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**The Manifesto in Britain and Ireland,
1878-1939: A Genealogy**

Julian Hanna

PhD

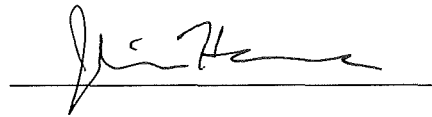
Department of English Literature

The University of Glasgow

September 2005

For Simone and Clyde

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is entirely my own and has been composed by me, and furthermore that the work contained herein has not been submitted for any other degree award or professional qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Hanna', is written over a solid horizontal line.

Julian Hanna

Contents

| | |
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| Contents | iii |
| Abstract | iv |
| Acknowledgments | v |
| | |
| 1 Introduction | |
| Endings and Beginnings..... | 1 |
| What is a Manifesto?..... | 8 |
| Performance and Text..... | 17 |
| The Manifesto in Britain and Ireland..... | 19 |
| | |
| 2 Making Enemies: The Rise of the Manifesto in England, 1878-1895 | |
| Introduction: Taking the Stand, Taking the Stage..... | 23 |
| 2.1 The Manifesto on Trial: The Cases of Whistler and Wilde..... | 26 |
| Whistler v. Ruskin..... | 33 |
| Wilde v. Queensberry..... | 45 |
| The Question of Influence..... | 57 |
| 2.2 Apostle of Aestheticism: Wilde's American Performance..... | 63 |
| | |
| 3 Rhetoric and Renaissance: Manifestos in Scotland and Ireland, 1890-1905 | |
| Introduction: The Other Nineties..... | 77 |
| 3.1 Proclaiming Identities: City, Nation, and Self in Patrick Geddes and William Sharp's <i>Evergreen</i> | 79 |
| 3.2 Manifest Influence: Blake, Nietzsche, and Nationalism in Yeats's Early Manifestos..... | 102 |
| | |
| 4 Wyndham Lewis and the Manifesto in British Modernism, 1910-1930 | |
| Introduction: Alone (or) in a Crowd | 124 |
| 4.1 'With Expletive of Whirlwind': Wyndham Lewis and the Arrival of the Avant-Garde Manifesto in England, 1913-1922..... | 126 |
| 4.2 An Uneasy Peace: The Manifesto and High Modernism..... | 147 |
| | |
| Conclusion | 176 |
| | |
| Bibliography | 179 |

Abstract

This thesis represents a genre study of the literary-artistic manifesto in Britain and Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It traces the development of the manifesto from James MacNeill Whistler's pronouncements on art and art critics in his trial against John Ruskin in 1878 to Wyndham Lewis's 'Enemy' polemics in the 1920s.

The most common type of manifesto is the short public declaration issued by an individual or group, usually for the dual purpose of generating publicity and attempting to influence future events. In addition, however, the genre is characterized by its hybridity: it can appear not only as the quasi-political tract favoured by the historical avant-garde, but also as a poem, preface, public lecture, circular letter, or virtually any other form of discourse. This generic diversity is a principal concern of the present thesis, and the acknowledgement of this aspect of the manifesto, paired with the focus on Britain and Ireland as opposed to mainland Europe, serves to distinguish it from earlier studies.

Specific examples of the manifesto appear in chapters two to four. They begin with the Aestheticist performances of Whistler and Oscar Wilde, followed by the nationalist revivals in Scotland and Ireland at the *fin-de-siècle*, and concluding with the relationship between the manifesto and High Modernism. The larger picture that emerges through these examples is of a strain of manifesto that originates with Whistler and is carried, to a greater and lesser extent, through the writings of Wilde, Yeats, Pound, and Lewis. This sub-species is defined by its oppositional and often masculinist tendencies, its egotism, and its elitist philosophy. It aggressively advertises its own exclusiveness, rather than attempting to win converts in the traditional style of the revolutionary manifesto.

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I would like to thank staff at the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh City Libraries, the Keiller Library at the Dean Gallery in Edinburgh, and the university libraries of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and York.

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I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents, Richmond and Linda, for leading by example, and to my whole family, without whose love and support none of this would have been possible.

Finally, there are two people who kept me laughing and to whom I dedicate this thesis: my wife Simone ('yes I said yes I will Yes') and my son Clyde.

1. Introduction

Endings and Beginnings

One of the aims of this thesis is to establish a genealogy of the literary-artistic manifesto in Britain and Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The point of terminus for this thesis is the 1930s, when the manifesto is truly 'on the town'. In the thirties the term is everywhere in use: even poetry is touched by its influence, as in Stephen Spender's homage to 'The Express' (1933) –

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.

– or Louis MacNeice's delight in the 'momentary caprice' and rejuvenation of spring in 'An April Manifesto' (1935).¹ The chronological beginning of this thesis is 1878, the year of James McNeill Whistler's libel trial against John Ruskin. Whistler's action sets a precedent for public (and performed) declarations by artists on the subject of art. It also leads to his *Ten O'Clock* lecture of 1885 – a truly groundbreaking manifesto – and eventually, as I will argue, to Wilde's libel case against the Marquess of Queensberry. Let us start, though, with what is nearer to us in time, and look briefly at the 1930s. Taking sides, usually the left, is a popular activity amongst artists and writers in the years leading up to the Second World War. The manifesto of the thirties is repoliticized by poets and painters after decades of use only in speaking about art, or *pretending* to speak only about art. As Valentine Cunningham shows, following Spender, the stereotype of a 'left-wing orthodoxy' in the thirties is largely accurate. Although some artists and writers maintain a position of neutrality, the majority sign up in support of the left, as they do by a landslide of 127 votes 'for' to five 'against' and sixteen 'neutral' in the *Left Review* pamphlet,

¹ Stephen Spender, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 2004), 19; Louis MacNeice, *Poems* (London: Faber, 1935), 46.

Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War (1937).² The question put to the writers who take part in the survey – ‘Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain?’ – is itself embedded in a manifesto. Not only is it openly biased toward the Republican side, but it is preceded by three paragraphs that signal a clear departure from Modernist isolation and announce a new policy of engagement. It begins:

To the Writers and Poets of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales

It is clear to many of us throughout the whole world that now, as certainly never before, we are determined or compelled, to take sides. The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do.³

The third paragraph declares, ‘To-day, the struggle is in Spain. To-morrow it may be in other countries – our own.’ W. H. Auden, one of the signatories of this manifesto-question, makes this declaration the refrain of his great poem on the Spanish War: ‘But to-day the struggle’.⁴ Tristan Tzara is another signatory, indicating how much has changed since the nihilistic days of Dada.

Yet, even in the thirties, not all manifestos are group affairs. Ezra Pound, whose ‘neutral’ response attacks the ‘gang of sap-headed dilettantes’ behind the *Left Review* survey, keeps producing manifestos long after the demise of Imagism and Vorticism.⁵ In ‘National Culture: A Manifesto’ (1938), he uses a rhetoric of conspiracy to warn of a grave threat to American culture. The defenders of culture, and the stated audience for this manifesto, are ‘a few dozen just men’.⁶ But who are these ‘just men’? ‘National Culture’ is similar in tone to Pound’s broadcasts for the

² Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 28-29. Cunningham makes reference to Wyndham Lewis’s ‘Freedom That Destroys Itself’, a radio broadcast subsequently published in the *Listener*, 13 (8 May 1935), 793-94, and to ‘The Left Wing Orthodoxy’, Spender’s article in the ‘Commitments’ double issue of *New Verse*, 31-32 (Autumn 1938), 12-16, which employs Lewis’s phrase and takes up his point (‘none’, Spender states in the article, ‘... should quarrel with the description’ [p. 12]).

³ *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (London: Left Review, 1937), n.p.

⁴ Auden, ‘Spain’ (1937), reprinted in *Poetry of the Thirties*, ed. by Robin Skelton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 133-36.

⁵ Ezra Pound in the ‘Neutral’ category, *Authors Take Sides*, n.p.

⁶ Ezra Pound, ‘National Culture: A Manifesto’, in *Selected Prose: 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973), 131-36 (p. 132).

Italian Fascists on Radio Roma during the war years, and like these broadcasts his manifesto is a product of solitary contemplation rather than a declaration of collective aims. If it had been published at the time it was written, it probably would have disappeared into the ether, or found only a very small 'elite'. As it happens, the manifesto, which is solicited in 1938 for an American series called 'Reactionary Pamphlets', does not reach the public until it is included in *Impact: Essays on Ignorance and the Decline of American Civilization* (1960).⁷ Two years before 'National Culture' is written, Pound circulates another manifesto, this time requesting signatures from friends including Wyndham Lewis and William Carlos Williams. Again the manifesto fails to reach the 'just men' to which it is directed, and it remains unsigned and unpublished in Pound's lifetime.⁸ T. S. Eliot refuses to publish it in the *Criterion*, which is not surprising given his response in the same year to *Authors Take Sides*: 'While I am naturally sympathetic, I still feel convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities.'⁹ Pound's reply to the *Left Review* survey reveals that he, like Eliot, is critical of communal causes – 'Questionnaire an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think', his statement begins – and when he does try to find a few good men to act as signatories or to publish his manifestos in the thirties, he is remarkably unsuccessful.

Pound is more successful in placing an article in the *Fascist Quarterly* in 1936. The following year, when the magazine becomes the *British Union Quarterly*, Pound's 'Demarcations' appears in the inaugural issue alongside Wyndham Lewis's "'Left Wings" and C3 Mind'.¹⁰ The two writers do not appear together, however, in *Authors Take Sides*, from which Lewis is conspicuously absent. Cunningham notes that 'some replies weren't published', but whether one of these was sent in by Lewis is unclear.¹¹ Since he had only recently broadcast, and then published in the *Listener*, his essay containing the accusation of 'left-wing orthodoxy', it is hard to imagine that

⁷ Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 357.

