherwise comments on the text, bringing out its hidden implications. While all this is going on, an analogy is being drawn with the process of reading *Blast* itself. The press-poster, or headline, or advert is implicitly linked with the heavy, exhibitionistic print of the Vorticist review: Lewis’s text comes with instructions, as it were, for ‘how to read’ a Vorticist work.

The newspapers, too, are militating to war, but Lewis’s text demonstrates how hidden messages can be read, or ‘distilled’ out of their crude letters:

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<sup>46</sup>*Times*, 16 March 1914, p. 14.



Bang! Bang!  
Ultimatum to you!  
Ultimatum to you!  
ULTIMATUM!  
From an Evening Paper: July—

'The outlook has become more grave during the afternoon. Germany's attitude causes considerable uneasiness. She seems to be throwing obstacles in the way.—The German ambassador in Vienna has telegraphed to his government, etc.'

Germany, the sinister brigand and naughty egoist of latter-day Europe, and of her own romantic fancy, 'mauvais voisin' for the little French bourgeois-reservist, remains silent and ominously unhelpful in her armoured cave.

Do the idiots really mean——? (B2, 94)

Here, the hysterical reaction to the embedded newspaper-clipping radiates both forwards *and* backwards through the field of Lewis's text. The impersonation of a press style ('style' in terms of the layout and impact of the words on the page, as well as the particular newspaper prose style) leads into a figurative fancy that moves beyond the banal, newscast cliché. The 'grave outlook' and 'considerable uneasiness' which are transcribed direct from the newspaper impress an almost operatic tension on the second, hysterical voice, which weaves an emotional little *festspiel* out of the scenario. The ominous silence of the German is filled by some berserk subeditor's noisy *Götterdämmerung* bangs: an Ultimatum-overture. In her own romantic imagination—or, rather, in a version of the German romantic imagination invented by the chauvinistic newspaper-reading British public—and under the millennial twilight of this 'latter-day,' Germany appears as a sinister, Nibelungish brigand (and in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, where she is said to lurk in an armoured cave 'across the Rhine' (p. 79), the



passage seems even more explicitly Wagnerian).

Fredric Jameson has described *Tarr* as a 'national allegory,' an attempt to complicate the self-contained national narratives of the nineteenth century, and to find an alternative which is suited to the transnational structures of twentieth-century capitalism.<sup>47</sup> The definitive historical crisis of traditional national narrative, and the end of a particular model of national conflict, would, of course, be the First World War. So Lewis's praise of the 'Amazing English Crowds,' who can be distilled down to a few telegraphic words, and his Wagnerian war-drama, the conflict of two semi-mythic national types, seem to mark the twilight for a traditional model of crowd-life—the point where the national narrative collapses.

After mimicking the highly-charged public languages of the press-poster and the newspaper, and driving them to their revealing figurative extremes, Lewis's third, critical voice, comes in, distancing itself from the emotive rhetoric: 'Do the idiots really mean——?' Do they really mean that they'll allow these artificial, unsustainable crowd-discourses to go over into life; that they'll actually perform their destructive, kitsch typological drama? The Morpeth Olympiad is a popular phenomenon, just as the war is: the people are having an Olympiad, so 'war must wait'; when they tire of the Olympiad, they will have a war. But Olympiads, like Suffragism, H. G. Wells, 'the little French bourgeois-reservist,' 'the naughty egoist,' and the whole 'grave outlook' are exposed as symptoms of our hysterical second discourse: they are elements of a short-hand in which the popular press—the society of the bill-poster and the *Daily Mail*—codifies the world. Here lies the 'idiotcy' of the public: do the idiots really mean that they'll be driven into a *real* war by the emotive language of the press's synthetic pantomime? The third narrative voice falters, as though its clever, dissenting language has been lost among these screaming, printed

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<sup>47</sup>Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 94–95.



words.

For Thomas Blenner, the force is too strong. Falling under the crowd's spell after his exposure to the Morpeth Olympiad poster, he couldn't help himself: 'He bought a London Edition of the "Daily Mail"' (B2, 95). Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* was the ultimate crowd-organ. Early in the century, it had achieved the largest circulation figures in the world.<sup>48</sup> When Lewis, introducing the Crowd Master chapters in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, wanted to show just what a nonchalant crowd-master he'd been in his *Blast* days, he presented himself as the highbrows' Lord Northcliffe, joking that 'in the first months of the War... I decided on 'business as usual'—along with the *Daily Mail*.'<sup>49</sup> With its text arranged in columns, in short paragraphs under bold, centred headings, 'The Crowd Master' bears a surprising resemblance to a page from Northcliffe's paper. The avant-garde aims of *Blast* are quite different from the *Mail*'s commercial self-interest, but perhaps Lewis is attempting to have the same impact on its reader as the *Mail* has on Blenner:

#### GERMANY DECLARES WAR ON RUSSIA.

With the words came a dark rush of hot humanity into his mind. An immense human gesture swept its shadow across him like a smoky cloud. 'Germany Declares War on Russia,' seemed a roar of guns. He saw active Mephistophelian specks in Chancelleries. He saw a rush of papers, a frowning race. 'C'a y est,' thought Blenner, with innate military exultation. The ground

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<sup>48</sup>Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 2–3.

<sup>49</sup>*B&B*, p. 64. Winston Churchill, addressing the Guildhall in November 1914, said that 'the British people have taken for themselves this motto—"Business as usual during alterations on the map of Europe".' (*Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, 8 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), III, 2341). The speech played well in the popular press, and the British people soon did.



seemed swaying a little. He limped away from the paper shop, gulping this big morsel down with delighted stony dignity. (B2, 95)

We know Blenner has a bad leg, but here his limp seems to result from the physical shock of the headline. These words, 'Germany Declares War on Russia' do more than signify a war declaration; they actually enact that coming war, so that the 'immense human gesture' of the mobilizing army rushes into their reader's mind on the backs of the dark printed letters. Once under their 'smoky cloud' (a trance state, perhaps, induced by a sweeping human gesture, like a mesmeric pass), Blenner experiences sensory hallucinations: the sounding of the words becomes a 'roar of guns'; images telescope out, from tiny 'specks in Chancelleries,' to the vast 'frowning race.'

Again, a 'rush of papers'—a large, bold headline, incorporated into the story—has led us to the hysterical, racial rhetoric of a crowding and unified people: the trajectory from the headline to wild fancy, from first to second voice, follows the same pattern as in the 'Morpeth Olympiad' and 'Ultimatum' passages. We are back with Germany's national myth, and her 'romantic imagination': German diplomats are transformed into Mephistophelean demons (—it's worth noting that 'Gretchen', Mephisto's foil, was being used during the war to mean a German girl).<sup>50</sup> But this time, there's no ironic deflation, no recoil from the press-hysteria. Blenner is absolutely involved, literally *swallowing* these visions, exulting in their physical impact, while the very ground (with a slight grammatical drunkenness) seems 'swaying.' The third voice of our knowing narrator, reading hidden truths in the crowd-messages, is gone, leaving us to make our own criticisms of Blenner's deeply flawed response to the newspaper.

The idea that printed words could hold a sensational psycho-

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<sup>50</sup>See 'Gretchen,' 1917 quot., *OED*.



logical and even physical 'sway' over their reader was hardly new. Readers of Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (serialised between 1859 and 1860) 'reported a direct physiological response. . . involuntary reactions and excited states of mind,' which one critic has attributed to Collins' control over the use of italics, small capitals and compositorial 'white lines': the 'running pattern of black and white' down the page supposedly created mesmeric 'optical sensations' in the reader.<sup>51</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, advertisers had fallen under the influence of suggestion psychology. In 1892, an advertising trade journal anticipated Le Bon by speculating that 'the public is obeying a "suggestion," not acting upon reason'; Walter Dill Scott's influential *Psychology of Advertising* was published in 1908, anticipating, in its formulation of 'the herd instinct', Wilfred Trotter's crowd theory. A few years later, Freudian terms were added to the mix: 'Can You Sell Goods to the Subconscious Mind?' asked a *Printers' Ink* headline in 1918.<sup>52</sup> An advert like the Morpeth Olympiad poster should have prepared Blenner's mind excellently for its ecstatic bad-news trance.

Encountering *Blast's* hypnotic bands of black and white, and its large suggestive lettering, Lewis's reader is expected to learn from Blenner's mistakes, in a way he himself does not—at least, not in this opening installment of 'The Crowd Master.' We, like the third voice discussed above, are supposed to retain our self-awareness in the midst of the shouting crowd-voices. And if, instead of letting them rush into our minds, in a meaningless clamour, we can discover how they *work*, than it is possible, as Lewis does, to make them work for us, for our own didactic ends: in this case, to advertise how his avant-garde advocate might learn to 'read' the city.

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<sup>51</sup> Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 324, p. 326; see also John Sutherland, introduction, *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), xiii.

<sup>52</sup> Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A cultural history of advertising in America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), p. 208.



The new, brash, clever populism of the advert, existing in a world of free-floating, allusive copy, fascinated Lewis's generation of writers. In *Ulysses*, newspaper ads are subject to complex decipherment, revealing suppressed political or sexual messages. An advertisement for Bransome's Coffee, rather than selling coffee, becomes an arcane form of transatlantic communication, mapping out 'whole bloody history' of the Phoenix Park Murders for some hack in New York.<sup>53</sup> The jingle advertising Plumtree's Potted Meat (without which a home is 'incomplete,' and which Molly gets from Boylan) carries subliminal messages about Bloom's sexual inadequacies.<sup>54</sup> Bloom's 'House of Keyes' advert is cleverly loaded with the 'innuendo of home rule' (7.150)—but in a novel whose heroes both lack housekeys, its 'meaning' remains equivocal.

The skywriting of an aeroplane, in *Mrs Dalloway*, spells something different for each of its readers: 'a K, an E, a Y perhaps?'—it might mean anything and everything, but eventually signifies only the impossibility of reading a particularised meaning into the crowded, hallucinatory text of the city.<sup>55</sup> One of Lewis's jokes in *Mrs Dukes' Million* depends upon a paradox—that the bright, vulgar spectacle of advertising is consubstantial with the most abject

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<sup>53</sup>James Joyce, *Ulysses: The corrected text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (London: Bodley Head, 1986), 7.626–677. For a fuller discussion of the ad's significance, see Jennifer Levine, 'A Brief Allegory of Readings: 1972–1992,' in *Joyce in the Hibernian Metropolis: Essays*, ed. Morris Beja and David Norris (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), pp. 182–84. Joyce's fascination with the language of mass-consumption have been covered in a recent special double issue of *James Joyce Quarterly* 30:4–31:1 (1993), devoted to 'James Joyce and Advertising.'

<sup>54</sup>*Ulysses*, 5.144–47; 17.304, 2125. The commodification of potted meat and of connubial bliss are discussed by Mark Osteen, 'Seeking Renewal: Bloom, Advertising, and the Domestic Economy,' *James Joyce Quarterly* 30:4–31:1 (1993), pp. 720–724.

<sup>55</sup>Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp. 22–23. The skywriting setpiece immediately follows the crowd-apparition of the Queen, linking it implicitly with the LeBonite concept of the fickle, hallucinating crowd.



mundanities of everyday life. When Hercules Fane wants to disappear in the Liverpool streets, avoiding the Raza Khan's gang, his subtle arts as an actor are useless; the best way he can blend in, is to don a huge cardboard deep sea diver's helmet and parade down Bold Street, joined by a rubber tube to a group of sandwich men.<sup>56</sup>

As well as delineating channels of commercial communication *within* their texts, the writers of 1914 interested themselves with the advertisements lurking at the edges of a text, in the fronts and backs of reviews and magazines. For Ezra Pound, such textual appendages (adverts, but also bindings, formats, typefaces, epigraphs, marginalia and other bibliographic codes—'paratexts,' as Gerard Genette calls them)<sup>57</sup> can be as significant as the text itself. The close-readings of popular weekly and monthly magazines which Pound published in the *New Age*, entitled 'Studies in Contemporary Mentality,' tend to linger over page-layouts, and paper quality, banner-slogans and -designs, or the tones of the magazines' editorials. Most importantly, he tabulates the kinds and quantities of ads they carry, gleaning sociological, commercial, and even stylistic intelligence from them. 'Fry's cocoa,' for example, comes to define publications like *Strand*: those 'periodicals designed to inculcate useful and mercantile values in the middle and lower middle classes or strata.'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Mrs Dukes' Million* (London: George Prior, 1977), pp. 349–51. Everything about the stunt is simultaneously banal *and* spectacular: 'It was a Public Baths that had sent these men forth to advertise an entertainment – a famous diver who was going to grope about in a tank, fight with a large fish, and find some treasure.'

<sup>57</sup>See Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, *Literature, Culture, Theory* 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Genette says little useful about paid advertisements: 'it is up to the reader to establish an ad's relation to the theme of the book' (p. 26).

<sup>58</sup>Ezra Pound, 'Studies in Contemporary Mentality. VI. "The Sphere," and Reflections on Letter-Press,' *New Age*, 20 Sept. 1917, p. 446; see also 'Studies in Contemporary Mentality. V. "The Strand," or How the Thing May Be Done,'



Contemporary critics have shown that it pays to be attentive to the bibliographic codes of Pound's own writings, and those of the Little Magazines which published him. For Jerome J. McGann, the *Cantos* are an epic dramatization of literature's ability to carry meaning at a bibliographic level.<sup>59</sup> Edward Bishop examines *The Little Review*, which carried copy for Goodyear tyres opposite adverts for anarchist essays; it 'was oddly eclectic in the material it assembled for what James Phelan has called the "penumbra" of the text—the ads, blurbs, reviews, etc. that are adjacent to it.' While promising to make 'no compromise with the public taste,' it financed itself by advertising 'The Book Hit of the Year!,' *Diane of the Green Van*, by Leona Dalrymple, 'The Novel That Won The \$10,000 Prize.'<sup>60</sup> The most eccentric example of a Modernist's flirtation with advertising would have been Lewis's privately printed, popular edition of *The Apes of God*: an Arthur Press circular claimed that they were publishing it *with advertisements*. The adverts

will not be confined to those of publishers and bookshops. We are including adverts. of Steamship Lines, tooth-pastes, and lawn mowers. . . . It will be *a unique event in the publishing world*. It is certain to arouse a great deal of interest and result in a wide publicity. . . . We hope you will take this *unusual opportunity* of advertising in *a more permanent* form than the newspaper or the magazine offers—which once read is thrown away.<sup>61</sup>

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*New Age*, 13 Sept. 1917, p. 425.

<sup>59</sup>Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 149 & ch.6 *passim*.

<sup>60</sup>Edward Bishop, 'Re:Covering Modernism—Format and Function in the Little Magazines,' in Ian Willison, Warwick Gould and Warren Chernaik, eds., *Modernist Writers and the Market Place* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 304–306.

<sup>61</sup>*The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (Norfolk, Ct.: New Direc-



Financed largely by Lewis's mother (and by a loan of £100 from Kate Lechmere, secured against several of Lewis's paintings),<sup>62</sup> *Blast* had little need to carry such adverts—just the usual publisher's list at the back, plus two full page prospectuses for Lewis-friendly reviews (*Poetry* and *The Egoist*) and a plug for 'Ezra Pound's New Book,' *Cathay*.<sup>63</sup> But, as we have seen, rather than let the commercial world linger at the threshold of his text, Lewis brings it inside, incorporating the aesthetic codes of the advertising-poster into the very fabric of *Blast*.

### LEARNING TO READ THE CROWD

Meeting Multum in London, Blenner thinks back to their first, indirect encounter: an advert in the 'small altruistic Book-Bazaar' on Charing Cross Road, the Bomb shop:

THE CROWD MASTER.

By BROWN BRYAN MULTUM.

THE CROWD MASTER. What might that mean? His bright astonished eyes fixed on the words, drinking up a certain strength from them.

An opposition of and welding of the two heaviest words that stand for the multitude on the one hand, and the Ego on the other.

That should be something!

Did it really mean Master of the Crowd in the sense of a possessive domination by an individual? It meant something else, it seemed evident.

Mooney and adrift since his leap out of discipline and life cut and dried, he gazed at it in now habitual

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tions, 1963), pp. 196–7. The trade edition was eventually published by Nash & Grayson, rather than Lewis's Arthur Press, and were unfortunately untainted by such rampant commercialism.

<sup>62</sup>Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy*, p. 64.

<sup>63</sup>*Blast* 1, pp. 159–[164]; *Blast* 2, pp. 103–[108].



neurasthenic hesitation. It was no 'mysterious instinct' that came to the assistance of his will, but the necessity of brutal and enthusiastic actions like the buying of a book in his inactive life. . . (B2, 99–100)

This is a rather more subtle kind of consumption than the gulping down of apocalyptic news. While a 'running pattern of black and white' massages *our* eyes, Blenner fixes *his* eyes—'bright,' 'astonished,' and almost drunken—on the large, capitals of the book's title: the same large capitals that *we* noticed when picking up this story of Lewis's, 'THE CROWD MASTER.' Comparisons are being drawn, it seems, between the reader, and the little fictional creation, Blenner. The character's experience communicates directly with the observant reader's: as Blenner notes, 'it was like a white corpuscle under the microscope, suddenly beginning to praise itself, drawing invidious comparisons between itself and the observant student' (B2, 100).

The metafictional device is perfectly worked out. Blenner begins to analyse what he's reading, interrogating these opposed categories, 'crowd' and 'master.' His enthusiasm ('That should be something!') results, not from his internal assimilation of the newspapers' noisy, easy language, but from a puzzling juxtaposition that he can't quite solve. 'Crowd' and 'Master,' he sees, are the 'heaviest' words for their respective concepts, and following the same easy logic that would pit the heavy stereotypes of the sinister German cave-dweller against the 'little French bourgeois-reservist,' one of these concepts should be fighting for 'possessive domination' over the other. But no, 'it meant something else, it seemed evident.'

If *I* turn to the first page of 'The Crowd Master,' I find these same opposed categories emblazoned in heavy sans type: 'What might that mean?' Reading down, through the opening paragraphs, my attention is grabbed by the upper-case paragraph headings, 'the crowd' and 'the police' (B2, 94). Again, these concepts



seem to be in opposition. The crowd is represented as a fluid, nocturnal seascape: 'Men drift...past the admiralty, cold night tide'; it 'breaks faintly here and there up against a railing.' The police are 'icy': they represent a harder form: not fluid, they are seen as active agents, who 'shift' the liquid of the crowd, 'touching and shaping with heavy delicate professional fingers.' They 'herd' London, shepherding their gregarious flock. The crowd are represented as suffragettes, demanding 'some vague new suffrage'; the police are 'contemptuous, cold and disagreeable' in the face of their demands.

But 'is this opposition correct?' the narrative demands of us. A little way down the page, a third term is introduced: 'the newspapers.' The papers, as we have seen, are simultaneously *of* the crowd, and outside it, manipulating its actions and emotions: they represent a model which, rather than pitting one 'heavy' concept against another, are able to 'read' and 'write' the crowd's mood (they 'already smell carrion. They allow themselves almost BLAST type already'), drawing on its vast, fluid body without drowning in it. Both performances—Blenner's reading of the crowd master poster, and the establishment of the newspapers as a means to 'save the crowd from breaking up,' adhering to its 'lumps' from the outside—demonstrate the first tenets of the *Blast* manifesto:

1. Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves.
2. We start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set up violent structures of adolescent clearness between two extremes.
3. We discharge ourselves on both sides. (B1, 30)

Working both against the crowd, to mould and shape its thought, and for them, against the brutal agencies driving them to war: 'The Crowd Master' exemplifies the complex oppositional strategies of *Blast*. Its readers, like the readers of Brown Bryan Multum's



book, 'The Crowd Master,' learn to understanding the 'something else' beyond Action and Reaction: to be, like Multum, both 'of the crowd and individually conscious' (B2, 99).

After buying the book, Blenner 'found in it, to begin with, an ingenious tirade against hair.' *Blast* readers know all about that: 'BLESS the HAIRDRESSER,' the manifesto had screamed. 'He trims aimless and retrograde growths into clean arched shapes and angular plots' (B1, 25). Like the policeman, the hairdresser has become the bizarre archetype of a cold, classical creative principle, imposing form on the inchoate mass: 'this might equally well have been headed "Blast Fluffiness,"' Lewis later added. 'It exalts formality, and order, at the expense of the disorderly and unkempt. It is merely a humorous way of stating the classical standpoint, as against the romantic.'<sup>64</sup>

When Blenner first read Multum's 'tirade against hair,' he had 'become definitely, to his family's distress, a crank and very liberal,' given to 'reading sociological books and wandering about London' (B2, 99). 'Untidy habits had taken hold of him. His hair had degraded him on chin and neck in a month to the level of a Stone-age super or a Crab-tree genius' (B2, 101). Blenner, then, is scandalised by Multum's tirade: 'it pressed him into a full beard, in his customary spirit of protest. His was one of those full beards that are as orderly as a shave. It was sleek matt chocolate colour, formed like a Roman Emperor's sculpted chevelure.'

This beard becomes a complex, ambiguous symbol: created in a spirit of protest, but 'formed' like a Classical sculpture. His beard, and the mobilization crowd all around him, are similarly said to be 'opportunities for feeding' his 'joy of protest' (B2, 96). It is perhaps not too far-fetched to interpret his facial-hair 'formations' as an Edward Learish microcosm of the 'suffragette' crowd which has 'formed' in London (B2, 94). Tarr, having condescended to marry Bertha, experienced a similar embodiment of protesting crowds in

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<sup>64</sup>Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 38.



his person:

The indignant plebs of his glorious organism rioted around his mind. "Ah-ha! Ah-ha! Sacré farceur, where are you leading us?" They were vociferous. "You have kept us in this neighbourhood so long, and now you are pledging us to your idiotic fancy for ever. Ah-ha! Ah-ha=... A faction clamoured, "Anastasya!" Certain sense-sections attacked him in vulnerable spots with Anastasya's voluptuous banner unfurled and fragrant.<sup>65</sup>

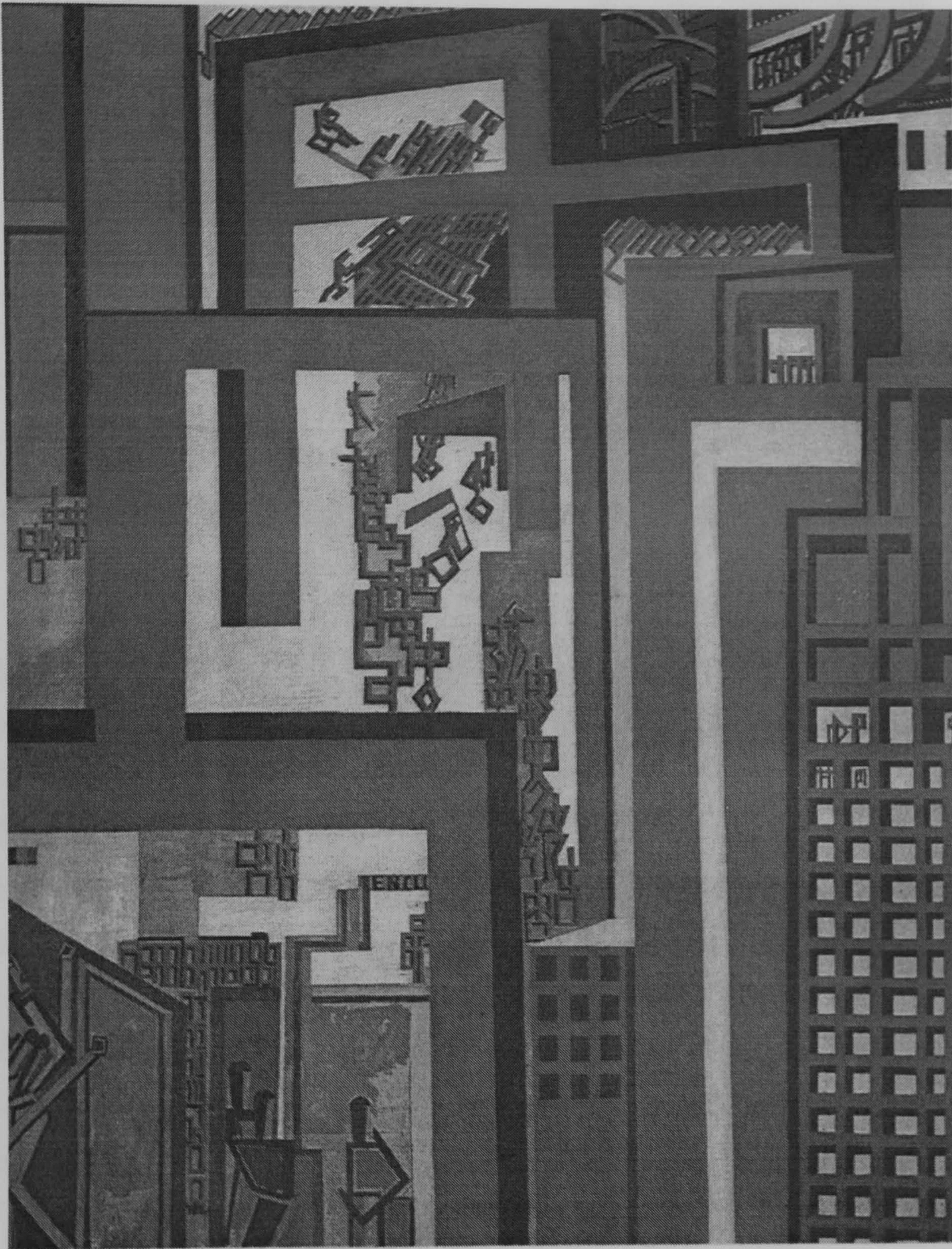
The idea of the crowd as a microcosmic body is evident in Lewis's painting, *The Crowd*, too (plate 5). The reddish webs of glyphic figures running up the centre of the painting from the bottom left, are contained by two, slightly duller but similarly shadowed superstructures. Unlike the repetitive grid to the right, these forms seem like large-scale repetitions of the individual figures from the crowd. Here, I think, is an analogy for what 'The Crowd Master' does: it attempts at a kind of mass-reproduction, both at a local, and at a global scale, of forms and relations drawn from the crowd, rendered with an avant-gardist self-awareness. It offers a model of a particular reading strategy, enticing its audience to progress to a more total degree of comprehension, and then demonstrates how these same reading experiences can be imposed onto texts, people, crowds, cities, nations—the world itself—at every level.

There is something rather literary, or textual, about the forms of *The Crowd*. One can almost pick out letters in the figures, reading their raised arms and legs as the ascenders and descenders of some primitive script. In the lower left, a headline-style fragment, 'enclo,' tries to control or enclose the crowd—reminding us of the ability of headlines, in 'The Crowd Master' to encapsulate a crowd mentality. Blenner's beard displays a similarly obscure

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<sup>65</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 version*, p. 312.





**Figure 5:** Wyndham Lewis, *The Crowd*, Tate Gallery, London. Reproduced from Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, p.135.



Blender looked at it and under-standing for a moment.

MULTUM. He had been talking to Blender. This was some more talk than he knew the poem. There was another book from another world of what somebody would think of it.

"How do you like it?" Blender said. "Talking up the bag he carried off, belonging to a man."

"I like it very much," Blender said. "I like it very much."

"Mr. Multum?—You across the Grand-Street?"

"Yes!" Blender pushed a book past, and about with one hand on the edge of the bed.

"I got it the other day. I enjoyed reading it very much. Blender said nothing and went away as he said this."

"I've got you the book." They stopped a moment growing.

"Thank you!" The "yes" was rather long and had, like a woman.

Blender really looked like the old for young man of the middle middle picture as he looked away. He had only a shadow of his good-looking, and, like the first time in his life, read of the brightness of his eyes.

He had seen a good deal of Multum since then, and took a special pleasure in watching the arrangement of each morning story that very slowly and not hard to his habit of mind. He unconsciously would close his eyes, with a movement like the looking of a dog, a little something about in his mind. The eye's brightness would become dim and the darkness, the heart's attention would be a little.

**PRELUDES.**

Blender was turned now to give his to a man, as the journey and the subject of his story about the last day, something to say him up suddenly made it to give out himself. He went to bed at last in the morning, but through the evening with the scattered's with and the paper every kind of as up to the night.

[Further parts will be printed in the next number of "Blast"]



**EZRA POUND'S NEW BOOK.**

**CATHAY:** TRANSLATIONS OF CHINESE POEMS. For the most part from the Chinese of Peking, from the works of the late Ernest Fenellos, and the Discoverings of the Professors Mori and Ariga. Small crown 8vo. 1s. net.

**SONNETS AND BALLADES OF GUIDO CAVALLARI.** Translated by Howells. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

In Two Volumes. 2s. 6d. net each.

**EZRA POUND'S POEMS.** Now first collected.

VOLUME I. PUNISHMENT—RETRIBUTION. Pp. 100.

VOLUME II. CANTO—RETRIBUTION. Crown 8vo.

May also be had separately.

Also REPRINTS in decorated wrappers, 1s. net.

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, CORNHILL STREET.

Figure 6: Concluding page of 'The Crowd Master,' and *Cathay* advertisement. Reproduced from *Blast* 2, pp.102-[103].

kind of textuality: it is envisioned as an outgrowth of Multum's text, a threshold between it and the rest of Blender's life, so that Blender's 'first glancing at this book of Multum's dated his beard' (B2, 101). The ability of people to form texts, or for texts to be carried over into the lives of people, has its best exemplar in Multum himself. When Blender finally meets him, his person is a perfect replacement for his book: 'He appeared, and something so completely different to preconceived notions, and at the same time so easy and unjarring was there, that there was no need to refer to the book.'

This idea that a reading can be carried on outside the demarcated limits of the text is, for me, suggested in a rather way by Blender's experience of 'reading' the advert for Multum's book. I read how Blender is 'attracted by a poster advertising a new book': I follow his attempts to understand the poster, trying out a similar strategy in my own reading of the story in front of me. I come, eventually, to the last page, and, left hanging on the promise that 'further parts will be printed in the next number of "Blast"' (B2,



102), I stop reading. But that's not quite all: on page 103, facing 'The Crowd Master's open-ended conclusion, I see a large Vorticist-style commercial, advertising 'ezra pound's new book' (see plate 6). Is this some kind of subliminal strategy for flogging *Cathay*, inspiring the reader to 'brutal and enthusiastic actions like the buying of a book in his inactive life'?

Blenner-like, I could begin to look for dramatic oppositions between the scholarly repose of Pound's titles ('Personæ—Exultations'; 'Canzoni—Ripostes'; 'Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti'; 'Cathay...For the most part from the Chinese of Rihaku, from the notes of the late Ernest Fenollosa, and the Decipherings of the Professors Mori and Ariga'), and the noisy energy of the headline and illustration, with its crude white and black diagonals, intersecting within a heavy frame of black masses. But whatever Blenner might have made of it, the advert demonstrates that the reading strategies of 'The Crowd Master' aren't merely ways of interpreting fictions: they can be carried over into life, back into the extratextual world to which this advert is a threshold.<sup>66</sup>

Given its unfinished status, one can only speculate about the ultimate 'meaning' of 'The Crowd Master.' It would seem to offer an account of Blenner's attempts to 'read' the modern city: initially, he fails, losing himself to the sensations of the crowd-mood; he falls victim to the crude, alluring and manipulative signals planted in newspapers, on walls in the form of posters, and so on. Mul-tum's book, though, offers the same kind of resistance that *Blast* had offered its readers; Blenner's education, and how he self consciously learns, through his reading, to defuse the emotive tribal rhetoric of the headline-writers, would presumably be developed

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<sup>66</sup>'*Seuils*,' or 'thresholds,' is the original title of Gerard Genette's *Paratexts*: the term implies that the paratext forms 'an undefined zone between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text)' (Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2).



through further installments.

*The Art of Being Ruled* closes with a quote from Parmenides, 'I wish to communicate this view of the world to you exactly as it manifests itself: and so no human opinion will ever be able to get the better of you.'<sup>67</sup> Many critics have been puzzled by that dense, seemingly disordered political work, but Reed Way Dasenbrock argues, fairly convincingly, that 'Lewis gives his reader a crash course in the kind of deception that flourishes in the modern world. It is therefore up to the reader to separate the wheat from the chaff in Lewis's discourse, to follow the "manifold by-ways" of his argument, and sort things out for himself.'<sup>68</sup> 'The Crowd Master,' for me, is a more impressive demonstration of a text which teaches its audience to 'read'; its didacticism is toned down, but still quite manifest, embodied in the essentially artistic play of form and scale.

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<sup>67</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p. 375.

<sup>68</sup>Dasenbrock, afterword, *The Art of Being Ruled*, p. 438.



## CHAPTER 3

# 'No sensation worth noting': After the Crowd

While all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowd is the only force that nothing menaces, and of which the prestige is continually on the increase. The age we are about to enter will in truth be the era of crowds.<sup>1</sup>

We are the first men of a Future that has not materialised. We belong to a 'great age' that has not 'come off'.<sup>2</sup>

When I began this study, I expected to find crowds everywhere; it was only gradually that I realised that, to apply Le Bon's projected 'Era of Crowds' to the high-modernist visions of the 1920s you must situate the crowds within 'a Future that has not materialised'. Neither Pound nor Lewis had much time for the idea of a crowd-art by the 20s.

Still, in the literary scene, we have the disintegration of personality and the external world experienced by the *Childermass's*

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<sup>1</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, trans. (unaccredited) as *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (1896; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982), xiv–xv.

<sup>2</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun Press, 1982) p. 256.



hordes of appellants, caught between the war and postponed entry to heaven. We have the crowds in *Mrs Dalloway*, that materialise around the unknown, unseen passenger of the motorcar whose face will be known 'when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth.'<sup>3</sup>

My assumption had been that that this new phenomena, 'the Crowd', seen in the early twentieth century as almost a new social medium capable of dissolving older, more solid bonds, would have left a lasting effect on the medium of art. That works created explicitly as 'Crowd art' would do things differently, because of these assumptions about 'Mass man's' ability to see and think of the world differently.

The critical literature on the 'great divide', the lively debate that critics like Huyssen and Jameson have conducted since the late 1970s about modernism's relationship with twentieth century 'mass culture'<sup>4</sup> certainly seems to suggest that the crowd is there somewhere, that it's key to understanding the politics of Pound and Lewis's work.

The more I looked at my chosen texts, though, the more elusive the crowds became. How difficult could it be to find six or seven million people in the literature of twentieth-century London? More difficult, it turned out, than I had at first assumed. As I read, great street-crowds dissolved before my eyes: the crowd in the station of the metro ceased to be a crowd, becoming petals, the stuff of much more traditional lyric. The crowds of *The Waste Land* were already undone by death, ghosts of a crowd. Mrs Dalloway journeyed through ever more abstract manifestations of the crowd,

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<sup>3</sup>Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986); 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture', in *The Jameson Reader*, ed. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 123–148.



on a trajectory towards a solitary aircraft, distant, imbued with an almost religious transcendence.

My aim, in this final chapter will be to find a way to deal with the disparity between the crowd's seeming centrality, and its simultaneous absence: to account for these crowds' existence, at the centre of modern culture, yet in a strangely disembodied, elusive form.

Form, I think, is the key. We have noted how Lewis configured the crowd as an exercise in reading. What if the crowd is approached more in the spirit of a Le Bon than of a Pound, as a dispassionate observer?

The opening and closing parts of this chapter have a common pursuit: what happens when the language of science is brought across into the aesthetic realm? It's a big question, and I have deliberately limited my approach to two very small questions which can, nevertheless, be illuminating. First, I shall leap back out of the chronological order of this thesis to examine the formation of Vorticism, circa 1914. Then, returning to the main sweep of my previous chapters, I want to pick up one of Lewis's crowdtexts in the 1930s, and look at how the aesthetic response to crowd science had been reconsidered in the post-war period. The central part of the chapter examines the elusiveness of the crowd-spirit in the 1920s, and gives us some understanding of its 'haunted' nature which occasion the sorts of seances we finish the chapter with.

Robert Nye, Gustave Le Bon's intellectual biographer, has criticised Susanna Barrows' book, *Distorting Mirrors*,<sup>5</sup> for the way that it 'treats science as a largely ideological construction, whose findings are shuffled in and out of the writings of crowd psychologists as if they were the images of novels or political speeches.'<sup>6</sup> But his

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<sup>5</sup>Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, Yale Historical Publications (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>6</sup>Robert A. Nye, 'II. The crowd', *Isis* 74:4 (1983), p. 570.



claim that Barrows 'undervalues the scientific content of crowd psychology' is perhaps rather harsh; it make sense of technical and aesthetic concerns in the same breath. Nye's own essay on crowd culture is one of the more successful examples;<sup>7</sup> here is my attempt to account for what happens when writers confront the scientific debates of their time.

#### EXCURSUS ON VORTEX MOTION: EDDIES AT THE CONFLUENCE OF SCIENCE AND ART

'Vortex' is a difficult word. A quick straw-poll of friends and colleagues suggested a vague general association with whirling eddies, sucking holes, and a sense of the fantastic: formations in space, things that might be prized by players of *Dungeons and Dragons*. It's important of course, in the vocabulary of science fiction (it's there at the birth of space-opera, with E.E. 'Doc' Smith's 'Vortex Blaster' stories of the 1940s)<sup>8</sup> and in the growing pseudo-science market ('water's vortex energy' is, newagers claim, 'the very energy that may be responsible for creating and sustaining our living reality'—indeed, if your municipal water supply suffers from poor 'hydration power', placing a spiralled copper 'vortex

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<sup>7</sup>Robert Nye, 'Savage Crowds, Modernism, and Modern Politics', in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, ed. Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): 42–55, 378–382.

<sup>8</sup>E. E. Smith, *The Vortex Blaster* (Hicksville, N.Y.: Gnome Press, 1960)—the title story was first published in *Comet* 1:5 (1941), when Smith was part-way through publishing his groundbreaking *Lensman* series (Reading, PA: Fantasy Press, 1948–1954; first published in *Astounding* 1937–1948), to which they are peripheral. Doc Smith incorporated existing speculative scientific and pseudo-scientific ideas into a moral and political universe entirely appropriate to the conditions of internationalised total war in which he was writing, and his vision laid the foundations for everything from Frank Herbert's *Dune* to the *Star Wars* films. See Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 71–74.



energizer' in the afflicted area can, they say, restore its 'energetic forces').<sup>9</sup> But as students of modern culture, the word 'Vortex' commands our attention chiefly because of the existence, between about 1914 and 1915, of something called Vorticism, and the journal *Blast*, edited by Lewis, and subtitled, 'a Review of the Great English Vortex.'

'Vorticism', Wyndham Lewis would write, much later, 'was what I, personally, did and said at a certain period'.<sup>10</sup> Much has been made of this quote:<sup>11</sup> it either absolves us from having to reconcile the wildly differing versions of Vorticism that we encounter when we read *Blast*, or it gives us something to argue against when we want to come up with a new definition of Vorticism, those given in *Blast* being so unsatisfactory.

My definition of Vorticism, outlined here, is highly idiosyncratic, and steamrollers over most of the aspects of Vorticism that you'd most readily recognise: Lewis's designs and the play *The Enemy of the Stars* don't figure, and neither does the greater part of the *Blast* manifestos. But don't worry; none of this is intended to alter those views of Vorticism which see it as the 'Art of the First Machine Age',<sup>12</sup> or as 'a movement of individuals'.<sup>13</sup> I can see the utility of those critics' Vorticisms that accept the movement as what Lewis personally did and said immediately before the First

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<sup>9</sup>William E. Marks, *The Holy Order of Water: Healing Earth's Waters and Ourselves* (Great Barrington: Bell Pond, 2001), p. 67; 'Water-Revitalization Technology for Better Vitality', *FutureTechToday*, EMF Pollution Solutions, Retrieved 24 Sept. 2002 <<http://www.emfsafe.com/waterevitalizer.htm>>.

<sup>10</sup>Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Gallery, 1956), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>By far the best discussion of the controversy surrounding Lewis's personal revision of Vorticism in the 1950s is to be found in Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 179–187.

<sup>12</sup>This is the argument of Richard Cork's landmark study, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, 2 vols. (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1976).

<sup>13</sup>Ezra Pound, "Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist", *Egoist* 1 (15 August, 1914), p. 306.



World War.

That said, I do find the more rigidly defined versions of Vorticism somewhat problematic: if Vorticism was connected to the patterns that nineteenth-century astronomy found in star systems,<sup>14</sup> or even if it is about patterned energies,<sup>15</sup> then how does this help us understand its cultural implications? Obviously, I don't mean this as a criticism of Hugh Kenner, who uses the figure of the knot and the whirlpool to explore works and cultural movements, but I don't think we need any more explanations of what a vortex is unless they can tell us about what Vorticist art was doing. Simply telling us what a vortex is doesn't explain Vorticism, any more than an understanding of regular hexahedrons can explain Cubism.

My argument will cover some of the same ground as Ian F. A. Bell's recent work on Pound, Eliot and science,<sup>16</sup> but my intention is to address one particular problem. I am very interested, obviously, in Lewis's and Pound's engagement with ideas about the crowd, about the new phenomena of mass behaviour and politics which I've argued were, to many people in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, seen as one of the key problems of modernity. Critics have had much to say about where Vorticism fits in with these ideas: Andrew Wilson, for example, in the most recent book on the subject, writes of 'Lewis's Vorticism, in which the identification of body with life delivers another sort of Body; a hard-edged robotic manikin, part of the faceless unthinking crowd'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Timothy Materer, *Vortex*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), pp. 145–6.

<sup>16</sup>Ian F. A. Bell, 'The Real and the Ethereal: Modernist Energies in Eliot and Pound', in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science, Art and Literature*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalryple Henderson (Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 114–125, 389–390. See also Ian F. A. Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The Modernist poetics of Ezra Pound* (London: Methuen, 1981).

<sup>17</sup>Andrew Wilson, 'Rebels and Vorticists: "Our Little Gang"', in Paul Ed-



But for me, one of the problems with the way this question is tackled is the way that really quite half-baked texts are read as though they had the status of coherent philosophy. If you look carefully at that quote from Andrew Wilson, you'll see that the first part of the sentence, lifted from Lewis's speculations on the 'wild body' in an early essay, is presented as a transparent critical formulation, which it isn't; as if it explained Lewis's presentation of the 'hard-edged robotic manikin' and 'the faceless unthinking crowd', which it doesn't.

The problem becomes clearer when one examines Lewis's story in the second number of *Blast*, 'The Crowd Master'. It's the most interesting thing that Lewis wrote, and he came back to it again and again, but when it's read at all, readers have tended to see it as expressing a 'moral' position on the psychology of the crowd: Lewis is either stigmatising the crowd as a soft effeminate mass, as against the 'good' hard masculine vorticist individual. But the story patently doesn't do this: rather it's testing modern scientific theories of the crowd, against the resources of modern art. What happens, the story asks, when an artist works as though he were using the rather dubious framework of an powerful through eccentric analytical science—in this case the science of crowds—in place of the usual aesthetic framework: this happens, and this ends up being a marvellous, fragmentary and self contradictory text that gives us a surprising perspective on the psychological means of writing.

I want to use the image of the vortex as a way of looking at these questions. I think it could help us to focus on this idea of art acting as though it possessed a similar means for understanding the world as science. It could help us to see the vorticist artwork not as a sad, failed adjunct to a promising body of speculative criticism, but as the creation of a new kind of aesthetic practice—an art that is forced to behave as if it were science—which takes

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wards, ed., *Blast: Vorticism 1914–1918* (London: Ashgate, 2000), p. 26.



a particular style of critical posturing only as its most important working tool.

## AESTHETICS AND MECHANICS

And so what does Vorticism mean? Someone first encountering other avant-gardes could, I suspect, feel reasonably comfortable with the 'cube' in cubism, the 'future' in futurism, the 'image' in imagism: the words here at least seem to refer to kinds of things we might associate with aesthetic practice. But vortex?

Lewis attributes the coinage to Pound; Pound starts using the word regularly in about 1913, first of all to refer to London: 'London... is like Rome of the decadence, so far, at least, as letters are concerned. She is a main and vortex drawing strength from the peripheries.'<sup>18</sup> Anyone familiar with the *Blast* manifestos will at once recall their talk of a great London vortex, and much has been made of this, with critics suggesting that Vorticism is primarily an art of place, an aesthetic of the London Metropolis.<sup>19</sup> I'm not happy with explanations that stop here. Vortex is not commonly understood to be equivalent to Metropolis, or to London. Whence the metaphoric leap?

Pound's next use of the word, in an article on Jules Romains' poetry written in late 1913,<sup>20</sup> makes me considerably happier given my interest in Crowds. Pound is translating Romains' 'Ode à la foule qui est ici'—Romains being the one-man representative of the Unanimist school, which proposed an aesthetic based on the proposition that large conglomerations of people (an audience, a crowd, or a city) shared a single soul or substance. Scientific laws about crowd minds were popular in France following Gustave Le

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<sup>18</sup>Ezra Pound, 'Through Alien Eyes. III', *New Age* 12 (30 January, 1913) p. 300.

<sup>19</sup>See Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p. 136.

<sup>20</sup>Ezra Pound, 'The Approach to Paris... IV', *New Age* 13 (25 September, 1913), p. 631.



Bon's work, and his formulation of a 'law of the mental unity of crowds'. Pound, in his translation, is trying to match the imaginary technical vocabulary of crowd-science that Romaine drops into his declamatory ode:

He feels the warmth of the crowd, he feels the  
focus of eyes.

Je ne vois pas si sa prunelle est noire ou bleue

;

Mais je sens qu'il me touche;

He becomes the 'crater' or vortex.

Ecoute; Little by little the voice issues from  
my flesh—

And seeks you—and trembles—and you trem-  
ble.<sup>21</sup>

Let's hold this idea of vortex as a pseudo-technical word (sci-fi, new age)—an imaginary term to describe the notional point where Crowd Mind Energy is concentrated, or something. I'm interested in this idea of an imaginary technical vocabulary. Let's fast-forward nine months or so, and look at Pound's definition of 'vortex' in the *Blast* manifestos:

The vortex is the point of maximum energy.

It represents, in mechanics, the 'greatest efficiency' in the precise sense—as they would be used in a textbook of MECHANICS.

You may think of man as that toward which perception moves. You may think of him as the TOY of circumstance, as the plastic substance RECEIVING impressions.

OR you may think of him as DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, as CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting. (B1, 153)

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<sup>21</sup>Ezra Pound, 'The Approach to Paris... IV', *New Age* 13 (25 September, 1913), p. 631.



'As they would be used in a textbook of mechanics'—that notion of an imaginary vocabulary again. How would 'vortex' be used in a textbook of mechanics? What does it have to do with mechanics? And what's all this about efficiency? Clearly, we are in a world of imaginary poetics where things are as clear and technical as in the world of mechanics. Let's take a quick look, anyhow, at the way Vortex might be used in a textbook of mechanics, and see if it throws any light on my questions.

In Latin, 'vortex' meant a whirl or eddy, and is usually associated with wind or water; passing into the English language, it would retain this classical sense of an epic natural force: the wreck of the Trojan fleet, the rocks of Scylla, the pits and vortices of Mount Aetna.<sup>22</sup>

During the Enlightenment, however, when Descartes theorised the universe as an aetherial field of eddying atoms, he used the term 'vortex' to refer to the whirlpool-forms the ether took around celestial bodies—so that, for example, the earth floats in a solar vortex of subtle atoms whirling around the sun, which drive the earth along with them. Vortex was suddenly a key word for conceptualising the cosmos, in ways that were intimately bound up with natural philosophy, with materialism, with new ways of knowing about the world. The Presbyterian bible scholar Matthew Henry translated the poetry of King James's Ecclesiastes—'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun'—into the terms of this recent technical, philosophical cosmology: what was meant, he said, was that he 'saw... all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre'.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of the Cartesian vortex would soon die. Swift foresaw it in *The Battle of the Books*, when he killed off Descartes in a volley of philosophical arrows: 'The Torture of the Pain, whirled

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<sup>22</sup>Cited in 'Vortex', *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup>Cited in 'Vortex', *Oxford English Dictionary*.



the valiant Bow-man round, till Death, like a Star of superior Influence, drew him into his own Vortex'.<sup>24</sup> But it was Newton's gravity that eventually killed off Descartes' vortex theory.

### SMOKE RINGS AND VORTEX ATOMS

The vortex theory of atoms that emerged in the 1860s, and survived into Pound's and Lewis's childhoods, was developed chiefly by William Thomson (better known as Lord Kelvin), building on work done in fluid dynamics by the German scientist, Herman von Helmholtz.<sup>25</sup> Obviously, we don't have time to go too deeply into the science of vortices, which reappear in the history of physics with an almost predictable regularity, most recently in work on superstrings. Helmholtz had proved in a series of theorems that, given a continuous frictionless fluid, isolated from external forces, whirlpool-like motions would form themselves into stable 'vortex rings'—donut-shaped structures of fluid rotation that were utterly immune to destruction or dissipation.<sup>26</sup>

Vortical movements in a continuous fluid would become a fruitful source of speculation in the fast-moving world of British physics. James Clerk Maxwell was arguing, by the beginning of the 1860s, that electromagnetic lines of force were driven along by the movement of vortex filaments rotating in the ether, an image that would become one of the most famous in nineteenth-century physics.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Jonathan Swift, *The Battle of the Books*, ed. A. Ross and D. Wooley, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>25</sup>See Lord Kelvin (Sir William Thomson), 'On Vortex Atoms', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 6 (1867): 94-105; Bruce J Hunt, *The Maxwellians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 212-3; E. A. Davis and Isobel Falconer, *J. J. Thomson and the Discovery of the Electron* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), pp. 16-18; Alexandre Filippov, *The Versatile Soliton* (Boston: Birkhauser, 2000), pp. 51-2.

<sup>26</sup>See Filippov, *The Versatile Soliton* pp. 44-50.

<sup>27</sup>Peter M Harman, *The Natural Philosophy of James Clerk Maxwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 117, p. 197.



But in 1867, a spectacular demonstration of the existence of Helmholtz's vortex rings in nature brought these stable structures of movement to the attention of William Thomson. Peter Guthrie Tate had set up some apparatus which expelled smoke rings into his Edinburgh lecture theatre. The smoke rings resisted all efforts to cut them with a knife; they simply wriggled around or moved away from the sharp object. When two rings were propelled towards each other, they interacted in peculiar ways: they either glanced towards one another and went into a state of violent vibration, passed through one another, or expanded ever more slowly towards one another, never quite touching, depending on the angle.<sup>28</sup>

It was this behaviour that stimulated the vortex atom theory: Thomson saw an analogy between these corpuscular smoke structures, and the kinds of corpuscular structures which, if they existed in a continuous electromagnetic ether, could constitute the atoms from which all matter was built. The theory has recently been characterised as 'an ambitious attempt to establish a unitary and continuous "theory of everything" based solely on the dynamics of the ether.'<sup>29</sup> In his Adams Prize essay of 1882, young J. J. Thomson gave an elaborate account of the vortex theory and extended it to cover chemical problems, including affinity and dissociation. As late as 1895, William Hicks gave an optimistic report on the state of art of the vortex atom at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). Hicks's view of the goal of theoretical physics is worth quoting at some length:

While, on the one hand, the end of scientific investigation is the discovery of laws, on the other, science

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<sup>28</sup>Robert Silliman, 'William Thomson: Smoke Rings and Nineteenth-Century Atomism' *Isis* 54 (1963): 461-474.

<sup>29</sup>Helge Kragh, 'The Vortex Atom: A Victorian Theory of Everything', *Centaurus* 44 (2002): 32-114.



will have reached its highest goal when it shall have reduced ultimate laws to one or two, the necessity of which lies outside the sphere of our recognition. These ultimate laws—in the domain of physical science at least—will be the dynamical laws of the relations of matter to number, space, and time. The ultimate data will be number, matter, space, and time themselves. When these relations shall be known, all physical phenomena will be a branch of pure mathematics.<sup>30</sup>

But really, you may well ask, how can you justify moving from Helmholtz's work in fluid mechanics, Maxwell's lines of force, and Thomson's use of vortex motion to unify matter and force, and making the leap to Vorticism and the English avant-garde of half-a-century later? Herman von Helmholtz may be a fine physicist, but it's a little obscure to try and pin an art movement on him.

Well, for a start, more important art movements than Vorticism have been pinned onto Helmholtz, who'd also done a lot of work on the biology of visual perception. The cliché that Impressionism rested on Chevreul's popularisation of Helmholtz's optical discoveries was already well established by the time Pound apparently became interested in vortices, being rehearsed, for example, by Anthony M. Ludovici in a 1912 review in the *New Age*<sup>31</sup>—precisely the magazine that those early quotes where Pound mentioned vortices came from. Helmholtz was, in many ways, a nineteenth-century equivalent of, say, Benoit Mandelbrot, Douglas Hofstadter, or Steven Jay Gould, a technical pioneer who became a household name because of the influence his essays had in the arts and humanities. Certainly, he was well-known enough that correspondents to the *New Age* could quote Helmholtz when complaining

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Helge Kragh, *Quantum Generations: A History of Physics in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), chapter 1.

<sup>31</sup>Anthony M. Ludovici, 'The Sonderburg Collection at Cologne', *New Age* 10 (8 August, 1912), p. 348.



about the follies of Cubism, as one did in March 1914.<sup>32</sup>

But if we're looking for direct evidence of Pound's awareness of Helmholtz and vortex theory, it's to the *Egoist* that we should turn, rather than the *New Age* (the *Egoist* being another leftfield Edwardian journal, much more closely affiliated to the Pound-Lewis axis of London art, an advertiser in the back of *Blast*). Because Pound had an alter-ego; his name was 'von Helmholtz', and he wrote reviews for the *Egoist*. Pound signed four of his reviews in 1914 with variations on the Helmholtz name—either Bastien von Helmholtz or Baptiste von Helmholtz.<sup>33</sup> The joke has nothing to do with the contents of the articles, which are thoroughly Poundian and not at all Helmholtzian, but they were published in the February and June of 1914.

The second batch, then—the June batch—were published little more than two weeks before Pound's vortex manifesto appeared in *Blast*, the one where he spoke of the vortex as 'the point of maximum energy', 'as they would be used in a textbook of mechanics': mechanics being precisely the branch of science to which Helmholtz's vortical theories of fluid dynamics belonged.

'Really all this organised disturbance'—Lewis is writing about the heyday of Vorticism—'was art behaving as if it were politics'.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, I'm not talking about politics today, but I like this 'as if'—'art behaving as if it were politics'—as a way of thinking about Vorticism's relation to electrodynamics.

Lewis's 'as if' strikes me as a particularly fruitful paradigm for the way that our art—crowd-science is operating. T. J. Clark comes

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<sup>32</sup>Harold B. Harrison, 'Cubism', *New Age* 14 (26 March, 1914), p. 671.

<sup>33</sup>Pound [Bastien von Helmholtz, pseud.], 'Suffragettes', *Egoist* 3 (June 1, 1914): 255; 'The Bourgeois' and 'John Synge', *Egoist* 3 (February 2, 1914): 53, 53-4. See also Ian F. A. Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The Modernist poetics of Ezra Pound* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 159.

<sup>34</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, rev. edn. (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun, 1982), p. 32. Hereafter referred to in the text as *B&B*.



close to it in his discussion of Cubism, where he formulates what he calls 'the "as if" hypothesis'. Picasso's paintings, Clark argues, ask, "'What would it be like. . . to have a new means of representing the world, and to have those means be complete and efficient, with the power to discriminate a whole other set of aspects to visual—maybe mental appearance?" "It would be like this."'<sup>35</sup>

It would be like this, these Vorticist fragments likewise say, if we could harness the kinds of energies imagined by the physicists (no matter whether the physics holds up to contemporary scrutiny). (As if, not just so: this is how we might imagine the world, and not this is how the world is). And T. J. Clark's argument is useful here because he finds a way to move beyond the inflexible 'classic' view of a modernism that 'responded to changes out there in physics'. Modernism, Clark argues, did not 'devise a new description of the world'—'It was a counterfeit of such a description—an imagining of what kinds of things might happen to the means of Western painting (let's substitute, British Art) if such a new description arose.'<sup>36</sup>

'We use the words', Pound had written in his Vortex manifesto, 'as they would be used in a textbook of mechanics.' I wonder whether these vorticist texts and studies are asking what might happen to the means of poetry if poetic language were to be reimagined as capable of the same kinds of work as precise descriptive mathematics. Of course, the poetry does not actually have to measure nature's forces with a mathematical precision; certainly, nothing that Pound published in *Blast* does. What's important is the possibility of a new way of seeing art.

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<sup>35</sup>T. J. Clarke, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 213.

<sup>36</sup>T. J. Clarke, *Farewell to an Idea*, p. 213–215.



## THE CROWD'S AFTER-IMAGE

In the spirit of this 'what if', let's try another: what if it was 1922, and you were reading *The Waste Land* for the first time. On the one hand, there is the testimony of art, and on the other, of the historians. Looking back at 1922, we find that the Crowd has recently had a rich few months in the social and political debates of London. After 'the year of the drought, when', as Richard Aldington remembered, 'no rain fell for six months... and the fields of England were burned brown,' a brown winter fog settles again over the city, and with it an election. Lloyd George, once the 'great tribune of the mob'—'DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE HAS THE VORTEX IN HIM?', Lewis had joked in the first issue of *Blast*—seems to have 'lost touch with the crowd'; he resigns in October, three days after Eliot's poem is published, and the disparate interest groups which had made up his Coalition Government, previously united in their collective dazzlement at his 'variety... performance', drift back to their respective parties.<sup>37</sup>

Lloyd George had famously put the focus on the crowds of 1914 as a driving factor behind the coming of war:

The theory which is propagated today by pacifist orators... that the Great War was engineered by elder and middle aged statesmen who sent young men to face its horrors, is an invention... I shall never forget the war-like crowds that thronged Whitehall and poured into Downing Street, whilst the Cabinet was deliberating on the alternative of peace or war. On Sunday there was

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<sup>37</sup>For the weather, see Richard Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake: A Book of reminiscences* (Cassell: London, 1968), p. 247; J. M. Stratton, *Agricultural Records, AD 220–1968*, ed. Ralph Whitlock (London: John Baker, 1969), p. 140, and *Manchester Guardian*, 13 Nov. 1922, p. 6. For Lloyd George, see *Outlook*, editorial, 21 Oct. 1922, p. 335; *B2*, n.p. [8], 'The Twilight of Mr Lloyd George', *Outlook*, 7 Oct. 1922, pp. 284; more generally, see Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition, 1918–1922* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1990).



a great crowd. Monday was a Bank Holiday and multitudes of young people concentrated in Westminster demonstrating for war against Germany.<sup>38</sup>

The crowd itself, which had been so visible throughout Lloyd George's premiership, appears suddenly less starkly: last year's aborted general strike, which had caused such panic regarding the influence of the mass ('incomparably the greatest working-class upheaval that has ever taken place anywhere in the world' a contemporary prophesied in the run-up), was a non-event, called off at the last moment. 'In 1922,' writes a contemporary, 'you will hear that the British working man is too staid and sensible a person to think of revolution except through the ballot box'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Adrian Gregory, 'British "War Enthusiasm" in 1914: a Reassessment', in Gail Braybon, ed, *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2004) pp.67-85

<sup>39</sup>*New Statesman*, editorial, 13 April, 1921, p.419. The general strike was anticipated by Woolf: see the entry for 15 April, 1921, in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 5 volumes (London: Hogarth Press, 1977-1984), II, 111: 'A queer sort of stillness seems already settling down on us... This is the foreboding of the General Strike... [At] 10 tonight, unless something happens meanwhile, all trains, trams, buses, mines, & perhaps electric light works come to an end.' A 15-year-old Evelyn Waugh, his mind filled with *Bulldog Drummond*, had written to the Labour Exchange requesting strike-breaking duties: 'It is quite exasperating. It looks as though we are going to have a civil war and I shall be out of it. I mean to try and get in somehow. It seems to me that it has now ceased to be a matter of right and wrong and is merely war' (*The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976], p. 124). The 'contemporary' is the labour-busting spook Basil Thomson, *Queer People* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d. [1922]), p. 273, quot. Wrigley, p. 13. By the time of his demise, the conservative press were consistently using the passé languages of dictatorship and crowd-psychology to denigrate Lloyd George, who they saw as a passé premier. He had been a vessel 'of the strongest "herd instincts" of the English race"', 'used as mouthpiece by the Genius of the nation to speak words of flame' which allowed him to assume the position of 'Dictator': 'a demagogue preaching bitterly to the passions of the crowd' ('The Passing of the Premier', *Outlook*, 14 Oct. 1922, pp. 303; 'Mr. Lloyd and Mr. George', *Saturday Review*,



And so, while the 1922 election appears as ‘a battle in the mist’, while ‘there is no lifting of the fog as the campaign nears its end’, while the issues appear ‘so vague and so confused that a very large proportion of the electorate does not know in the least how to vote’—such vagaries and obfuscation are merely things that a responsible electorate will have to try to work out in this time of ‘return to party politics. People can think again and talk again;’ Le Bon’s stark warnings about ‘electoral crowds’ and their thoughtless impulses no longer appear very relevant. After the pre-war crisis and a few brief summers of post-war unrest, it’s becoming clear that the return to a staid, sensible parliamentarianism is absorbing the revolutionary energies of the one-time suffragettes and strikers. Everything that made the psychological crowd appear so starkly before the war—its dazzling, primitive collective energy, imagined to move beneath and against the modern current of rationalisation—is now beside the point. The possibilities of direct action envisaged by the pre-war strikers, and the new politics of collective unity and marvellous effect which they seemed to represent, have vanished in the Westminster fog.<sup>40</sup>

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11 Nov. 1922, p. 709). Thus, the fact that his hostile attitude to labour after 1919 had alienated his working-class support can be misrepresented as the final convulsion of some mythic mind: ‘the Genius of England, to encompass his overthrow, has been compelled to utilise the subconscious racial instinct against one-man rule handed down through all our generations’ (‘The Passing of the Premier’, p. 304). The last detailed study of these attitudes to Lloyd George is Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Lloyd George’s Premiership: A study in “Prime Ministerial Government”’, *The Historical Journal* 13 (1970): 130–157.

<sup>40</sup>The election returned a large—but, according to the constitutional thinking of the time, unmandated—Conservative majority (they commanded a smaller share of the popular vote than Labour and the two Liberal factions combined) and elevated Labour, for the first time, to the status of official opposition: see Austin Harrison, ‘Parliament Regained’, *English Review* 35 (1922): 562–70. The quotations are from *New Statesman*, editorial, 11 Nov. 1922, p. 161; *Nation and Athenaeum*, editorial, 11 Nov. 1922, p. 221; Harrison, p. 562. For Le Bon on electoral crowds see *The Crowd*, pp. 180–192.



'There was,' recalled Ford, on his way out of London that November, 'as I passed through Trafalgar Square, a dense fog and the results of a general election coming in... an immense shouting mob in a muffled and vast obscurity. The roars made the fog sway in vast curtains over the baffled light-standard. That for me was the last of England.' Occultation; vast obscurity; the last of England: how far he had come from the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition before the war, when an 'infinite clear radiance of pure light', illuminating upturned faces in the 'infinite moving mass' of the Crowd, had seemed to open up the possibility of a future crowd-art.<sup>41</sup>

These two moments, the moment of disclosure and the moment of foreclosure, define, I think, the parameters of my study. We will return to consider their meaning before the end of this chapter, and not allow ourselves to be delayed too long by their ramifications. Both moments had been present in LeBonite crowd-theory all along though: the crowd's power to dissolve the world and bring about end of civilisation, and to bring new formations into being. Is this not where the vision of the crowd most closely touches the vision of modernism?—modernist art as an art which dissolves the world, positing a radical break with the aesthetic forms that have come before, and imagining that art might call a new order of things into being?

So what, you will ask, has any of this to do with the poem Eliot wrote? My claim that the crisis was over by 1922 already seems at odds with precisely those readings that have associated *The Waste Land* with the Crowd; that have drawn on Klaus Theweleit's reading of Fascists' anxiety about a 'red flood' to link the poem's fear of 'death by water' with a public fear of revolutionary tides and collapsing boundaries.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ford, 'Impressionism—Some Speculations', *Poetry* 2 (1913), p. 181. See above, Chapter 1.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Mod-*



The poem's contract with its reader—'I will show you fear' (30)—seems to me to serve an aesthetic of strangeness which unsettles precisely because of its refusal to be 'elucidated' (whatever gestures the notes may make in this direction) by reference to anything else. We are sequestered, figuratively 'under the shadow of this red rock', within what one of the most astute readers of the poem's politics has called its 'alternative civil society', its own 'universe of discourse'.<sup>43</sup> And in this shadowy space, it's the unconsummated formal patterns and extemporally caricatured voices that disturb: the way the poem intimates pattern, quotes or echoes voices and verbal structures that we've come upon earlier or will come upon later in the poem, leaving them unresolved as new patterns or voices suggests themselves, each emerging and receding in turn.<sup>44</sup>

Anyway, the civil and industrial unrest that preceded Lloyd George's resignation certainly didn't unsettle Eliot, who'd mocked the idea that the 'Three Trades-Unions'—the alliance of the major industrial unions capable, it was thought, of seeing through a

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*ernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 190–3; Maud Elmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 198–9. For Theweleit's original argument, see his *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway, volume I of *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) I, 233. As in my previous chapters, the kind of argument I have in mind is essentially that of Andreas Huyssen.

<sup>43</sup>Michael Levenson, 'Does *The Waste Land* Have a Politics?', *Modernism/Modernity* 6:3 (1999), p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>This reading draws heavily on Michael Levenson's analysis of the 'opening movement of *The Waste Land*', remarkable for its attention to the way stylistic features in the poem suggest 'principles of similarity'—in insight on which Levenson constructs the most elegant critical characterization of the poem to date. See *A Genealogy of Modernism: A study of English literary doctrine 1908–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; reprinted 1997), pp. 168–72. 'No single consciousness presides; no single voice dominates. A character appears, looming suddenly into prominence, breaks into speech, and then recedes, having bestowed momentary conscious perception on the fragmentary scene' (172).



General Strike—would really bring anyone to ‘the point of perdition’. While the J. C. Squire-reading middle class’s ‘citadels appear to topple, it is busy strengthening its foundations’. Writing to his mother, before she visited him in London (this was in the late April of 1921, while he was drafting the first two sections of his poem), he coolly registered the increasing tendency for mass actions to be ‘settled’ almost as soon as they were declared: ‘the coal strike will look much more alarming to you than it does from here’, he reassured her. ‘It may be settled before you get this letter. . . . The temper of England is not revolutionary’.<sup>45</sup>

If we read *The Waste Land* as an expression of the ‘doubt that there was any way that English culture would hold together with a vastly expanded electorate’, or as a recapitulation of the Conservative Party’s ‘distinct strategy for achieving political power’, then I think we have missed some of this strangeness.<sup>46</sup> We could be too rigid about correlating the dust—‘I will show you fear in a handful of dust’—to the compounded human particles of the crowd (a common enough image: remember the ‘fine dust of extinction,’ which, Lewis wrote, ‘is scattered in any crowd like these black London war-crowds’):<sup>47</sup> about trying to ‘explain’ its marvelous, ambiguous images by pinning them to contemporary events. I’m interested in what might happen if we were to shift the focus away from *The Waste Land*’s supposedly conservative fear of crowds (which I’m arguing was, by 1922, passé, anyway), and

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<sup>45</sup>T. S. Eliot, ‘London Letter. March, 1921’, *Dial* 70 (Apr. 1921), p. 451; *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 449. Hereafter cited as *LOTSE*. Charlotte Eliot was apparently concerned that her boat from America might be held up by the strikes. For the dates of the various manuscripts, see Lawrence Rainey, ‘Eliot Among the Typists: Writing *The Waste Land*’, forthcoming. Rainey’s painstaking reconstruction of Eliot’s use of various paper stocks, comparing them with those used for dated correspondence, definitively supercedes all previous speculation.

<sup>46</sup>Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 177.

<sup>47</sup>Lewis, *CMms*, 1.



onto the patterns of disappearance and absence in the poem. What might one make of these patterns, reading Eliot's poem at the very moment the crowd was vanishing in the fog?

Focussing on an England where revolution could be so easily dismissed will, I hope, preserve the tentative, surprising ways that the strike, and the crowds of 1921, did impinge on Eliot's poem. Before the war, when Pound was beginning to formulate his image of the London 'Vortex', it was the 1913 coal strike that gave him 'faith in the future of England': 'A million men going out of work and keeping perfect order. No! The thing is stupendous... *Nascitur ordo.*' It was this bright vision—the birth of a new, collective order—that had informed the avant-gardist milieu from which Eliot emerged a professional writer. And if he wasn't overly concerned by mass unrest in 1921, he did note how the long smokeless summer of 'the coal strike... turned a blazing glare on London, discovering for the first time towers and steeples of an uncontaminated white.' It's tempting to speculate that *The Waste Land's* 'white towers' (289), once you clear away the critical soot which has obscured such historical details, may carry within them this moment when the architecture of a collective past was revealed, through the occult influence of the contemporary Crowd, stark and uncontaminated by the obscuring fog: a ghostly imprint left on the reader's retina after the image of that glimpsed collective has faded.