⁸ The manifesto is first reproduced in full in Stock, pp. 340-41.

⁹ T. S. Eliot in the 'Neutral' category, *Authors Take Sides*, n.p.

¹⁰ Ezra Pound, 'A Social Creditor Serves Notice', *Fascist Quarterly*, 4 (October 1936), 492-99, and 'Demarcations', *British Union Quarterly*, 1 (January 1937), 35-40; Wyndham Lewis, "'Left Wings" and C3 Mind', *British Union Quarterly*, 1 (January 1937), 22-34.

¹¹ Cunningham, p. 28.

he was merely overlooked. In 1936-37 Lewis is very active on the subjects of war, politics, and the left, publishing *Left Wings Over Europe* (1936), *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive* (1937), and his Spanish Civil War novel, *The Revenge for Love* (1937). The month before *Authors Take Sides* appears, a special 'Wyndham Lewis Double Number' of *Twentieth Century Verse* (November-December 1937) appears. It is possible, of course, that he was sent a questionnaire and simply refused or did not bother to answer it.¹²

W. B. Yeats is also not represented in the *Left Review* survey. His friendship with Pound, and the widespread sympathy in Ireland for Franco during the war, might lead one to expect that, had he contributed a reply, it would have been either 'neutral' or 'against'. The evidence, however, puts him with the 'for' majority: it exists in a letter of support for the Spanish Republic and the Second International Writers' Congress held in Madrid in July 1937. Pablo Neruda, the conference organizer and the only source for the story, urged Yeats to endorse a letter of support, and he did so.¹³ The 'letter' might in fact be the manifesto reprinted in the *Left Review* the following September, in which 'the writers of 28 nations assembled' declare themselves opposed to Fascism and promise to 'undertake to defend Republican Spain wherever she is threatened, and to win to her cause the waverers and the misled'.¹⁴ Elsewhere in the pages of the *Left Review*, in February 1935, Spender opens an essay entitled 'Writers and Manifestoes' with a quotation from Yeats: 'We can no longer permit life to be shaped by a personified ideal, we must serve with all our faculties some actual thing'. Spender contrasts this positive commitment to 'the real' with two negative examples of manifestos calling for art to be used exclusively as propaganda, in this case in support of Communism. The point of his essay is to reassure *Left Review* readers that 'if one insists that one should write as one chooses and about what one wishes, one is not a traitor to the cause of world socialism'.¹⁵

¹² Even this most probable theory is undermined by the fact that Lewis replies to other questionnaires in previous years, including one in *New Verse* ('An Enquiry', 11 [October 1934], 7-8) and another in the final number of the *Little Review*, where Lewis, appearing in good company, writes: 'I have just received your circular. Here is the photograph you ask for. The examination paper is too difficult for me I am afraid' ('Response to a Questionnaire', 12.2 [May 1929], 49).

¹³ Elizabeth Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 223.

¹⁴ 'Manifesto', *Left Review*, 3 (1937), 445-46.

¹⁵ Stephen Spender, 'Writers and Manifestoes', *Left Review*, 1 (1935), 145-50.

If Spender's article shows the manifesto in a poor light, as a tool of 'bureaucrats' and ideologues, Yeats demonstrates that it can also serve as a more passionate, less predictable form of expression. His single-issue manifesto-periodical, *On the Boiler* (1939) is as he describes *The Herne's Egg*, a play written during the same period, 'typical of my old age, outrageous & violent'.¹⁶ The persona of the old man on the boiler, like the similar characters Crazy Jane and Tom the Lunatic,¹⁷ represents a late incarnation of Yeats's doctrine of the mask. The mask is a motif that appears frequently in the drama of the manifesto, usually in its more aggressive forms; as Richard Ellmann argues, 'the mask is a weapon of attack'.¹⁸ By becoming the 'mad old man' and issuing wild declarations, Yeats is able to assert mastery over his frail physical state, and to generate public debate on the issues that interest him (in Foster's words, 'the ruminations on democracy, authoritarianism, and degeneration'¹⁹). As he explains to Dorothy Wellesley (11 Nov 1937), 'I shall curse my enemies and bless my friends. My enemies will hit back, and that will give me the joy of answering them'.²⁰ His choice of words suggests Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* (1914), but Yeats has another periodical in mind: Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* (1871-1884).

'Ruskin's manifesto against the modern age', as Foster describes it, is a suitable model for the 'splenetic manifesto' assembled by Yeats.²¹ The soapbox orator, Yeats himself points out, has always been one aspect of his character. 'I was the spokesman because I was born arrogant and had learnt an artist's arrogance', he writes, remembering the early days of the Abbey Theatre.²² Aside from being a deliberately provocative persona, the 'mad old man' is also a self-parody, much like Wilde's aesthete and Whistler's loud, litigious American. In addition to these factors, Yeats admits the motivation of 'the need to increase [the Cuala Press's] income by a

¹⁶ Letter to Olivia Shakespear, dated 10 February 1938. Quoted in Roy Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997-2003), II: *The Arch-Poet*, p. 612.

¹⁷ For poems featuring these characters see, for example, *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933).

¹⁸ Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 176.

¹⁹ *Life*, II, p. 612.

²⁰ *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 900. Hereafter referred to as 'Wade'.

²¹ Both quotations belong to Foster; see *Life*, II, pp. 607 and 586, respectively.

²² W. B. Yeats, *On the Boiler* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1939), p. 13.

controversial publication'.²³ By invoking the spirit of Ruskin's monthly letters to the British worker, Yeats brings us back to the idea of the artist or critic as preacher.²⁴ McCoy, the old man Yeats recalls seeing as a boy in Sligo, was 'a mad ship's carpenter, very good at his trade if he would stick to it', which sounds like the poet admonishing himself. McCoy also, like the 'fanatic' Yeats, 'broke off from time to time to read the Scriptures and denounce his neighbours'.²⁵ This connection is relevant to the paternalistic relationship Yeats sets up between himself and Ireland in *On the Boiler*, and it supports the idea that the artistic manifesto has not only political (and legal) but also religious roots, in the sermon.

The principal model for Yeats's sermonizing in his later years is Swift. In his 'Introduction' to *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* (1934), the play that takes Swift as its subject, Yeats writes: 'Swift haunts me; he is always just round the next corner'.²⁶ He enlists Swift and other figures of the Ascendancy in his fight against democracy, making his later manifestos sound more like state proclamations than revolutionary ones.²⁷ The extent to which Yeats looks to Swift as a guide is evident in the interest he takes in Swift's epitaph in the early thirties,²⁸ and in the similarity he sees – as he revises *A Vision* – between their views of history. He writes, again in the 'Introduction':

²³ *Life*, II, p. 623. The use of manifestos for advertising purposes, whether to gain attention for a movement or cause, an individual, or in this case a publishing house, is well established.

²⁴ There are of course other ways in which *Fors* might have been influential, notably in Ruskin's belief in a return to 'first principles', and the teaching of the many by the few. Most of all, however, it is Ruskin's voice that captures Yeats's interest – the blunt expression of 'truths', seen in his famous attack on Whistler: 'I have seen, and heard, much of cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.' See James McNeill Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London: Heinemann, 1890), p. 1.

²⁵ *On the Boiler*, p. 9.

²⁶ In Yeats, *Selected Prose*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 213. In addition to writing this play on Swift (whose works he read during his convalescence in Rapallo) in 1930, Yeats also produces Arthur Power's one-act play, *The Drapier Letters*, in 1927. See Michael Steinman, *Yeats's Heroic Figures* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 114.

²⁷ He announces in the same piece that in his youth, 'I turned from Goldsmith and from Burke because they seem a part of the English system, from Swift ... But now I read Swift for months together, Burke and Berkeley less often but always with excitement, and Goldsmith lures and waits. I collect materials for my thought and work, for some identification of my beliefs with the nation itself, I seek an image of the modern mind's discovery of itself, of its own permanent form, in that one Irish century that escaped from darkness and confusion.' *Selected Prose*, p. 213.

²⁸ Yeats's translation of Swift's epitaph into English appears in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* in 1933.

Swift seemed to shape his narrative upon some clairvoyant vision of his own life, for he saw civilisation pass from comparative happiness and youthful vigour into an old age of violence and self-contempt.²⁹

The fourth *Drapier Letter* ('To the Whole People of Ireland') Yeats considers to be one of the great manifestos of Irish nationalism.³⁰ 'No one had the right to make our laws but the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland', he writes. 'It was this doctrine that Swift uttered in the fourth *Drapier Letter* with such astringent eloquence'. He continues: 'Swift found his nationality through the *Drapier Letters*, his convictions came from action and passion'.³¹ Now, in his final public address, *On the Boiler*, Yeats attempts to combine 'action and passion' with a Swiftian 'savage indignation' – he writes at the time of 'the enemies I must make'.³²

'Savage indignation' characterizes Yeats's late career, as it did Swift's, more than any earlier phase. The writing in *On the Boiler* strains with the effort to 'seek the brutality, the ill breeding, the barbarism of truth'.³³ The result is many things, all reflections of the manifesto's heterogeneous form: it is by its own admission 'a policy for young Ireland', as well as being a public record of Yeats's feelings on subjects as diverse as eugenics,³⁴ municipal affairs, the future of the nation, the evils of the 'mob', art and nationalism, *A Vision*, new economic theories, and war. As if this were not enough, it ends by promising: 'The old man on the boiler has been silent about religion, but soon this occasional publication ... will print his words upon the subject

²⁹ *Selected Prose*, p. 221.