For a couple of years after the war, Eliot could still envision a poet who drew motive energy from 'the mind of [their] own country,' rather than their 'own private mind', tapping into an instinctive 'habit on the part of the public, to respond to particular stimuli.' But by the time he was drafting *The Waste Land*, a contrary strain had entered such arguments, voiced in the dandyish *Tyro* essays and 'London Letters' of 1921 and 1922 (which, unlike the earlier 'Tradition' essay, would not become fast-frozen in the canonic *Selected Essays*). The modern art he wanted, an art which



would gather up the last, unconscious 'fragments of a possible English myth', and transmute them into a collective 'ideal'—'a universal figure, feeding the idealism of hungry millions'—was slipping, even as Eliot tried to elucidate it, from view.<sup>48</sup>

And after 1922, after *The Waste Land* was put before the public, 'something... had happened to the mind of England': it could no longer be embraced as an immanent reality, the Group Mind valorized by collective psychologists, and apparent behind the everyday movements of London's postwar crowds. For the generation of critics who would rally behind Eliot, the collective mind would get swallowed up by more misty notions of a golden-age 'coherence' that was now ('now' being since the war or since the Restoration, depending on the particular version) irrecoverably lost: a vanished 'organic community', a lost 'wholeness', or 'integrated sensibility'. The fate of these ideas would be another story: their meanings, and their use by cultural critics in the '30s as a stick to beat the 'masses', have been productively explored in recent studies of modernism.<sup>49</sup>

To imagine how you might have made sense of the poem in 1922 entails both a return to the crowd, and to the moment of the crowd's eclipse. The moment of *The Waste Land* was the moment when the most powerful of modernist visions—the apparition of the crowd—disappeared from view; but at the same moment, the afterimage of that vision—the ideal of an art whose

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<sup>48</sup>Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Essays, 1917–1932* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 16 (hereafter cited as *SE*)—originally published in *The Egoist* 6 (September 1919), p. 55; 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', *SE* ?, originally in *The Dial* 69 (November 1920), p. 443; 'The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism', *Tyrol* 1 (April 1921), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup>Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *SE* 287 (originally in the *Times Literary Supplement* [20 October 1921], p. 670). For the fate of these ideas see Alison Pease, 'Readers with Bodies: Modernist Criticism's Bridge across the Cultural Divide', *Modernism/Modernity* 7:1 (2000): 77–97, esp. p. 79, and Marc Manganaro, *Culture, 1922: The emergence of a concept* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 151–174.



integrity was drawn from the vanished crowd—appeared most starkly. *The Waste Land*, modernism's first poem, stands in relation to Le Bon's projected 'era of crowds' in the same way that, according to Lewis, Eliot and the 'men of 1914' stood in relation to a larger myth of modernity: '*We are the first men of a Future that has not materialised. We belong to a "great age" that has not "come off".*'

## 1922: A RETURN TO THE SCENE OF THE CROWD

The strangeness *The Waste Land* held for its earliest readers is well known. Virginia Woolf, hearing Eliot perform his work, and seemingly impressed by his range of ventriloquism—'he sang it & chanted it [and] rhymed it'—was left with 'some strong emotion' which she seemed unable or unwilling to give a name to; she noted the poem's 'symmetry', but admitted that 'what connects it together, I'm not so sure'.<sup>50</sup> A little later, Harold Monro schizophrenically described the reaction of 'a friend' who found the poem's perverse playfulness 'an outrage', while arguing for himself that it eluded any critical measure. Eliot's poem struck him 'violently'; it is 'fierce and horrible': Eliot's contemporaries 'pale as one reads *The Waste Land*', and yet the impressions that it leaves on the reader's mind seem 'so contradictory that a large majority of minds will never be able to reconcile them, or conceive of it as an entity.'

Here is a very noble picture; and in what does this poetical picture consist? In images of a tower, an archangel, the sun rising through mists, or in an eclipse, the ruin of monarchs, and the revolutions of kingdoms. The mind

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<sup>50</sup>*Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975–1980), II, 572. 'T. S. Eliot', interview in *Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews* Second series (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 97.



is hurried out of itself, by a crowd of great and confused images; which affect because they are crowded and confused. For, separate them, and you lose much of the greatness; and join them, and you infallibly lose the clearness.<sup>51</sup>

A lot would happen in the months following Eliot's performance, for Woolf, of his completed poem: *The Waste Land* would be published, and more and more text would begin accruing to it. I can't help wanting to link this to the white towers and the fog: wanting to glimpse, behind the heavily overwritten text that's come down to me, the moment when Woolf could take literally Eliot's characterisation of his poem as 'rhythmical grumbling', so that she 'had only the sound of it' in her ears, and hadn't 'yet tackled the sense. But... liked the sound' (—'one doesn't quite know what it is that one wants to get off one's chest', Eliot put it, 'until one's got it off').<sup>52</sup> But of course the idea of a sensual, fragile original, that could be apprehended directly and without recourse to 'the sense,' is a dream: a dream not so different from the dream of a crowd-art that was imagined in 1913 to work directly through prerational sympathetic bonds, and far in advance of the kind of 'hard work' of critical elucidation that has been *The Waste Land's* historic burden.

I want to hold onto this dream, though, even though it would vanish behind the published poem. We can glimpse gestures towards this kind of direct communication: in the opening of 'The Fire Sermon', for example, where, in a landscape emptied of everything except song and performance—where the wind is 'unheard'

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<sup>51</sup>Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, [part ii, section 5]

<sup>52</sup>*Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975–1980), II, 572. 'T. S. Eliot', interview in *Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews* Second series (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 97.



and the 'nymphs are departed' (175); their friends 'have left *no* addresses' (181: this and the following emphases are mine) and the 'river bears *no* empty bottles' (177)—what remains are effects of rhythm and sound, stagey snatches of voice, their individual character lost in a common medium of direct communication that finds its climax in the pure sound poetry of

Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
So rudely forc'd  
Tereu (203-6).<sup>53</sup>

But what kind of reading experience will allow us to preserve the dream, glimpsed in passages like this, of a poetry where effect is everything, and still do justice to Monro's urge to put these effects into some meaningful kind of order—to 'reconcile them', to conceive of them as 'an entity'? That's the question I address in this section; my answer, my attempt to return to 1922, will actually be very simple, pedantically recording what texts were available when. Because when, a year after Eliot's performance, Woolf finished setting the type for the Hogarth Press *Waste Land* with her own hands,<sup>54</sup> the elements that would determine whether it wasn't or was read as a crowd-poem, as a piece to be sung and chanted and savoured in the ears, as the troubled autobiography of a déclassé haute-bourgeois, or as a pinboard for the aspirations of a generation of literary critics, were already in place.

Eliot first published it in his new review, the *Criterion*, in mid-October 1922, and a few days later it had its first American publication in the *Dial*. As yet, there were no published notes to accom-

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<sup>53</sup>With its insistent echoes of Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress', we could also compare this aesthetic with Eliot's characterization of that poem as 'a succession of concentrated images', culminating 'suddenly with that surprise which has been one of the most important means of poetic effect since Homer.' Eliot, 'Andrew Marvell', *Times Literary Supplement* (31 March 1921), p. 201.

<sup>54</sup>VW to Barbara Bagnall, 8 July, 1923, *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, III, 56.



pany the poem. These would appear less than two months later, when (on 15 December) Boni and Liveright published Eliot's poem as a short book. For British readers, this noteless hiatus would last much longer. Like Harold Monro, they would have to wait a whole eleven months, until the first London edition: the one set by Woolf at the Hogarth Press.<sup>55</sup>

Monro had already heard about the rumoured 'allusions to . . . thirty-three sources', though he'd not yet seen the notes. He's one of the last early readers to record his impressions without one hand on *The Golden Bough*, and doesn't seem to have felt the urge to fill his shop with copies of *From Ritual to Romance*. But the rumours had nonetheless suggested to him the specific practice which became seemingly instinctive to the actual readers of *The Waste Land*: the urge to shore up the poem with *more text*. He put it to an imaginary Eliot that 'it is not very easy for those who have not read your book *The Sacred Wood* to understand your poetry. Some insight into your mind is advisable' ('Possibly', is the mock-Eliot's not-very-helpful response, '—Well?'), and worried he was incapable of understanding the poem 'because my reading is not sufficiently wide.'

My argument will rest on this sociological fact: that, confronted with the fierce, violent, sonorous, irreconcilable strangeness of *The Waste Land*, its readers thirst for 'some insight', some way into 'tackling the sense'—we want a *context*.

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<sup>55</sup>The first number of *Criterion* was published on around 16 October, while the issue of the *Dial* in which *The Waste Land* appeared, dated November 1922, was actually published on around 20 October, or possibly a little later. For a discussion of these dates, see Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 78&n.; p. 195n.3; p. 101. Rainey's deduces a date of 20 October from a letter by the *Dial*'s publisher, Gilbert Seldes, but concedes 'a delay of perhaps one or two days'; Eliot was possibly under the impression it appeared on the 25<sup>th</sup>: in any case, he expected to see the December number on 25 November (LOTSE 614).



Monro thought *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot's book of criticism, might provide one; Edmund Wilson, who would make straight the way for readings of the poem which focussed on sources, privately wondered whether a more private pretext shouldn't also be sought, so that *The Waste Land* became 'a most distressingly moving account of Eliot's own agonized state of mind during the years which preceded his nervous breakdown';<sup>56</sup> but for most readers, the notes at the back of the book would be most convenient.

True, their stunning success at providing a model of reading, a model for the 'elucidation' or 'explanation' of a work (so that by the '30s it could be said that the 'lust for explaining modern poetry starts... with the first comments on "The Waste Land"') has waned in recent years, and with it the sense of *The Waste Land* as the master-text of modern poetry.<sup>57</sup> They won't give us a *Waste Land* that's very useful in the 21st century. But if my question is how, if it were 1922 and you were reading *The Waste Land* for the first time, you would get beyond Woolf's or Monro's first impressions—of how those first readers, flailing about for some explanation that might settle the matter, some way to reconcile its violent impressions and discover 'what connects it together', might have found a way into the poem—then the most obvious answer (the one which seemingly has the advantage that it is confirmed by the critical history of the poem, that it tallies with what most of those readers actually *did*) would be that you read the notes: that their model of a work with a 'plan' and 'incidental symbolism' will

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<sup>56</sup>Edmund Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics, 1912–1972*, ed. Elena Wilson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 94. He could even use the notes to bolster this reading. 'For the autobiographical significance of Tiresias' double sex... see the appendices of the Attis-Osiris volume of *The Golden Bough*', wrote Wilson, who seems to have erroneously assumed Eliot was gay. 'It is extremely interesting, explaining, as it does, what the primitive peoples did with their fairies' (99).

<sup>57</sup>[Geoffrey Grigson], 'New Books on Poetry—And Miss Sitwell', *New Verse* 12 (December 1934), p. 14.



structure your reading, allowing you to make sense of the poem's complexities.

The weakness of such an answer—besides any objection that 'making sense of the complexities' really means flattening them out, being rid of the strangeness that originally enthused the reader—is that, if you were reading the poem when it first appeared, in *The Criterion* or in *The Dial*, the notes didn't exist yet: you'd have to wait for the book publication.

### ELIOT'S LONDON LETTER: ELUCIDATING THE DIFFICULTIES

How might you have read the poem, I wonder, if you'd simply grasped onto the next thing by Eliot you came across, imagining that it might help you 'elucidate the difficulties' of the poem? For an American subscriber to the *Dial* (who, you will remember, had read *The Waste Land* in the November issue), that would have been the 'London Letter' in the December issue (which nevertheless appeared in mid-November, a little less than a month before the Boni and Liveright *Waste Land*),<sup>58</sup> the one where Eliot admitted to being 'quite incapable of taking any interest in any literary events in England in the last two months, if any have taken place', so depressed was he about the death of Marie Lloyd.<sup>59</sup> For a follower of literary events in England, subscribing to the *Criterion*, it would be 'In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd', a very slightly revised republication, in the issue for January 1923 (the Hogarth *Waste Land*, you will remember, wouldn't be published till September) of that same article on Lloyd's funeral. Could the funeral of Marie Lloyd, then, and the way that Eliot interpreted it, provide a way into understanding the patterns that appear and then vanish from view, or the ventriloquism, the voices who fade the moment they are audible, in *The*

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<sup>58</sup>Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, p. 195n.3.

<sup>59</sup>'London Letter. November, 1922', *Dial* 73 (Dec. 1922), p. 663.



## *Waste Land?*

Neither response, Woolf's hurried diary entry or Monro's playful, wryly self-deprecating 'Notes for a study of *The Waste Land*', claims to say anything very authoritative about the poem. But their superficial sense of uneasy strangeness, it seems clear, does not point to the work of a poet who recognises 'the necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere' (SE 16). A reader seeking to get beyond their stolen sense of *The Waste Land* as a new and not easily readable thing would need another model of coherence than that found in Eliot's prescriptions of 1919.<sup>60</sup>

First, how could they resolve the ferocious strangeness—what was it, Tradition's violent burlesquing? or could it be dismissed as a bad joke, 'worthier of Punch than of a serious poet'?—that

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<sup>60</sup>There's a reason, I think, for Eliot's move away from the idea of a 'mind of Europe' with which a 'traditional' poet would conform and cohere; it's an argument I hinted at in my opening paragraphs, but which may not convince until we have some evidence for it. But in case you suspect me of tossing aside Eliot's austere engagement with tradition on some occult pretext, so that we can rag without responsibility to our Shakespearean heritage—which, if you scratch the 'occult', I admit—I'll let it stand here. The idea of a 'tradition' which acts, like the crowd-mind, as the vessel for a common primal history—'which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draftsmen'(SE 16)—seemed in 1921 and 1922 to be crumbling away under the pressure of modern scrutiny. As he was drafting *The Waste Land*, Eliot was reading the *Ulysses* in manuscript (*Letters* 450, 455, 456) and he came to realise that such a powerfully negative artwork superannuated *everything*. 'It left Joyce with nothing to write another book on. It showed up the futility of all the English styles' (quot. in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, II, 382 [entry for 26 Sept. 1922]). *Ulysses* was significant for 'the old things to which [it] put an end' ('London Letter—August, 1922', *Dial* 73 [September 1922], p. 329). If such arguments appear completely at odds with the implications of 'Ulysses, Order and Myth'—also published in *The Dial*, little more than a year later (vol.75 [November 1923]: 480–483)—then that's precisely the point: the period surrounding the composition and publication of *The Waste Land*, represents a hiatus in his career during which the ending of all things, the vanishing of a collective ideal, suddenly becomes important.



was implied when such wildly varied fields of cultural knowledge as Oliver Goldsmith and Typewriter Girls intrude on one another? (—it was this ‘distortion’ at the end of the typewriter girl passage,

When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about the room again, alone,  
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts another record on the gramophone.

[253-6]

that so outraged Monro’s ‘friend’)<sup>61</sup> This wasn’t what Eliot was thought to mean, in 1919, when he declared that the tradition must be ‘ever so slightly altered’ by a new work (*SE* 15).

Secondly, Woolf was struck by the poem’s ‘symmetry’: an interesting word to choose, given her contemporaries’ first sense of the poem (even those sympathetic to it) as ‘a collection of flashes’, ‘disconnected, confused’.<sup>62</sup> Though the poem’s many internal systems of patterning (and symmetry is one of them) appear coherent enough in themselves, their very coherence seems to insinuate a transcendent master-pattern to which they all conform—a system that ‘connects it together’ and which Woolf was unable to identify. But the such coherence is always, ultimately, withheld; almost as soon as we discover an ordering principle, it vanishes.

As an example of what I mean by this, an argument that the poem frames a kind of fearful symmetry might begin by noting how the beginning of the its last section recapitulates elements from the beginning of its first: the ‘dry stone’, which gave ‘no sound of water’ (*TWL* 24) in ‘The Burial of the Dead’, is echoed by the unforthcoming ‘sound of water over a rock’ (355) of ‘What the Thunder Said’, and by the ‘stony places’ (324); ‘the mountains’

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<sup>61</sup>Monro, ‘Notes’, p. 23.

<sup>62</sup>*Times Literary Supplement*, 26 October, 1922, p. 690, rept. in *TWL*, p. 137; Gilbert Seldes, ‘T. S. Eliot’, *Nation*, 6 December, 1922, p. 614, rept. in *TWL*, p. 138.



(17)—where ‘you feel free’—are echoed by the ‘distant mountains’ (327), which are ‘mountains of rock without water’; ‘spring rain’ (4) finds a response in the ‘thunder of spring’ (327). And there are fainter echoes: ‘sunlight’ (10) is answered by ‘torchlight’ (322); ‘we stopped in the colonnade. . . and drank coffee’ (9-11) becomes ‘we should stop and drink’ (335).

Better, we could go on to say that a kind of progression has occurred: they reappear *more* negatively even than they’d appeared originally, drained of every vestige of positive content. In place of the ‘spring rain’ (TWL 4) stirring dull roots, we hear only the ‘thunder of spring’ (327) which is ‘dry sterile thunder without rain’ (342); Marie’s idyllic truism, ‘in the mountains, there you feel free’ (17), is torn into with an incommensurate ferocity, verging on caricature:

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit  
There is not even silence in the mountains  
But dry sterile thunder without rain  
There is not even solitude in the mountains  
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl  
From doors of mudcracked houses (340-45)

The reader, shocked at each new turn into reassessing their sense of how the poem might cohere, isn’t privileged with a stable vantage point. Elements from an obscure symbolic vocabulary appear, and disappear as promptly as they came, without giving us the opportunity to understand whether they occupy any meaningful place in the poem’s overall form.

Could this be, I wonder, an appropriate response to the conditions prevailing in England, in Europe, at the time that Eliot was writing the poem? That is, could the poem be drawing, on some formal level, on the logic of vanishing hopes in the real world? It’s difficult to go much beyond speculation at this point.

This, anyway, is how I want to conflate the history of crowd



action and *The Waste Land*: not by looking at the crowds in the poem, but by looking at how the formal elements of the poem relate to a particular historical crisis of crowd form. Attempts to historicise the poem have occasionally suffered the same weaknesses as traditional readings of Eliot: they degenerate into source studies, reference-spotting. We shouldn't worry about pointing to the 'shrubs and . . . trees' that had 'wilted and died' in the 1921 drought (and thus 'caused some perturbation in the popular mind') as sources for Eliot's 'dead tree' that 'gives no shelter,' any more than his 'cricket' that gives 'no relief' should be seen as referring to the Australian cricket team's annihilation of a 'crippled, effete' M.C.C. eleven in front of a strange new class of crowd, 'the workaday type of office-goers' who attended the 1921 ashes series in their tens of thousands.<sup>63</sup> Such historicist speculation is as easy to argue with—no worse, perhaps, than the claims that the tree and cricket have their analogues in a tree defended by the ancient priesthood of Nemi, and in Ecclesiastes' burdensome grasshopper. Yes, the poem will go on to hint at a pattern of *Golden Bough*-like sacrifice—'The Hanged Man' (55), buried corpses (71) and all that—just as in this passage it speaks in a voice suggestive of the terrible authority of the Old Testament prophets. But it will also hint at an account of the material 'testimony' of London, the 'empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette

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<sup>63</sup>Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, pp. 247–8; *Wisden's Almanack* [score—either find printed ref or use [http://www.wisden.com/almanack/...](http://www.wisden.com/almanack/)]; Home Gordon, 'Post-War English Cricket', *Quarterly Review* 238 (1922), [306–313], p. 308; *Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1921, p. 8, and 14 June 1921, p. 10. At the same time as he was drafting the earlier sections of *TWL*, Eliot had written of the contribution of cricket (and specifically of 'Mr. [J.C.] Squire, when he plays a game of cricket') to a 'possible English myth' which, although 'pitiably diminished', offers a possibility of transcendence, of 'seeing life in the light of imagination.'. Of course, Eliot sees drama as a much more important site than cricket for this myth (he concedes that it's unimportant whether or not Squire, the editor of *The London Mercury*, actually plays cricket); the theatre, however, 'affords in our time singularly little relief': compare *TWL* 1.23.



ends' (177–9) and other detritus that left their trace on contemporary life: an account for which the dead trees and cricket are equally fitted.

So lets stay much closer to the surface of the poem, attending to these patterns of emergence and disappearance; it is these patterns, I think, which would be brought to the fore if we were to read the poem with a focus on Eliot's Marie Lloyd essay, with our imaginary assumption that his writing on Marie Lloyd will 'elucidate the difficulties' of *The Waste Land*. But first, we need to outline a few background details, the significance of Marie Lloyd for an understanding of the forms of crowd history.

#### THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

On Tuesday, 3 October, 1922—less than a fortnight, that is, before Eliot's *Criterion* was released, and *The Waste Land* was put before London's literary public for the first time—a gaunt and shrunken figure, wearing a long, ill-fitting dress and a crushed plumed hat ('a middle-aged woman of the charwoman class', Eliot called her)<sup>64</sup> stumbled, half-drugged, into the footlights of the Edmonton Empire. She was carrying a large handbag, and singing:

I came across an abbey  
That was tumbled all to bits  
It seemed a relic of a bygone day.

They joined in the chorus:

It's a bit of a ruin that Cromwell knocked  
about a bit  
One of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about  
a bit

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<sup>64</sup>'London Letter—November, 1922', *Dial* 73 (December 1922), p. 661. The various versions of Eliot's Marie Lloyd essay are discussed further on in this essay.



In the gay old days, there used to be some  
doings  
No wonder that the poor old abbey went to  
ruin.

Partway through, the singer stumbled, toppling over. 'Her weakness was mistaken by the audience for fine comic acting,' the manager of the Empire said later, 'and they shrieked with laughter as she fell.' Marie Lloyd was funny even in death.

According to Ford Madox Ford (who at the time was attempting to work out, in *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*, how Music Hall and Variety might inform a new kind of long English poem), 'London traffic stopped for half a minute whilst the paper boys ran down the streets shouting: "Ma-rie dies! Ma-rie's dead!"'<sup>65</sup> James Agate, who contributed occasional pieces on Music Hall to the *Saturday Review*, was even more insistent on the moment's [out-of-time-ness]:

When, in Tottenham Court Road, I saw the sheet which announced that Marie Lloyd was dead, everything around me became still. The street lost its hubbub, and for a space I was alone with a sharp and almost personal sorrow. . . . "Marie"—pronounced with the broad vowel beloved of the cockney—was in everybody's mouth that day, in club and barrack-room, in bar-parlour and in modest home. On the high seas "Marie's dead" would be droned from ship to ship.

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<sup>65</sup>Ford Madox Ford, *It Was the Nightingale* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), p. 197. For Ford's version of a poetry informed by the marvelous effects of Music-Hall, see *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses, or a short history of poetry in Britain: Variety entertainment in four acts. . . with harlequinade, transformation scene, cinematograph effects, and many other novelties, as well as old and tried favourites* (London: Duckworth, 1923). This is the "immense poem" that Ford was working on in October 1922; see *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 146.



This is how Eliot's original Marie Lloyd essay, the last 'London Letter' that he'd written for the *Dial*, had begun:

Marie Lloyd's funeral became a ceremony which surprised even her warmest admirers:

"The scenes from an early hour yesterday, had been eloquent of the supreme place which Marie Lloyd held in the affection of the people. Wreaths had poured into the house in Woodstock Road from all parts of the country. There were hundreds of them from people whose names are almost household words on the variety stage, and from such people as 'a flower boy' in Piccadilly Circus: the taxi-drivers of Punter's Garage: and the Costermongers' Union of Farringdon Road. . . . Bombardier Wells sent a wreath. It was a white cushion, and across it in violets were the words 'At Rest: With deepest sympathy from Mrs and Billie Wells.' . . . Tributes were also sent by Hetty King, Clarice Mayne, Clara Mayne, Little Tich, Arthur Prince, George Mozart, Harry Weldon, Charles Austin, Gertie Gitana, the Brothers Egbert, Zetta Mare, Julia Neilson, and Fred Terry, Mr and Mrs Frank Curzon, Marie Loftus, many of the provincial music-halls, the Gulliver halls, and dressers from most of the theatres, and many of Miss Lloyd's old school chums. . . . A favourite song of Miss Lloyd's was recalled by a wreath fashioned like a bird's cage. The cage was open, but the old cock linnet had flown. . . . A large floral horseshoe, with whip, cap, and stirrups, was from 'Her Jockey Pals'—Donoghue, Archibald, and other men famous in the racing world. . . . There were other wreaths from the National Sporting Club, the Eccentric Club, the Ladies Theatrical Guild, the Variety Artists' Federation, Albert and Mrs Whelan, Lorna and





**Figure 7:** The crowds at Marie Lloyd's funeral, reproduced from Midge Gillies, *Marie Lloyd: The One and Only* (London: Gollancz, 1999), n.p.

Toots Pound, Kate Carney, Nellie Wallace, the Ring at Blackfriars, Connie Ediss (who sent red roses) the Camberwell Palace (a white arch with two golden gates), Lew Lake, Major J. Arnold Wilson, and innumerable other people."<sup>66</sup>

The image of loss used by Eliot—where the flowers stand in for a strangely absent crowd of mourners—seems to have a dissonance that was shared by the people mourning those they'd lost in the war.

Thirty days after Marie Lloyd's funeral, at 11 o'clock in the morning, a huge crowd had gathered at the Cenotaph in Whitehall to remember the fourth anniversary of the Armistice. A cenotaph, literally, is an empty tomb, a monumental absence, and there's a sense in which the post-war armistice crowd were also standing in for those absent: the *Times* noted how many women wore the medals of dead husbands and sons, and everyone wore a poppy

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<sup>66</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *Dial* 73 (December 1922), pp. 659–660.



for remembrance: 'an endless procession'—'the stream of them seemed to have no source, the flow no stop'<sup>67</sup>

'A MYSTERIOUS LAW OF APPEARANCE AND  
DISAPPEARANCE GOVERNS EVERYBODY'

In the months that Eliot was publishing his *London Letters* in the *Dial*—the letters that we've agreed to use to 'elucidate' his poem, and which he was writing at the same time that he wrote *The Waste Land*<sup>68</sup>—he had held up the music hall as a model of what a crowd art might look like. 'Success', he wrote of Nellie Wallace, 'depends upon the relation established by a comedian of strong personality with an audience quick to respond with approval or contempt.'<sup>69</sup>

There were other augurs, too, of a dawn of the art of the theatre: *The Rite of Spring* was playing to 'crowded houses'. 'The ballet will probably be one of the influences forming a new drama, if a new drama ever comes.'<sup>70</sup> This hope for a new dramatic art seems to be linked to a new way that Eliot was approaching the collective, the audience. The 'working man', Eliot would later argue, 'who went to the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the act; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art.'

[Whereas] other comedians amuse their audiences as much and sometimes more than Marie Lloyd, no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the

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<sup>67</sup>*Times*, November 13, 1922, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup>See Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting the Waste Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>69</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 70 (June 1921), p. 688.

<sup>70</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 71 (August 1921), p. 213.



people that made Marie Lloyd unique, and that made her audiences even when they joined in the chorus, not so much hilarious as happy.<sup>71</sup>

This notion is linked to the idea that I discussed in my introduction, of the crowd as the guardian of tradition—a notion theorised by E. P. Thompson in his essay on moral economy.<sup>72</sup> To watch the crowd's behaviour is to see traditional life affirmed. But for Eliot it is also to look into the 'soul of a people'. Writing about *The Golden Bough* a few months earlier, Eliot had made the same suggestion about the customs analysed by Frazer. '*The Golden Bough* can be read... as a revelation of that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation.'<sup>73</sup>

'Vanished mind'? How do we get from the 'soul of a people' to a 'vanished mind'? This, you see, is precisely what I mean by a logic of appearance and disappearance which could be seen as suggestive when placed next to our reading of *The Waste Land*. Any hope for a new kind of crowd art is already extinguished. In Paris, having completed his poem, Eliot had

thought of Marie Lloyd again, and wondered again why that directness, frankness, and ferocious humour which survive in her... should be extinct, should be odious to the British public, in precisely those forms of art in which they are most needed, and in which, in fact, they used to flourish.<sup>74</sup>

With the death of Marie Lloyd, the death of any kind of collective art is assured. Eliot leaves us, at the end of the Marie Lloyd letter, not with her audience, her crowd, but with a massive collective absence, mass depopulation, mass death:

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<sup>71</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 73 (December 1921), p. 662, p. 660–1.

<sup>72</sup>See my discussion above, pp. 13–14.

<sup>73</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 71 (October 1921), p. 453.

<sup>74</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 72 (May 1922), p. 513.



In a most interesting essay in the recent volume of *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, the great psychologist W. H. R. Rivers adduces evidence which has led him to believe that the natives of that unfortunate archipelago are dying out principally for the reason that the "Civilization" forced upon them has deprived them of all interest in life. They are dying from pure boredom. When every theatre has been replaced by 100 cinemas, when every musical instrument has been replaced by 100 gramophones, when every horse has been replaced by 100 cheap motor cars, when electrical ingenuity has made it possible for every child to hear its bedtime stories through a wireless receiver attached to both ears, when applied science has done everything possible with the materials on this earth to make life as interesting as possible, it will not be surprising if the population of the entire civilized world rapidly follows the fate of the Melanesians. You will see that the death of Marie Lloyd has had a depressing effect, and that I am quite incapable of taking any interest in any literary events. . . .<sup>75</sup>

This, then, is the kind of logic that I am thinking of: the logic of *The Waste Land*, the crowd already undone by death even as we approach them. 'A mysterious law of appearance and disappearance governs everybody', Eliot wrote, in another of his 'London Letters'. An 'occult influence' at work in London decrees that 'there are times when it is desirable to be seen, and times when it is felicitous to vanish.'<sup>76</sup> For the crowd, which might have provided Eliot with the model of a new art in that summer of 1921, the occult influence had decreed that it should vanish, die out for lack of interest, be replaced by funereal wreaths and flowers.

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<sup>75</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 73 (December 1922), p. 663.

<sup>76</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial* 71 (October 1921), p. 452.



## BACK TO THE CROWD: CANTLEMAN'S RETURN

*Blasting and Bombardiering* has, for some years, been by far the least difficult of Lewis's books to get hold of (there's been a copy in most of the big chain booksellers I've visited lately, which is more than can be said for anything else by Lewis); it has, however, been almost ignored by critics. In Paul Edwards' recent, bulky study, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, it merits just three mentions; a search of the *MLA Bibliography* only yields two, not very specific entries;<sup>77</sup> mostly, it has been mined by biographers for its anecdotes, the 'gossip'.<sup>78</sup> Its eccentricities, the fictions that are suddenly interpolated into the life history, have gone largely unnoticed.

I have discussed, in chapter two, above, the history of the 'crowd master' texts, and I want to return to these. Here, I shall be chiefly interested in the fragments that Lewis included in his autobiography, and how the new context leads us to read them in a rather different light.

Cantleman's 'crowd-experiments' in *Blasting and Bombardiering* show him to be more than a Crowd-Master: he satirically 'masters' the whole complicated nexus of psychological and scientific ideas that had been attacked by Lewis in *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man*. By the 1930s, it would have been impossible to understand ideas about 'Crowd-Mastery' outside this wider intellectual context. The fears and regrets of the LeBonite crowd-theorists had, after the experiences of 1914, been superceded by a new project. Given a deep enough 'scientific' understanding of

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<sup>77</sup>Scott Warren Klein, 'Opposition and Representation: The Fictions of Wyndham Lewis and James Joyce', *Dissertation-Abstracts-International*, Ann Arbor, mi (dai). 1991 Feb, 51:8, 2753A-54A dai No.: da9101275. Degree granting institution: Yale UP; Shirley Neuman, 'The Observer Observed: Distancing the Self in Autobiography', *Prose Studies* 4:3 (1981), 317-36.

<sup>78</sup>See Richard Ellman, *James Joyce*, rev. edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 492-95; Miriam J. Benkovitz, *Ronald Firbank: a biography* (New York: Knopf, 1969).



people's behaviour, thought the new generation of psychologists, one could control the crowd: this (said the authors of the American Army Intelligence Tests) is '*the lesson in human engineering which the war has taught us.*'<sup>79</sup> Ideas about giving form to the shapeless mass, which had interested Lewis in his *Blast* period, were no longer avant-garde speculations; they represented mainstream thought.

For John B. Watson (the founder of the 'stimulus and reaction' school of 'behavioristic psychology,' and the supposed model for Sir Michael Kell-Imrie, the psychopathic narrator of Lewis's 1932 novel, *Snooty Baronet*),<sup>80</sup> the war-crowds are seen as a potential source of data: like Cantleman, he is open to the experimental possibilities of war:

First we must all admit that social experimentation is going on at a very rapid rate at present—at an alarmingly rapid rate for comfortable, conventional souls. As an example of social experimentation... we have war. No one can predict what changes in reaction will be brought upon a nation when that nation goes to war. It is a blind manipulation of stimuli on a par with the experimentation of a child when he knocks down his house of blocks so patiently and laboriously constructed.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the worries of 'comfortable, conventional souls,' this great national experiment of the First World War is easily assimilated into Watson's behaviourist project: to amass 'a wealth of information on the reactions following stimuli' which will eventually prove 'of inestimable benefit to society.'<sup>82</sup> Cantleman, of

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<sup>79</sup>C. S. Yoakum and R. M. Yerkes, *Mental Tests in the American Army* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1922), p. viii, quoted by Lewis in *Time and Western Man* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), p. 321. (Lewis's italics.)

<sup>80</sup>See Bernard Lafourcade, afterword, *Snooty Baronet* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984).

<sup>81</sup>John B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930; 1st ed. 1924), p. 41.

<sup>82</sup>*Behaviorism*, p. 42.



course, isn't the 'dogmatic destructive philosopher' that Watson (according to Lewis) was.<sup>83</sup> But in trying to understand Cattleman's 'crowd-experiments,' it will be helpful to bear in mind the uses to which experimental science was put between the wars, as the tool of the deluded conspiracy of psychologists, behaviourists and social engineers that Lewis uncovered in *Time and Western Man*: "The "captains of industry" (and no doubt also the general staff) are of one mind: the military organization of the vast masses of people militarized during the War must be carried over into "civil life"" (p. 322).

When writing of science, and of the 'experiments' by which positivist science is supposedly validated, Lewis is careful always to enmesh rational ideas in the fanciful imagery of the lunatic and fraudulent fringes, debasing the sciences by exposing their suppressed roots in mountebankery and the occult. In *Snooty Baronet*, Kell-Imrie, (like the psychological sciences themselves) has been maimed in the war. Every time he experiences orgasm (the 'stimulus') he vomits (the 'reaction'): the ridiculousness of his behaviouristic universe is exposed. His attempt to 'prove' the rationality of everything he does, comes across as a comically deranged rant: 'I behave as a *Behaviorist* and as such I claim I should be accepted, and if there is nothing else I can do to prove it, I will at least continue to *behave* as you have seen me behaving through these pages, and as all true Behaviorists *must* behave.' Elsewhere, discussing intelligence-testing, Lewis writes that, 'like the phrenologist, or character reader in the tent at the fair, the "Tester" "tells your character," only he has a pretentious "laboratory" to do it in' (*T&WM*, 320): thus, theorists who view human behaviour scientifically are immediately linked back to fairground soothsayers.

As soon as Cattleman decides to begin *his* experiments, to 'test' the crowd, he becomes, rather than a phrenologist, a rather farcical

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<sup>83</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, ed. Paul Edward (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), p. 327.



kind of spiritualist medium:

Cantleman's crowd experiments began at once. He moved immediately to the centre of London—he dropped out of his taxicab, at hazard—rapping on the window for it to stop where the crowd seemed densest and stupidest.

For some hours he moved forward at a snail's pace. The night came on. He allowed himself to be carried by the crowd. He offered himself to its emotion, which saturated him at length. When it had sunk in, he examined it. Apparently it was sluggish electricity. That was all. As such it had no meaning, beyond what the power of a great body of water has, for instance. It conducted nowhere: it was aimlessly flowing through these torpid coils. The human cables had been disposed no doubt by skilful brains: they might be admirable. But not the electricity.

However, human messages passed up and down. He interpreted the messages. Like the spirit writing of the planchette pencil, they were exceedingly stupid. (B&B, 80)

It is difficult to form a clear picture of what is going on here: the writing is full of details, references which can be followed up, but which eventually flow aimlessly back into the density of Lewis's text. Three distinct metaphors are superimposed: the seance, the electric circuit, and the body of water. We are thus encouraged to make the obvious links: spiritualistic phenomena were often compared to 'electrical' communications (Allan Kardec, the French spiritualist theorist, described mediums as 'simply electrical machines that transmit telegraphic dispatches from one point which is far away to another which is located on earth')<sup>84</sup> and the 'hu-

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<sup>84</sup>Quoted in Lawrence Rainey, 'Taking Dictation. Collage Poetics, Pathology



man cables' admired by Cattleman can be seen as components in a psychical-telegraph, carrying the 'human messages.'

Water metaphors are so commonly used to describe the behaviour of electric circuits that we can almost let this 'great body of water' pass, attributing it to an automatic habit of thought formed in the early days of electrical experimentation. Electricity had been theorised by Benjamin Franklin as an 'imponderable fluid,' an elusive, weightless liquid which 'flowed' like water; soon, other imponderables were being identified: 'mesmeric fluid', and 'odic force.' Similar fluids, it was thought, flowed through the human nervous system; transferences of fluid from one person to another were used to explain telepathy, or 'thought transference,' the phenomenon experienced by Cattleman, as he becomes 'saturated' with the crowd's emotion.<sup>85</sup>

The idea of the crowd as a 'great body' of some psychological liquid, pooling the fluids of its smaller bodies, also had scientific authority. The Victorian anthropologist, Dunbar Isidore Heath, for example, had held that the transference of 'psycholasm'—an imponderable substance constituting the mind; a pseudo-electrical 'psychic medium', devised by G. H. Lewes (the biographer of Goethe and lover of George Eliot)<sup>86</sup>—was responsible for the behaviour of crowds:

... a vast number of mental phenomena—for instance, sympathy, the yielding to the opinions of others, the accepting evidence, the emotional sensibility of crowds, the love of admiration, etc., etc.—all point to the idea that the psychoplasms of different individuals are parts of one universal psychic medium.... It is well known

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and Politics', *Modernism/modernity* 5 (1998), p. 127.

<sup>85</sup>Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and psychical research in England, 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 218–219.

<sup>86</sup>George Henry Lewes, *The Foundations of a Creed*, 2 vols., *Problems of Life and Mind*: 1st series (London: Trübner, 1874–75), I, 118.



that Farady [sic], under the name of "Lines of Force," considered every human being to be connected by myriads of electrical tentacula with all parts of the medium. . . .<sup>87</sup>

The distinction between Lewes's 'psychoplasm' and Faraday's theory of electrical force is blurred by Heath, anachronistically attaching Faraday's 'lines of force' back to the fluid theories which they had superceded.

By 1913, these ideas about 'universal psychic media,' and 'electrical tentacula' connecting human minds had become as confused as they were widespread. In a paper describing the processes of '*sympathetic conduction*' that enable individual minds to commune with a 'group mind', John E. Boodin attempted to clarify the electro-biological analogy:

I do not care to go on indefinitely and work out possible analogies between mental energy and electrical. They will easily suggest themselves and may easily be overworked. . . . What I wish to emphasise is that the conception of electrical fields of energy and their immaterial continuities across space, intersecting our gross material world, seems to furnish a model which fits in with our conviction in the immediate acquaintance of mind with mind.<sup>88</sup>

Boodin's caution is undermined by the extravagance of his own analogies (communication between minds is compared to telephone communication, for example, and he goes as far as suggesting that 'mental impulses' actually do accompany electrical impulses along real telephone cables). He points to the 'physical

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<sup>87</sup>Dunbar Isidore Heath, 'On the Origin and Development of the Mental Function in Man', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 4 (1875), p. 75.

<sup>88</sup>John E. Boodin, 'Individual and Social Minds,' *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 10:7 (1913), p. 174.



compound,' h<sub>2</sub>o, as the equivalent of 'social compounds' like the crowd.<sup>89</sup> Water, electricity, telepathy, telephony and crowd-theory all flow into a common store of indistinct psycho-electro-biological images. The impulses discovered by Cantleman coursing sluggishly through the 'great body of water', the London Crowd, have a common source in this psycho-electro-biological discourse. Lewis, while not of course referring to any specific instance, directs us back through a nexus of related, once well-used 'scientific' ways of communicating human experience, of describing human sympathy and interrogating immortality—ideas which rely on wonderful leaps of metaphoric imagination, and which are now 'exceedingly stupid.'

Reading *Blasting and Bombardiering* carefully, we will already have been aware of these voices from the 'other side' of scientific discourse. The crowded train from the Scottish Border acts as a kind of microcosmic antechamber to the London Crowd-World; mobilization scenes in miniature prepare Cantleman for the great roaring war crowd. Moving between carriages, from a compartment full of 'vegetative shapes' of women, 'connected in some way with mobilization' (*B&B*, 70), thence into a carriage of 'Crowd-proof Jack Tars'—men who can cut through the stormy sea of the war-crowd, 'the first break in the continuity of the Crowd-spirit Cantleman had met with since the war began blowing up' (74)—Cantleman is enacting his later movement in and out of the London crowd. Joining the 'vegetative' women, a typically feminine (and, it turns out, sickly) crowd, it is as if he has joined an impromptu seance: 'Ten people, chiefly women, slept upright against each other in one carriage. They revealed unexpected fashions in

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<sup>89</sup>Boodin, p. 176. The correspondences between the human bodies of which a Crowd is constituted, and the elements which constitute a chemical compound were first noted by Le Bon: 'Just as in chemistry certain elements, when brought into contact—bases and acids, for example—combine to form a new body possessing properties quite different from those of the bodies that have served to form it.' (*The Crowd*, p. 6)



their sleep. Their eyes seemed to be shut fast to enable them to examine some ludicrous fact within. It looked, from the corridor, like a séance of imbeciles' (70).

The 'ludicrous fact within' that the small unconscious crowd examine foreshadows the ludicrous crowd-messages received by Cantleman ('like the spirit writing of the *planchette* pencil, they were exceedingly stupid,' 80). But unlike Cantleman—whose eyes wander critically around the train, 'watching,' 'registering,' and 'dwelling upon' faces (69)—these women's eyes are 'shut fast': the Crowd is 'still blind, with a first pup-like intensity,' not having woken from its 'habitual infantile sleep' (77). The *Blast* story would offer them a chance of opening their eyes, and learning to read other faces on the train; here there is none of that.

But perhaps it's the very blindness of their crowd-status that 'enables' these women to apprehend their useless and pointless knowledge. For Cantleman, it's necessary to actively persuade the crowd-mood to 'enter him' before he can 'hasten outside it' and 'examine himself' (81); but these women can 'examine' it from 'within,' not even waking from their crowd-sleep. The crowd-mind, though, like so many other psychological phenomena, can only be observed at a subliminal level, and in the weaker, less formed minds of women. Observing them from the corridor, a raw sample of crowd-life isolated in their 'one carriage,' Cantleman resembles a *Salpêtrière* psychologist experimenting with somnambulists, or a psychical researcher studying a trance-medium, and discovering (as Frederic Meyers did) 'the manifestation in spontaneous sleep-walking states of manifestly supernormal powers,—sometimes of telepathy, but more commonly of clairvoyance or



telæsthesia.<sup>90</sup>

Even as we make these connections, they begin to break down, sparking against other textual components. Odd, suspiciously obtrusive words tend to disturb Lewis's totalistic metaphor; a few pages later, they turn up again, as a new way of figuring the crowd. The desire for form, which obsessed the 'Crowd Master' of *Blast* has given way to an unformed, endlessly shifting discourse. Even when the electro-biological figurations seem well integrated, they have so many facets that their shape is impossible to grasp. This is Lewis's crowd-language, soft and unformed, its significant words left flapping in the rush of images, like so many jellyfish tentacles.

The women in the train, for example, don't have to be read exclusively as mediums. They are said to reveal 'unexpected fashions in their sleep.' They become like tailors' dummies, arrayed with the next season's war-fashions—fashions that Cantleman will later try out for himself in London's crowded shopping-streets: 'The war was like a great new fashion. Cantleman conformed. He became a man of fashion' (*B&B*, 77). Habits of dress, as ever for Lewis, are interchangeable with habits of mind. 'Clothing and its part in the psychology of war is a neglected subject,' Lewis later argues (121), and any one reading of these few chapters would pass over dozens of neglected subjects, submerged in the formless throb of crowd life.

To take another example: Cantleman feels the electrical impulses of the Crowd aimlessly flowing through its 'torpid coils.' On the one hand, these 'torpid coils' are easily integrated into the

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<sup>90</sup>Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, abridged edition (Tasburgh: Pelegrin Trust in association with Pilgrim Books, 1992), p. 120. Myers' object of research was Mrs Leonora Piper, a Boston trance-medium, discovered by William James and retained by the Society of Psychical Research as a 'vehicle for testing the many psychological puzzles associated with mediumship': see R. Lawrence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, parapsychology and American culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 146–47.



electro-scientistic metaphor: they suggest induction coils, which 'conduct nowhere,' but induce a current of a different character in the secondary coil (a secondary coil like Cantleman, perhaps, who receives their 'sluggish electricity' with contempt). A major component in the old-fashioned telephone, 'human messages' would often pass through induction coils. But on the other hand, they conduct the reader back to the earlier figuration of the crowd as a deadly snake: 'every night it serpentine in thick well-nourished coils...' (79).

The serpent represents an aspect of the Crowd Master texts which I will largely ignore; a priestly, pseudo-religious discourse, developed in the 'sermon' on birth, marriage, and the burial and afterlife of the dead (*B&B*, 79-80). But while the priest is another figuration of the 'Crowd Master' figure, the serpent draws our attention to the wild assortment of odds and ends that are buried in the Crowd-subconscious accessed by Cantleman.

We can play games with the text rather like those of children's picture-books, that hide tiny people or animals in the noise of their illustrations. How many symbolical creatures are hiding in Cantleman's Crowd-Experiments? He moves 'at a snail's pace'; he is carried by the 'sluggish electricity' of the crowd. In this Cantleman/crowd, snail/slug dichotomy can, I think, we can recognize an instance of the hard/soft, formed/formless dichotomy that was evident at the beginning of 'The Crowd Master', and which runs all the way through *Blasting and Bombardiering*. The crowd is fluid and malleable, a baggy monster; the hard-helmeted police can 'shift it in lumps... touching and shaping it' (78). But here, shape is elusive. If Cantleman is a hard-surfaced Crowd-Master, then why, at one point at one point, is characterised as a soft, waxy 'tabula rasa,' inviting the 'visible ghosts' of the War-Crowd to 'inscribe' their ideas on him (82)?

Lewis gets a lot of comic mileage out of Cantleman's ambiguous, shifting masculinity. The Spiritualistic medium is essentially



a female role, and the flow and interpenetration of the various Crowd-Fluids, arguably has seminal implications. But sometimes the crowd 'enters' Cantleman, and sometimes he 'penetrates' the crowd (81). In the ebb and flow of the crowd's 'cold night tide' (78), where Cantleman 'sank like a diver' (81), a weird, cnidarian androgyny holds sway.

After probing the soft, feminine images of the crowd for some time, Cantleman finally 'penetrated' it, receiving the sudden sensation 'that he was a *married man*' (81): this seems straight enough sex, perhaps. But it isn't a simple marriage of male and female; it isn't even 'the Rape of the Crowd' that we had witnessed in Oxford Circus, taken 'half awake and struggling, with voluptuous spasms': it's man-meets-jellyfish, and Cantleman's outlandish marriage involves his cerebral penetration of the crowd's jelly-fish mind. This ichthyophile (or rather, cnidariophile) image is certainly the most bizarre in the 'Crowd-Master' texts, but it's typical of Lewis's clownish use of metaphor. The leap seems too great—how can he resolve the London War-Crowd with this ridiculous mental man-of-war?—but somehow, he catches on to a handful of tenuous connections, pulling off the stunt by the skin of his teeth.

Most obviously, the crowd's 'jelly-fish' nature refers to its flabbiness, as opposed to Cantleman's supposed penetrating hardness: it's a negative component in the binary that opposes the snail and the slug, the well-trimmed and the hairy. Lewis will go on to compare his and T. E. Hulme's radical, abstract 'scarab' aesthetic with the airy, hairy 'jellyish' aesthetic of low-brow art: 'We were a couple of fanatics and of course I am still. We preferred something more metallic and resistant than the pneumatic surface of the cuticle. We preferred a helmet to a head of hair. A scarab to a jelly-fish' (*B&B*, 104). The preferability of a helmet to a head of hair had been demonstrated by Jacob Epstein, in his 1907 bronze portrait of *Romilly John*.<sup>91</sup> The head is encased in a smoothed dome,

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<sup>91</sup>Jacob Epstein, *Romilly John*, private collection, *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and*



imparting an almost machined, ovoid formality to the more organic features of the face; according to Judith Collins, 'in several early casts, the cap has been burnished to enhance its helmet-like appearance.'<sup>92</sup> Hulme, discussing Epstein's *Studies for Birth* (one of which Lewis reproduced in *Blast*, B1, xvi), speaks of 'the tendency to abstraction, the desire to turn the organic into something hard and durable.'<sup>93</sup>

Hulme goes on to describe how, in Epstein's work, 'generation, which is the very essence of all the qualities which we have here called organic, has been turned into something as hard and durable as the geometric figure itself.' But Cantleman's encounter with the jelly-fish clearly isn't a 'hard, durable' vision of sex. We get that in the scientific bluster of his notebook, with its attempts to posit a geometry of family relations that might give form to the crowd; a 'Crowd-matrix full of children' (81-2). But reading this through, Cantleman 'was disappointed': the shifting sexuality of the jelly-fish, which can change sex several times in its life-cycle, or can consist (like the Portugese Man-of-War) of many organisms of different sexes, and at many stages of development, makes a much more alluring crowd-image.

Indeed, for Lewis, the *essence* of sex lies in its protozoic lack of organization. It occurs at the same low, mesmeric level of consciousness as the Crowd-mind, the *bas-fonds de la société*. In the 1918 version of *Tarr*, Tarr considers the 'jellyishness' of everyday life, and of his sluggish, effeminate acquaintances in the crowd:

A jellyish diffuseness spread itself and gaped on the beds and in the bas-fonds of everything. Above a certain level of life sex disappeared, just as in highly or-

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*Drawings*, exhibition catalogue (Leeds: Leeds City Art Galleries and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1987), pp. 134-5.

<sup>92</sup>Judith Collins, 'Early Carvings,' in *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, p. 133.

<sup>93</sup>T. E. Hulme, *Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness (Manchester: Fyfield-Carcanet, 1998), p. 112.



ganised sensualism sex vanishes. And, on the other hand, everything beneath that line was female.=Bard, Simpson, MacKenzie, Townsend, Annandale—he enumerated acquaintances evidently below the absolute line and who displayed a lack of energy, permanently mesmeric state, and almost purely emotional reactions.<sup>94</sup>

The 'permanently mesmeric state' below the jelly-line brings us back, inevitably, to the image world of psychical research, just as the torpedo 'shock' that Cantleman receives from his jellyfish short-circuits the reader back into the electric ether (the stings of torpedos, and of serpentine electric eels, fascinated the pioneers of electrical experimentation). The jelly-fish—a living, floating mass of unconscious protoplasm with outreaching tentacula, liable, outside its own medium, to dissolve into nothingness—is an appropriate spiritualistic image. In her *Notes on Thought and Vision*, for example, H. D.'s description of her 'jelly-fish state of consciousness' draws on the same sort of ideas. 'There is, then, a set of super-feelings. These feelings extend out and about us; as the long, floating tentacles of the jelly-fish extend out and about him.'<sup>95</sup>

Even at the level of the sentence, meanings shift, evaporate and rematerialise. After the exciting details of his arrival in London, Cantleman had seemed to dissolve into the crowd; as he begins his crowd-experiments, he is hurriedly brought back into focus: 'He

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<sup>94</sup>Tarr: *The 1918 version*, pp. 313–14.

<sup>95</sup>H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision and The Wise Sappho* (London: Peter Owen, 1988), p. 19. *Notes on Thought and Vision* was not published in Lewis's lifetime; nevertheless, the serpent-jellyfish-crowd of *Blasting and Bombardiering* bears a remarkable resemblance to H.D.'s 'over-mind,' a realm of paradisaal death symbolised by the serpent. 'But in my personal language or vision, I call this serpent a jelly-fish. The serpent—the jelly-fish—the over-conscious mind' (p. 40). Entering her over-conscious state, the jelly-fish is 'placed like a foetus in the body' (p. 19). Cantleman, stung by his cerebrated jelly-fish, also finds himself in the family way: 'it seemed to be that he was a *married man*' (*B&B*, 81). Were it possible, one might almost suspect Lewis of *mocking* H.D.!



moved immediately to the centre of London—he dropped out of his taxicab, at hazard—rapping on the window for it to stop where the crowd seemed densest and stupidest.’ The sentence both describes and disrupts his journey: its energetic first part proves a false start, and, exploded apart by ambiguous dashes, it must begin again, returning to the details of his transport. So, he is in a taxicab, we learn; it stops, and he is ‘dropped’ out ‘at hazard.’ He thus begins his crowd-experiment in the orthodox scientific fashion, taking a randomized sample, which he has chosen by ‘dropping’ himself in the middle of London.

But before the sentence is allowed to finish, it doubles back on itself for a second time. Far from acting ‘at hazard,’ we are now told, Cantleman halted the taxi deliberately ‘—rapping on the window for it to stop where the crowd seemed densest and stupidest.’ Wouldn’t the deliberate selection of a dense, stupid sample bias his experiment? That, of course, is not the issue here: we are now dealing with a quite different kind of phenomenon. Reading back from Cantleman’s crowd-seance, this word ‘rapping’ should immediately suggest the presence of unseen forces.

‘Rapping,’ like the ‘spirit writing of the *planchette* pencil’ (B&B, 80) was a simple technique for transmitting messages between worlds. Cantleman has only just gone over into the crowd-world, and it would be easy to overlook this first, typically stupid message, guiding him to its ‘densest and stupidest’ part. The discovery of ‘spirit rapping,’ made by the Fox sisters in Hydesville, New York, in 1848, represented, for the spirit world, as important a breakthrough in communication technique as Morse’s electric telegraph (which had entered public use four years previously, in 1844) was to prove for the living. Not only did it allow spirits ‘to communicate with more ease and with a greater variety of manifestations,’ R. Laurence Moore argues; it also allowed them to be seen as ‘the observable and verifiable objects of empirical



science':<sup>96</sup>

'The impressive rappings... suggested that spirit messages could be subjected to an objective test verifiable by a group of impartial witnesses.... One did not have to trust the word of Andrew Davis Jackson [an earlier mesmeric oracle] that spirits inspired his utterances. Spirits now stood available to answer test questions put to them by an investigating audience. (p. 482)

Here, then, is an alternative model of empirical interrogation. The train of cause and effect which was observed in the tester's 'pretentious "laboratory,"' (where a randomized sample is exposed to certain stimuli in order to measure certain responses) is, to a certain extent, derailed—as is the train of Lewis's disjointed sentence, describing a Cattleman's taxicab journey from A to B. Spiritualism offers a kind of scientific spectacle, where effect follows effect, chasing no distinct cause, the audience leading the performance.

Spectacle, both as a crowd entertainment, and as a way of envisioning the crowd itself, is another major theme of these chapters from *Blasting and Bombardiering*; the counterpoint to scientific and dispassionate observation. But spectacular scenes like the coal-mining, naval-reservist's Harry Lauder routine, or the 'giant canvas by Frith' at King's Cross (76) are embedded in the historical-cultural minutia of Lewis's prose, part of the very act of 'crowd-writing.' As he'd argued in *Time and Western Man*,

the head of a crowd is like a pudding en surprise. Everything is put into it; it reacts to the spectacles that are presented to it partly under the direction of those spectacles, but mainly according to the directing synthesis

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<sup>96</sup>R. Laurence Moore, 'Spiritualism and Science: Reflections on the first decade of Spirit Rappings,' *American Quarterly* 24 (1974), p. 478, p. 477.



of all that has fallen or been stuffed into it, coming from all that is going on around it.<sup>97</sup>

In Lewis's story, the sheer volume of over-the-top, spectacular metaphor seems to preclude an easy synthesis. It is as if *too much* has been 'stuffed into it.' From time to time, Cattleman and Crowd disappear entirely, replaced by a circus-troupe of metaphorical creations: deep-sea diver, jelly-fish, medium or shape-shifting snake. Lewis overdoes the marvellous; the incredible, the awesome and the downright silly are crammed in, to the extent that any attempt by the reader to find a coherent logic, or 'meaning' in the story seems beside the point.

The 'awe' or 'marvel' of Aristotelian aesthetics, pleasurable in itself, and vital, in small quantities, to the dramatic success of a literary work, is expanded to ludicrous proportions. 'If a poet posits an irrationality and a more rational alternative is apparent, this,' according to Aristotle, 'is an absurdity.'<sup>98</sup> In his humorous argument for the absurdity of the crowd-sciences' rationale, Lewis does just that.

Perhaps, though, these tricks aren't as marvellous as they might seem. As Gustave Le Bon pointed out, crowds live in an hallucinatory image-world: 'a crowd scarcely distinguishes between the subjective and the objective. It accepts as real the images evoked in its mind, though they most often have only a very distant relation to the observed fact.'<sup>99</sup> And the new crowd-entertainments, the moving pictures, had blurred the divide between image and reality still further.

For a time, Cattleman becomes a cinematic impresario: 'his detachment was complete and his attention was directed every-

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<sup>97</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup>Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, in *Aristotle: Poetics; Longinus: On the sublime; Demetrius: On style*, Loeb Classical Library 199, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1460a, 33.

<sup>99</sup>*The Crowd*, p. 22.





**Figure 8:** Wyndham Lewis, *The Theatre Manager*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, reproduced from Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 31.

where. His movements resembled those of a freelance cinema-operator' (*B&B*, 77). This is very obscure; freelance cinemas operated in well defined circuits, perhaps, or their operators worked themselves into convulsions trying to change a difficult reel. Why should a freelance cinema-operator be so detached and attentive?

The reference, I think, is to Le Bon, who claimed that

The art of appealing to crowds is no doubt of an inferior order, but it demands quite special aptitudes. It is often impossible on reading plays to explain their success. Managers of theatres when accepting pieces are themselves, as a rule, very uncertain of their success, because to judge the matter it would be necessary that they should be able to transform themselves into a crowd.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>*The Crowd*, p. 35.



The passage, Chris Mullen has argued, was the literary source of Lewis's early drawing, *The Theatre Manager* (plate 6);<sup>101</sup> the head of the theatre manager, who studies a script, is reflected in the mirror held by a member of his mask-faced troupe: in the midst of these twelve 'types of humanity,' he has arguably 'transformed himself into a crowd.' Mullen further interprets the manager-figure as Shakespeare, the 'resourceful punch-and-judy showman' of *The Lion and the Fox*, whose players 'had to be supple, and in some sense vulgar: and were as much in search of that terrible *néant*, "what the public wants" . . . , as is any journalist to-day.'<sup>102</sup>

And as, indeed, was any 'freelance cinema-operator' of the 1910s. In March, 1914, following a 'symposium on "what the public wants",' an exhibitor calling himself 'showman' told readers of *The Bioscope* that 'it is the public's taste that we have to consider, and not our own caprices.'<sup>103</sup> The exhibitors of films—industrial London's successors to the popular theatre managers—came to see themselves as LeBonite crowd-masters. Rachel Low describes how, 'urged on by the trade papers, which made a special feature of fatherly guidance in this respect, the showmen took the old art of booming and made it into a science. A "knowledge of psychology" became part of the equipment of the smart manager, and the vanity, snobbery and sentimentality of likely patrons were tactfully stimulated.'<sup>104</sup>

Cantleman's detached, scientific, yet 'penetrating' interest in the psychology of these crowds, his willingness to conform with the 'great new fashion,' and his movement in and out of the crowd, getting to know its mind, do indeed resemble the movements and

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<sup>101</sup>See Jane Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis*, exhibition catalogue (London: Lund Humphries in association with City of Manchester Art Galleries), p. 31.

<sup>102</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox* (London: Grant Richards, 1927), p. 171.

<sup>103</sup>Quoted in Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film 1906–1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), pp. 28–29.

<sup>104</sup>*History of the British Film 1906–1914*, p. 30.



stratagems of the moving-picture man. Focus on the image for too long though, and it dissolves into weird paradox. It's only because Cantleman himself is such an impulsive spectator that he can be compared to the providers of cinematic spectacle. He window-shops for new crowd fashions, gazing at women in the train. In the Scottish seaman-miner's spiel about mobilization, Cantleman recognises a crowd-pleasing turn, '—all in the voice of Harry Lauder, if you can do it, with much nodding of the head, and humorous levitation of the eyebrows, the r's rolling, a chuckling drumfire of pawky vocables' (*B&B*, 72–73).<sup>105</sup>

For most of the story, then, Cantleman has been a spectator, rather than the spectacle-peddler, the moving-picture man. And, as a solitary spectator, he turns our basic assumptions about music hall and cinema upside down. They are usually crowd-spectacles—a mass audience watches the one-and-only Harry Lauder; Lauder projects to his mass audience. But Cantleman is cast as a one-man audience, picking out Harry Lauders and Leonora Pipers in the crowd: 'this was a People's World once more, racy, rich and turbulent' (76). Sight lines are diffuse; rather than focussing on one performer, Cantleman's 'attention was directed everywhere,' as if he were watching the Raza Khan's acting troupe (who, in *Mrs Duke's Million*, mix art and life by performing in the midst of the crowd, *as the crowd*). His 'detachment' becomes difficult to pin down, as the spectacle of crowd-life threatens to consume everything.

One way to resolve these complexities would be to argue that, as Cantleman, freelance cinema operator, transforms himself into a Crowd, the crowd can become embodied in an individual. In

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<sup>105</sup>Sir Harry Lauder, too, had worked in the pits for ten years (W. MacQueen-Pope, *The Melodies Linger On: The story of music hall* (London: W. H. Allen, 1950), p. 409); later, in 1931, his best known songs would be filmed by George Pearson (see 'Harry Lauder,' *Internet Movie Database*, ed. Greg Bulmash, Dave Roberts and Keith Simanton, 4 Sept. 2000, The Internet Movie Database Ltd., 4 Sept. 2000 <<http://uk.imdb.com/Name?Lauder,+Harry>>), so many readers of *Blasting and Bombardiering* would know them as film shorts.



the 'Cantelman' manuscript, Mr and Mrs Stevens show Cantelman their new 'nightly entertainment,' observed from their bathroom window: an 'energetic figure,' cinematically framed in the glow of a dormer window across the street; a naked swiss servant-girl, brushing her 'massive fair hair' in front of a mirror.<sup>106</sup> Working over the scene in his mind, Cantelman transforms it into the kind of white-slave scenario that was banned in Hollywood under the postmaster general's 'thirteen points':<sup>107</sup> the image in the window becomes the 'beautiful slave girl' of her own reflection; 'her cruel lovely double in the mirror would not let her cover her improper white body – ah, what a good idea! Grimly and wildly in consequence she brushed at the bright hair in the looking glass, as conscious of her nudity as though she had been looking into Mr Stevens' eyes.'

If the Theatre Manager, with his mirror, had become a Crowd, then this Swiss servant is an even more blatant crowd-image: both an image of the crowd, and an image *for* the crowd, of the kind which, according to Le Bon, constitute the crowd's attempts at 'thought.' Cantleman, too, seems suffused with her crowdness, allowing sensational imagery to flood his mind, like Blenner had before him. We might remember, of course, that Blenner was a mirror-gazer: examining his image, he saw *his* 'master,' Multum.<sup>108</sup> But the relationship then was as pupil to master; here it is slave and mistress—an indicator of the general shift in Lewis's view of the subjection of the crowd to authority following the First World War. But where 'authority' might be focussed in this all encompassing spectacle, it is impossible to say. The jellyish crowd-

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<sup>106</sup>'Wyndham Lewis's *Cantelman – Crowd Master* sections seven and eight,' p. 7.

<sup>107</sup>Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915–1928* (New York: Scribners, 1990), p. 206. Eliminating pictures that 'were based on white slavery' was the second of the thirteen points.

<sup>108</sup>B2, 99: 'His eyes suggested Multum to him.' It was this mirror-image that set off the memory-train of their first meeting.



aura is suffused over everybody: rather than stamping an individual shape on the formless mass, as would the 'Crowd Master' of *Blast*, Cattleman is led into a subliminal cinematic fantasy, by the crowd-image in the mirror.

Every experiment stands or falls on its final results. Lewis had satirised scientism before, and his attack had focussed on the discrepancy between the experimenter's claims, and the poverty of their actual results. That was in a story from *The Wild Body* called 'You Broke My Dream,' which described the 'Experiment with Time' carried out by a young painter, Will Blood.<sup>109</sup> Blood wants to know whether dreams contain detritus from the future, as J. W. Dunne's serialist theories state. He assiduously notes down the details of his dreams, and waits for them to be echoed in his waking life. They are, but only because he ignores his notes, and completely revises everything about the dreams in order to fit.

Cattleman relies less on wilful distortion, but the results of his experiments are still distinctly underwhelming. After having 'lain in the crowd for hours together,' Cattleman claims that he has 'received *no sensation worth noting*. As Crowd it is a washout' (*B&B*, 83). There were, we know, a few sensations, though: weak stupid messages, a 'married' sensation (81), and the feeling of sudden divorce (82). The real value of his experiments, of course, lies in the shapeless, pathetic, but very telling transcriptions of the crowd-mind represented by the narrative prose: all of the things Cattleman doesn't bother to record.

The shapelessness of the story is, as we've seen, important.

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<sup>109</sup>'You Broke My Dream, or An Experiment with Time,' in *The Complete Wild Body* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982), pp. 179–188. *An Experiment with Time* had been the title of Dunne's attempt to scientifically prove the possibility of seeing into the future. Dunne first became aware that his mind could travel along temporal series by reading newspaper headlines: he would remember a few words from a dream, and they would later resurface, emblazoned on the front pages of national newspapers. See J. W. Dunne, *An Experiment with Time* (London: A. & C. Black, 1929; 1st ed. 1927), pp. 29–38.



But the crowd experiments, and the story itself, do have a bizarre kind of climax in Cantleman's vision of a perfect National Crowd-Image: the revelation of Lady Hamilton, got up as a lewd Britannia.

Lady Hamilton floated into his mind. She had scent upon her limbs, which were sheathed in tight-fitting bathing drawers. She was going for a dip. She was Britannia. A wave slapped her, roguishly. *Elle faisait le culbote*. Immediately a sensation occurred. Cantleman produced his notebook.

*Experiment with a Crowd*

(2) A sensation of immediate bawdiness occurs, in contact with Nelson. 'England expects every man to'—yes, *what*? To sleep with Lady Hamilton apparently. Violets and brine. There's nothing else for it.

(note.—*Plutôt par snobisme que par vice.*)

And the imperial votaress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy free.  
I see her drying thighs, in a virginal pavillion.  
Nelson adjusts his blind eye to the keyhole. (B&B, 82-3)

Emma Hamilton, the blacksmith's daughter who rose through society to marry Sir William Hamilton, and who eventually become Lord Nelson's mistress, has proved surprisingly adaptable as an iconic figure. She has left her mark in the most surprising recesses of English-language culture.<sup>110</sup> Phillip Herring suggests that Joyce could have taken her as model for Molly Bloom<sup>111</sup>—it seems unlikely, but given Hamilton's unpunctuated epistolary

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<sup>110</sup>For example, Susan Sontag's novel, *The Volcano Lover*, takes her as its heroine (Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover: A romance* [London: Vintage, 1993]); Vivien Leigh played her in the film directed by Alexander Korda, *That Hamilton Woman* (United Artists, 1941).

<sup>111</sup>Phillip F. Herring, 'Molly Bloom and Lady Hamilton,' *James Joyce Quarterly* 15 (1978): 262-264



style, and the five references to her in Joyce's notes to *Ulysses*, the suggestion is not without interest. Joyce owned, in Trieste, a copy of Esther Hallam Moorhouse's popular biography, *The Story of Lady Hamilton*<sup>112</sup>—Moorhouse wrote two other books on Nelson and his mistress, *Nelson's Lady Hamilton* and *Nelson in England*,<sup>113</sup> and in 1911, she married Gerard Tuke Meynell,<sup>114</sup> of the very 'Clan Meynell' who were 'blasted' in *Blast* (B1, p.21): it therefore seems possible that Lewis could have known Esther's work.

It is in the illustrations to *The Story of Lady Hamilton*, reproductions of George Romney's portraits of Emma in the aspects of various classical figures, that her suitability as a crowd-image is best expressed (plate 9). Like the jelly-fish, or the crowds of *Blast*, she becomes a malleable form; her face is a vehicle for shifting significances, as mythical images are imposed upon it.

Lewis casts her as Britannia, the rabble-rousing corporate image for the British State; her bathing drawers, advertising the fact that she's 'going for a dip,' remind us of the figuration of the Crowd as sea. The image of Lady Hamilton, then, seems submerged in the British crowd-consciousness, capable of being re-clothed like a doll to suit the crowd's mood. Instead of 'ruling the waves,' we are told, 'a wave slapped her, roguishly. *Elle faisait le culbute*': 'she turned a somersault,' or 'came a cropper.' So Britannia, too, is subject to the crowd's 'cold night tide,' in a cheeky, seaside postcard sort of a way.

The mobilization scenes of *Blasting and Bombardiering* have been haunted by memories of the last major European conflict, the Napoleonic

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<sup>112</sup>Esther Hallam Moorhouse, *The Story of Lady Hamilton, Queens of Beauty and Romance 2*, (London: G. T. Foulis, 1933). Joyce's copy was published by T. N. Foulis, 1911: see Richard Ellman, *The Consciousness of James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 120.