³⁰ As Joseph McMinn points out, the 'aspiration' to a national audience in Swift's manifesto 'is largely rhetorical, a tactic designed to lend authority to the writer's arguments by identifying a part of the nation as the authentic voice of the whole people'. See McMinn, 'Introduction', in *Swift's Irish Pamphlets: An Introductory Selection* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks.: Colin Smythe, 1991), 13-20 (p. 18). Yeats tries to right this imbalance when he lists his revised pantheon, now heavily influenced by the eighteenth century, in *On the Boiler*: 'Berkeley, Swift, Burke, Grattan, Parnell, Augusta Gregory, Synge, Kevin O'Higgins, are the true Irish people ... If the Catholic names are few history will soon fill the gap' (p. 30).

³¹ *Selected Prose*, p. 216.

³² Letter to Dorothy Wellesley, 22 June 1938. In Wade, p. 911.

³³ Letter to Ethel Mannin, 17 December 1937. In Wade, p. 903.

³⁴ To touch briefly on a complex issue: Yeats's interest in eugenics can be read as his desire to exert control over the future, to shape his own and Ireland's destiny. This is a desire he identifies in Swift (who fails tragically in his aspirations) in *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*. For detailed discussions on eugenics and *On the Boiler*, see Foster, *Life*, II, pp. 612-21; and David Bradshaw, 'The Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and the Emergence of *On the Boiler*', *Yeats Annual*, 9 (1997), 189-215.

without tact or discretion'.³⁵ *On the Boiler* is not merely a public record of public thoughts; it is also a personal record, 'the unconscious becoming conscious'. It is an effort to reveal as much as possible – 'my meaning set out in plain print' – while time remains.³⁶ Sadly, Yeats dies before the magazine appears, and is unable to debate or defend his strange polemic in the wake of its publication, leaving only some uncomfortable last words.³⁷

What is a Manifesto?

The preceding examples give us some sense of the manifesto as a diverse, multi-purpose genre. Not everything in this thesis, it should be clear at this point, will bear an immediate resemblance to the *manifesti* of Italian Futurism. Stripped to its most basic definition, the artistic manifesto is simply a statement of artistic principles; even less precisely, it is a statement of principles by an artist. Aside from that, what defines a manifesto is something scarcely tangible; a sense of its own occasion, perhaps. As a working definition, I propose that the artistic manifesto is a pamphlet-length, polemical, public declaration, which may be issued by an individual or by a group, usually on the subject of the present or future state of art. Some of its many and often hybrid forms include: editorials or whole magazines, essays, poems, songs, lectures, court testimony, pamphlets, posters, plays, exhibition catalogues, aphorisms, epigrams, epitaphs, dialogues, circular letters, prose fiction, interviews, installation art, and autobiography. Little magazines – *Fors Clavigera*, the *Evergreen*, *Blast*, the *New Age*, the *Egoist*, and others – will feature prominently in these pages. Letters will also be important: the incandescent epistolary style of Pound or Whistler, for example, Wilde's *De Profundis*, or Wyndham Lewis's defamatory 'round robin' sent to the clients of Roger Fry's Omega Workshops. Over the course of four chapters, I will attempt to create a profile of the genre, without reducing its myriad complexities

³⁵ *On the Boiler*, p. 32.

³⁶ Wade, pp. 904 and 911.

³⁷ Yeats dies on 28 January 1939; *On the Boiler* is finally issued in September just as war breaks out in Europe.

and constant shifts to a standard set of characteristics. First, however, it will be useful to hear what others make of the manifesto.

Before we look at examples of comments by artists and critics on the manifesto, some insight into the term's use in different contexts is in order. One early application of the term is in John Bulwer's pioneering study of hand gestures, first published in 1648. The full title reads:

Chirolugia; or, The natural language of the hand, composed of the speaking motions and discoursing gestures thereof. Whereunto is added *Chironomia*; or, The art of manuall rhetoricke, consisting of the naturall expressions, digested by art in the hand, as the chieftest instrument of eloquence. By historicall manifestos, exemplified out of the authentique registers of common life and civill conversation. With types, or chirograms, a long-wish'd for illustration of this argument.

The sense here is akin to 'example' or 'evidence', with an interesting connection between the subject of the study (hand gestures) and the root of 'manifesto', *manus* (hand). In Perry Miller's 1950 anthology of the American Transcendentalist movement, there is a section called 'Manifestoes'. The application of the term in this case is an editorial decision; the word does not appear in the original nineteenth-century texts included under this heading. The Transcendentalist manifestos are two 'discourses', an open letter, and an editorial – the last is by Ralph Waldo Emerson, being an announcement to readers of the *Dial* that lays out the magazine's principles in the first issue (July 1840). It begins: 'We invite the attention of our countrymen to a new design.'³⁸ As will be demonstrated in the coming chapters, the editorials contained in first issues provide a rich bounty for the manifesto hunter. This is a good early example, and it also illustrates the gap that frequently exists between the editor's aspirations, or claims, and the degree to which they are realized; in this case, the magazine to which Emerson lends his inspiring prospectus fails to live up to its promise.³⁹

³⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'The Editors to the Reader', in *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, ed. by Perry Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 247-51 (p. 248).

³⁹ As Miller tells us, the *Dial* 'never made any money, and never attained more than three hundred subscribers at the most'. Worse still, it failed to live up to even its editors' expectations – Emerson apologized to Carlyle for its poor quality (p. 248). The general situation also holds for many

A third example involves the insertion of the term 'manifesto', once it has become common currency, into a revised edition. The work in question is Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell's *Life of Whistler*, originally published in two volumes in 1908. In the section concerning Whistler's great miscellany, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890), the authors insist, with reason, that it is 'much more than just a jest book'. There is, they argue, an 'underlying truth he wished to express even if it remained undiscovered by his contemporaries in their conviction of his levity'.⁴⁰ The revised, single-volume edition of 1911 condenses this argument, with the introduction of an important new word. 'The book, which may be read for its wit,' the authors now state, 'is really his Manifesto'. With the cultural shift of 1910, famously noted by Virginia Woolf and instigated by Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist Exhibition (which coincides with Marinetti's first visit to London), it is credible to suggest that Whistler's biographers decide to recast *The Gentle Art* as a proto-modernist manifesto.⁴¹ A similar thing is done by Yeats and Edwin Ellis in their edition of Blake in 1893. Some of his more ephemeral prose, including the 'Descriptive Catalogue' to his 1809 exhibition and the 'Public Address' (1809-10), is labelled with the term. Far from being a nod to fashion, however, Yeats and Ellis's use of the term in an artistic context was uncommon in Britain at the time, though it was gaining currency in France.⁴²

Commentary by artists and writers on the production of manifestos, though not exactly rare, is fairly unusual. The manifesto is often a means to an end, an advertisement, and as such it is not subject to the same scrutiny by artists as their 'true' works. Marinetti is one exception, which is unsurprising given that he is, from 1909, a leader and promoter first and a poet second. It is Marinetti who is commonly credited with raising the status of the manifesto to an art form.⁴³ In the preamble to

movements: Italian Futurism, for example, produced a number of successful artists and some lasting works, but remains best known for its manifestos. Is this a triumph for the genre or a failure of the movement?

⁴⁰ Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1908), II, p. 108.

⁴¹ Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 2nd edn (London: Heinemann, 1911), p. 292.

⁴² See Chapter 3 below for a more detailed commentary on Yeats and Ellis's edition of Blake.

⁴³ This point is raised in Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), where she describes the Futurist

'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909), before the gang of hyperactive iconoclasts screech off into the night in their 'snorting beasts', the act of writing manifestos is dramatized: the narrator recalls 'blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling'.⁴⁴ Wyndham Lewis, writing in the second issue of *Blast* (July 1915), criticizes the importance of the manifesto, and its particular character, in Italian Futurism: 'Their work is very much prejudiced by Marinetti's propaganda, which is always too tyrannically literary, and insists on certain points that are not essential to their painting.'⁴⁵ In the 'Notice to Public' at the start of the same issue of *Blast*, manifestos are put in their proper place. Defending the 'delay in the appearance of the second number', the editorial states that 'as this paper is run chiefly by Painters and for Painting, and they are only incidentally Propagandists, they do their work first, and, since they must, write about it afterwards'.⁴⁶

As for stating the actual rules of manifesto writing, Tristan Tzara's 'Dada Manifesto' of 1918 is the most detailed, if not the most reliable, example. Tzara's manifesto is full of bold, memorable statements, many of which relate to manifesto writing in general. It begins: 'To proclaim a manifesto you have to want: A.B.C., thunder against 1,2,3, lose your patience and sharpen your wings to conquer'. One of the key elements, for movement and manifesto alike, is 'novelty', which is considered cynically and approvingly by Tzara in turn. Good literature, and an effective manifesto, should fulfil one or all of the following specifications:

Each page ought to explode, either from deep and weighty seriousness, a whirlwind, dizziness, the new, or the eternal, from its crushing humour, the enthusiasm of its principles or its typographical appearance.⁴⁷

Except that none of these statements can be taken at face value, for as Tzara states:

manifesto as 'the movement's literary genre par excellence' (p. 90). In 1912, Franz Marc makes a similar comment to Wassily Kandinsky: 'I cannot free myself from the strange contradiction that I find their ideas, at least for the main part, brilliant, but am in no doubt whatsoever as to the mediocrity of their works.' Quoted in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. by Umbro Apollonio, trans. by Robert Brain et al. (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), p. 7.