<sup>113</sup>Esther Hallam Moorhouse, *Nelson's Lady Hamilton* (London: Methuen, 1906); Esther Hallam Meynell, *Nelson in England: A domestic chronicle* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913).

<sup>114</sup>'Esther Hallam Meynell,' obituary, *The Times*, 7 Feb. 1955, p. 10.



Wars. 'The Kaiser,' the german sea-grocer man at the...  
the train, having been asked for whom shopping he was...  
did you think I meant? Napoleon Bonaparte? ...  
could not have called such a man a ...  
eyes of the sailors. They were all aching ...

The romantic style of war was all ...



**Figure 9:** George Romney, *Emma Hart as Ariadne* (1785), National Maritime Museum, London.



Wars. 'The Kaiser,' the germanic sea-grocer roars at Cantleman in the train, having been asked for whom shooting is too good, 'Who did you think I meant? Napoleon Boneypart!' (*B&B*, 71). 'They could not foresee Jutland any more than Jellicoe,'<sup>115</sup> the narrator says of the sailors. 'They were still anchored at Trafalgar.'

The romantic myths of war, then, still hold sway. Later in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, Lewis describes his own attempts, in the trenches, to relive the great Napoleonic battles, 'while I was reading in my flea-bag by the light of a candle—it was the *Chartreuse de Parme* I had just begun, and I was for the second time on the field of Waterloo' (121). But the vision of Lady Hamilton transposes the myths of war—the signal at Trafalgar, which 'will be remembered as long as the language, or even the memory, of England shall endure,' 'England expects every Man to do his Duty'; or Nelson exercising his 'right to be blind sometimes,' raising the glass to his blind eye at Copenhagen<sup>116</sup>—and places them in a society of sordid crowd-spectacle.

But the patriotism of Britannia, like Cantleman's scientism, is a woefully inadequate response to the new international situation. Nelson has 'retired into his needle'; 'he is now quite blind,' and can explain nothing to the crowds of 1914. Popular military and romantic myths are inappropriately appropriated by Cantleman's scientific project: he seems forced to abandon his experimental notes, taking up bad poetry instead. But he, at least, is aware of Nelson's blindness.

Crowd-ideas of 'sensation' and 'duty' are confusingly intermingled in the image of Lady Hamilton. The myth of the sea, which had sustained England through the previous century's conflicts,

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<sup>115</sup>Jellicoe, Commander of the Fleet during the war, was heavily criticised for his handling of the Battle of Jutland, the only major naval battle of the war. In *The Crisis of the Naval War* (London: Cassell, 1920), x–xi, he writes that, 'the navy was faced with problems which were never foreseen, and could not have been foreseen by anyone in this country.'

<sup>116</sup>Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson* (London: Hutchinson, 1903), p. 322, 240.



and which most of the public (to say nothing of the Vorticists, for whom 'the English Character is based on the sea': B1, 35) expected would sustain her through this new war, proves hopelessly ill-suited to the twentieth-century crowd-world.

Reverting to his properly 'autobiographical' voice, Lewis explains that Cattleman's feelings were

pretty near to what I felt.—Great interest. Great curiosity. But no identification of my personality with that collective Sensation. The war-crowds who roared approval of the declaration of war in 1914, were a jelly-fish, in my judgement. For some they were a Great People in their wrath, roaring before the throne of the God of justice, for the blood of the unrighteous. That was not my view of the matter. (84)

In the image-world of the Cattleman story, the crowd is spineless, drifting unconsciously on a historical tide which it doesn't understand; the crowd-images of the Old-Testament vision are, like the vision of Lady Hamilton, just exaggerated cliches that can move the malleable crowd.

This blind, supernormally stupid crowd, observed by the detached, ironic pseudo-scientist is not as funny as it might at first seem. If Lewis is mocking the crowd's lack of self-knowledge, its inability to read the terrible dangers of the new wartime situation, its lack of vital energy, and of a 'message,' then he is doing so in an essentially tragic context. In the *Blast* version of the story, communication was not only possible, it was all-pervasive; in the city of avant-garde inflected mass-literacy, simply by learning to read the words that surround you, you master your surroundings. Post-war, all that has changed. Communication is no longer possible; the only people 'reading' the crowd are the war-mongers, the psychologists and the false-priests; Lewis falls back into satire, ridiculing their methods and premises, so that Crowd 'science' de-



generates back into the muddle of superstitious discourses that it grew out of.



# The End of an Era

The Empty Ones can guarantee a day when the last Zone-Herero will die, a final zero to a collective history fully lived. It has appeal.<sup>117</sup>

The 'Empty Ones' of *Gravity's Rainbow* hark back to Eliot and Rivers's Melanesians, 'dying out principally for the reason that the "Civilization" forced upon them has deprived them of all interest in life'.<sup>118</sup> 'Otukungurua' or emptied vessels, these Herero 'Revolutionaries of the Zero' have opted for racial suicide via a negative birth rate: 'there *was* a tribal mind at work here, and it had chosen to commit suicide.'<sup>119</sup>

*Gravity's Rainbow*, of course, is governed by a similar law of disappearance to *The Waste Land*—a law that is most obvious in the dissolution of its main character, Slothrop, whose fragments are eventually scattered across the Zone.<sup>120</sup> But what I'm interested in here is the connection between this logic of disappearance—mass-disappearance, in the case of the Empty Ones—and the Rocket. The Zone Hereros who seek 'a final zero to a collective history',

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<sup>117</sup>Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (London: Vintage, 1995; originally published 1973), p. 318.

<sup>118</sup>T. S. Eliot, *Selected Letters* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 459.

<sup>119</sup>Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, pp. 316–317

<sup>120</sup>Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 742; for a discussion of Slothrop's dispersal, see Joseph Dewey, *In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1990), p. 166. For suggestive similarities between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Waste Land*, see Andrew E. Mathis, *The King Arthur Myth in Modern American Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2002), p. 131.



are also seeking the mysterious S-Gerät, the rocket with a serial number of five zeros. Whatever the status of the S-Gerät, in the context of Pynchon's overarching leitmotif of the Zero—which, in ballistics, where the rocket's trajectory is represented as ' $\Delta t$  approaching zero', stands for the final field of annihilation, ground zero,<sup>121</sup>—it is clear that their eventual mass-extinction is tied up with the logic of total dehumanised annihilation that would come to dominate the military-industrial world of the Rocket.

In much of my foregoing discussion, the First World War has been present in the background. It brought the crowd to the fore because what was seen to be required for victory was mass-mobilisation. It was partly because of the war's influence, and the interest in how populations behave in wartime, that two of the major works of British crowd-science that I've mentioned, Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* and Conway's *The Crowd in Peace and War* came to be published and widely discussed.<sup>122</sup>

The outcome of the Second World War, though, would make crowds irrelevant. In the immediate aftermath of Hiroshima, and in the light of the testing of the first successful hydrogen bomb in 1952, it was apparent that you just didn't need to bring huge crowds of soldiers with fixed bayonets face to face any more:<sup>123</sup> the new atomic weapons could be delivered initially by a few men in a b-29, and then, as rocket technology developed, by a small team of experts in a silo on another continent. The bomb made

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<sup>121</sup>Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 159. The leitmotif is introduced in the novel's first section, 'Beyond the Zero': see for example, Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 3 ('to try to bring events to Absolute Zero'); p. 28 ('in infinite series just perceptibly, term by term, dying...but never quite to the zero...') [Pynchon's ellipses]; p. 426 ('Steel fragments fell, a hundred feet away from the Zero point, slashing into the rye like hail'), etc.

<sup>122</sup>Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1916); Martin Conway, *The Crowd in Peace and War* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915).

<sup>123</sup>Joseph Smith, *The Cold War*, second edition, Historical Association Studies (Oxford: Blackwells, 1998). 40.



crowds vanish, metaphorically by alleviating the need for massive standing armies, and literally as a weapon of mass destruction. In the U.S., the House Committee on Postwar Military Policy had concluded in 1945 that,

if an army was necessary. . . it would be better to recruit a small volunteer force, and better still if the country used its defence dollars to raise a professional army of scientists, rather than conscripts, and to fund a comprehensive program of research and development in the technology of modern war.<sup>124</sup>

In this light, the Zone Herero's attachment to the 00000-series rocket bomb as 'a final zero to a collective history fully lived' has obvious appeal. The rocket stands for absence of people, just as Lewis's war-crowd had stood as a poignant symbol of their contingent plenitude.

After the end of Le Bon's 'era of crowds', then, where do we go? In the remainder of this section, I intend to examine one final brief example of dying crowd art; I shall end by speculating on where, in the 21st century, crowd art may be heading.

'THE LATEST MUSCOVITE MENACE'—BAKU,  
TRANSCAUCASIAN REPUBLIC, 1922

On 7 November, 1922—that is to say, three weeks after *The Waste Land* had been published in London; a month after the death of Marie Lloyd; a fortnight before Eliot's last 'London Letter' appeared—the city of Baku, 4000 miles from London, witnessed one of the more remarkable works of avant-garde Crowd-Art. Baku, at that time, was emerging from a period of turbulence, riven by an ethnically-charged power-struggle. Workers in the cities, mainly Armenian

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<sup>124</sup>Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 132.



and Russian, had established a revolutionary Baku Soviet in 1917; this had been overthrown a year later by a nationalist “Army of Islam”, aided by Ottoman Turkish forces; the Muslim-dominated Azerbaijan People’s Democratic Republic had in turn ended with occupation by the Bolsheviks, hungry for the Caspian oil supplies.<sup>125</sup>

By 1922, the use of mass spectacles to celebrate the anniversary of the October revolution had already been well established—performances which both commemorated the historic intervention of the masses on the world stage, and allowed for the development of the new forms of cultural practice that left-wing artists imagined would be expressed through the person of the crowd. Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Enlightenment and founder of Proletkult had written that ‘in order to experience themselves, the masses must manifest themselves externally, and this is possible only when. . . they themselves are their own spectacle.’<sup>126</sup>

A collective of directors including Nikolay Evreinov had, in 1920, produced an ambitious spectacle of ‘mass theatre’ entitled *The Storming of the Winter Palace* to commemorate the third anniversary of that event. The event was scripted (‘extremely unanimously and enthusiastically’) by a ‘collective author’ of ten writers. The stage consisted of two stages—one red (occupied by the workers), the other white (the provisional government)—and the Winter Palace itself. The actors consisted of eight thousand participants who were, Evreinov told them, ‘parts of a collective actor’. And by Lunacharsky’s measure, the hundred-thousand spectators must also be counted as significant participants.<sup>127</sup>

The performance in Baku in November 1922, organised to cel-

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<sup>125</sup>See James P Nichol, *Diplomacy in the Former Soviet Republics* (Westport: Praeger-Greenwood, 1995), p. 147; Sherri Liberman, *A Historical Atlas of Azerbaijan* (New York: Rosen, 2004), pp. 45–46.

<sup>126</sup>Quoted in Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 77.

<sup>127</sup>Corney, *Telling October*, pp. 76–80. The quotes are from p. 77.



celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Revolution, was more musical than dramatic. Arseny Avraamov is often cited as a precursor of the *musique concrete* movement; he would later produce pioneering electronic music by drawing directly onto magnetic tape, and had already begun the microtonal experiments that would culminate in the creation of his 'ultrachromatic' 48-tone system.<sup>128</sup>

From strategically placed signal towers, Avraamov and his fellow conductors used flags and pistol shots to conduct an orchestra that encompassed much of the surrounding city; indeed, the combined military-industrial force of the region:

several choruses with spectators, cannons, foghorns, the Caspian flotilla, two batteries of artillery guns, several full infantry regiments incl. machine gun division, hydro-aeroplanes, all of Baku's factory sirens. . . central steam whistle machine.<sup>129</sup>

This 'central steam whistle machine' or *magistral* was a device of Avraamov's own design, a bank of tuned whistles powered by a central steam source, somewhat after the fashion of an organ (plate 10). Again, the performance was about collective action, and the masses becoming aware of themselves as spectacle. The industrial-scale renditions of *The Warsaw Song*, *The International*, and *The Marseillaise* could, apparently, be heard across a considerable stretch of Azerbaijan.<sup>130</sup>

Through a widely-read study of Russian revolutionary art, *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus* (1926) by the Austrian René Fülöp-Miller,<sup>131</sup> Avraamov's performance became known—though not

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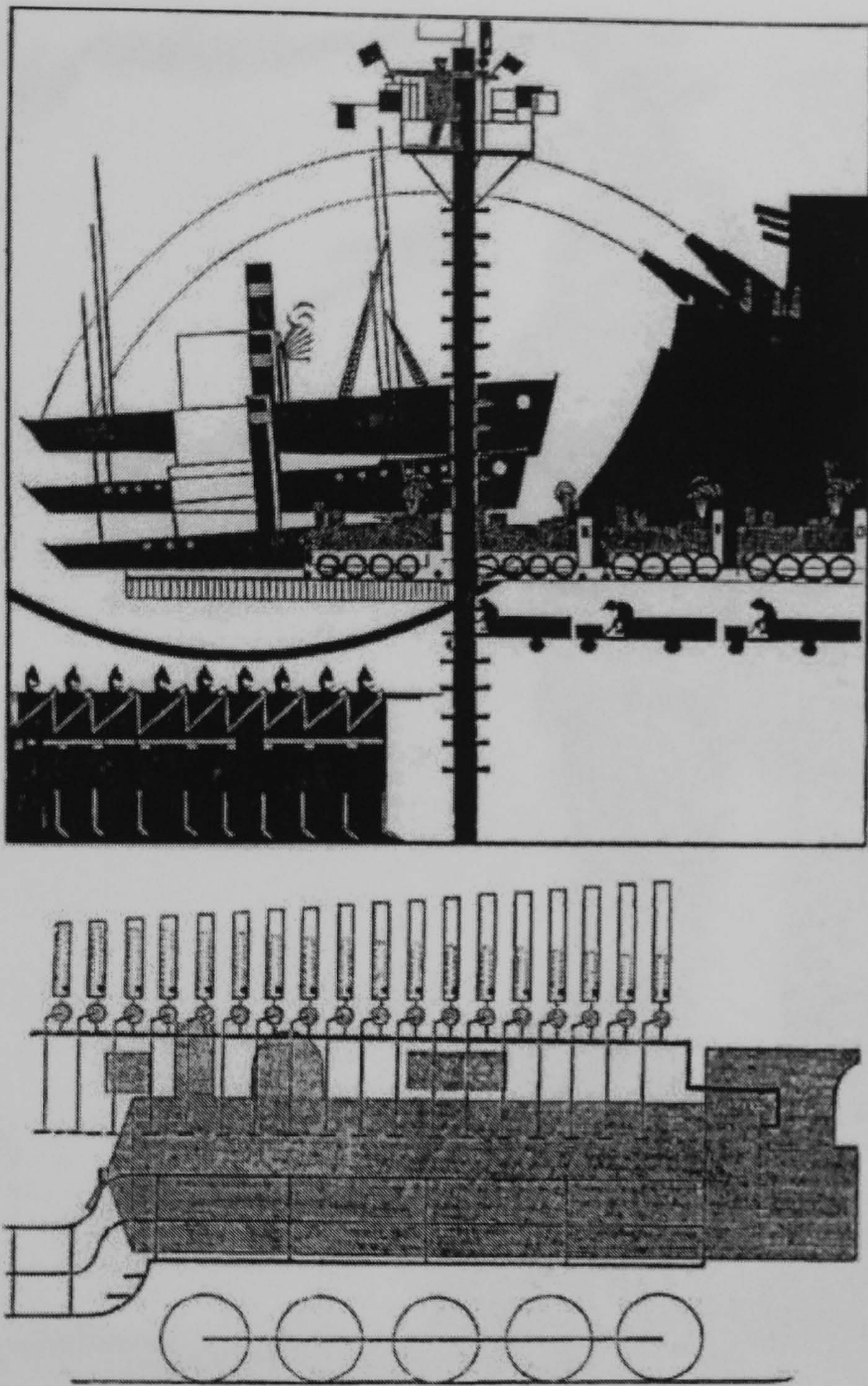
<sup>128</sup>Marina Lobanova, 'Avraamov, Arseny Mikhaylovich', Grove Music Online, ed. L. Macy (accessed 4 August, 2005), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>129</sup>Text of instructions quoted in Marina Lobanova, 'Avraamov, Arseny Mikhaylovich', Grove Music Online;

<sup>130</sup>Flora Dennis and Jonathan Powell, 'Futurism', Grove Music Online, ed. L. Macy (accessed 4 August, 2005), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>131</sup>René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An examination of cultural*





**Figure 10:** Artist's rendition of the Baku Symphony of Factory Whistles and *Magistral'*, *Gorm* 9 (1923), reproduced from Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 2004), p. 29.1





**Figure 11:** A Symphony of Factory Whistles, reproduced from René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An examination of cultural life in Soviet Russia*, trans. F. S. Flint and D. F. Tait (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), n.p.



accepted particularly sympathetically—in the West. Fülöp-Miller described the performance's 'noise orchestras', 'composed of a crowd of motors, turbines, sirens, hooters, and similar instruments of din; the choir master stood on the balustrade and "conducted" the din with the aid of a complicated signalling apparatus.'<sup>132</sup> Fülöp-Miller reproduced an image of Avraamov on the 'balustrade', conducting the 'din' with his 'complicated signalling apparatus' (plate 11).

So it was that this image came into the hands of T. S. Eliot in 1927. He described it in a commentary-piece for the *Criterion*, entitled, 'The Latest Muscovite Menace':

Readers of an interesting German book, entitled *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschevismus* (which is about to be published in English), will remember the photograph of a proletarian conductor, with a couple of railway flags, directing some 'community singing' from the top of a factory.<sup>133</sup>

I like Eliot's tone here: as we shall see, there is a certain amount of intentional humour at work, as Eliot exercises what David Chinitz has called his 'Mr Eliot' persona (the mask, 'based on a number of conventional character types' ranging from the fogey to the eccentric English gent, that according to Chinitz allowed Eliot to develop 'into an international superstar');<sup>134</sup> there is also a certain amount of unintentional humour attributable to the 'chinese whispers effect' that I discussed in the introduction, whereby, as an

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*life in Soviet Russia*, trans. F. S. Flint and D. F. Tait (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927). For an example of the book's popularity in Italy, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Between Fascism and Democracy: Gaetano Ciocca—Builder, Inventor, Farmer, Engineer', *Modernism/Modernity* 2:3 (1995), p. 124.

<sup>132</sup>Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. .

<sup>133</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary: The Latest Muscovite Menace', *Criterion* 5 (1927), pp. 285–286.

<sup>134</sup>David E. Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 175–179. The quotes are from p. 177.



idea crosses international borders, it carries a meaning quite other than the one that was intended.

'Of late,' Eliot continued, 'whenever any very large number of Britons is assembled in one place for holiday enjoyment, as for a Cup Final or Test Match, we find that a large part of the excitement consists in their all singing together.'<sup>135</sup> What Eliot says is quite true. At that year's cup final, the *Times* correspondent had been extremely impressed with the display, 'that most remarkable of modern phenomena, Community Singing'. He was especially impressed by 'the strange spectacle of a white figure, plump but athletic, vigorously waving his arms about, on a movable, black painted platform':

The whiteness of the figure and the blackness of the platform somehow suggested a scaffold and an execution, but the morbid thought soon dissipated when the strains of the 'Froth Blowers' Anthem' began to rend the air, and it was realised that this platform was the perch of a super-conductor, gymnastically as well as musically trained. . . . Mr. T. P. Ratcliff, in fact, was a former physical training instructor, and it was his knowledge of the well swung arm, not too easily tired, quite as much as his sense of beat and time, that lured on the crowd to unheard-of vocal triumphs. The echo of the Stadium, perhaps, helped the singers and their conductor to extract a 'yah' out of the word Hallelujah that would have been terrifying in an enclosed space. . . . 'Tipperary' and other war songs, of course, we all sang equally well—thanks to Mr. Ratcliff's hypnotic arms.<sup>136</sup>

Whatever may be said for such public, collaborative, social arts,

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<sup>135</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary: The Latest Muscovite Menace', *Criterion* 5 (1927), pp. 285–286.

<sup>136</sup>*The Times*, 25 April 1927, p. 6.



Eliot was not the one to say it. His reaction to this phenomena is wholly miserable; depressed, even:

We have not witnessed such a musical sacrifice, and do not know whether it is as yet merely a newspaper wheeze, or whether it has really taken hold of the British Massenmensch. If it has really caught on, we should like our social philosophers to tell us what it means. . . . We cannot explain it. But it should at present be suspect; it is likely very hostile to Art; and it may mark, and be a means of hastening the disappearance of the English Individualist whom we have heard so much about in the past, and his transformation into the microscopic cheese-mite of the great cheese of the future.<sup>137</sup>

Two essays by Eliot, commentaries in *The Criterion* separated by only four and a half years. They both deal with communal singing, yet they're poles apart; two seemingly opposite views of mass participation.

In the first, 'In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd', Eliot proposed that 'the working man who went to the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the act; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art.'

[Whereas] other comedians amuse their audiences as much and sometimes more than Marie Lloyd, no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique, and that made

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<sup>137</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary: The Latest Muscovite Menace', *Criterion* 5 (1927), pp. 285–286.



her audiences even when they joined in the chorus, not so much hilarious as happy.<sup>138</sup>

In the second, on the other hand, communal singing is seen as 'The Latest Muscovite Menace'. At around the time Eliot published *The Waste Land*, the communal chorus had seemed to provide the model (albeit a model which had passed its critical moment, its finest practitioner dead) for a kind of performance which could raise the life of community to some kind of harmonious aesthetic totality. The crowd, now, could provide little sustenance.

#### THE WISDOM OF CROWDS: A NEW CROWD MILLENNIUM?

Le Bon's 'era of crowds', then, I had thought, was one and the same as Lewis's 'age that had not come off', a 'future that has not materialised'<sup>139</sup>—an era which nevertheless existed in the promise of the texts I've been looking at; texts which, we have seen, came into the world curtailed, or which, upon publication, carried only the faint trace of their origins as crowd texts.

Then, just as I was finishing my preliminary studies for this thesis, I began to hear about crowds in the media. For a start, there was the British artist Jeremy Deller. He had received a certain amount of attention in 2001 for his *Battle of Orgreave*: a partial re-enactment of the violent clashes between police and pickets during the 1984–85 miners' strike.<sup>140</sup> Deller's performance looked back to early Soviet mass spectacles like *The Storming of the Winter Palace*: police and miners who had participated in the original 'Battle of Orgreave' were invited to take part, much as Evreinov

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<sup>138</sup>T. S. Eliot, 'In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd', *Criterion* 1 (1923), p. 194, p. 193.

<sup>139</sup>Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, trans. (unaccredited) as *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (1896; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982), xiv–xv; Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun Press, 1982) p. 256.

<sup>140</sup>See Jeremy Deller, *The English Civil War Part II: Personal Accounts of the 1984–85 Miners' Strike* (London: Artangel, 2002).



had sought to attract 'as far as possible, actual participants in the October storming'.<sup>141</sup>

The message, however, was different—whereas Evreinov's spectacle in 1920 had been dedicated to the crowd's victory, Deller's memorialised one of the terminal defeats of modern British working-class politics. The book and film which document the performance are filled with interviewees' bitterness at the failure of collective action during the strike: one participant interviewed for the film voices his angry disagreement with the chant, 'the miners united will never be defeated': 'it should have been "the workers united"'.<sup>142</sup>

So, I thought, crowd art may not be entirely dead, but that doesn't effect my theses about the death of the crowd. While the artist can still put on a mass-spectacle, a piece of crowd art, they no longer claim that they are making revolutionary art, drawing on the same reservoir of collective force that will revolutionise the world. Rather, Deller's piece revels in its own contradictions, and it's these contradictions that make it interesting: drawing on the trauma of a failed revolt against Thatcherism that didn't do any good, what good can this performance do; what does it possibly change?

Well, within a few years Deller had received the Turner Prize,<sup>143</sup> Britain's highest-profile award for contemporary art—not that this quite answers my question; however, it does seem to suggest that there's an appetite for the questions posed by collective art practices. It didn't end there. In 2003, there were reports of a new phenomena in New York known as 'Flash Mobs'; a mysterious figure known only as 'Bill' was using e-mail and text-messaging services

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<sup>141</sup>Corney, *Telling October*, p. 76.

<sup>142</sup>The re-enactment was filmed by Mike Figgis as *The Battle of Orgreave*, Artangel Media and Channel 4, 2001. The book I refer to is Jeremy Deller, *The English Civil War Part II*.

<sup>143</sup>Maev Kennedy, 'Turner prize shock: out of four serious competitors, the best artist wins', *The Guardian*, 7 December, 2004, p. 1.



to orchestrate large, inexplicable crowds that dissolved as quickly as they formed. On Tuesday, 19 June, 2003, at 7:27pm, a crowd spontaneously gathered in Macy's in Manhattan: they were, they told staff, looking for a 'love rug'. Ten minutes later the crowd dispersed.<sup>144</sup>

Then, in 2004, James Surowiecki published a book called *The Wisdom of Crowds*.<sup>145</sup> Subtitled 'why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations', Surowiecki's book is interesting because, firstly, it effects a complete about-turn from the ideas of Le Bon and the nineteenth-century crowd theorists. Secondly, it is interesting because it puts these ideas across in a manner that seems completely of its era, in the same way that Le Bon was of his era: it has received a large amount of media coverage; it dwelt on subjects (like the Wikipedia) that are currently (1995) receiving a large amount of media coverage; it has caught the imagination of the twenty-first century business, self-help, management-guru market.

Perhaps the era that we are about to enter may, just possibly, become a new era of crowds.

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<sup>144</sup>Alec Hanley Bemis, "'My Name Is Bill . . .': A q&a with the anonymous founder of flash mobs", L. A. Weekly (6–12 August, 2004; accessed 9 September, 2004), < <http://www.laweekly.com/ink/04/37/features-bemis.php> >

<sup>145</sup>James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations* (New York and London: Doubleday, 2004).



# Wyndham Lewis's *Cantelman: Crowd Master*

## ABOUT THE TEXTS

The 'Cantelman Crowd-Master' manuscript fragments and complete typescript are now in Cornell University Library.<sup>146</sup> Sections of 'Cantelman Crowd-Master' were published in *Unlucky for Pringle* and *Enemy News*, but these fragments of the story don't adequately reflect what is a reasonably polished narrative that differs significantly from other available texts, and even from the *Blasting and Bombardiering* fragments.<sup>147</sup> My reading texts makes the whole available for the first time.

The opening sections of the manuscript resemble part I, chapter VI, and part II, chapters II, III, and IV of *Blasting and Bombardiering: Cantelman* (—his name is regularized as 'Cantleman' in the *Blasting and Bombardiering* version) is in Scotland, at a country-house party; he travels down to London during the mobilization, where

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<sup>146</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Cantelman–Crowd Master*, mss. and tss. Wyndham Lewis Papers. Cornell University, Ithaca. See also Mary F. Daniels, *Wyndham Lewis: A descriptive catalogue of the Manuscript Material in the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University Library* (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>147</sup>Wyndham Lewis, 'The Countryhouse Party, Scotland', in *Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and other stories*, ed. C. J. Fox and Robert T. Chapman (London: Vision, 1973), 45–49; Robert Edward Murray, ed., 'Wyndham Lewis's Cantelman-Crowd Master: section six', *Enemy News* 34 (1992), 7–13; Murray, ed., 'Wyndham Lewis's Cantelman-Crowd Master: sections seven and eight', *Enemy News* 35 (1992), 6–16.



he observes the crowds.

The manuscript continues with Cantelman in London. He meets Cedric Morkdine in the street, who praises Cantelman's potboiler, *Bryan Multum*; they drink beer in the Soho Distillery and have a typically combative discussion. Cantelman then visits Mr and Mrs Stevens, with whom he lodges when in town. He spies on a girl across the street, who is brushing her hair in front of a mirror, naked, and again his novel is praised.

Months later, a friend, Pringle visits, and looks at something Cantelman has written. This is 'The Code of a Herdsman', which completes the 'Cantelman Crowd-Master' manuscript. Lewis had published the 'Code' in a slightly different form in *The Little Review* in July 1917, as part of the series of 'Imaginary Letters' written by Pound and himself; there, it had purported to be 'a set of rules sent by Benjamin Richard Wing to his young friend Philip Seddon enclosed with a letter.' A few months later it was included in his book, *The Ideal Giant*, which also included 'Cantelman's Spring-Mate.'<sup>148</sup> The table on the following page should simplify things a little:

There are two copies of the Cantelman typescript in the Cornell archive: one is a carbon copy of the other; both have the same annotations, in Lewis's hand on the originals and in another hand on the carbon copy.

The typescript is presented here in its entirety. The final section, 'The Code of a Herdsman' is typed up from pages torn from a printed copy of *The Ideal Giant*, also in the Cornell collection. These pages have been annotated in Lewis's hand, and the annotations incorporated in the final typescript.

This text presents all of Lewis's annotations to the typescript,

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<sup>148</sup>'Imaginary Letters. The Code of a Herdsman', *The Little Review* IV,3 (1917), 3-7; *The Ideal Giant* (London: Little Review, 1917); see also 'Cantleman's [sic] Spring-mate', reprinted in the second edition of *Blasting and Bombardiering*, pp. 304-311.



'The Crowd Master' ..... <i>Blast 2 (1915)</i>	'Code of a Herdsman' ..... <i>Little Review / Ideal Giant (1917)</i>	The Cattleman— Crowd Master MSS	Blasting and Bombardiering (1937)
The Crowd [London]		1. The Crowd. London, July 1914	
Thomas Blenner [Scotland]		2. The Countryhouse Party, Scotland	In Berwickshire, August, 1914 I Hand Over my Self-Portrait to my colleague of 'Blast'
The Journey to England		3. Mobilisation	Morpeth Olympiad Journey During Mobilisation
London		4. Arrival in London	
Multum		5. An Experiment with a Crowd	The War Crowds, 1914 [Includes An Experiment With a Crowd]
		6. Cedric Mordkine	
		7. Mr and Mrs Stevens	
	The Code of a Herdsman	8. The Code of a Herdsman	

Figure 12: Table showing correspondences between the Cattleman / Crowd Master texts.



with my editorial corrections. I have used three levels of footnotes: a top level, showing my own interventions; a second level, printed in double columns, which shows Lewis's autograph corrections, and, at some points, a third level with my editorial notes.

I have shown Lewis's own typescript annotations throughout. However, readers should note that the double column apparatus in the 'Code of a Herdsman' section indicates annotations made by Lewis on the pages torn from the printed *Ideal Giant* text. The 'Code' was also published in the *Little Review*: there are several variant readings between the two published versions, which I have duly marked in the double column apparatus—their provenance is clearly marked.

Marginal notes indicate breaks in the typescript pages: TSA = the complete Cornell typescript; IG = *The Ideal Giant* printing of 'The Code of a Herdsman'; LR = *Little Review* printing of 'The Code of a Herdsman'

I have attempted to show all significant alterations made by Lewis in a fairly pedantic—but not overly pedantic fashion. My own corrections, as well as correcting spellings and typographic errors, go so far as to normalise capitalisation—which Lewis uses inconsistently, and which some editors have argued should be preserved—in favour of common practice. All of my corrections are clearly marked in the footnotes.



# 1. The Crowd

London. July. 1914.

TsA 1

Men drift in thrilling masses past the Admiralty, cold night  
tide. Their throng creeps round corners, breaks faintly here and  
there up against a railing barring from possible sights. Local ebul-  
5 lience and thickening: some madman disturbing their depths with  
baffling and recondite noise.

The police with distant icy contempt herd London. They shift  
it in lumps passim, touching and shaping it with heavy delicate  
professional fingers. Their attitude suggests that these universal  
10 crowds want some new vague Suffrage. Is this opposition cor-  
rect? In ponderous masses they prowl, with excited hearts. Are  
the crowds then female? The police at all events handle them  
with a professional contempt of their excited violence, cold in their  
helmets.—Some tiny grain of suffrage will perhaps be thrown to  
15 the millions in the street, or taken away. The police at all events  
are contemptuous, cold and disagreeable.

The newspapers already smell carrion. They allow themselves  
already the giant type reserved for great catastrophes.

Prussia should be the darling of the Press: the theatrical instinct  
20 of the New Germany has saved the Crowd from breaking up for  
twenty years. It has kept men in crowds, enslaving them to the  
feminine entity of their numbers.

Bang! Bang!

Ultimatum to you!

25 Ultimatum to you!

---

16 contemptuous] contemptuos 20 Germany] Gremany 22 numbers.] num-  
bers,

---

8 heavy] heacy

10 Suffrage. Is] [Line break  
cancelled]

15 away. The] [Line break  
cancelled]

20 Crowd] crowd



## ULTIMATUM!

From an evening Paper: July—

“The outlook has become more grave during the afternoon. Germany’s attitude causes considerable uneasiness. She seems to be throwing obstacles in the way.—The German ambassador in Vienna has telegraphed to his government, etc.”

Germany, the sinister brigand of latter-day Europe, “*mauvais voisin*” for the little French bourgeois-reservist, remains silent and ominously unhelpful in her armoured cave. Do these idiots that rule us indeed mean catastrophe? It seems that they do!

The Crowd, that first mobilisation of a country, now is formed in London. It is established with all its vague profound organs *au grand complet*. Every night it serpentines in thick well-nourished coils, all over the town, in tropic degustation of news.

*The Individual and the Crowd: Peace and War*. Man’s solitude and Peace; Man’s Community and Row.

So periodically we shed our individual skin, or are apt to, and are purged in big being: an empty throb. Men resist death with horror it is true, when their time comes. But death is only a form of Crowd. It is a similar surrender.

Again, does not the Crowd in life spell death too, when most intensely marshalled? Crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death, such is its immemorial function. A fine dust of extinction, a grain or two for each man, is scattered in any crowd like these

27 Paper: ] paper:

34–35 Do these... they do!] [New paragraph] Do the idiots really mean - ?

36 Crowd, ] crowd

40 *Individual and the Crowd: Peace and War* ] individual and the crowd: peace and war

41 Peace; Man’s Community and Row. ] peace; man’s community and Row. The bachelor and the

husband-Crowd. The Married Man is the symbol of the Crowd: his function is to set one going to create one in the bowels of his wife. At the altar he embraces Death.

43 throb. Men ] throb. [New paragraph] Men

44 is ] is,

44 form ] from

47 marshalled? ] marshalled



50 black London war-crowds. Their pace is so mournful. Wars begin with this huge indefinite interment in the cities.

For days now wherever you are you hear a sound like a very harsh perpetual voice of a shell. If you put W before it, it always makes *War*.

55 It is the Crowd cheering everywhere. Even weeks afterwards, when the Crowd has served its turn and been dissolved, those living in the town itself will seem to hear this noise.