⁴⁴ F. T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', in Apollonio, 19-24 (pp. 19-20).

⁴⁵ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast*, 2 (1915), 38-47 (p. 40).

⁴⁶ 'Notice to Public', *Blast*, 2 (1915), p. 7.

⁴⁷ Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto, 1918', in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 297-304 (p. 297).

I am writing this manifesto to show that you can do contrary actions together ... I am against action; for continual contradiction, for affirmation also, I am neither for nor against and I don't explain because I hate common sense.⁴⁸

Fearlessness is the one attribute that rises above the din of these contradictions.⁴⁹ 'We have discarded the sniveling tendency in ourselves. ... We must have strong, upright works, precise'⁵⁰ – 'violence and precision', in other words, as Marinetti once defined the manifesto.⁵¹ 'Imagisme', a prefatory manifesto to Pound's 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', and most likely written by Pound for F. S. Flint⁵² (the mock interview and the 'Don'ts' are published in the same issue of *Poetry*), clears a space for the nascent Imagist movement using a clever technique. Following in the wake of Futurism, it claims not to partake in any of the characteristics of the avant-garde. To begin with, 'They were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavour was to write in accordance with the best tradition'. Neither, it claims, is self-advertisement the goal, so no manifestos had been issued: 'They had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only, and they had not published them.' (This of course is about to change.) Their 'Doctrine of the Image' they felt 'did not concern the public', and they did not seek to 'provoke useless discussion' through attention-seeking public gestures.⁵³ 'Imagisme' and 'A Few Don'ts' have since become two of the most famous and most effective examples of Modernist propaganda, demonstrating that novelty comes in many forms; the two texts also succeed in creating a movement where one did not previously exist.

The manifesto's 'we' is a central concern of the first English-language study of the manifesto, Janet Lyon's *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (1999). Lyon concludes her study, in fact, by presenting an image of a timeline governed by this very aspect of the manifesto: 'From the first emergence of the idea of the

⁴⁸ Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto', p. 301.

⁴⁹ Similarly, in the first three tenets alone of 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909), 'love of danger', 'fearlessness', 'courage, audacity, and revolt', 'aggressive action', and 'the punch and the slap' are mentioned (p. 21).

⁵⁰ Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto', p. 300.

⁵¹ Perloff, p. 81.

⁵² See Stock, p. 132.

⁵³ F. S. Flint, 'Imagisme', *Poetry* (Chicago), 1 (1913), 198-200.

universal subject [expressed in the 'we'] until its ever-deferred completion'.⁵⁴ This is the part of the genre that earns Jacques Derrida's close attention in his unpacking of the Declaration of Independence in America's bicentennial year.⁵⁵ The collective pronoun is less important, however, to a study of the literary-artistic manifesto in Britain and Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Few of the examples under consideration here either address the general public or attempt to masquerade as a public body representing anything beyond the interests of the artist, or artists. If there is a 'we' in these manifestos, and not simply an 'I', it usually denotes a clearly defined group: the editors of a little magazine like *Blast*, for example, or the members of a movement like Imagism. This is not to argue that the speaking position is any clearer in the manifestos of solitary artists and small groups than it is in manifestos purporting to speak for (and to) larger sections of society.⁵⁶ The masks and pseudonyms used by Wilde, Sharp, MacDiarmid, and Yeats attest to the potential complexity of a solitary 'I'. In other cases, a certain amount of bluff is involved: Wyndham Lewis admits that, with Vorticism, 'It was essential that people should believe that there was a kind of army beneath the banner of the Vortex. In fact there were only a couple of women and one or two not very reliable men.'⁵⁷ Imagism takes a different approach, attempting to generate interest by appearing disinterested. Nevertheless, the two situations, the broad public appeal on one hand and the 'storm in a teacup' or feigned indifference on the other, require different approaches.⁵⁸

The image of the 'storm in a teacup' raises an important question about the relationship between the artistic manifesto and other variants of the manifesto, including political tracts and religious sermons. Is the artistic manifesto merely a parody, as the image suggests, of its more serious cousins? Or does it represent a

⁵⁴ Lyon, p. 206.

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Declarations of Independence', *New Political Science*, 15 (Summer 1986), 7-15.

⁵⁶ Examples of the latter include the Digger and Leveller manifestos (1646-50) and Olympe de Gouges's 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman' (1791), which speaks on behalf of 'mothers, daughters, [and] sisters', and addresses the women of France as a collective body. See Lyon, pp. 16-23 and 46-54.

⁵⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Vorticists', in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1989), 378-83 (p. 382).

⁵⁸ One of the 'editorials' concerning the reception of *The Apes of God* (1930) in Lewis's *Satire and Fiction* (London: The Arthur Press, 1930) is titled 'A Storm in That Tea-Cup Called London' (pp. 7-8).

sincere attempt to lend to artistic debate the weight and *gravitas* often associated with matters of politics and religion? There is no simple answer: just as the artistic manifesto draws on many diverse influences, there is almost infinite variety in its composition. Whistler's *Ten O'Clock*, for example, is at least in significant part a parody: the opening lines indicate that it will be delivered, albeit 'with great hesitation and much misgiving', 'in the character of The Preacher' (a more or less direct parody of Ruskin).⁵⁹ But it touches on many serious points, including the unjust power of the critic, 'filled with wrath and earnestness', to determine the fate of the professional artist.⁶⁰ Whistler's preacher implores his audience to leave art and artists alone; to do nothing, rather than something. Wilde's declarations in courtroom and lecture hall, meanwhile, alternate between the sincerity of his first lecture, 'The English Renaissance' (1882), and the flippancy of his reply to Edward Carson, when asked whether a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas was 'ordinary' (meaning did its tone conform to the social conventions of epistolary address): 'Ordinary? I should think not.'⁶¹

Scholarly and journalistic accounts of the manifesto present a range of definitions and attributes. Stewart Home points to a common element in many manifestos when he writes dismissively of Isidore Isou's Lettriste manifesto, 'Introduction à une Nouvelle Poésie et à une Nouvelle Musique' (1947). 'This turgid tome', he states, 'is saved from complete unreadability by Isou's megalomania.'⁶² Mary Ann Caws places similar emphasis on what she calls the manifesto writer's 'extravagant self-assurance': 'The manifesto is an act of *démesure*, going past what is thought of as proper, sane, and literary.'⁶³ Janet Lyon's *Manifestoes* includes a lengthy attempt at 'locating' the genre. Lyon focuses especially on the manifesto's

⁵⁹ Whistler, *Gentle Art*, p. 135.

⁶⁰ *Gentle Art*, p. 149.

⁶¹ Merlin Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London and New York: Fourth Estate, 2003), p. 104. See also Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 46-49.

⁶² Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1991), p. 12. Home's comment is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's judgement of Fascist aesthetics in an Italian Futurist manifesto on the Ethiopian war. After quoting a long list of its violent declarations, Benjamin states: 'This manifesto has the virtue of clarity.' 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), 217-242 (p. 242).

⁶³ Mary Ann Caws, 'The Poetics of the Manifesto', in *Manifesto*, xix-xxxi (p. xx).

speaking position and the way in which it 'derives power from indeterminacy' – from the mask of the universal 'we'. Far from the 'liberatory genre' it is often taken to be, Lyon argues, it is a genre of 'rigid hierarchical binaries', of 'us' and 'them'.⁶⁴ Lyon also points to the masculine inscription of the form, which must be taken into account by later feminist manifestos, including Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967). Martin Puchner, who has done extensive work on the manifesto and the theatre, argues in one article for the importance of the manifesto's 'temporality', 'its construction of a history of rupture'. This element is borrowed from the manifesto's revolutionary political use, 'to change suddenly the course of history'; the avant-garde manifesto after Marinetti seeks to reproduce this type of revolutionary break in the sphere of art.⁶⁵

One truism that often appears in studies of the avant-garde, but which is highly misleading when applied to Britain and Ireland, is the claim that *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) is the dominant template for the literary-artistic manifesto.⁶⁶ The case of Vorticism, the closest approximation of a European-style avant-garde in Britain, demonstrates this fact. Aside from being in part a reaction against the broad public appeal of the political manifesto and those who imitate its style (the 'great art vortex' 'is nothing to do with "the people"', the editor of *Blast* sniffs), the manifestos contained in *Blast* bear only a remote, secondhand resemblance to revolutionary political manifestos.⁶⁷ There is plenty of evidence of other influences: Nietzsche's aphorisms,⁶⁸ for example, as well as billboard

⁶⁴ See especially 'Introduction' and Chapter 1, 'Manifestoes and Public Spheres', in Lyon, pp. 1-45.

⁶⁵ Martin Puchner, 'Manifesto = Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 54 (2002), 449-465 (p. 451). Puchner's forthcoming book, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) will no doubt expand his already considerable contribution to the study of the genre.

⁶⁶ Caws argues in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (2001), for example, that *The Communist Manifesto* is 'the original model, of immense influence and historical importance for later aesthetic proclamations' (xix).

⁶⁷ 'Long Live the Vortex!', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 7-8 (p. 7).