---

55 Crowd ] crowd

---

56 Crowd ] crowd



## 2. The Countryhouse party. Scotland.

Cantleman was in the North. He was at a country house with an American, just across the Border, with a large party, because he had just become a celebrated writer. There was a writer there as well who had long been celebrated who had followed him there with his wife, because he had become famous from associating with other celebrated people and he attached himself to this rising star.

This was Leo Makepiece Leo: through his mother he was related to Thackeray. Leo's wife had come with him: she had been celebrated an even longer time than he: she was a great woman novelist. The American hostess desired to be celebrated, and to be a novelist. In their different rooms they were all writing books, sketches or articles about each other. The great woman novelist said "Leo is a diplomat". She always said this. She had converted him now into an earl (Lord Raymond Mount Maurice—Leo had chosen his own christian name), she had peopled the stables of the hired country house with hunting horses (though in fact only occupied for this let by a single Rolls Royce), extended the lawns, provided a male staff of footmen chefs and valets (there were no men-servants in the house except the chauffeur) and was well away towards a very brilliant victorian piece, in her most renowned manner. Her celebrated husband Leo's pen did not lag behind. He filled the atmosphere with crafty "diplomats", laboriously adulterous. He placed them as he found himself, only more

---

68 American ] american 73 christian name), had ] christian name) had 75 Royce),  
extended ] Royce) extended

---

65-66 was related ] related

68 celebrated, ] celebrated

69 rooms ] views

69 books, ] books

72 Maurice— ] Maurices

73 she had ] had

75 occupied for this let by ]

occupied by

76 lawns, ] lawns

77 men- ] mene

78 piece, ] piece

79 Leo's ] Leos



so, in surroundings of extreme luxury. He hemmed them in with obsequious valets, and provoked them to interpret the most spectacular traditions of anglo-norman landowning society. They had  
 85 an unaccountable touch too, a florid touch—a thwarted “inhibited” gusto for the flesh-pots of sex but always the flesh-pots of others others (hence the adultery) which they may have picked up on their long diplomatic missions to Vienna, in contact with exotic pathologists; and they possessed a dull and heavy lip, a fishy  
 90 and inscrutable, welt-political eye they did not get in the English county—but that did not matter. All these things in due course passed into currency. Men dislike true portraits. So all was well, the romantic pen was busy on all sides. Cantelman stored up the stories of the aged-famous. They flowed in an adenoidish nasal  
 95 low voice twanging from the wet hanging lips of Leo. The house became peopled with a century of English greatness. Cantelman, the celebrated “futurist”, swam sullenly against the historical tide. England he patronised: “victorianism” he exploded against in glib  
 100 contempt. Leo humoured the young lion, the young lion tolerated Leo: they were “high contracting parties”. “Diplomacy” was called in and did its work—Leo read the papers in the morning.

“A war is coming” he piped nasally one day at breakfast, the big naif fat-boy, his hair untidy and tie crooked, a smile bulging in one pink shining cheek, one wet azure eye cocked above it at the  
 105 company.

90 welt-political eye they ] welt-political, eye, they 90 English ] english 95 low voice ] low-voice 96 English ] english

83 valets, and ] valets and  
 85–86 “inhibited” ] “inhibited,”  
 87 others (hence the adultery)  
 which they ] others—hence the  
 adultery that they  
 89 pathologists; and they  
 possessed a dull ] pathologists,  
 and a dull  
 91 county ] contry

93 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
 93 stored ] stroed  
 96 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
 97–99 tide. England... contempt.  
 Leo ] tide. Leo  
 101 work—Leo ] work. Leo  
 102–103 at breakfast... crooked, a  
 smile ] at breakfast, a smile



"You don't really mean to say that, do you, Leo? You don't mean there's going to be a European war?" the American hostess asked in passionate expostulatory waves of rising and falling sound.

110 "I'm afraid that's what it means" his punched pipe (pitched at the alarm) replied, the Times put down beside him, open at the leaders.

"But England will never go to war" she said. "A liberal government, anyway, will never declare war. If it were a conservative  
115 government, then perhaps they might."

"What do you bet?" croaked Leo, the jolly sporting gentleman-journalist.

"Oh I'm not betting, Leo!"

120 "I'll bet you anything you like that the liberals will do it. They will go to war more easily than the conservatives. They always have."

"I don't see how they can."

125 "Well. I know all of them. Several are my intimate friends" he quavered and snuffled. "If you knew them as well as I do you'd know they would. I hope I'm wrong."

Leo was of German nationality. He had several eminent liberal friends, whom Cantelman had met at his house.

"I don't believe Asquith dare declare war."

"You see!" croaked Leo.

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106 You don't] You dont 106-107 You don't mean there's] You dont mean theres 107 European] european 107 American] american 110 that's] thats 122 don't] dont 126 German] german 128 don't] dont

---

107-109 the American... rising and falling sound] the american hostess asked.

110-111 his punched pipe (pitched at the alarm) replied,] he said,

110 punched] Punches

119 liberals] Liberals

123-125 "Well... hope I'm wrong." ] "I know all of them. If you knew them as well as I do you'd know they would.

126-127 liberal friends... at his house.] liberals friends.



130 Cantelman did not understand. He knew nothing about liberals or conservatives. "War" conveyed nothing to him. He was totally ignorant of what these people were discussing. The "future" was the province of his election. It was a Utopia of course. War was not a part of it. Other countries went to war, not his.

135 They went on talking about war.—What was war? He had no idea. Cantelman took up the Times and read what Leo had been reading. He could not understand. His father had been a soldier. That was a reason to misunderstand war or think little about it: what his father had done he would not do. He would never be a  
140 soldier, since his father had been one: so why consider war?

"Leo's body is a sluggish colony of massive blond segments" Cantelman had registered in his notebook. "'Those are worms that are his arms'—also his legs. I regard him as a gigantic annelid. His body is probably a red-blooded earth-worm, white at the extremi-  
145 ties of the segments." After this was written: "Note. This disgusts me, but evidently this is not the case with most people. ('Worms breathe by their skin, as they do not possess any special respiratory organs. The two sexes are united in the same individual, but two individuals (same sex) pair together.' This sounds like Leo.)"

150 Leo's attitude to his body was that it was very large and fat. Cantelman put down his heavy breathing to adenoids. He did not understand his gasping. He did not understand Leo.

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130 Cantelman] Cantleman 142 Cantelman] Cantleman 145 "Note.] Note.  
149 Leo.)] Leo.). 151 Cantelman] Cantleman

---

130–131 liberals or conservatives ]

Liberals or Conservatives

131 "War" ] "War

132 discussing ] discussing  
discussing

133 province ] porvince

133–134 election. It was a Utopia  
of course. War ] election. War

134 countries ] countrys

136 Cantelman ] Cantleman

137 could not ] could'nt

138–139 it: what ] it. What

141 segments ] worms.

142 had registered ] noted

143–144 arms'...His body ] arms,'  
also his legs. His body

144–149 a red-blooded...Leo.]

disgusting ringed earth-worm, red  
at the extremities of the segments."



Next morning Leo sighed and gasped as he read the newspaper. It sounded as though he were in a bath. He kept raising his  
 155 thick eyelid up and depressing his cheek; an eyelash had not got into his eye: he was acting as his body dictated. That made him prop his eye open, whose blue disk was painted upon a reddish egg, the size of a small fowl's.

"What's the news Leo?" asked the hostess.

160 "Oh—There's going to be a European war," Leo said, looking up from his paper. He had said that already: but there was nothing else to say. He passed his large protruding wet blue eye impassively over the faces of these children—absorbed in their luxury, luxury, eggs, fish, bacon, marmalade, and porridge, their self  
 165 satisfied eras of sheltered peace.

"I hope you're wrong Leo" said the American hostess.

Cantelman watched Leo in silence. Leo looked at him and returned to the paper. Cantelman took one up and read the news. After breakfast Leo read the other papers in the hall. Cantelman  
 170 came down from his room going towards the main house-door. Leo put down his paper and held out his hand.

"Help me up, there's a good chap!" he panted with a pained discomfort, a bitter slightly quivering mouth, that appeared to be suffering from the sensation following a rebuff.

158 fowl's] fowls 159 What's] Whats 160 European] european 160 war,] war." 166 American] american 167 Cantelman] Cantleman 168 Cantelman] Cantleman 172 there's] thers

157 upon] in

158 egg, the size of a small fowl's.]

egg the size of small hens egg.

160 Oh—There's] Oh: there's

160–162 Leo said... nothing else to

say.] Leo said "quietly" and

thrillingly, looking up from his

paper.

163 children—absorbed] children,

absorbed

164 luxury, eggs] luxury, their

eggs

164–165 porridge, their self

satisfied eras of sheltered peace.]

porridge.

167 Leo] him

167–168 Leo looked at him and

returned] He returned

169 Cantelman] Cantleman

172–174 Help me... rebuff.] Help

me up" thers a good chap" he

panted.



175 Cantelman pulled him up out of the chair. Leo liked being  
helped up from chairs by people over whom he exercised any  
authority, by nobodies or by juniors. He got on his feet with a  
limp, as though he had stuck together. He shook. He stood still,  
his large feet pointing flatly to right and left, his legs fat cylinders  
180 clinging at the knees as though still adhering.

"When will the car be ready?" he asked, in his soft panting  
"diplomatic" undertone.

"I'm just going to see."

"I'll come with you," said Leo.

185 The car was outside the door. Leo lit one eye, his jagged teeth  
appeared through his walrus moustache, he nodded, and went  
and had a jolly companionable talk with the chauffeur. Soon the  
guests had collected. They went to play golf. Cantelman left them  
near the small county town, and went in to it alone to get the latest  
190 papers. The "Northern Dispatch" had a poster: in large letters,  
violet on a white ground, was the announcement:

## MORPETH OLYMPIAD. RECORD CROWD.

Wonderful crowds, gathering at Olympiads! What is the War  
to you? It is you that make both the Wars and Olympiads. When  
195 War knocks at the door, why should you hurry? You are busy  
with an Olympiad!—Cantelman looked at the perfidious poster  
and reflected as above.

This crude violet lettering, distillation of suffragetic years, of

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184 you," ] you" 188 Cantelman ] Cantleman 196 Cantelman ] Cantleman

---

175 Cantelman ] Cantleman

175 Leo ] He

180 adhering ] stuck

181–182 he asked... undertone. ]

he asked.

185 was outside ] was just outside

186–187 nodded, and went and ]

nodded and went, and

188 golf. Cantelman ] golf:

Cantleman

189 the small county town ] the

town

198 lettering, distillation ] lettering

distillation



minor violences. He was a suffragette. He now felt eager for news.  
200 He bought a London Edition of the Daily Mail.

## GERMANY DECLARES WAR ON RUSSIA

With the words came a dark rush of hot humanity in his mind.  
An immense human gesture swept its shadow across him like a  
smoky cloud. "Germany declares War on Russia" seemed a roar TsA 5  
205 of guns. He saw active mephistophelian specks in Chancelleries.  
("diplomats" like Leo). He saw a rush of papers, a frowning race.  
With innate military exultation he regarded it. The ground seemed  
swaying a little. He left the paper-shop, swallowing this tragic  
morsel with stony dignity.

210 The party at the golf links took his "News," "Mails," and "Mir-  
rors", as the run home commenced. Each manifested his gladness  
at the bad news in his own restrained way. Would England de-  
clare war? Leo said "Yes"—simply, "quietly" and with fatigued  
patience. "She" would, he said. He knew what "she" would do, if  
215 "she" didn't know herself.

The closing of the Stock Exchange, announced, suggested a  
host of fascinating changes in life. What would happen as to the  
Banks? Food supplies had better be laid in. What of invasion?

220 The excitement and novelty of life foreshadowed pleased this  
group of children. Leo, also, in his way, appeared satisfied. The  
general satisfaction showed itself in various disguises. The next  
few days was a gay Carnival of Fear, or conventional horror. The

---

215 didn't] did'nt

---

200 He bought] He brought

204 Russia] Russia,

205–206 Chancelleries.

("diplomats" like Leo).]

Chancelleries: "diplomats" like

Leo.

206–207 race...regarded it.] race,

with innate military exultation.

208–209 swallowing this tragic

morsel with] gulping this big

morsel down with

213 war?] war.

213–215 "Yes"...herself.] Yes,

"She" would.

221 general satisfaction]

satisfaction



Morpeth Olympiad poster was secured, and pinned up in the hall.  
It appeared an adequate expression of the greatness of the English  
225 nation.

Then all London newspapers began to be bought up in Edinburgh, and none ever got as far as this countryside. Cantelman left the house-party and returned to London.

---

224 English ] english

---

223 pinned up ] stuck up

226 newspapers ] Newspapers

227 Cantelman ] Cantleman



### 3. Mobilisation

He left Scotland by the night train, on the second day of the  
230 British mobilisation order. He had to wait for half an hour at Ged-  
des station for the midnight train from Edinburgh. Two English  
youths in khaki, with rifles were on the platform. Several men  
arrived in a large car. One was very tall and rather fat. He stood  
talking to the station master, who touched his cap respectfully, for  
235 some minutes. Precautions taken in the neighbourhood, scraps of  
private news a station master might be supposed to know, was  
being retailed. Cantelman watched the new arrivals with dislike.  
He stood, in his dress and appearance nautical and priestly at  
the same time, on guard over his portmanteau. He watched the  
240 public-schoolboy merriment of the group of new arrivals. Officers  
packing off southwards a little late?

“Obese well-fed snob, enchanted with your few expensive tricks  
of manner. Too poor a chemistry to produce anything else,” thought  
Cantelman. “Arrogant sheep! The Prussian Officer ever is your  
245 superior. He does at least read Clausewitz, he is conversant with  
the philosophy of his machine-made moustaches. When he does  
something he knows what he is doing.”

Cantelman knew so well what he was doing that he had left  
his notes in his table-drawer, for Leo to read. He now remem-  
229–230 the British ] the british 231 English ] english 244 Cantelman ] Cantle-  
man

229–230 the British ] british  
232 khaki, with rifles were ] khaki  
with rifles were  
234 master, who touched his cap  
respectfully, for ] master who  
touched his cap respectfully for  
237 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
239 on guard ] in guard  
240 public-schoolboy ] large  
puppy schoolboy  
242–245 “Obese... superior. ]

“Stupid fat snob!” Too poor a  
chemistry to produce anything  
else. thought Cantelman. “I prefer  
the Prussian Officer.  
247 he is doing. ] he’s doing.  
Arrogant and crafty sheep! A la  
laterne!  
248 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
248 he had left ] he left  
249 table-drawer ] table-draw



250 bered this. While he was hesitating whether to return for them  
the train came melodramatically into the station. It drew him into  
it. Leo and his hostess must peruse his notebooks in which they  
appeared, Leo as a red-blooded earth worm. He found sailors  
sprawled about in all the compartments. Mobilisation was every-  
255 where. The train was quite full. Ten people, chiefly women, slept  
upright against each other in a carriage. They revealed unexpected  
modes of sleep. They all appeared to have their eyes shut to ex-  
amine drunkenly drunkenly some absurd fact within. He placed  
himself amongst them.

260 Sentries on the bridges at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Very war-like  
stacks of rifles on the railway platform. More "mobilisation scenes". TsA 6  
He noted with pleasure these signs of imminent world-war. The  
ten sleeping women travelling through England on this impor-  
tant and dramatic night, must be connected with the mobilisation.  
265 Sleep had struck them down at the start. These ten upright un-  
comfortable and indifferent figures looked as though they were  
mobilised every week. It was inconvenient, but they had grown  
accustomed to it. Newcastle woke them. They stared glassily at it,  
then closed their twenty eyes in determined sleep.

270 A squat figure in a stiff short coat got in. He made an eleventh  
beside Cantelman. He began a gradual sinking movement towards  
the seat. He reached it a short time after they had restarted. He

---

271 Cantelman ] Cantleman

---

252-253 they appeared, Leo as a  
red-blooded earth worm. ] ther  
appeared.

254 all the ] most

258 drunkenly ] some drunkenly

258-259 within. He placed himself  
amongst them. ] within.

260-261 Very war-like stacks ]

Stacks

261-262 "mobilisation scenes". He  
noted with pleasure these signs of

imminent world-war. ]

"mobilisation scenes".

263 women ] people

267 week ] week or so

267 inconvenient, ] disagreeable,

269 closed their twenty eyes in  
determined sleep. ] slept again.

270 in. He ] in, and

272 restarted. He ] restarted. [New  
paragraph] He



apologised, Cantelman was not drawn towards him. He was answering the mobilisation call, he said. He must have been something to do with the Navy's food, Cantelman thought. <sup>275</sup> thought. "I'm not travelling for pleasure" he said later. He was harsh and bombastic in manner. "No, I'm called up.—What are we going for?" he asked, misunderstanding a question. "Why, to take the place of other men, as soon as they're shot down!" The trenchant <sup>280</sup> hissing of his "soon as they're shot down" woke one of the women. He rolled down her eyeball, gazed intently at the naval rating, and closed her eyes again.

"The Kayser ought to be bloody well shot!" he said. "He's bin gettin' ready for this near on twenty years. Now he's goin' to <sup>285</sup> have what he wants, hot and strong. A-ah!—He's bin spendin' his private fortune on it!"

He was a man of about fifty, like a hard-featured Prussian. Must be connected with provisions, Cantelman thought. Sea-grocer? The white apron of the German delicatessen shops fitted him. <sup>290</sup> Near his pension, perhaps. Too noisy to be a fighter.

The warmth of the lady next to Cantelman appeared to him, eventually, excessive. Her leg was fat, restless and hot. Then he noticed a thick wheeze and a shawl. Other indications showed him that he was very closely pressed against a sick woman. The heat <sup>295</sup> was fever no doubt. There were minutes of canine uncertainty.

Minutes of stolid hesitation passed. He thought he might fall off

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<sup>275</sup> Cantelman ] Cantleman <sup>278</sup> question. ] question, <sup>288</sup> Cantelman ] Cantleman <sup>289</sup> German ] german

---

<sup>273</sup> apologised, Cantelman was not drawn towards him ] but was not an attractive man  
<sup>275–276</sup> thought. "I'm ] thought. [New paragraph] "I'm <sup>276</sup> pleasure" ] pleasure," <sup>276–277</sup> and bombastic in manner. ] and angry.  
<sup>280–282</sup> women... again. ] women.

<sup>284</sup> near on twenty ] twenty  
<sup>284</sup> goin' ] going  
<sup>289</sup> German ] German  
<sup>291</sup> Cantelman ] Cantleman  
<sup>295–296</sup> uncertainty. Minutes ] uncertainty. [New paragraph] Minutes  
<sup>296</sup> passed. He thought ] passed. [New paragraph] He though



to sleep himself. He did not feel inclined to blend his slumbers with those of a diseased person. The atmosphere of the carriage came to appear unwholesome.

300 He rose at at last; ashamed, and went into the corridor. He got in between some sleeping sailors in the next compartment. Here the light was uncovered and the men less solidly packed for the night. One sailor opposite Cantelman was awake, filling his pipe, and talking to a navy. They were not talking about the  
305 war, but the mining industry. The sailor was a Scotsman from near Glasgow, as black as a Lavantine. His features were aquiline and baggy in the symmetrical Mediterranean way. Eyes heavy, brown, blank, and formed with the distinctness of little billiard balls, lids like metal slides. One black eyebrow was fixed up with  
310 wakeful sagacity. His eyes were polite; his being civilized, active and competent.

Cantelman talked to the sailor when the navy left the train. He was a naval reservist who had been down to Chatham for the Test Mobilisation a few days before. No sooner back, and congratulating himself on no more derangement for some time to come,  
315 than the real mobilisation order comes.

“The wife brrings the letter in on Sunday morrening. I just tuk  
it and put it down by the side o’ the bed!” all in the voice of Harry  
Lauder, with nodding of head, humorous raising of eyebrows, the  
320 R’s rolling and sounding like perpetual pawky chuckles. Many

---

307 Mediterranean ] meditteranean 320 R’s ] r’s

---

298–299 person. The atmosphere... unwholesome.] person.

300–301 at last...got ] at last, rather ashamed, went into the corridor, and got

302–303 solidly packed for the night.] permanently packed.

303 Cantelman ] Cantleman

305 Scotsman ] Scotchman

307 Mediterranean ] southern

308 the distinctness ] clearness

310–311 polite...competent.]

politic and circumspect.

312 Cantelman ] Cantleman

313 Chatham ] Chatam

320 perpetual pawky chuckles ]

perpetual chuckles



pauses, caused partly by obstruction of facetious R's. "Then I turned over and slept for tee hourrs more! I didn't need to open it! I'd been expecting it." Obstruction filled with ghosts of R's and strangled chuckles: raised eyebrow and fixed eye.

325 The sailor's conversation betrayed no consciousness that this journey on which he was embarked was unusually dangerous. There was only humour, mildly veiling a genial disgust.

The York platforms were comparatively empty.

330 A naval reservist got into the compartment. A half a dozen people saw him off. His mother, a burly good natured woman, kept swaying from one foot to another. A contemptuous grin curled her close mouth, and with her staring tragic eyes she kept turning and looking at him, then back down the platform. Two girls, his sisters probably, stood crying behind his mother, one wiping her face  
335 with a very small handkerchief, and an old man remained close under the window, deprecatory, distressed and absentminded. It was a foretaste of other scenes for Cantelman.

But the empty York platform, at two in the morning, and this English family, without the wild possessive hugging of the French  
340 at the stations, sending off their reservist, affected him more. It hardly seemed worth while sending off One. What could he do? The mother's sarcastic grin and fixed eyes, and her big body with one shoulder hunched up, almost a grace, like a child's trick, as her eyes wandered, were not easily forgotten. He prayed that the  
345 woman would get back her reservist son safe and well.

Two hawkers or slum-hawks, flash and quick, had scuttled in. Their smooth canaille faces, american clothes, and particular air of

---

339 English ] english

321 facetious R's. "Then ]  
facetious R's. [New paragraph]  
"Then  
322 slept for tee hourrs more ] had  
another couple of hourrs  
337 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
338 two ] 2

339 English ] English  
340 their ] the  
346 hawkers... got in. ] young men  
of twenty or so had got in.  
347 american ] American  
347-348 particular air of



solidarity, like members of a Music-Hall troupe, was too familiar  
a type. They blocked up the window, talking to a third come to  
350 see them off. The young reservists family attempted to catch sight  
of him through the side window. The mothers eyes stared wildly  
in.

The train started; the new reservist took his place next to the  
Scotsman. The two shuffling gangsters lounged in the corridor  
355 outside from which scraps of a pretentious cant reached the com-  
partment, until the neighbouring station was reached, when they  
got out.

The York reservist (something about his short stiff collar and  
beret-like hat assisting) resembled a breton conscript sailor. He  
360 had tobacco-coloured, rather soft and staring eyes, a moustache  
and much developed Adam's apple and jaw muscles. He filled and  
lighted his pipe with deliberate rather self-conscious movements.  
He turned to the Scotsman. "Are you going to Portsmouth?" he  
asked.

365 "Chatham" said the Scot, in flat deep solemnity, taking his pipe  
out of his mouth, and leaning towards him. The York reservist  
began grumbling conveniently about the upset. Both the Scotsman  
and he came from the Pits. The Yorkshireman had a good deal to  
say about the new German machinery they had installed lately. It  
370 only worked well under certain conditions. The other had also  
seen that German machinery used, further North: it had not been

---

359 beret-like ] beri-like 369 German ] german 371 German ] german

solidarity ] an air of extraordinary  
solidarity

348 Music-Hall ] music-hall

349-352 third...wildly in. ] third  
came to see them off.

354 Scotsman ] Scotchman

354-356 two...until ] two youths  
stood in the corridor outside until

359 assisting) resembled ] helping)  
was like

363-364 Scotsman. "Are you going  
to Portsmouth?" he asked. ]

Scotchman: "Are you going to  
Portsmouth?"

365 Chatham ] Chatam

367 Scotsman ] Scotchman

368-369 good deal to say ] good  
say

371 German ] germany



satisfactory. Why must they buy German machinery? For a long time they talked about the Pits.

The sailors with whom he sat appeared Crowd-proof. They  
375 were the first break in the continuity of the Crowd-spirit that Cantelman had met since war began blowing up. As sailors they were professionals with a long top-dog tradition that removed them from anxiety. TsA 8

The Scotsman was a Syrian gem of craft and balance. The Yorkshire  
380 shire pitman was a handsome and intelligent man of the people, such as you associate rather with France than England. The former referred to the real new Crowd in his measured way, without respect:

“They were standing therre till midnight, so thick I had to go  
385 round by way of Tyne Street. You should have just seen them! I gave a look at the notice for reservists stuck up, and sez to myself, ‘that’s done it!’ ”

A very massive fresh young man in the corner woke up, rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands, like a schoolboy, and grinned.  
390 Very large, empty, regular features, long pointed nose, rather lecherously twisted at nostrils, and mouth of cupid’s bow pattern. His fair hair was going on top. The stupid grin with which he met everyone’s eyes caused his scalp to fly back each time. He stared a great deal ahead of him, his eye fixed and lip twisted, suggest-

372 German] german 379 Syrian] syrian 379-380 Yorkshire] yorkshre

373 Pits] pits

374 The sailors with whom he sat appeared Crowd-proof. They] The Crowd-proff sailors

375-376 Cantelman] Cantleman

376 began] gegan

377 professionals] professionalls

379 Scotsman] scotchman

385 Street] street

385-386 have just seen them! I

gave a look] have seen them. I just

look

388 massive] heavily built fair

391-393 His fair...stared] His hair wasgoing on top. At the silly grin with which he met everyone’s eyes the hair retreated on his head. He starded

394-395 and lip...natural] with a painful expression like the straining of a perpetual natural



395 ing the straining of a natural function. He sprang up frequently,  
dashed himself into the woodwork of the door, rebounded, charged  
again, but straighter, and disappeared. He too was a Pit-hand.

A small wizened fellow, who had been sleeping, curled up with  
his head on his service sack, woke and put his legs down from the  
400 seat. He too was a miner. Cross-examined a little by the first-  
Scotsman, he gave an account of himself, and asked various ques-  
tions. They told him that his jersey wouldn't pass muster. Two  
stripes ornamented the sleeve. Chatham he was bound for. Can-  
telman began to think of all naval reservists as miners. The Scot,  
405 however, began talking of a postman who had been seen off at  
Ivanhoe or somewhere by the entire staff of the Post Office.

"I could hairrdly squeeze out of the carriage furrer them!" he  
said, "I went down the platform to get a wee drink. When I came  
back I didn't have to look for my carriage. The whole post office  
410 was gathered in front of it."

The Yorkshireman felt it advisable here to put in a plea for  
discrimination.

"Soppy I call it. Seeing you off!" he chucked his chin up and  
clicked his tongue. "Your family feels, I suppose—."

415 "That's another matter. But it was comic to see that regiment  
of clairks come to see off the postman," persisted the Scot.

"Rregiments clairks" he rolled and clapped sardonically, over-

---

397 Pit-hand. ] pit-hand, but  
brought no illuminating  
information to the common talk.  
He appeared to have the perpetual  
preoccupation of which that  
pained mouth-curling was the  
outward sign, into which he  
quickly sank, after a few outbursts  
of laughter and a little chat.  
399-400 woke and put his legs  
down from the seat ] woke up  
403 Chatham ] Chatam

403-404 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
409 post office ] bloomin' post  
office officials  
413-414 "Soppy... I suppose—" ]  
"Yes, when your family comes to  
see you off—well—your family—"  
415-416 "That's... postman," ]  
"Thats different, but you should  
have seen those boomin' post office  
officials,"  
417 "Rregiments... sardonically, ]



riding his neighbour's half apology, and dexterously avoiding sentimental embarrassments.

420 All agreed that mobilisation meant war. The "Kayser" had made war, of course. In these simple minds that German Mars, with his imperial helmet, stood delivering ultimatums. "He'd get it this time right enough, the bastard," more than he bargained for! and so on. It was the "Kayser" that would suffer acutely. The German people were overshadowed by this dazzling scapegoat. The broadsides of the Fleet would now be directed at *him*, the bastard!

425

Cantelman slept finally.—King's Cross was reached.

---

421 German ] german 424-425 German ] german

---

"Bloomin' Post Office Officials," he rolled out with sardonic jerkiness,

420 All agreed ] They none of them doubted

422 ultimatums ] ultimatum

423-426 bargained for!... the bastard! ] bargained for!

427 Cantelman slept finally.—King's Cross was reached. ] King's cross was reached.



## 4. Arrival in London.

A century old print, the perpetual morning of the romantic TsA 9  
coaching highway, occurred to Cantelman as he stepped onto King's  
430 Cross platform. Life had already gone back a century. Everything  
was becoming historical. The Past had returned. It was also a Peo-  
ple's-world once more, racy, rich and turbulent. Cantelman was  
enthusiastic. Like the others he did not question the credentials  
of this miracle. Soldiers and sailors, an army of porters, rushed  
435 and jostled. A big German with scarred pig-face came down from  
the gates looking for his luggage with acid theatrical concentration  
behind his glasses. He was another description of reservist.

Cantelman went to his rooms. After a wash he went out to  
look round and sample the intoxication of this colossal event. This  
440 he went about in his usual solitary fashion. He went down into  
the street and drifted with the Crowd. He enjoyed its anonymous  
depths.

War came heavily on with a resolution no one had ever credited  
it with. The incredible was determined to happen. Minds seemed  
445 everywhere made up, the minds responsible for natural events.  
The Crowd was still blind, with a first puppy-like intensity.

The "great historical event" is always hatching, the Crowd in  
its habitual infantile sleep. Then the appointed hand releases the  
clutch, the "great event" is set in motion: the Crowd rises to meet  
450 the crash half awake and struggling, with voluptuous spasms.

---

431-432 People's ] Peoples 435 German with ] german with 446 Crowd ]  
crowd 447 Crowd ] crowd

---

428 A century ] Something like a  
century

429 highway, occurred ] fresh and  
conventional, occurred

429 Cantelman ] Cantleman

432 Cantelman ] Cantleman

435 German with ] germanwith

438 Cantelman ] Cantleman

439 round ] around

439-442 event. This...depths. ]  
event.

444-445 incredible...natural  
events. ] unbelievable was going to  
happen.

449 event" ] event,



Every acquaintance Cantelman met in the first days of his re-  
turn was a new person. The only possibility of renewal for the  
individual is into this temporary Death and Resurrection of the  
Crowd, it appears. The war was like a great new fashion. Cantel-  
455 man conformed. He became a man of fashion. But he was cold in  
the midst of the Crowd. In the first days he experienced nothing  
but a penetrating interest in all that was taking place. His detach-  
ment was complete and his attention was directed everywhere.  
His movements resembled those of a free-lance cinema-operator.

---

451-452 Cantelman met... was ]  
Cantleman met was  
454-455 Cantelman ] Cantleman

457 but ] bu  
459 movements ] movement



## 5. An Experiment with a Crowd.

460 For some hours now, having descended into the street, he moved forward at a snail's pace. It was the Tottenham Court Road. The night came on. He allowed himself to be carried by the Crowd. He offered himself to its emotion, which saturated him at length. When it had sunk in, he examined it. It was apparently sluggish  
465 electricity. As such it had no meaning, beyond what the power of a great body of water has, for instance. It conducted nowhere: it was aimlessly flowing through these coils. The human cables had been disposed no doubt by skilful brains: they might be admirable, but not the electricity. However human messages passed  
470 up and down. He interpreted the messages. Like the spirit-writing of the planchette-pencil they were exceedingly stupid.

He went outside into an Italian Café, which was empty. The Crowd passed slowly in front of the door. Taking his note-book from his pocket, he wrote in large letters in the left hand top corner  
475 of an empty page

### An Experiment with a Crowd.

What was the experiment to be? Well, he would not only mix with the Crowd, he would train himself to act its mood so that he could persuade its emotion to enter him properly. There he  
480 could store it to some extent. Then he would from time to time hasten outside it, and examine himself in the Crowd-mood. This experiment would require a great deal of suppleness. He went

TsA 10

461 snail's ] snails    462 Crowd ] crowd    473 Crowd ] crowd    474 letters ]  
letless    478 Crowd ] crowd

460 hours now... he ] hours he  
461-462 pace. It was the  
Tottenham Court Road. The night ]  
pace. The night  
468 skilful ] skillful  
471 planchette-pencil ] planchette  
pencil

472 Italian Café ] italian cafe  
475 page ] page.  
479 emotion ] motion  
482 suppleness ] suppleness  
482-483 went into the Crowd ]  
went outside into the crowd



into the Crowd again. He sank like a diver. He disposed his body  
in a certain way, slouched heavily along, fixed his eyes ahead of  
485 him. He soon became almost an entranced medium.

Soon he began to think of things very remote from the herd.  
His American hostess was eager to finance a review. He was to be  
editor. He proceeded to the office of this paper-to-be: he prepared  
his first number: he composed his advertisements, he defined his  
490 policy.

Suddenly he experienced a distinct and he believed authentic  
shock. It could only have come from the Crowd. He evidently had  
penetrated its mind. He had recieved his first novel sensation—  
what was it? Well it seemed to be that he was a married man. He  
495 had *the married feeling*. He immediately withdrew from the Crowd.  
There was a public house, he tried the saloon bar, ordered a bitter  
beer, and sitting at a table produced his notebook.

He wrote:

### Experiment with a Crowd.

500 1. Single man receives sensation of married state.

The Family = The Crowd.

Question: Do married men (in Crowd) feel single?

Feels like *irresponsible* married man. No sensation of children.

Perhaps Crowd matrix full of children?

505 He read this through. He was disappointed. "I am frankly  
disappointed!" he stuttered. Why not be frank? He returned

---

483 disposed ] dispoed 487 American ] american 493-494 sensation—what ]  
sensation=what 495 Crowd ] crowd 502 Question: ] (Question: 502 Crowd ]  
crowd

485 almost ] nearly

488 paper-to-be ] paper to be

489 advertisements ] advertisement

492 only have come ] only come

493-494 sensation—what ]

sensation—what

494 a married man ] *a married man*

495 *the married feeling* ] the married

feeling

498 He wrote: / Experiment ]

Experiment

501 Family ] family.

503 Feels ] Feel

505-506 disappointed...frank? ]

disappointed.



to the Crowd. He tramped slowly forward, as mechanically as possible. He reached Charing Cross, then the end of the Strand. Trafalgar Square was an extensive human lake. He moved towards  
510 the Nelson Column. He might obtain a valuable note if he climbed up onto the plinth. Hoarse voices were muttering all round him. He felt the pressure of the visible ghosts whom he was inviting to inscribe their ideas on the tabula rasa he offered them.

Their messages continued to be extremely confused. He noticed he had lost ground, even. He felt more and more solitary,  
515 therefore *single* and so divorced.

On the plinth of the Nelson Column he strained for a distinct sensation. Nothing came at all. He strained again. He felt as detached as the stone Nelson. What a change from Trafalgar, he  
520 thought. Lady Hamilton floated into his mind. She had scent upon her limbs, which were sheathed in tight-fitting bathing drawers of a Turkish appearance. She was going for a dip. She was Brittania. A wave slapped her. *Elle faisant la culbute*. Immediately a sensation occurred. He produced his note book.

525 He scribbled rapidly:

### Experiment with a Crowd.

2. A sensation of immediate bawdiness occurred in contact with Lord Nelson. "England expects every man to"—what?? To sleep  
530 with Lady Hamilton, apparently. Violets and brine. There's nothing else for it.

And the imperial votaress passed on.

In maiden meditation, fancy free.

---

520 thought] though 522 Turkish] turkish 522 Brittania] Britannia

---

521–522 drawers of a Turkish appearance.] drawers.

523 *Elle faisant la culbute*] Elle faisant la culbute

525 He scribbled rapidly:

Experiment] Experiment

528 Lord Nelson] Nelson

530–531 for it. / And] for it. /

(note: Plutot par par snobbisme que par vice. ) / And



I see her drying her thighs, which are white as snow, in a virginal seaside pavilion. Nelson adjusts his blind eye to the keyhole.

535 He descended from the steps of the column, and stood un- TsA 11  
certainly gazing to North and South. He turned northwards and  
made his way round the drab circular fountains, on the sides of  
which couples squated, up the shallow staircase, over to where the  
bronze signs set in the granite plinth of the National Gallery by the  
540 government provide a public test gauge, and so to the right of the  
northern bus-route. He was in St. Martin's Lane. He thought he  
felt something. He quickly withdrew into an Italian Café, his note  
book already in his hand.

### Experiment with a Crowd.

545 3. The English Crowd is a stupid dragon. It ought not to be al-  
lowed out alone. I have lain in it for some hours and have received  
no sensation worth noting. As a Crowd it is a failure.

(*Postscript.* Up! the Kings Navy! Lord Nelson although on a  
column now like a gymnosophist, gave me my only sensation. He  
550 had forgotten Trafalgar. He is now quite blind. He has retired into  
his needle. The wild ass stamps o'er his head but cannot break his  
sleep.)

---

540 government] goverment 545 English] english 549 column] cloumn  
552 sleep.)] sleep).

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533 drying her thighs, which are  
white as snow,] drying thighs  
533-534 virginal seaside pavilion]  
virginal pavilion  
534 blind] bling  
535 steps of the column] plinth  
538 staircase] steps  
539 the National Gallery by]  
National Galleryby

540 government] goverment,  
541 Martin's] martin's  
542-543 Italian... his hand.]  
italian cafe, and drew out his note  
book.  
546 for some hours] for hours  
548 Up!] Up,  
551 o'er] oer  
552 sleep.)] sleep.



## 6. Cedric Mordkine.

555 He returned to the Crowd by way of the passage called Cecil Court. The Hippodrome was passed on the other side. He saluted the Bomb Shop, where his bombs sold well.

Opposite Crosse and Blackwell's he thought of Cedric Mordkine. He crossed the road. Abreast of the Soho Distillery he came face to face with Mordkine. Mordkine appeared to be sunning himself, pococuranting. So this was Mordkine's place-in-the-sun?

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553 Crowd ] crowd 553-554 Cecil Court. ] ..... 556 Blackwell's ] Blackwells

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559 Mordkine's ] Mordkines

---

553-554 Cecil Court. ] Lewis has left a hiatus in the MS, but as Cantelman is clearly cutting through from the bottom of St. Martin's Lane to the section of Charing Cross Road near Leicester Square (where the Hippodrome is situated), the passage must be either Cecil Court, or St. Martin's Court. You can take your pick: St. Martin's Court is famous for its place at the heart of theatreland; I chose Cecil Court because its bookshops were frequented in the 30s by Lewis's compatriots, Geoffrey Grigson and Ruthven Todd. See Geoffrey Grigson, *Recollections: Mainly of Writers & Artists* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984), pp. 45-6.

556 Crosse and Blackwell's ] Now the London Astoria at 127 Charing Cross Road, this building was, until 1927 when it was converted into a cinema, Crosse & Blackwell's pickle factory. See Harold Philip Clunn, *London Rebuilt, 1897-1927: An Attempt to Depict the Principal Changes which Have Taken Place* (London: J. Murray, 1927), p. 119.

556-557 Cedric Mordkine. ] In the earliest autograph drafts for this section, preserved with the Cornell typescript, 'Cedric Mordkine' is named 'Sydney Modker'. In the course of drafting, Lewis quickly amends this to 'Modkine', and then 'Mordkine'. The early form of the name makes the cruel caricature of John Rodker much clearer. Rodker, the poet and publisher, shares Mordkine's East-End Jewish background. Lewis doesn't seem to have met Rodker until some time in 1915 when he was putting together *Blast* 2—he wrote to Pound: 'I found Rodker a most poisonous little bugger...repellently hoarse (this may be a form of jealousy) & with abominable teeth, not to mention his manners... He told me he had written a lot of filthy sexual verse, which, if he sends it, I shall hang in the W. C. He described it as Verlainesque, damn his dirty little eyes.' See *Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, ed. Timothy Materer (London: Faber and Faber, 1985) p. 13.



560 He was not interested in Mordkine. He passed him. A hand was laid, gently but firmly, on his arm from behind.

“Oh, how are you Mordkine?” he expostulated.

The supercilious sullen transparent young lion gazed at the hooded eyes, the prominent teeth, the pathetic lips, the spectacles, that had stopped him. Well? What next? Mordkine did not  
565 quail, he coughed—covering his rabbit-mouth with his hand; then he shot up a quick toffee-brown bright sickly smile at the face of the transparent king of the literary jungle, where he lived too, but with less noise and prominence. The face did not respond. Mord-  
570 kine immediately quenched his smile (*you’re not wanted: learn your place!*) and said with a false ready earnestness:

“What do you think of all this? It looks damned serious.”

Mordkine in his imitations of colloquial English interpreted the English stupidity in a way offensive to Cantelman. With growing  
575 depression the latter waited.

“Yes, most grave” he assented.

Mordkine gave a bright hoarse giggle. Cantelman was a wag, oh a great wag. A great bow-wow. Again with mechanical swiftness he composed himself (it’s not for the likes of us to laugh!  
580 Chut! Laugh when you’re chucked a laugh, not otherwise. Don’t be familiar!).

“I suppose it will be all right really. We shan’t go into it—do you think?” he said with his most sympathetic face. TsA 12

---

573 English ] english 573–574 the English ] the english 579 it’s ] its 580 Don’t ]  
Dont 582 shan’t ] shant

---

562 Oh, how ] Oh how

562 Mordkine?” he expostulated. ]  
Mordkine?”

564–565 spectacles, that ]  
spectacles that

566 quail, he coughed—covering ]  
quail; he coughed, covering

566–567 then he shot ] and then

shot

569–570 The face did not respond.  
Mordkine ] That face did not  
respond. He

573–574 the English ] english

574 Cantelman ] Cantleman

575 the latter ] Cantleman

577 Cantelman ] Cantleman



“How do I know what “we” shall do?” said Cantelman. (His  
585 *we’s* that ought to be *unses!* This bloody man!).

“No of course. But I don’t think it likely, do you?” Mordkine wheedled dully.

Cantelman stood gazing at the drifting Crowd. He raised his hand, some moments of silence having mercifully elapsed, to dismiss this tactless figure who began to affect his cuticle. The handshake did not materialise. Cedric Mordkine said:

“Will you have a drink with me? All this makes me dreadfully restless, I don’t know why. I know it’s stupid of me.” (He blushed very slightly a dull mustard yellow, and looked shyly at  
595 the ground). “I’m so glad that I met you. I’ve wanted to tell you how much I admired your book, Bryan Multum.”—Mordkine paused with a fascinating confusion, while his sharp eyes informed him that he had made a breach in this reserve.

“I thought it was a great work.” He looked again. Yes. That  
600 was all right! Got him!

They went into the Soho Distillery. The saloon-bar was not very full. Two horse-guards, standing at attention, cane protruding back and front, right elbow up, drained two half pint mugs of “Four-‘alf”, exchanged a wooden-soldiers painted glance, without  
605 moving their lips within their strapped-down jaws, reversed *sur place*, jingling their spurs, and marched out in step, watched by the other customers. When they had passed out of sight the other customers looked at each other.

“Fine young fellows!” said one man.

610 “Ah!” replied another.

“Tommy Atkins knows how to enjoy himself!” said the first.

---

584 Cantelman] Cantleman 586 don’t] dont 588 Cantelman] Cantleman  
588 Crowd] crowd 593 don’t] dont 593 it’s] its 599 He looked] Helooked

---

584 His] This East-End Jew and  
his  
585 *unses!* This bloody man!]

*unses!*  
594 blushed very slightly ]  
blushed a very slightly



“Not-half!” said the second.

“I suppose they’ll be having to stand-by pretty soon now.” said the first.

615 “Ah! I shouldn’t be surprised” said the second. “Looks like it, don’t it?”

Mordkine with his ingratiating discretion, veiling his gutturals under a discreetly borrowed Oxford-accent, blushing a cinnamon yellow under the powerful lights of the Pub, ordered two Wor-  
620 thingtons at the bar.

Once more in front of Cantelman, he sat in silence for a minute. (Let him wait! Would you like to hear it, then? Oh yes: “a splendid masterpiece.”—You shall have it. “I say, Cantelman, I was very impressed”—depressed, repressed anything you like!—Only wait,  
625 my fine gentleman!)

Cantelman moved uneasily. (“This animal gets me down. What did I come in for? Evidently he hypnotised me. I must circle round him another time. Never stand. Best to keep moving—in a circle.”)

“Here’s good health!” He drank.

630 Mordkine began talking about women.

TsA 13

“I’m going away next week” he said. “I don’t know where to go to.”

“Why don’t you go to Ireland?” Cantelman said.

Mordkine looked up quickly with a covering grin.

635 “To Ireland?” he still could not gather why the new fresh bumptious dynamic lion had said Ireland. “Yes I should like to

615 shouldn’t] should’nt 616 don’t] dont 623 Cantelman] Cantleman 629 Here’s] Heres 631 don’t] dont 633 don’t] dont 633 Cantelman] Cantleman 635 still] sil

613 stand-by pretty soon now.”] stand by pretty soon now”

619 Pub] pub

621 Cantelman] Cantleman

622 then?] then!

622–623 a splendid masterpiece] a masterpiece

624–625 wait, my] wait my

626 Cantelman] Cantleman

628 time. Never stand. Best to keep moving—in a circle.”)] time.”)

635–636 the new fresh bumptious dynamic lion] his hated vis-a-vis



go to Ireland. Have you been there?"

"No" said Cantelman.

Mordkine gave it up.

640 "I don't mind where it is."

"Don't you?"

"No." Mordkine croaked slowly his grating exhausted laugh, blushing a dirty yellow. "I want to be by myself. I feel I must get away from the whole lot. P'raps I shan't go."

645 He stared with a thick yellow kittenishness into the distance, where he seemed to espy a naive, delightful irrational, intensely lovable creature—himself. P'raps he wouldn't go! Nothing commonsense and stable about Cedric—you never know from one minute to the next etc. I know he, me, must be unbearable some-

650 times.

Cantelman looked dully puzzled. He yawned. The lion was beginning to roar a little. He wanted to be fed, fed with flattery. Wait, swine-lion, till I am ready with the few sweet words your stupid gullet demands!

655 "What lot? Do you want to get away from all this?"

Mordkine looked round. He realised Cantelman meant the excited crowds.

"No: I meant all these bloody women!" "Oh!" Cantelman looked at him enquiringly. He opened his eyes wide as though  
660 making room for masses of "bloody women", all crowding flatteringly round Cedric Mordkine Esq. the wanderer Mordecai.

"The woman with whom you say you have an entanglement—Ada, wasn't it—is not alone—?" he said tentatively.

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638 Cantelman] Cantleman 640 don't] dont 641 Don't] Dont 644 P'raps] Praps 644 shan't] shant 647 P'raps] Praps 647 wouldn't] would'nt 651 Cantelman] Cantleman 658 Cantelman] Cantleman 663 wasn't] was'nt

---

647–650 himself... sometimes.]  
himself.

651–654 puzzled... demands!]  
puzzled.

656 round. He realised

Cantelman] round and realised he  
658–661 "Oh!"... Mordecai.]  
Cantleman looked at him  
enquiringly.



Mordkine gave his muffled croak of mirth. He slightly tossed  
665 up his head in gently intelligent derision.

“No, Cantelman! I’m sorry to say there are others!”

“Of course!” said Cantelman, bored but determined. “Will you  
have another drink?”

Mordkine assented.

670 “The same?” Cantelman got the same.

“Your speedy release from your many entanglements?” He  
drank a deep toast.

“Don’t you ever get entangled?” asked Mordkine coaxingly.

TsA 14

675 “Yes, women will never let me alone for a moment. I am terri-  
bly chased. I was avoiding two when I met you. They are doubt-  
less waiting for me outside at this moment. But I’ve got quite  
used to it.”

Mordkine croaked.

“I wish I could get used to it” he said.

680 “My case is really a distressing one; because, being rather a  
striking looking man, I am persecuted practically all the time. Ever  
since we have been sitting here I have been the object of the flat-  
tering interest of that barmaid.”

685 Mordkine gave a bright, green, flash over his shoulder at the  
barmaid and a croak.

“I thought it was me she was looking at!” he said.

Cantelman laughed.

“No it was me, as a matter of fact.”

Cantelman drank.

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666 Cantelman] Cantleman 667 Cantelman] Cantleman 670 Cantelman]  
Cantleman 673 Don’t] Dont 687 Cantelman] Cantleman 689 Cantelman]  
Cantleman

---

664 mirth. He] mirth and

666 Cantelman!] Cantleman;

674 let] laet

675–676 you. They are doubtless  
waiting for me outside at this  
moment. But ] you. But

679 it” he said.] it.”

680 really a distressing one;

because, being] really distressing  
one; because being

686 thought] though



690 "My private life is quite uninteresting: you will excuse me therefore if I don't make you my confidant" he said.

"I suppose our private lives are always of more interest to ourselves than to other people" Mordkine said, breathing hard, feeling himself attacked.

695 "That is my view of the matter" said Cantelman.

There was a silence, that payed itself out a little tensely from moment to moment.

"I am a writer: that is quite enough advertisement of what is private life otherwise. That is the extent of my impertinence" Cantelman then said.

"Do you regard that as impertinence?" Mordkine asked.

"Yes. But I am an unassuming man—quick and painstaking: I write in order to have no private life."

705 "You are very lucky, Cantelman. We are not all able to do that. Then we have "entanglements", as you call it. I'm sorry I bored you with mine. They are on my mind just now. That's why I talked about them."

"Not at all."

Mordkine bared his teeth as he laughed through his nose, but passed his solemn mask quickly down over the laugh, stopping it dead. He said then: "I tried to start writing something the other day. It seemed to me of the greatest importance as I was writing it. I wrote about fifty pages. Then I tore it up!" He smiled as though receiving horrified protests with bitter indulgent calm. An expression of painful candour had descended on his face. "I sometimes

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691 don't] dont 695 Cantelman] Cantleman 700 Cantelman] Cantleman  
704 Cantelman] Cantleman 715 descended] discended

---

691 confidant" he] confidant." he

693 people" Mordkine] people."

he

702 an unassuming man—quick

and painstaking:] a genuinley

unassuming man.

704 We are not] Everyone is not at

705 we] they

709–711 Mordkine bared... "I

tried] "I tried

713 He] Mordkine



feel I never want to write another line.—I don't believe I really have anything to say", he said shortly, matter-of-fact, looking away. TsA 15

"No?"

"I don't think so."

720 As Mordkine's humility grew, and a parade of disenchantment threatened to develop, Cantelman stood up. Mordkine rose too.

"You, now, have a great deal to say, Cantelman. I envy you very much."

725 "Yes, I have a lot to say" Cantelman admitted smootly. "Also I write quickly. I am quick."

"I wish I could!"

730 "I always repent of what I write. You know the story of Voltaire sending his play, *Olympie*, to a friend? 'It is six days work,' he wrote. His friend replied, 'the author should not have reposed on the seventh.' —'But he repented of his work,' was Voltaire's riposte.—All us creators repent!"

Mordkine raked the cello in his throat.

"But there's no mystery about my fecundity as you make out there is."

735 "No mystery for *you*." Mordkine drooped in becoming discouragement beside the table.

"Well if you choose to affect to think that it is mysterious to have "a great deal to say", as you call it, shall I enlighten you as to the secret at the bottom of it?"

740 "I should like to know what the secret is—."

"The secret is this, Mordkine. I am extremely simple—unassuming,  
716 don't] dont 718 "No?" ] "No"? 719 don't] dont 721 Cantelman]  
Cantleman 722 Cantelman] Cantleman 724 Cantelman] Cantleman 729 replied,  
'the] replied 'The

717 matter-of-fact ]

"matter-of-fact"

720 Mordkine's ] mordkine's

720 grew, ] grew

725 quickly. I am quick ] quickly

731 riposte ] answer

733 there's ] thers

735-736 *you*... the table. ] *you*."

738 "a great ] a great

738 enlighten ] enlightene

741-742 simple—unassuming,

painstaking and quick:] simple:



painstaking and quick: what I say I believe. Having-a-lot-to-say is the same thing as—to use another form of obstructive cant—‘being sincere.’ ”

745 “I believe you’re right” said Mordkine at once, very humbly indeed. “I don’t think I can be sincere. No, I mean that I believe it is impossible for me to be sincere. That’s what the matter with me.”

Cantelman laughed.

750 “I should be more curious to know how you account for your inability to be ‘sincere’, than you to know why I find so much to say.”

Mordkine’s small cuneiform profile was bent to the floor as they walked out. He flashed his large grey eye in the mirror of the  
755 passage in a quick look of recognition at his half-grinning yellow image. Cantelman, between them, but six inches higher up on the glass, was also cuneiform.

“That would be much more difficult to explain.” He croaked to decorate his point.

760 They stood outside the Distillery again.

“Oh, I had intended, Cantelman, to talk to you about your book, *Bryan Multum*. I wanted to ask you something about it.—I  
must ask you another time.” TsA 16

“Yes.”

765 “I forget what it was now.” He sniggered, lighted up his eyes and blushed a shy mustard yellow.

The Crowd flowed round them, each fresh unit of it modify-

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746 don’t] dont 747 That’s] Thats 749 Cantelman] Cantleman 756 Cantelman] Cantleman 761 Cantelman] Cantleman 767 Crowd] crowd

---

743 obstructive cant ]

obstructivecant

745 right” ] right.”

745–746 Mordkine at once, very humbly indeed. ] Mordkine humbly.

753 small cuneiform ] small

754 He flashed ] It flashed

755 half-grinning ] half-quivering

757 was also cuneiform. ] was also

.

762 *Multum* ] Maltam



ing its direction for a moment. Cantelman seemed unwilling to leave Mordkine, he examined him attentively, Mordkine, turning  
 770 him first one profile, then the other. Edge-on he wore his grin: but in profile he provided a grave, flat immobile mask, with an intent and slightly frowning eye.—Novel chemistries were at work, Cantelman reflected. Between the Crowd and this person perhaps they were operating. Mordkine had not before permitted himself to re-  
 775 veal so openly his dislike. He should paid more attention to: he remembered before intending to pay more attention to Mordkine. Perhaps, talking of secrets, Mordkine might have in his keeping some secret of the Crowd.

“How do you like crowds?” Cantelman asked.

780 “Oh they make me restless: I feel when all this is going on I can’t stop indoors. How does it affect you?”

As with the other spirit-messages, he would get nothing but something dull or evasive. Cantelman left him in disgust, but when he had gone a few yards he looked round to see what he  
 785 was doing. He appeared to be making for the Tube.

Now, thought Cantelman for a few minutes, while his mind was still in the disagreeable field of influence of Mordkine: Why was that man so aggressive suddenly?—He was very struck by the change. How discreet and defferential he usually was. Was  
 790 it on impulse that this deep and dirty little man had compelled  
 768 Cantelman ] Cantleman 772–773 Cantelman ] Cantleman 779 Cantelman ]  
 Cantleman 781 can’t ] cant 783 Cantelman ] Cantleman 786 Cantelman ]  
 Cantleman 789 defferential ] deferential

769 Mordkine, turning ] Mordkine  
 turning

771 flat ] falt

773 person perhaps ] person,  
 perhaps

775–776 He should. . . Mordkine. ]  
 He should pay more attention to  
 him.

782–783 but something ]

butsomething

786 thought Cantelman ] though  
 Cantleman,

787 Mordkine: Why ] Mordkine,  
 Why

788 suddenly?—He ] suddenly?  
 He

789 defferential ] differential



him to enter a Pub? On the other hand why had the operation been affected so easily? Had he been put under the spell of this low-grade will by the Crowd-personality that he had been busy acquiring? That might be it. The idea recommended itself to him.  
 795 *It was as a unit of this helpless Crowd that he had acted.* He had actually succeeded in becoming an inferior man. As such he could be pushed in, or out, anywhere. That was the explanation. For instance when he reproached himself with having been “hypnotised” into the Distillery, evidently that was absurd. *He* could not  
 800 be treated in that way. So evidently it was not himself that had entered the Distillery. It was a sleep-walking Crowd-man.

Now he was reaching the stage—at last—when his *Experiment with a Crowd* could be said to be bearing fruit. That had really been Test No 1. He would get in another Test quickly. He had  
 805 returned.—He was in the hall of the tube. He stopped a moment. “Oxford Circus” was his destination. He bought the ticket. He went down the staircase. As he passed the entrance to the “Gentlemen” Mordkine came out. A vicious grey eye fastened on him seriously while the rabbit-teeth appeared in a grin of recognition.  
 810 He smiled back.

“Again?” he said.

“We seem fated to meet tonight” said Mordkine touching him lightly upon the sleeve.

He went on down the stairs, while Mordkine pursued his way

---

808 fastened on ] fastened on 811 “Again?” ] “Again”?

---

791 the operation ] its operation

792 easily? ] easily.

795 *he had acted* ] he acted

797–798 the explanation. For instance ] why—. For

800 treated in that ] moved into Distilleries in an ordinary

804–805 He had returned.—He was in the hall of the tube. ] —He

was in the hall of the Tube. He had returned.

806 bought ] brought

807–808 “Gentlemen” ] “Gentleman”

812–813 Mordkine touching him lightly upon the sleeve. ]

Mordkine.



815 up to the street.

He recalled the picture of Mordkine hurrying as he supposed towards the Tube. The interview had characteristically affected the Mordkine's glands: that and the beer.—A small bladder and a rabbit mouth!

820 The Tube-train was comparatively empty. He looked at the faces. TsA 17  
Here he seemed cut off from the Crowd. He hoped his Crowd-soul would not evaporate. At Oxford Circus the newspaper sellers were bellowing. He bought a paper. He read it under a lamp.

“The mobilisation was complete at 12 o'clock today.”

825 The news-headings that animated the Crowd animated him. The news-sheets were full of gathering climaxes.

“Austria Finds Servian Reply Unsatisfactory.”

The invincible British fleets, steam-up, lay in the British ports ready to issue out at the signal. Or perhaps they were ranged in  
830 iron cordons already across the German Ocean? “The Riddle of the Sands”, the treachery of the ceding of Heligoland—he released a mass of sensational associations. He flooded his mind: it became a dark and angry expanse of water on which guns flashed, lighting a fierce section of oncoming seas, through which torpedoes sped  
835 in sleek shoals. That was the correct imagery, no doubt, for the big captions of the Press. Work away, stripped gunners, for this great *Experiment with a Crowd!* His experiment was nothing beside that colossal trial.

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818 Mordkine's ] Mordkines 821 Crowd ] crowd 825 Crowd ] crowd 828 British ]  
british 828 British ] british

---

815 up to the street ] up them

818 the beer ] beer

819 mouth! ] mouth.

823 read ] raed

824 o'clock ] o'clock

827 Servian ] Service

828 steam-up ] with steam-up

834 seas, through ] seas through

837–838 *Experiment... trial.* ]

*Experiment with a Crowd!*



## 7. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens

At the top of the empty house, of day-time offices, was the  
840 flat of the Stevens, man and wife. The light was switched on; the  
interval of the short steep stair was rapidly accounted for by the  
light school-girl trip of Mrs. Stevens.

“Why it’s *you!* We’ve just been talking about you! Fred said  
he wondered where you’d got to! You’ve been neglecting us Mr.  
845 Cantelman. I suppose you’ve been very busy. Have you? Come  
up.” A pleasant American voice said this, and the woman’s thin  
figure sprang up the stairs.

Cantelman had lived here for a year. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens let  
two rooms in this flat.

850 In the drawing-room Mrs. Stevens turned round and peered at  
him, wrinkling up her eyes, standing with her back to the fireplace  
in her juvenile plain semi-American dress, a work-basket upon the  
table.

“Let’s have a look at you! Why, you’ve cut your hair! It changes  
855 you quite a lot. What made you do that?”

“I thought I would.”

“I think it’s an improvement. You look quite smart now.”

“Where is Mr. Stevens?” he asked.

“He and our new lodger, Mr. Gillespie are upstairs in the bath-  
860 room. Let’s see, you’ve never seen our new lodger have you? He’s  
rather a nice man. I think you’d like him. He knows about you.  
He’s read your *Bryan Multum*. He likes it.”

---

843 it’s] its 846 American] american 846 woman’s] womans 848 Cantelman]  
Cantleman 852 American] american 854 Let’s] Lets 857 it’s] its 860 Let’s]  
Lets 860 He’s] Hes 862 He’s] Hes

---

840 flat] falt

843 *you*] you

844–845 us Mr. Cantelman] us

848 Mr.] Mor

848 Mrs.] Mrs

850 Mrs.] Mors

851 back] bach

856 thought] though

859 our new lodger, Mr. Gillespie]

Mr. our new lodger, Mr. Garnett

862 *Bryan Multum*] Bryam Maltam



"I'm glad to hear that."

"No: he really is an intelligent man. He wants to meet you.  
865 He's a graduate of Princetown. He's a very well-read man."

"What is he doing in the bathroom with Fred? Is Fred giving  
him a bath?"

"Not exactly" she laughed. "Why no, of course you don't know  
about our nightly entertainment.—It's just begun: they went up  
870 just before you rang."

"What is it?"

"Oh I don't know, the men go and look at it. It's the servant  
in the home for lost cats. She's mad I think. Perhaps you would  
like to go and have a look?" She smiled with dry sensible naugh-  
875 tiness at him. He understood it must be something containing  
sex-appeal.

"What is it? I'll go and look."

He went towards the door.

"All right. You go up too. Tell them not to be too long. Bring  
880 them down." she said turning to her work-basket. "I want to talk  
to you. I want to ask you what you think about the war."

"All right" he replied from the unlighted passage.

Cantelman went upstairs and opened the bathroom door. Mr.  
Stevens and another man were standing in the dark near the win-  
885 dow. Mr. Stevens came back quickly towards the door.

"Hallo, Mr. Cantelman" he said capably, in a low voice. "Shut  
the door! Right! If she saw the light that might frighten her—I

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865 He's ] Hes 865 He's ] Hes 868 don't ] dont 869 It's ] Its 872 It's ] Its  
873 She's ] Shes 883 Cantelman ] Cantleman 886 Cantelman ] Cantleman

---

866 Is ] I s

871 What ] what

873 home ] Home

874-876 look?"...sex-appeal.]  
look?"

879 "All right. You go up too. Tell ]  
"Tell

880 said ] called after him

882 "All right"...passage.] "All  
right."

886 said capably, in a low voice.]  
said.

887 her—I ] her: though I



don't suppose it would! Have you come up here to have a look?  
Did my wife tell you where we were? Here, come and watch the  
890 great undressing act. Entrance sixpence."

The other man turned round.

"This is Mr. Cantelman" said Mr. Stevens. He continued to  
speak in a low voice because of the darkness. "Mr. Gillespie."

"I'm pleased to make your acquaintance" said the lodger, shak-  
895 ing hands. "Come to see the show? You're just in time."

Cantelman looked over the top of the window sash. In the  
servants garret across the narrow street a bright light was burn-  
ing. Just inside the dormer window an energetic figure glowed, so  
near that it seemed twelve feet away only, though it was probably  
900 twenty-five. Cantelman could see the staring blue eyes of a rather  
strange-looking girl, like a Swedish girl interpreting a Hardy hero-  
ine, he thought: not Tess. "A Pair of Blue Eyes" perhaps? With  
quick angry gestures this wild-eyed creature brushed at a swing-  
ing mass of ornamental fair hair. Her eyes never left a mirror hang-  
905 ing at the side of the window. There was another girl in the mirror,  
a romantic staring nymph as well, whose massive fair hair had to  
be brushed by the tired servant. This lovely creature in the mirror  
made her carry out her task quite naked. The girl was quite naked:  
his mouth moistened. Through some perverse desire to make her  
910 feel her position more acutely, perhaps, as a domestice or a slave,

888 don't ] dont 892 Cantelman ] Cantleman 896 Cantelman ] Cantleman  
900 Cantelman ] Cantleman 901 Swedish ] sweedish 902 Tess ] Tesse 903 quick ]  
quich 903 wild-eyed ] wild eyed

889 Did my... come ] Here—come

892–893 continued to speak ]  
spoke

893 Gillespie. ] Garnett

895 "Come... in time." ] "Have  
you come to see the show?"

898 an ] and

901–902 like a... with ] who with

903 gestures this wild-eyed

creature ] gestures

907 creature in the mirror ]  
creature

908–909 naked. The girl was quite  
naked: his mouth moistened.

Through ] naked, through

909 perverse desire ]

perversedesire

910–913 slave... good idea! ] slave.



that was the idea: for perhaps she was a beautiful slave girl. Her  
cruel lovely double in the mirror would not let her cover her im-  
proper white body—ah what a good idea! Grimly and wildly in  
consequence she brushed at the bright hair in the looking-glass, as  
915 conscious of her nudity as though she had been gazing into Mr.  
Steven's eyes. Mr. Stevens on his side as the bathroom was rather  
higher than her attic, was able to examine all this brightly-lighted  
white slave-flesh shaken brutally by the angry arms of the beauti-  
ful captive, to well below her hips: as she impatiently reached up  
920 to the gas to improve the lighting, the tops of her stockings were  
visible, in fact.

"She's a Swiss!" Mr. Stevens hissed confidentially to Cantel-  
man.

"She's a handsome piece" said Cantelman politely.

TsA 19

925 "Yes, she's not at all bad" said Mr Stevens with curt business-  
like patronage of his exhibit.

"I wonder if she knows she can be seen?" said Mr. Gillespie.

"You bet she does!" said Mr. Stevens capably.

"How do you know she's a Swiss?" asked Cantelman.

930 "They always have Swiss girls over there. I suppose it would  
be awkward to have English girls as servants.—You know what it  
is. It's a home for loose women. Streetwalkers. They take them in  
and keep them until they get a job."

922 She's ] Shes 922–923 Cantelman ] Cantleman 924 She's ] Shes 924 Cantelman ]  
Cantleman 925 she's ] shes 925 Mr ] Mr, 929 she's ] shes 929 Cantelman ]  
Cantleman 930 Swiss ] swiss 931 English ] english

(For perhaps she was a beautiful  
slave girl).  
916 Stevens on his side ] Steven on  
his side,  
917–918 brightly-lighted white  
slave-flesh ] brightly lighted flesh  
919 captive ] slave girl  
925 bad" ] bad."  
926 patronage of his exhibit ]

patronage  
927 said ] siad  
927 Gillespie ] Garnett  
931 servants.—You ] servants. You  
932 It's ] It is  
932 loose women. Streetwalkers.  
They ] lost women—they  
933 get a ] find them a



The lodger laughed.

935 "To see them in their dressing-gowns entertaining their friends to tea sometimes you'd think it was a brothel! That's what I thought it was at first. I thought I'd got into a tenderloin!"

"Yes, they b-b-bring all their—professional kit with them." stut-  
tered Mr. Stevens. "Sometimes they don't stop more than a couple  
940 of days."

"Do they go back to the streets do you mean?" asked Cantel-  
man.

"Mostly!" Mr. Stevens answered capably.

The girl put down the brushes. She now stood quite still staring  
945 wild-eyed in the looking glass. She turned slightly to the left and slowly stroked her hip. Mr. Stevens chuckled. As though she had heard him, she slowly turned back, stepped up to the window and stared out. Mr. Stevens stepped back a little: Cantelman and the lodger followed suit.

950 "What's she doing now?" said Mr. Stevens.

She turned to the mirror and putting her face up against it, stared at it. Stepping back she took several deep breaths, passing her hands over her sides and breasts. Then immediately, with a furious gesture, she reached up and turned out the gas. The  
955 bathroom where they stood was darker at once.

"That's the lot!" Mr. Stevens exclaimed. Rattling his keys in his pockets he stepped towards the door.

They filed out and Mr. Stevens briskly descended the stairs. His wife came out of their bedroom, beneath the bathroom.

---

936 That's ] Thats 939 don't ] dont 941-942 Cantelman ] Cantleman 948 Cantelman ]  
Cantleman 950 What's ] Whats 953 breasts. Then immediately, with ] breats.  
Then immediately, with 956 That's the lot!" ] Thats the lot!,"

---

935 dressing-gowns ] dressing  
gowns

947 the window ] a window

950 What's ] What

953 breasts. Then immediately,  
with ] breats. [New paragraph]

Then with

954 gesture, she ] gesture she

954-955 out the gas. . . at once. ]  
the gas out.

959 His wife ] Mrs. Stevens



960 Madame gets a little out of it too! thought Cantelman. Stirs  
Fred up.

“Well, is it all over?” she asked.

“Yes!” said Mr. Stevens, shortly and capably, with a dry rattle  
in his throat, jingling his keys in his trouser-pocket. “All over for  
965 to-night.”

They went into the drawing-room.

When they got in they stood together awkwardly.

TsA 20

“You have been introduced to Mr. Gillespie?” said Mrs. Stevens.

“Yes, we’ve been introduced.” Mr. Gillespie smiled.

970 “Well, what did you think of our peep-show?” she asked.

“Very amusing” said Cantelman. “They haven’t attempted to  
put your rent up yet?”

“No, not yet! They’re all offices round here. I don’t suppose  
anybody else sees it.—Won’t you sit down?”

975 They sat down.

“Don’t you think that it is an improvement, Fred? Mr. Can-  
telman has had his hair cut!” She gazed at Cantelman her eyes  
screwed up, her head on one side.

Mr. Stevens looked at him critically, his eyes screwed up a little.

980 “So he has! I wondered what the change was. Yes, he looks  
quite a good-looking fellow now.”

“Tell us what you think about the war, Mr. Cantelman!” she  
said.

“What I think? Nothing much. What do you?”