⁶⁸ Rather than opposing the influences of Nietzsche and Marx, arguing that one is present and the other is not, I am trying to emphasize the diversity of influences in the *Blast* manifestos. Marshall Berman argues, rightly, that Nietzsche and Marx exercise a *shared* influence on the avant-garde in the form of their 'voice': 'not only its breathless pace, its vibrant energy ... but also its fast and drastic shifts in tone and inflection, its readiness to turn on itself'. See Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 23.

advertisements, or the hysteria-inducing headlines of tabloid newspapers.⁶⁹ For the most part, though, *Blast*'s frame of reference remains firmly fixed in the art world. It is a reaction against, and an emulation of, 'the futurist' and 'the aesthete'.⁷⁰ Its famous 'blasts' and 'blesses' are borrowed from Apollinaire, or possibly go as far back as Blake.⁷¹ Its goal is self-advertisement, the same as Whistler's, and like Whistler it attracts attention only to plead for its own autonomy: 'The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.'⁷²

Another pervasive myth about the manifesto in recent criticism is that it is the invention of Marinetti and Italian Futurism. In the introduction to their collection of Russian avant-garde manifestos, Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle argue that 'above all – their use of manifestoes not as mere theoretical supporting statements but as a publicity medium ... bears the trademark "made in Italy"'.⁷³ The influence of Italian Futurism on its Russian counterpart is important and demonstrable, but the use of manifestos for publicity and self-promotion pre-dates Marinetti, going back at least as far, in Britain alone, as Whistler and Wilde.⁷⁴ Not only do these earlier precedents exist but, as Lawton and Eagle's anthology shows, Ego-Futurism in particular identifies Wilde as a key part of its ancestry, along with Whitman and Baudelaire.⁷⁵ Another misconception is that the manifesto is a form confined to newspapers,

⁶⁹ In 'The Crowd Master', Lewis contrasts a poster for the 'Morpeth Olympiad' (an annual local event in the Northumberland market town which Lewis seems to think is in Scotland) with newspaper headlines concerning the coming war. The advertisement is 'violet on white, large letters ... lettering distillation of 1905-1915: Suffragism. H. G. Wells. Morpeth Olympiads', while the newspapers 'allow themselves almost BLAST type' to declare:

Bang! Bang!
Ultimatum to you!
Ultimatum to you!
ULTIMATUM!

In *Blast*, 2 (1915), 94-102 (pp. 94-95).

⁷⁰ 'Long Live the Vortex', p. 8.

⁷¹ See Chapter 4, notes 31 and 184.

⁷² 'Long Live the Vortex', p. 7.

⁷³ *Russian Futurism Through Its Manifestoes: 1912-1928*, ed. by Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 18.

⁷⁴ Robert Jensen argues the case of Whistler in *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). He compares Whistler to Marinetti, and states: 'Whistler understood himself to be the foremost propagandist for his "cause."' Thus, the publications in support of his exhibitions and as attacks on his critics were unparalleled in the nineteenth century. They possess a manifesto-like quality, more common to post-1900 art' (p. 43).

⁷⁵ 'The First Year of Futurism' (1912) by Ivan Kazansky declares that, 'Among foreigners, we would designate Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire as forerunners of Ego-Futurism.' Lawton and Eagle, 112-117 (p. 115). (Whitman's influence is noted elsewhere in this Introduction.)

leaflets, and little magazines – that it is only a print medium. Johanna Vondeling's recent article, 'The Manifest Professional: Manifestos and Modernist Legitimation', claims to support an 'inclusive' definition of the manifesto, but actually focuses solely on little magazines; non-print forms are entirely excluded from the analysis.⁷⁶ A remedy to this shortcoming will be attempted here, with the inclusion of public lectures, courtroom testimony, and other 'live' manifestos, as well as a broader range of text-based manifestos.

Performance and Text

Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* and Black's *Law Dictionary* both define the manifesto as a 'written' document. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, less exclusively, as something 'issued', but the definition still leans towards printed material. In fact there are strong examples of both the written and performed variants, particularly during the 'high' period of the manifesto in early-twentieth-century Europe. The courtroom testimony in the trials of Whistler and Wilde also represents a type of manifesto performance. These performances exist, or did at one time, in the form of written transcripts; they have been pieced together by Merlin Holland and H. Montgomery Hyde, in Wilde's case, and Linda Merrill, in the case of Whistler. Courtroom performances, if they are of public significance, are also recorded in the press. While the court transcripts include pieces of information beyond the spoken testimony, such as laughter or an indication of how something was said (e.g., 'somewhat petulantly'), the newspaper reporter goes much further, recording gestures, dress, tone of voice, and the overall 'impression' the speaker makes on the judge, jury, and audience.

The subject of the 'live' manifesto has recently received scholarly attention in two articles by Martin Puchner, who argues for the importance of the theatrical and performative aspects of the genre. In his first article, 'Screeching Voices: Avant-Garde: Manifestos in the Cabaret', he pinpoints 'uncertainty' as a characteristic of the

⁷⁶ Johanna E. Vondeling, 'The Manifest Professional: Manifestos and Modernist Legitimation', *College Literature*, 27 (2000), 127-45 (p. 128).

revolutionary, and subsequently the artistic, manifesto. In these cases, Puchner argues, 'what the revolutionary "we" stands for remains uncertain, as does the authority by which it represents'. He goes on to say that the revolutionary manifesto 'compensates for this lack of authority ... through the demonstrative over-confidence and aggressiveness that will remain the marks of the genre' (hence the 'screeching voices').⁷⁷ The 'obsessive use of aggressive and performative verbs: we declare, we announce, we demand, we proclaim', has as much to do with the written as with the spoken, or 'screeched', form.⁷⁸ However, the live performances go beyond the limits of text to introduce the elements of physicality and even a feeling of physical danger, using costumes, noise, unpredictable forays into the audience, and other features of the cabaret. These manifestos, Puchner points out, address an audience of 'listeners' rather than of readers.⁷⁹ The second article, 'Manifesto = Theatre', includes mention of 'a tradition of reading the *Communist Manifesto* as some form of a theatrical script', citing as an example Jacques Derrida's comparison of this archetypal manifesto with the archetypal tragedy, *Hamlet*. Puchner notes especially the theatricality of the 'Preamble', which brings into dramatic confrontation the 'spectre of Communism' with the 'Manifesto of the party itself' – the plain and 'open' declaration of principles versus the spectral 'nursery tale'.⁸⁰ Puchner sees, here and in other examples (including the theatre manifestos of Antonin Artaud), a 'struggle' between the performativity of the literary genre and the theatricality of the oral performance. The manifesto, ultimately, is not 'comfortable' either in the written form, which it tries to transcend through speech acts, or in the oral form, which is hindered by the task of expounding a theory or a particular platform. This tension is present in the variety of manifestos produced in different media by Whistler and Wilde, which so often straddle the lines between text and performance, as well as art and criticism.

⁷⁷ Martin Puchner, 'Screeching Voices: Avant-Garde: Manifestos in the Cabaret', in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, ed. by Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 113-35 (p. 114).

⁷⁸ 'Screeching Voices', p. 121.

⁷⁹ 'Screeching Voices', p. 123.

⁸⁰ Puchner, 'Manifesto = Theatre', p. 462.

The Whistler trial, according to Linda Merrill, 'has been dramatized on radio more than once and re-enacted on stages as far apart as Hampstead and Detroit'.⁸¹ Wilde v. Queensberry, too, lends itself well to dramatic treatment. At the 2003 Edinburgh International Book Festival, for example, Merlin Holland presented his new edition of the trial by performing 'scenes' from the cross-examination in the 'character' of his grandfather, with the writer and critic Owen Dudley Edwards acting as Edward Carson.⁸² Holland's edition of the trial, based on a newly discovered transcript, is described as being 'laid out as a play with proper names for ease of reading, though in the MS the "characters" are generally designated "Q" or "A"'.⁸³ While these 'scripts' may be read as a certain type of manifesto, the live performances that they represent, literally judged and recorded by onlookers, better demonstrate the diverse media that can be used to convey artistic principles. They are very different to the letter form used by Wilde in *De Profundis* (1897) or the small attractive pamphlet form, like a French *feuilleton* or an Italian *manifestino*, promoted as being suitable as a gift, that Whistler uses to announce his views in *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics* (1878). This tendency to speak in many and varied modes is summed up most succinctly by Caws, who writes: 'Like a mirror of the personality of the author, single or collective, the manifesto takes on as many styles as there are writers and speakers. But it has to grab us.'⁸⁴

The Manifesto in Britain and Ireland

There has never been a comprehensive study of the literary-artistic manifesto in Britain and Ireland. Aside from the familiar story of Vorticists and Imagists before the war, no detailed analysis of manifestos in these countries exists.⁸⁵ It is true that,

⁸¹ Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pp. 1-2.

⁸² Edinburgh International Book Festival, 11 August 2003.

⁸³ Holland, pp. xl-xli.

⁸⁴ Caws, p. xxviii.

⁸⁵ Two of Lyon's chapters, 'Militant Allies, Strange Bedfellows: Suffragettes and Vorticists Before the War' and 'Modernists and Gatekeeping Manifestoes: Pound, Loy, and Modern Sanctions', provide ample coverage of the manifesto in the brief but very active period from 1912-14. Lyon, it should be noted, goes far beyond the 'well worn story' of the pre-war years: included alongside Mina Loy in the second chapter mentioned above is a discussion of Dora Marsden's editorials in the *Freewoman*, New

by 1914, there had been such an upsurge in manifesto writing that a review of *Blast* in *The Times* (1 July 1914) begins: 'The art of the present day seems to be exhausting its energies in "manifestoes."'⁸⁶ But after the brief fire ignited by the arrival of Italian Futurism dies out, Britain again becomes a manifesto-free zone. Or does it? The English Surrealist David Gascoyne, frustrated by his own attempts to import an avant-garde, describes the situation in no uncertain terms. He writes in his notebook: 'Moral bombs and dynamite are of no use whatsoever; the island's damp climate extinguishes the fuses.'⁸⁷ But, if it does not take hold in the same way as in France, Italy, or Germany, the manifesto in Britain does maintain a small but dedicated following that includes, at various times, Virginia Woolf, Wilfred Owen, Dora Marsden, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Auden, MacNeice, and Spender. Then there are the principal figures in this study: Wilde and Whistler; Yeats and Lady Gregory; Patrick Geddes and William Sharp; Pound and Wyndham Lewis.⁸⁸ The task of the present study is to establish the lines of influence and dialogue that exist between these figures, and between the late-Victorians and the Moderns, in relation to the development of an English-language manifesto tradition.

Given this broad field, the choice of examples has not been easy. The figures chosen are not only representative of the decades spanned by their respective careers; they are also, more demonstrably, the most productive manifesto writers of their time and place. In the cases of Yeats and Lady Gregory, Geddes, and Sharp, working in Ireland and Scotland, there is little competition. This is less true for the London-based artists and writers. Woolf, for example, is potentially a good candidate with essays like 'Modern Fiction' and 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown'. Like the other members of Bloomsbury, however, she places less value on propaganda and polemical statements than either Pound or Lewis.⁸⁹ T. S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' is

Freewoman, and *Egoist*, as well as Valentine de Saint-Point's French Futurist manifestos. See Lyon, 92-167.

⁸⁶ "'Blast': The Vorticists' Manifesto', *The Times* (1 July 1914), 8.

⁸⁷ From a notebook called 'Blind Man's Buff', in *David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996*, ed. by Roger Scott (London: Enitharmon Press, 1998), p. 457.

⁸⁸ Yeats and Lady Gregory are the exception here, of course: they produce their manifestos chiefly in and for Ireland, where the artistic manifesto's following consists almost exclusively of them alone.

⁸⁹ Although Jane Goldman makes a good case for some of Woolf's 'manifestos' in her recent book, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

often read as a manifesto, but his voice is too measured, too ‘proper, sane, and literary’ in Caws’s phrase, and as such falls foul of one of the few generic restrictions argued for here. National boundaries are another restriction. As a rule, nationality means little in my argument, but principal country of residence does have some bearing on the process of selection. The English-born Mina Loy, for example, whose ‘Feminist Manifesto’ (1914) is a prime example of the genre, works in Italy and the United States. Laura Riding, an American like Pound and Whistler, publishes her excellent early manifesto ‘A Prophesy or a Plea’ in her home country just before sailing to Britain with Robert Graves.⁹⁰ Pound, Whistler, Wilde, Yeats, and even Wyndham Lewis are all born outside Britain, but they are *habitués* of the London scene, where they are central proponents of the manifesto. (George Bernard Shaw might also have been included in this group for his prodigious writing of prefaces.) There is a strong link between the oppositional stance of the manifesto writer and the position of the expatriate – having to shout to be heard, turning criticism to one’s own advantage, embracing the status of the enemy or ‘other’.

In the three case studies that follow, an effort has been made to cover the widest range of material while retaining specificity and centrality. Three periods are covered, and three nations (England, Scotland, and Ireland). Particular examples contained within these categories are representative of wider phenomena, but they have either been neglected by scholarship to date, or it is judged that their inclusion in a study of the growth of the manifesto will show them to good advantage, in a fresh light. The great diversity of the genre as it exists in Britain and Ireland will be demonstrated by not limiting examples to those produced under the direct influence of the European avant-garde. There will be Vorticist manifestos, but there will also be the manifestos contained in the court testimony, pamphlets, and lecture tours of Whistler and Wilde, the programmes of the Irish Literary Theatre, and the plans for a civic and national renaissance centred in Edinburgh.

⁹⁰ Riding’s manifesto, in which she calls for ‘the birth of a new poetic bravery’, is her first piece of published criticism. It appears in the *Reviewer*, 5 (April 1925), 1-7.

Manifestos rarely, if ever, tie up their loose ends in a neat conclusion. More often they end in exclamations and exhortations: 'Workers of the world, unite!'.⁹¹ Hardly ever do they end in a calm reckoning of key themes. The manifesto is a genre that lives in the moment – as Marinetti writes in the first Futurist manifesto, 'Time and Space died yesterday'.⁹² In an effective manifesto, it is true that a certain amount of rhetorical energy must be saved for the ending. A final push is needed to make a lasting impression, win converts, or elicit a passionate response from the audience. Whistler ends his *Ten O'Clock* lecture (1885) with an expression of playful contempt, telling his audience they should feel relieved that art does not concern them ('Art seeks the Artist alone'). 'With the man, then, and not with the multitude, are her intimacies', he declares;

Therefore have we cause to be merry! – and to cast away all care – resolved that all is well – as it ever was – and that it is not meet that we should be cried at, and urged to take measures!⁹³

The audience is sent away with the perverse message that, rather than becoming more involved with the cause of art, they should forget about it entirely, and go about their lives having 'cast aside the weary weight of responsibility and co-partnership'.⁹⁴ It is a message that resonates through many British and Irish manifestos in the decades that follow – simultaneously attracting and repelling their audience, they advertise their own exclusiveness.

⁹¹ This closing line is translated more accurately but less persuasively as, 'Working men of all countries, unite!' See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 258.

⁹² Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 22.

⁹³ Whistler, *Gentle Art*, pp. 156-58.

⁹⁴ *Gentle Art*, p. 156.

2. Making Enemies: The Rise of the Manifesto in England, 1878-1895

Taking the Stand, Taking the Stage

This chapter will explore certain aspects of the legal trials of James McNeill Whistler and Oscar Wilde, as they impact on one another and on the manifesto genre. There will also be a short discussion in the second part of the chapter outlining Wilde's extensive North American lecture tour of 1882. Describing and analysing two alternative models for the artistic manifesto – the artist's pronouncements from the witness stand, or in documents relating to the trial, and the artist's performance on tour – will be the aim of this chapter. The 'courtroom' manifesto will be examined as it appears in Whistler's libel case against John Ruskin in November 1878, and in Wilde's action against the Marquess of Queensberry in April 1895. Wilde's first appearance in court, acting as plaintiff, is of particular interest in relation to the Whistler trial. This is because, as Wilde reflects during his final trial, 'It was entirely about literature.'¹ The subsequent criminal trials of April-May 1895, wherein Wilde acts as defendant, will also be discussed. It will be my general contention that the trials of Whistler and Wilde represent key examples of the late nineteenth century artistic manifesto in Britain. At the same time, because they are live performances taking place in a legal setting, and representing what might be called the 'early' or 'pre-' historical avant-garde, these events have been overlooked by the already minimal scholarship on the history of the manifesto. They are well known, central, much written about: but from this viewpoint they are surprisingly neglected. The same can be said of Wilde's tour as an advertisement for Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*. The trials, and the tour, will receive a fresh look: the trials will be placed side by side for the first time, and all three events will benefit from analysis in a new context, as early examples of the artistic manifesto.

¹ *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by H. Montgomery Hyde (London: William Hodge, 1948), p. 314.

Whistler uses his trial against Ruskin as an occasion to present his views on art. He sees his high-profile showdown with the leading English art critic of the day as a great opportunity to pronounce his dissenting views, and to elevate his status. He disseminates his opinions and principles with a violence and self-publicizing verve that galvanizes a new style of expression for the artist. This happens before the trial, in letters declaring a call to arms; during the trial, in his performance in the witness box, reported in the daily press; and after the trial, in his polemical pamphlet, *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics* (1878). His own version of the trial, edited and embellished from newspaper accounts, is used as the opening blast of his book-length manifesto, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890). The new style defines itself in contrast to the idiom of the critic, with its pretence of objectivity, and acts in defiance of the public (even while its object is to attract patrons and admirers). Whistler addresses a number of important issues in his courtroom manifesto, including the role of the critic, the artist's right to protect his livelihood, and technical matters such as the role of narrative and the concept of 'finish' in a painting.

The Whistler trial exhibits characteristics common to the manifesto form, both as a live event and as a written polemic. This is true in relation to legal and political manifestos, and in comparison with the twentieth-century artistic manifestos that benefit from Whistler's precedent. Whistler repeatedly asserts himself as a representative of the professional artist, if not necessarily as the leader of a particular movement.² The trial is important as a watershed in Whistler's career. It serves to introduce him as a major public figure, and it begins a phase of his working life that extends through a succession of polemical pamphlets, battles in (and with) the press, and high profile exhibitions, culminating in *The Gentle Art*. Whistler uses the legal forum to declare his views on art and to stage a symbolic battle with Ruskin. The pamphlet *Art and Art Critics*, described by one reviewer as 'a belligerent Bravura in brown paper',³ is its text-based accompaniment, and an early example of the written

² In fact, Whistler's egotism left little room for concern about the well being of others. Nevertheless, in his manifestos and correspondence, as I will show, he does claim to represent the interests of his fellow artists.

³ 'A "Bravura" in Brown Paper', *Examiner* (11 Jan 1879), 44-45.

manifesto, with different properties to the 'live' pronouncements made on the witness stand.