---

960 Cantelman] Cantleman 971 Cantelman] Cantleman 971 haven’t] have’nt  
973 don’t] dont 974 Won’t] Wont 976 Don’t] Dont 976–977 Cantelman]  
Cantleman 977 Cantelman] Cantleman 982 Cantelman] Cantleman

---

960 too!] too,

960–961 Stirs Fred up.] I suppose  
she finds it stirs Fred up Fred.

967 When... awkwardly.] They  
stood in the drawing-room when  
they got in.

968 have been] have

968 Gillespie] Garnett

969 Gillespie] Garnett

970 Well,] Well

970 peep] pep

978 up, her head on one side.] up.

979 up a little.] up.



985 "Why, I think the Germans are mad! The Kaiser is simply—  
is not, well, he's not "all there"! That's what I think! It's in the  
family. He's a degenerate."

Mr. Stevens fidgeted. Cantelman looked at him.

"The Germans are asking for it!" he said capably and briefly.  
990 "They've been asking for it for a long time now. Now they're going  
to get it!"

"I agree with Mrs. Stevens" said the lodger, very slightly Amer-  
ican. "I believe the German Emperor's mad."

"Is there any fresh news?" asked Mrs. Stevens.

995 "I don't think anything very new" Cantelman replied. "Austria  
seems to be about to declare war."

"On whom?"

"Oh, on Serbia."

"They've all been preparing for this for years.—What do you  
1000 think England will do?" she asked with a bright intensity, ner-  
vously plaiting her scraggy hands.

"Declare war on Germany!" said Mr. Stevens at once, without  
taking his steady practical eye off the mantelpiece, between his  
teeth in which his pipe was stuck.

1005 "Do you really think that England will go in too?" she asked  
Cantelman.

"I really don't know enough about it to say. I hope England TsA 21  
will keep out, and sell munitions to the various combatants."

Mr. Stevens shook his head.

1010 "We shan't do that!"

---

986 That's] Thats 986 It's] Its 987 He's] Hes 988 fidgeted] fidgetted  
988 Cantelman] Cantleman 992-993 American] american 995 don't] dont  
995 Cantelman] Cantleman 1002-1004 once, without taking his steady prac-  
tical eye off the mantelpiece, between his teeth in which his pipe was stuck.]  
once. 1006 Cantelman] Cantleman 1007 don't] dont 1010 shan't] shant

---

985 mad!] mad.

994 Stevens] Stevns

999 all been] been

1001 plaiting her scraggy hands.]

twisting her hands together.



"I think war between England and Germany would be a crime!" exclaimed Mrs. Stevens.

She had lived in Germany for some years as a governess. Her husband puffed at his pipe and looked at the floor. He had large  
1015 pipe-sucking gashes and dimples in either hollow cheek. His face was a dark colour without being tanned. He and his wife were approaching fifty, but he had a youngish look and dark brown hair with an athletic wave. He had the appearance of a cricketer nearing his retirement and preparing to become a coach or keep a  
1020 public-house. Both were phthisic.

"I've been reading your book, Mr. Cantelman" said the lodger. "With very great interest."

"Bryan Multum?"

"Yes. It's a swell book. I stayed up reading it two nights. I  
1025 think you kind of owe me an apology!" He laughed with a self-possessed spreading of the lips.

Mrs. Stevens crouched forward elbows on knees, her eyes screwed up, and smiled eagerly at Cantelman and at Mr. Gillespie, fusing them in her hungry lion-hunting smile.

1030 "Yes, I can testify to that" she said. "It was as much as I could do to wake him up in the morning."

"I think it was quite lovely the way you made the girl go out into the jungle and shoot the hero dressed in a tiger-skin rug!"

---

1020 phthisic ] pthisic 1021 Cantelman ] Cantleman 1028 Cantelman ] Cantleman

---

1015 pipe-sucking gashes and dimples ] gashes  
1015 hollow cheek. ] cheeks acentuated by pipe-smoking.  
1017 dark brown ] dark  
1019 preparing to become ] prefering to becom  
1020 public-house. Both ] public-house. [New paragraph]

Bothe  
1022 "With ] With  
1023 Bryan ] Bryam  
1027 elbows on knees, ] with  
1028 up, ] up,  
1028 Gillespie ] Garnett  
1029 them... smile. ] them )))) in her smile.  
1030 I could ] I could



1035 “Yes I though a was perfectly lovely Mr. Cantelman!” Mrs. Stevens exclaimed. “I thought your discription of the primival forest was marvellous. You’ve never been in the tropics, have you?”

Cantelman shook his head.

1040 “How do you find out about all those plants and what the natives eat? The snowstorm in the jungle was wonderful too. I couldn’t forget it for days. You have a marvellous gift of description!”

“I think Mr. Cantelman is at his best where he is describing something savage. He knows how to make your flesh creep more than anyone I know. That scene where Arthuro—what was it—”

1045 “Ponsonby!” she screamed. “Yes I thought that was perfectly wonderful! Arthuro Ponsonby was my favourite villain: though I liked the Jew—Raphael, what was his name? I *hated* that man! I could have wrung his neck when he took Elaine into the cathedral. Didn’t you hate him Mr. Gillespie?”

1050 “No not so much as Arthuro” Mr. Gillespie smiled.

TsA 22

There was silence: Cantelman laughed suddenly, passing his hand over his face in a harsh upward massage, like a man waking from a heavy sleep. Then he sat staring at them, scratching the back of his head.

1055 “He doesn’t like us talking about his book!” said Mrs. Stevens. “Do you, Mr. Cantelman.”

“Indeed I do rather.”

“Oh I thought you didn’t. I remember your saying that once TsA 23

---

1037 Cantelman] Cantleman 1040 couldn’t] could’nt 1042 Cantelman] Cantleman 1047 name?] mane? 1049 Didn’t] Did’nt 1051 Cantelman] Cantleman 1055 doesn’t] does’nt 1056 Cantelman] Cantleman 1058 didn’t] did’nt

---

1034 lovely Mr. Cantelman!] lovely!

1044 Arthuro] Arthurs

1045 “Ponsonby!”] [Run on from previous paragraph]

1046 wonderful! Arthuro] marvellous. Arthurs

1048 have wrung] wring

1049 Gillespie] Garnett

1050 Arthuro] Arthurs

1050 Gillespie] Garnett

1053 them,] them

1056 Cantelman.] Cantleman?



you had written something you forgot all about it, and when people talked to you about it you often couldn't make out what they were talking about!"

"Why that is perhaps true. But of course I am flattered by—"

"Oh no Mr. Cantelman you're not! We're not as stupid as that. We know that it doesn't matter to you what we think of your book."

"Indeed that is not so. I very much hope you like it. Why shouldn't I? Who do you suppose I write for?"

"Well, not for *us*."

"That's where you're wrong. I wrote the scene in the jungle for you."

"Now you're laughing at me! Well, I don't mind. I enjoyed reading your book. So you did write it for me, whether you like it or not."

"But I do like it!"

They all laughed.

"Who did you write the conversation in the hat-store for, Mr. Cantelman?" asked the lodger.

"Oh.—I wrote that because I heard it."

"And how about the death of the old father after the wake?"

Cantelman looked at him with the good-natured grin of a man who is being got at, of patient puzzled enquiry.

"Well, old men have to die, in books as elsewhere."

"Surely" said the lodger. "I thought that a masterly piece of writing!"

There was a heavy silence. Cantelman gazed with open shame at the same flower on the carpet as Mrs. Stevens.

"You haven't read it, have you Mr. Stevens?" asked the lodger.

"No," said Mr. Stevens in a respectful dignified voice, "I haven't. 1060 couldn't] could'nt 1062 by—" ] by—". 1064 doesn't matter] doesn't metter 1067 shouldn't] should'nt 1069 That's] Thats 1086 Stevens.] Stevens 1087 haven't] have'nt 1087 asked] saked 1088 "No,"] "No".

1088 haven't] have'nt



I've never been able to get it. As soon as you'd finished it, my wife  
1090 lent it to somebody else."

In the mews at the back there was a burst of shouting. They  
listened.

"What are they crying?" asked Mrs. Stevens. "Oh Fred do get  
a paper! I should like to see what they are calling out."

1095 Fred got up, Cantelman got up too.

"I must go" he said.

"Must you? Well it's been very nice seeing you. Come in and  
see us again soon. Come in to tea some day." Mrs. Stevens gazed  
at him with her humourous smile for "authors", the look genial ca-  
1100 pable well-informed womanly middleclass women have in the zoo.  
Mr. Gillespie held out his hand—he was humble and practical, it  
was his turn!—his eyes put the maximum of intelligent recogni-  
tion into the few seconds of the handshake. Cantelman passed out  
like a heavy lord, stooping slightly beneath the doorway.

1105 "Yes, I've wanted to read your book," said Mr. Stevens capably  
as they went down the stairs.—"I've read some of the reviews!"  
he looked up quickly, relieved. "I saw one that said a lot of nice  
things about it.—Has it gone well?"

"Pretty well, I think."

1110 As they issued into the street the urgent bawling figures of  
the newsboys appeared round the corner, with one paper trailing  
like a broken white wing, hastening forward selling copies as they  
went without stopping. What they were shouting was what they  
had been shouting earlier at Oxford Circus. Cantelman left Mr.  
1115 Stevens as he hurried to intercept the nearest of them.

---

1089 As soon as you'd ] Assoon as you'de 1097 it's ] its 1099 smile for ]  
smile. for 1100 women ] woman 1100 zoo ] Zoo 1105 book," ] book 1106 "I've ]  
I've 1106 some of ] someof



## 8. The Code of a Herdsman

Eight months after the declaration of war Cantelman was lying in bed in the room he had formerly occupied with the Stevens. His lunch had just been brought from the Italian restaurant next door. He lay back on the pillows. He laid a manuscript on the table beside him. There were steps and a business-like knock.

TsA 25

“Captain Guy Pringle is here. Shall I tell him to come up?” Mrs. Stevens called.

“Captain Pringle? Yes, if you please, Mrs. Stevens,” Cantelman called back.

A slow and heavy foot sounded on the stairs. The door opened and a man smiling heavily and silently at Cantelman entered and with husky hunching of shoulders closed the door without noise behind him—a genial conspirator.

“Hello!” he then said, in a high pitched finicky caressing voice, still grinning with his large teeth and eyes. Just “Hello” in a little light nasal familiar voice, the whispered monosyllable a tender salute.

“When did you get back?” asked Cantelman, superbly hirsute on his hill of pillows.

“Just now.” Pringle threw himself into the armchair. “How are you?”

“Well I got rather worse a few days ago and had to come back to bed. I thought I was alright. There was not a sign of a discharge. I thought it was all over. I jumped onto a bus: I had some wine with my dinner, only a glass or two, and the bloody thing came on again. So here I am.”

“Bad luck” said Pringle. “Have you seen the doctor?”

“No, what’s the use? I’d better go on as I started now.”

“It’s all the fault of that old devil Samber! If you hadn’t listened

---

1118 Italian] italian 1120 business-like] business like 1128 conspirator.] consoirator. 1133 “When] “when 1139 all over.] allover. 1143 what’s] whats 1144 It’s] Its 1144 hadn’t] had’nt



1145 to him—!"

"Well he said he had it for a year once in Venice and went about his work just as usual as I told you. It sounded all right. I don't think his advice was so bad. To treat it as a bad cold that lasts for a long time—that is the best way to treat it, it seems to me. The treatments that dispose of it quickly are all of them apt to lead to complications."

Pringle sat with a sad curling lip, raw moist and bitter, his head down and eyes fixed on his friend. His large Wellington nose was red with emotion and fatigue.

1155 "I don't know" he said. "Most people get rid of it within a few weeks."

"I know: some do. The doctor I went to said he's had it fifteen times. I shouldn't like to have the experience Franklin had. I told you about him didn't I?"

1160 Pringle nodded.

"He had two operations."

Cantelman lighted a cigarette.

"Ought you to smoke?" asked Pringle.

"I don't smoke much."

TsA 26

1165 There was a knock at the door. The chasseur from the restaurant took away the lunch-tray.

"Mrs. Stevens doesn't know, I suppose, what you've got."

Cantelman looked astonished.

1170 "I dare say she does.—It hadn't occurred to me.—I don't talk to her about it. How's your leg?"

Pringle placed his hand on his right thigh and squeezed it gently.

"It's been rather bad today."

"What is it? Is it rheumatism? You don't know."

1175 Pringle stared with hanging chops and sodden fish-eyes at his

1147 don't] dont 1155 don't] dont 1158 shouldn't] should'nt 1163 asked] asked 1164 don't] dont 1167 doesn't] does'nt 1169 dare say] daresay 1169 hadn't] had'nt 1169 don't] dont 1170 How's] Hows 1173 It's] Its



friend for a dramatic twenty seconds.

"No, I don't know he drawled, gentlemanly. "I wish I did."

"What's the news? Is there anything new in the papers?"

"I haven't seen anything."

1180 "I read this morning the war would probably be over in a couple of months."

"I wish it would finish as soon as that: but I'm afraid— What's that?"

1185 Pringle pointed to the manuscript. Cantelman glanced where he was pointing.

"That's the Code of the Herdsman."

"Code of the what?"

"Herds-man."

Pringle smiled.

1190 "Have you written it? May I look at it?" he asked, bending forward.

"I'll read it to you. It's not long." said Cantelman.

He took up the manuscript and looked at it, frowning.

1195 "It's supposed to be a set of rules sent by one person—of masterly attributes—to another person, who is, on his side, discipular. That's the idea. It is one person who is being exhorted by another to a certain line of conduct. The rules are numbered, one, two, three and so on. It is not complete yet."

1200 He frowned at the manuscript again, unwilling to begin. He looked at Pringle and smiled. Then he began reading.

TsA 27

LR 3

IG 31

## THE CODE OF A HERDSMAN.

(1) Never maltreat your own intelligence with parables. It is a method of herd-hypnotism. Do not send yourself to sleep with the rhythm of the passes that you make. As an example of herd-

---

1178 What's] Whats 1179 haven't] have'nt 1182 afraid— What's] afraid—. Whats 1186 That's] That's 1194 It's] Its 1196 That's] That's 1202 Never maltreat] Nevermaltreat

---

1204 make. As] [*Little Review*:]

make.=As



1205 hypnotism, you may take modern German literature. You, however, are a Herdsman. That is surely parable enough!

(2) Do not admit *cleverness* in any form into your life. Observe the accomplishment of some people's signatures! That is the herd-touch.

1210 (3) Employ stupidity to defeat the stupid. Introduce a flatness, where it is required into your commerce. Dull your eye as you fix it on a dull face. Why do you suppose George Borrow used such insane clichés as "The beams of the descending luminary?" He was a great writer. That is the sort of thing meant here, only  
1215 applied to your social commerce. Mock the herd perpetually with the grimace of its own garrulity or deadness.

(4) Should the herd get out of hand and stampede towards you, leap on to the sea of mangy backs until the sea is still. That is: cast your mask aside, and spring *above* them. They cannot see  
1220 or touch anything *above* them: they have never realised that that their backs—or rather their tops—exist! They will think that you have vanished into Heaven. LR 4

(5) As to language: eschew all clichés implying a herd person-

---

1205 German ] german 1217 stampede ] stampedes

---

1205 you may... You, ] German literature is so virulently allegorized that the German really never knows whether he is a Kangaroo a Scythian, or his own sweet self. You [*Little Review*:] self.=You,  
1206 parable ] Parable  
1208 That ] It  
1210 Employ stupidity to defeat the stupid. Introduce ] Exploit Stupidity. Introduce [*Little Review*:]

Exploit Stupidity.=Introduce  
1212 suppose ] think  
1213 insane ] idiotic  
1213-1215 luminary... Mock ] luminary—" He was a great writer and knew what he was doing. Mock [*Little Review*:] doing.=Mock  
1217 deadness. (4) Should the herd get out ] deadness. If it gets out  
1223 (5) ] (4)



ality. Never allow such terms as Top-Hole, Priceless, or Doggo or  
 1225 whatever the slang may be at the moment or in the society in the  
 midst of which you happen to find yourself, to pass your lips. Go  
 to the dictionary if you want an epithet. If you feel eloquent uti-  
 lize that moment to produce a cliché of your own. Cherish your  
 personal vocabulary, however small it is. (It should not be large).  
 1230 Use your own epithet as though it were used by a whole nation.  
 People will then accept and may even begin using it, supposing it  
 to be a herd cliché. Then drop it at once. Borrow from all sides  
 mannerisms of callings or classes to enrich your personal bastion  
 of language. Borrow from the pulpit, from the clattering harangue  
 1235 of the auctioneer, the lawyer's technicality, the pomosity of politi-  
 cians. Borrow grunts from the fisherman, solecisms from the in-  
 habitants of Merioneth. "He is a preux, ah-yes-a-preux!" You can  
 say, "ah-yes-a-preux" as though it were one one word, accent on  
 the "yes". This is an illustration of a combined personal idiom and  
 1240 of a delivering borrowed from some alien walk of life.

(6) In accusing yourself stick to the Code of the Mountain. But  
 crime is alien to a Herdsman's nature.

(7) Yourself must be your Caste.

---

1224-1226 or Doggo... find  
 yourself, to] or Doggo to  
 1227-1228 utilize] use  
 1229-1230 is. (It should not be  
 large). Use] is. Use  
 1230-1232 nation... Borrow ]  
 nation. People would have no good  
 reason for otherwise accepting it. /  
*Examples of personal epithets.* / That  
 man is *abysmal*. / That is an  
*abysmal* book. / *It was prestigious!*  
 (Borrowed from the French.) /  
 Here comes that *sinister bird!* /

Here is a *sinister card*.  
 (Combination of French and 1890  
 slang.) / He has a great deal of  
*sperm*. / I like a fellow with as  
 much *sperm* as that. / Borrow  
 1235-1236 politicians. Borrow ]  
 [Little Review:] politicians.=Borrow  
 1237 "He] [Little Review:] "He=  
 1238 say,] say—  
 1239-1240 "yes"... walk of life.]  
 "yes".  
 1241 (6)] (5)  
 1243 (7)] (6)



1245 (8) Never say, as the Irishman will, "I feel *compassion* for such and such a person." Reserve that insult for yourself. Pity nothing that exists, except yourself, therefore.

1250 (9) Cherish and develop, side by side, your six most constant personalities. You will then acquire the potentiality of six men. Leave your front door one day as *B.*: the next march down the street as *E.* A disconnected assortment of clothes, hats, are of especial help in this wider dramatisation of yourself. *Never* fall into the vulgarity of being, or of assuming yourself to be, one ego. Each trench must have another one behind it. Each single self which you manage to be at any given time—must have five at least indifferent to it. You must have a power of indifference of *FIVE* to *ONE*. All the greatest actions in the world have been five parts out of six impersonal in origin. It is a pure waste of time to attempt anything at all worth doing at a lower ratio than this. (This is nothing to do, I need hardly say, with so called "dimensional" classifications). To follow this principle you need only cultivate your memory. You will avoid being the blind man of *any* moment. *B* will see what is hidden to *D.* (Who were Turgenev's "Six Unknown" for whom he said he wrote his books? Himself.)

IG 33  
TsA 28  
LR 5

1265 (10) Never lie. You cannot be too fastidious about the truth because it is a part of you. If you falsify it you lose your personality.

1250 disconnected assortment] disconnected assortment 1255 FIVE to ONE] FIVE to ONE. 1259 "dimensional"] "dimimensional" 1263 Himself.)] Himself.

1244–1246 (8) Never... therefore.]  
[Section 8 was added in the *Little Review* corrections.]

1247 (9)] (7)

1248 personalities] indications of different personalities

1250 disconnected assortment] variety

1250–1251 hats, are of especial

help] hats especially, are of help

1252 being, or of] being or

1253 self which] self—that

1257–1260 impersonal... To

follow] impersonal in the impulse of their origin. To follow

1262 *D.* (Who)] [*Little Review*:] *D.* = (Who

1264 (10)] (8)



There are many people who are scarcely real, in consequence of this, at all. At any moment they are threatened with being “seen through.” And once a person is in such a position that he can be *seen through* (how excellent that popular cliché is!) Why then he is little better than a phantom. If you become that description of potential spectre, your life may be feverishly active, but it will be essentially *unreal*.

If you must lie, at least see that you lie *so badly* that it would not deceive anybody entirely, however great a fool. This kind of *formal* lie will in most cases answer the purpose. The *other* man, the person to whom you tell the lie will lie for you—to himself. He will instinctively improve your lie for you. He will offer himself as an ideal medium for your falsehood. In nine cases out of ten he will lie to himself, that is make believe that he believes what you have said and deceive *himself* far better than you could. Every one is trained to do this, of course. You will thence be profiting, merely by a recognised obligation of your kind to be credulous, not “to be suspicious”. Very handy? Why yes, but consider the immense trouble you would be at to make it quite clear you were lying, apart from the manifest risk of making yourself into a *walking lie*.

The main thing, however, is, on principle, to lie very badly and imperfectly when you must. You cannot lie crudely and stupidly enough. *This is in order to protect and secure your own reality*. Bear that of course in mind. As soon as you begin acquiring any skill or artistry in lying, cultivating the talent of the comedian, then goodbye to your own reality. For the personality lives upon the surface, and *cannot* flourish in a subterranean life, where it is never able to sun and air itself. This you may take absolutely for granted.—If I insist a great deal on this point, there is certainly no moral purpose in mind. Disembarrass yourself of every trace of *moralist* compunction where lying is concerned. It is purely to yourself that you must not be untruthful. To practice to deceive

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1268 is in] id in 1269 cliché] [blank space] 1295 Disembarrass] Disembarras



is to engage yourself to some extent to the forms that you adopt. However, this is enough. These are all rules for acquiring or retaining *reality* or self-hood. I might have put this real first.

There is certainly one point that may be added to this instruction. You will be forced to lie, in one form or another, in most cases, because it will be the only way, you will find of conveying the truth. The majority of people will have no means whatever of receiving your *truth*. It would seem the purest hebrew to them. Under the circumstances it is scarcely so much a question of *lying* as of *forcing* people to accept as much of the truth as they can stomach, or are ever likely to be able to swallow, along with a great deal of material that is necessarily false. So you will have not an envelope or coating, of the false, but an entire ball of sweet and false, with a grain at its heart of the truth. But you need take no trouble at all with the false compound of this pill. Just scrape any sweet-tasting dirt together, any nonsense at all, and bury your seed in it.

(11) If your calling or the interests of your career necessitates your spending a good deal of time with educated and wealthy people, spend some of your spare time every day in hunting your weaknesses, caught from commerce with the herd, as methodically, solemnly and vindictively as a monkey uses with his fleas. You will find yourself swarming with them if you do not. But you must not bring them up onto the mountain. If you can get another man to assist you—one that is honest enough not to pass his own on to you—that is a good arrangement.

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1310 false,] flase, 1311 false,] flase, 1312 Just scrape] Just a scrape

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1264–1314 truth...bury your seed in it.] truth. If you must lie, at least see to it that you lie *so badly* that it would not deceive a pea-hen.—The world is, however, full of pea-hens.

1315 (11)] (9)

1315–1317 If your...spend] Spend 1320 if you do not.] while you are surrounded by humanity.

1321 mountain. If] [*Little Review*:] mountain.=If



(12) Do not play with political notions, aristocratisms or the re-  
 1325 verse: that is a compromise with the herd. Do not allow yourself to  
 imagine “a fine herd, though still a herd.” *There is no fine herd.* The  
 cattle that describe themselves as “gentlemen” you will observe to  
 be a little cleaner. Do not be taken in by this simple cunning. You  
 will find no serious difference between them and those vast dismal  
 1330 herds they avoid. Some of them are very dangerous and treacher-  
 ous. The training of a gentleman provides the ill-natured with an  
 efficient disguise, and their evil propensities become developed by  
 opportunity and early unchecked use. So be on your guard with  
 the small herd of gentlemen!

1335 (13) You will meet with this pitfall. At moments, surrounded  
 by the multitude of unsatisfactory replicas, you will grow con-  
 fused by a similarity bringing them so near to us. You will then  
 reason perhaps as follows. Where, from some points of view, the  
 difference is so slight, is that delicate margin of the immense im-  
 1340 portance that we hold it to be: *the only thing of importance*, in fact? IG 34  
 That group of men talking by the fire in your club (you will still  
 remain a member of your club—if you have one), that party at the  
 1326 *There is no* ] There is no 1329 dismal ] disman 1342 club—if you have  
 one), ] club)\$ [Marginal note:] if you have one

1324 (12) ] (10)  
 1324–1325 reverse: that ] reverse,  
 for that  
 1326 *There is no* ] *There is no*  
 1327 describe themselves as ] call  
 themselves  
 1328 cleaner... You ] cleaner. It is  
 merely cunning and produced with  
 a product of combined soda and  
 fats. But you [*Little Review:*]  
 cleaner. It is merely cunning and  
 produced with a product called  
*soap*. But you  
 1330–1333 treacherous... So be on ]  
 treacherous. Be on [*Little Review:*]

treacherous.=Be on  
 1335 (13) ] (11)  
 1335 pitfall. At ] pitfall: at [Not  
 marked in Cornell *Ideal Giant*  
 notes.]  
 1337–1338 us. You will then reason  
 perhaps as follows. Where, ] us.  
 You will reason where, [*Little*  
*Review:*] us.=You will reason  
 where,  
 1339 is that delicate margin of ]  
 whether that delicate margin is of  
 1342 club—if you have one), ]  
 club),



theatre, look good enough, you will say. Their skins are fresh, they  
 are well made, their manners are good. You must then consider  
 1345 what they really are. On closer inspection you recognise that they  
 are duplicates only of those in the past who have depressed and  
 deceived you. It is only outwardly that they resemble anything at  
 all interesting or pleasant. But they have recognised you immedi-  
 1350 ately as of a different clay. Matter that has not sufficient mind to  
 permeate it grows, as you know, gangrenous and putrid. So you  
 will safe in assuming that most of these phantoms are putrid at  
 heart, vain and in consequence highly malevolent. What seduced LR 6  
 you from your severity for a moment was the same thing as a dull  
 woman's good looks, that is all. Nature is a most accomplished  
 1355 pimp. She also like the psychoanalyst has a violent predilection  
 for sex-interpretation, and when not engaged in the specific work  
 of sex, uses up her sex stores on the material she has accumulated  
 in the most unexpected places. So that sort of low, intense, cun-  
 ning of sex, which is cheap as dirt, for nature manufactures it in  
 1360 the mass, is what most often you will find yourself busied with.  
 So any sort of charm suggestive of sex must be scrutinised rather  
 carefully.

All this is *probably* what you will have in front of you. On the  
 other hand, everywhere you will find a few people, who, although  
 1365 not a mountain people, are not herd. They may be herdsmen gone  
 1351 safe ] be safe 1355 psychoanalyst ] psycho analyst [psychoanalyst in *Ideal  
 Giant* annotations] 1360 busied ] [empty space; busied in *Ideal Giant* annota-  
 tions]

1345–1349 you recognise... clay.]  
 you *know*, from unpleasant  
 experience, that they are *nothing*  
 but limitations and vulgarities of  
 the most irritating description. The  
 devil Nature has painted these  
 sepulchres pink, and covered them  
 with a blasphemous Bond Street  
 distinction.

1350–1352 putrid... malevolent ]  
 rotten. Animal high spirits, a little,  
 but easily exhausted, goodness, is  
 all they can claim. [New  
 paragraph]  
 1354–1363 good looks... All this  
 is ] good looks. This is [*Little  
 Review*:] good-looks.=This is



mad through contact with the herd who have since made their home with it: or through inadequate energy for our task they may be found there: or they may be a hybrid. They may even be herdsmen temporarily bored with the mountain.

1370 There are numerous varieties of outsiders difficult to distinguish but of a higher sort than the true herd. Treat them as brothers. Employ them as opportunity offers, as auxiliaries in your duties. Their society and help will render your task less arduous.

(14) As to women. There is a simple rule, that has no homosexual bearing; namely, wherever you can, substitute the society of men. Treat women kindly, nevertheless, for they suffer from the herd, although of it, and have many of the same contempts as yourself. Women are a sort of bastard mountain people. There must be somewhere a Female Mountain, a sort of mirage-mountain. I should like to visit it. But what their physiological life, the very core of their destiny (and without it why have women at all?) imposes, however much, beneath the urgency of fashion, they masculinise, women and the processes for which they exist, are the arch conjuring trick: and they have the cheap mystery and a good deal of the slipperiness of the conjuror. But do not embroil the mountain with this sect. Even the Mountain may have been born of a Female Mountain, of course—a mirage-mountain.

TsA 31

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1366–1367 herd... with it:] herd,  
and strayed:

1368 hybrid. They] hybrid, or  
they

1369 mountain.] mountain. (I  
have a pipe below myself  
sometimes.)

1370–1371 varieties... true herd.]  
“other denominations.”

1374 (14)] (13) [*Little Review*:] (12)

1374–1375 women... wherever]  
women: wherever

1376 women kindly, nevertheless,  
for] them kindly, for

1378 Women] They

1380–1383 it... masculinise,  
women] it. But women [*Little  
Review*:] it.=But women

1385–1387 conjuror... mirage-  
mountain.] conjuror. [*Little  
Review*:] conjuror.=Sodomy should  
be avoided, as far as possible. It  
tends to add to the abominable  
confusion already existing.



(15) Wherever you meet a shyness that comes out of solitude IG 34  
 (although *all* solitude is not anti-herd) a naiveness, a patent ab-  
 1390 sence of contamination, you will recognise what I mean if I say the  
 sweetness of the mountain springs, or the unpolluted whiteness  
 of its snows, any of the signs of *goodness*, you must treat that as  
 sacred, as portions off the mountain. However much you suffer  
 for it, you must defend and exalt them.

1395 On the other hand, *every* child is not simple, and *every* woman  
 is not weak. In many cases to champion a woman would be like  
 springing to the rescue of a rhinoceros when you noticed that it  
 had been attacked by a flea. Chivalrous manners, again, with  
 many women is like tip-toeing into a shed where an ox is sleep-  
 1400 ing. Children, too, often rival in nastiness their parents. But you  
 have your orders in this matter. Indifference where there should  
 be nothing but the *whole* eagerness or compunction of your being,  
 is the worst crime in the eyes of the mountain.

(16) Conquests have usually been divided from their antithesis  
 1405 by some small accident or other. Had Moscow not possessed a  
 governor ready to burn the Kremlin and the hundreds of palaces LR 7  
 accumulated there, peace would have been signed by the Czar at

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1393 off] of

---

1388 (15)] (14) [*Little Review*:] (13)

1389 a naiveness,] naiveness, and

1390–1391 you will...sweetness]  
 the sweetness

1391–1392 springs...any] water,  
 any

1393 mountain. However]

mountain. [New paragraph]

However

1394 them. [New paragraph] On

the] it. On the

1396 weak. In] [*Little Review*:]

weak.=In

1396 woman] female

1399–1400 sleeping. Children, too,

often] sleeping. Some children,  
 too [*Little Review*:] sleeping.=Some

children, too

1403 eyes of the mountain]

mountain's eyes

1404 (16)] (15) [*Little Review*:] (14)

1404 antithesis] antitheses, and

defeats from conquests

1405 small accident or other]

casual event



Bonaparte's entrance. Had the Lascalans persevered for ten days  
 against Cortés, the Aztecs would never have been troubled. Yet  
 1410 Montezuma was right to remain inactive, paralysed by prophesy.  
 Napoleon was right when he felt that his star was at last a use-  
 less one. He had drained it of all its astonishing effulgence. The  
 hair's breadth in question is only the virtuosity of Fate, guiding  
 you along imaginary precipices. All the detail is make-believe. So  
 1415 watch your star soberly and without comment. Do not trouble  
 about the paste-board cliffs! When you fall, why you fall of course  
 nowhere, into nothing. The dramatic hair-edge alone is real; so  
 basta! light your pipe.

(17) *There are very stringent regulations* about the herd keeping  
 1420 off the sides of the mountain. In fact your chief function is to pre-  
 vent this happening. Some of the herd, in moments of boredom, or  
 from vindictiveness, are apt to make rushes for the higher regions.  
 Their instinct always fortunately keeps them in crowds or bands.  
 Their trespassing in consequence is soon noticed. Those traps and  
 1425 numerous devices you have seen on the edge of the plain are for  
 use, of course, in the last resort. Do not apply them prematurely.  
 Not very many herdsmen lose their lives in dealing with the herds.

(18) Contradict yourself, in order to live. You must remain  
 broken up, since to observe is your function. Encourage other

IG 36

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1408 entrance. Had ] [*Little*  
*Review:*] entrance.=Had  
 1412 effulgence. The ] [*Little*  
*Review:*] effulgence.=The  
 1413 breadth in question ] breadth  
 1414 precipices. All ] [*Little*  
*Review:*] precipices.=And all  
 1414-1415 make-believe. So  
 watch ] make-believe anyway.  
 Watch  
 1416-1418 cliffs!...pipe. ] cliffs!

1419 (17) ] (16) [*Little Review:*] (15)  
 1421 Some of the herd, ] Some,  
 1421-1422 or from vindictiveness ]  
 or vindictiveness  
 1423-1424 bands. Their ] bands  
 and their  
 1424 in consequence is ] is  
 1426-1427 prematurely. Not ]  
 [*Little Review:*] prematurely.=Not  
 1428 (18) ] [*Little Review:*] (16)  
 1429-1430 up...together. ] up.



1430 people to stick together.

(19) The teacher does not have to *be*, although he has to *know*. He is the mind imagining, not the executant. The young, svelte, miraculous athlete, the strapping virtuoso, really has to give the illusion of a perfection. Do not expect *me* to keep in sufficiently good training to perform the feats I recommend. I usually remain up on the mountain.

(20) Above all this sad commerce with the herd, let something veritably remain “un peu sur la montagne.” Always come down with masks and thick clothing to the valley where we work. Stagnant gasses from these Yahoosque and rotten herds are more dangerous often than hooves or horns or claws of the wandering cylinders that emit them. See you are not caught in them without your mask. But once returned to our adorable height, forget the sad, insanitary, unbeautiful nature of your task, and with great freedom indulge your love. The terrible processions beneath are not of our making, and must be outside our pity. Our sacred hill is a volcanic heaven. But the result of its violence is peace. The unfortunate surge below, even, has moments of peace.

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1431 (19) ] [*Little Review*:] (17)

1434 perfection. Do ] [*Little Review*:] perfection.=Do

1435 recommend. I ] [*Little Review*:] recommend.=I

1437 (20) ] [*Little Review*:] (18)

1443 mask. But ] [*Little Review*:] mask.=But

1443–1444 the sad. . . task, and ]  
the besmirching of you task, and  
[*Little Review*:] your sallow task:

1445 love. The ] [*Little Review*:]  
love.=The

1446 must be outside ] are without

1447 peace. The ] [*Little Review*:]  
peace.=The



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