The libel trial initiated by Wilde against John Douglas, Marquess of Queensberry will provide the second example of the courtroom manifesto. The most 'literary' of Wilde's three trials, it includes Wilde's testimony on the principles of Aestheticism and his views on morality in art, as well as his defence of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young' (1894). Most of this testimony comes before the first serious turn in the trials – the moment when Wilde flippantly and disastrously refers to Walter Grainger as 'a peculiarly plain boy' – and much of it precedes Wilde's eventual awareness of the weight of evidence gathered against him by Queensberry's defence. It is at this early stage, therefore, that Wilde is still concerned with testifying in defence of Art, in much the same way that Whistler does almost two decades earlier. The highlights of the first trial are located mainly in Wilde's exchanges with Edward Carson in the cross-examination. The trial, which is first performed in court, then recorded and reported by the press (and later by the author himself), is highly theatrical, as would be expected. Themes of concealment and declaration, or 'outing', figure centrally. *De Profundis*, Wilde's reflection on the trial and his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, is, like Whistler's pamphlet, a written counterpart to his performance in court.

Aside from describing these two trial-manifestos, the first part of this chapter will also present a hypothesis about the influence of one upon the other. Wilde interprets Whistler's landmark trial the way Whistler intended: not as a defeat, which it is in some ways, but as a victory, both for the advancement of abstract ideals and for the more pragmatic advancement of Whistler's career. This hypothesis has serious implications: Wilde's decision to launch the original action, and his ultimate fate at the hands of the legal system, might have been set in motion by an incautious reading of Whistler's precedent. Just as Whistler follows Wilde's lead with the *Ten O'Clock* (1885) and plans for an American tour, so Wilde follows Whistler by making his fateful decision to prosecute in what he naively hopes will be a 'literary' trial.

Whistler's precedent looms large over Wilde's trial against Queensberry, as it does with respect to all the key figures in this study.

2.1 The Manifesto on Trial: The Cases of Whistler and Wilde

On 22 February 1895, a week before Wilde discovered the Marquess of Queensberry's libellous note at the Albemarle Club and started proceedings against him, the first English translation of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* appeared on the shelves of London bookshops. (It went into three editions before the start of Wilde's first trial at the beginning of April.) Inside, a warning is issued to its new English readership:

Decadentism has not been confined to France alone; it has also established a school in England ... The ego-mania of decadentism, its love of the artificial, its aversion to nature, and to all forms of activity and movement, its megalomaniacal contempt for men and its exaggeration of the importance of art, have found their English representative among the 'Aesthetes', the chief of whom is Oscar Wilde.⁴

This would not have been news to most Londoners, since Wilde had first risen to fame some thirteen years earlier, in 1882, as the Apostle of Aestheticism who travels to America to spread the gospel of the beautiful in the land of the Philistine. Nor was the movement called Aestheticism particularly new even then: Swinburne had been involved in a high profile libel case in 1876 with the critic Robert Buchanan, who had insulted the poet by calling him 'King of the Aesthetes', and the term had achieved notoriety earlier still with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.⁵ It is interesting, however, to note how far news of Wilde's role as leader of the movement had spread by the time of his trials. Whistler and Wilde are seen by their contemporaries as representing some form of Aestheticism or *l'art pour l'art* in Britain. Establishing this public

⁴ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London: Heinemann, 1895), p. 317.

⁵ Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America (1882)* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), p. 18.

perception is crucial to the present study, because by tradition a manifesto is usually something issued or performed by the leader of a particular body, whether it is a nation, a political party, or an artistic or social movement.⁶ Whistler and Wilde take on this representative role when they make their declarations, and the roles (of 'Master' and 'Apostle' respectively) give weight to their utterances. The reverse is also true, especially for Wilde: he becomes the recognizable face, in effect the 'leader' of Aestheticism, by delivering public performances in that role, starting with lectures and eventually ending in court appearances. That Whistler and Wilde are perceived and often ridiculed as leaders of Aestheticism is demonstrable with reference to the following examples.

In the Ruskin trial of 1878, the counsel for the defence attempts to undermine Whistler as a serious artist by associating him with the recent fad of Aestheticism. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride* had not yet made its debut, but George Du Maurier's cartoons in *Punch*, featuring the languid aesthetes Maudle and Postlethwaite, were beginning to attract attention to the phenomenon. Whistler, with his French mannerisms and expressions, his elaborate and much publicized decoration of the Peacock Room the previous year, and his recent paintings like *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875), a striking symbol of *l'art pour l'art*, is an obvious choice for leader of the movement. Sir John Holker's opening statement for Ruskin's defence imagines for the jury a satirical trip to the Grosvenor Gallery, where Whistler's most abstract painting had caught Ruskin's critical eye. 'After partaking of an artistic chop served on a plate of ancient pattern and some claret in a Venetian glass,' Holker begins, 'we would get into the gallery and be attracted by Mr. Whistler's pictures ... We would find "nocturnes," "arrangements," and "symphonies" surrounded by groups of artistic ladies.'⁷ When *Patience* opens in London three years later, in 1881, George Grossmith plays Bunthorne as Whistler, complete with the trademark white forelock, monocle, moustache, and sharp familiar laugh. It is only afterwards (though not long

⁶ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), a manifesto is 'usually issued by or with the sanction of a sovereign prince or state, or by an individual or body of individuals whose proceedings are of public importance'.

⁷ Merrill, pp. 165-66.

afterwards) that Wilde becomes associated with the role, partly through his own efforts, and partly through the efforts of the *Patience* promoter Richard D'Oyly Carte, who sends Wilde to America in 1882 as the 'real' Bunthorne.

Wilde's relative success on the year long lecture tour of America turns a master-disciple relationship with Whistler into a rivalry for leadership of the London art scene. Whistler's most famous manifesto, the *Ten O'Clock* (1885), comes at least partly in response to Wilde's recent notoriety, and contains criticisms aimed at the 'amateur' who was sitting in the audience.⁸ When Helen Lenoir, on behalf of D'Oyly Carte, tries to persuade Whistler to embark on a lecture tour of America, she tells him: 'I am perfectly certain as to making it a success – a much bigger success than that of Mr. Wilde there.'⁹ Whistler addresses the rumours of his tour in a letter to the *World* (13 October 1886). Here he deals publicly with his anxiety about following in the footsteps of the young pretender, and with the problem of appearing like a Ruskinian prophet of social uplift, while preaching a doctrine that is opposed to such Victorian ideals. 'And these others who have crossed the seas', he writes, '... must I follow in their wake, to be met with suspicion by my compatriots, and resented as the invading instructor?' He goes on to state his intention

to take with me some of those works which have won for me the execration of Europe, that they may be shown to a country in which I cannot be a prophet, and where I, who have no intention of being other than joyous – improving no one – not even myself – will say again my 'Ten O'Clock,' which I refused to repeat in London – *J'ai dit!*

He closes the letter with a shrug at the apparent contradiction: 'one cannot continually disappoint a Continent!'¹⁰ In the end, however, the tour falls through. If Whistler shows himself to be uneasy in the role of leader, preferring to cultivate an image of

⁸ A letter sent by Alan Summerly Cole to Whistler on 21 February 1885, the day after the *Ten O'Clock* was first delivered, reports: 'The people near me were enchanted at Oscar's long drawing face as the question of aesthete and costume was handled – [actor] Corney Grain beamed with satisfaction.' In *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, Online Centenary edition, ed. by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp (Glasgow: Centre for Whistler Studies, University of Glasgow, 2003), <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>, reference number 00642.

⁹ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00926.

¹⁰ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 11432.

victory in the face of 'execration', Wilde also stands at a certain distance from the role of Apostle of Aestheticism. As Richard Ellmann argues, 'Self-parody was coeval with advocacy. Wilde could see by the time he reached Oxford, that the movement was going out as much as it was coming in.'¹¹ Nevertheless, the public association with Aestheticism provides Whistler and Wilde with a platform from which they can launch their ideas about art and publicize their personal achievements at the same time.

Although their closest period of association comes between their respective trials, during the 1880s, Whistler and Wilde show marked interest in each other's legal affairs. On Wilde's part, his 'first art-essay', as he calls it,¹² is a review of the Grosvenor Gallery's opening exhibition in the *Dublin University Magazine*, July 1877. The review often reflects the values of Ruskin, whom he credits 'in great part' at the end of the article for 'the revival of culture and love of beauty'.¹³ Burne-Jones is a favourite, as he is in Ruskin's review of the same exhibition in *Fors Clavigera*, and Wilde comments appreciatively on the classical narratives and symbolism of the painter who was to be Ruskin's star witness. When he finally arrives at Whistler's paintings, Wilde introduces them excitedly as 'the most abused pictures in the whole Exhibition', yet does little to help the viewer to understand the painter's innovations. He betrays his ignorance of Whistler's method and principles at the outset, commenting that, '[The paintings'] titles do not convey much information.'¹⁴

Wilde's precocious self-confidence comes through in a letter to the *Dublin University Magazine*'s editor, Keningale Cook. He writes: 'I wish my full remarks on Mr. Whistler to be put in (as per margin). I know he will take them in good part, and besides they are really clever and amusing.'¹⁵ Fortunately for Wilde, his remarks are not so insulting as Ruskin's, nor did his name carry much weight, and in any case Whistler was even less likely to hear about a negative review in the *Dublin University Magazine* than he was to hear of a plainly libellous one in *Fors*. There are no

¹¹ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), p. 86.

¹² *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 58.

¹³ Wilde, 'The Grosvenor Gallery [1877]', in *The First Collected Edition of the Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Robert Ross, 15 vols (London: Methuen, 1908-1922), XIV: *Miscellanies*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Wilde, 'The Grosvenor Gallery [1877]', pp. 17-18.

¹⁵ *Letters*, p. 52.

surviving letters written by Wilde during November 1878, the month of Whistler's trial against Ruskin, so we have no record of his more personal thoughts on the event. (It may be presumed that he was busy making the transition from Oxford to London: he graduates on 25 November, three days before the trial takes place.) Two years later, in another Grosvenor Gallery review, Wilde demonstrates that he has freed himself from Ruskin's influence, and his tone has changed to one of appreciation for Whistler. He sides with the artist 'whose wonderful and eccentric genius is better appreciated in France than in England', and observes: 'nor have the philippics of the *Fors Clavigera* deterred him from exhibiting some more of his "arrangements in colour"', at least one of which, the *Harmony in Green and Gold*, Wilde now considers worthy of a recommendation.¹⁶ A final piece of evidence suggesting Wilde's interest in the Whistler trial – along with his fascination for Sarah Bernhardt – is his purchase of a small drawing, 'Miss F' (depicting Maud Franklin, Whistler's mistress and model). The picture is sold to Wilde for five guineas as 'Sarah Bernhardt, seated holding a book', at the Sotheby auction of Whistler's possessions on 12 February 1880, following the artist's financially disastrous libel case.

Most of Whistler's interest in Wilde's trials seems to stem from his desire to reclaim the same drawing lost to his rival fifteen years earlier. A letter from the art dealer David Croal Thomson, dated 24 April 1895, gives details of the sale. It reads, in part:

Dear Mr Whistler,
Your telegram has duly arrived & acting on your instructions we have purchased your Drawing of Sara Bernhardt at the Wilde sale for 15-15/-
There was a howling mob at the sale & every thing was sacrificed. The auctioneer was glad to hurry everything up & altogether the place was dreadful.¹⁷

Whistler's wife Beatrix replies to this letter, informing Thomson that, 'By the way, it is not Sarah Bernhardt at all!' and asking him if he knows whether a portrait of Wilde

¹⁶ Wilde, 'The Grosvenor Gallery [1879]', in *Miscellanies*, p. 27.

¹⁷ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 05817.

by Harper Pennington sold (in fact it was bought by Robert Ross).¹⁸ Beneath a pragmatic – some might say cold-hearted – façade, Whistler's letters concerning the Wilde trials reveal a surprising degree of concern for, and sympathy with, Wilde's situation. This sympathy is evident in a letter to Whistler's friend and publisher, William Heinemann. Writing from Paris on 17 April, after the conclusion of the first trial and Wilde's subsequent arrest on criminal charges, he asks: 'What of Oscar? Did you go to the court? – What does he look like now?'¹⁹ Writing to Heinemann again, most likely in the immediate wake of the conviction, he presses for more news. 'What of Oscar? – and what of those who are left! – for I hear there has been a general bolting of every body! – and that London is left to the few without sin –.'²⁰ His tone changes drastically according to the addressee, however, and to Lady Archibald Campbell he writes, with the voice of a gossip: 'I hear that when the large indecent poet was withdrawn from circulation, such was the terror of the treadmill that town absolutely emptied itself.' Even here, though, the true target of ridicule is English society, to which both he and Wilde are outsiders. He closes the topic by stating that, in Paris, 'The whole matter ... would die of derision.'²¹

Parallels have been drawn between the two famous trials less often than might be expected, given their many similarities. William Gaunt, in *The Aesthetic Adventure* (1945), writes: 'It is possible that as Wilde meditated the means of subduing the Marquess the example of his litigious friend (or "enemy") was in his mind.' But he adds, 'If that were so he sadly underestimated many things', including 'the superior combative powers of Whistler' and 'the shaky foundations of his own position'.²² More recent scholarship on both trials has neglected to expand on, or even repeat, the comparison. Two studies, Michael Foldy's *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (1997) and Linda Merrill's *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (1992), for example, omit any mention of the other chief example of 'art on trial' in late-Victorian Britain. More recently still, Merlin Holland's revelatory book, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real*

¹⁸ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08286.

¹⁹ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 10792.

²⁰ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 02084.

²¹ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00519.

²² William Gaunt, *The Aesthetic Adventure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 179.

Trial of Oscar Wilde (2003), leaves out of its otherwise authoritative account any reference to the earlier British trial, citing instead the also valid but much earlier French trials of Flaubert and Baudelaire, both of which take place in 1857, when Wilde is just three years old. These omissions are puzzling: they might be explained by various reasons, including the separate scholarly spheres of literature and painting, the higher profile of the Wilde case in recent decades, or the essential difference between a trial about aesthetics and a trial about morality, but none of these reasons is entirely satisfactory, and the important similarities between the two trials beg notice.

Both trials are libel actions that went disastrously wrong for the plaintiffs. In each case, the defendant is conspicuously absent from the proceedings (Ruskin did not even appear in court because of his fragile mental health at the time, or claims to that effect). The burden of proof in such a trial lies with the defendant, to show that the libel is justified and not simply malicious – that Wilde could accurately be described as ‘posing’ as a sodomite, and that Whistler was truly ‘approaching wilful imposture’, in other words that he was posing as an artist (most likely Turner, as Merrill argues²³) – with the result that both Whistler and Wilde testify at length, and seemingly from a defensive position. Like Wilde, though less famously, Whistler is ‘abandoned’ by most of his friends during the crisis, and has difficulty finding allies to testify on his behalf. The two trials are seen at the time as being essentially impossible to win, although in Whistler’s case ‘winning’ (or gaining ‘satisfaction’) means receiving substantial damages. As the *Architect* reports before Whistler’s trial, ‘the legal gentlemen consulted by Mr. Whistler are said to have concurred in agreeing that he has nothing to hope for by way of satisfaction as the law is at present interpreted’.²⁴ In neither trial is any faith shown by press or prosecution with regard to the jury’s ability to make judgements of taste. (The issue of art criticism is especially central to the Whistler trial, of course: in *Wilde v. Queensberry* it enters only tangentially as a matter that might influence the jury’s opinion as to whether Wilde was in fact ‘posing’.) Most importantly, though arguably, both Whistler and Wilde seem to be motivated by the promise of an ideal forum in which they can make

²³ Merrill, p. 52.

²⁴ ‘On the House-top’, *Architect* (26 January 1878), 49.

a high profile stand, in Wilde's case against the rule of morality in art, and in Whistler's case against the oppressive power and interference of a critic like Ruskin. In this sense both cases are examples of successful manifestos, if not successful libel actions.²⁵

Whistler v. Ruskin

Although Whistler serves Ruskin with a writ on 8 August 1877, the case does not come to trial until more than a year later, on 25 November 1878. This delay is brought about mainly by Ruskin's ill health, although in the end he refuses to appear at all, much to Whistler's chagrin. During the intervening months, Whistler has an opportunity to formulate his ideas on subjects touched upon by Ruskin's review, and to rally support for his cause, which includes soliciting witnesses. This enthusiasm on Whistler's part is also a necessity: interest in the trial flags during the long interval, with some pundits speculating that the case has been dropped altogether.²⁶ In addition, Whistler faces an uphill battle gathering witnesses to testify against so powerful a figure as Ruskin, who not only holds the position of Slade Professor of Art

²⁵ In addition to these broader parallels, there are a number of minor similarities that serve to highlight the closely interconnected London society in which the two trials take place. There is, for example, the providence of the Whistler drawing that changes hands first in the wake of Whistler v. Ruskin, and then again following the Wilde trials, when it is returned to its creator. Another coincidence is that not only do Whistler and Wilde both have addresses in fashionable Tite Street, Chelsea, at the time of their trials, but the judge who finally convicts Wilde, Justice Alfred Wills, is also his neighbour. In the wake of the Ruskin trial, Whistler's other nemesis, the critic Harry Quilter, purchases Whistler's cherished White House when trial costs force him to sell. Whistler writes to 'Atlas' at the *World* (17 October 1883), on the subject of renovations being carried out by Quilter: 'Shall the birthplace of art become the tomb of its parasite in Tite Street?' (*Gentle Art*, p. 125.)

Another parallel incident is the small lie of self-invention told by each prosecuting party when he first appears on the witness stand. Whistler, despite his barrister's previous testimony that his client was 'born in America', declares that he was 'born at St. Petersburg' (Merrill, pp. 137 and 141). Similarly, Wilde gives his age as 39, and is later forced by Carson to concede that he is actually 'somewhat over forty' (Holland, p. 64). These minor perjuries are indicative of the kind of approach Whistler and Wilde take to the proceedings – theatrical rather than cautiously legal – an approach which does little to convince the jury in each trial of their sincerity.

Finally, there are similarities in the aftermaths of both trials. Wilde, following his release from prison, is forced to flee to France, something he notoriously refuses to do before his trial; Whistler, somewhat less urgently and motivated by purely financial reasons, relocates to Venice for six months on an etching assignment. (This is ironic, perhaps even malicious, given Ruskin's well known passion for the city.) Whistler's return and eventual 'triumph' over his adversary, when he sells *Nocturne in Black and Gold* in November 1892 for eight hundred pounds (four times the price Ruskin had raised his voice to protest), is of course denied Wilde, whose life is ruined by his trials.

²⁶ Merrill, p. 66.

at Oxford at this time, but is also becoming an increasingly virulent critic, particularly in his journal, *Fors Clavigera*. These factors may contribute to the urgent tone of Whistler's letters, and his view of the trial as a war between artists and critics, in which there can be no equivocation. One representative letter of the time shows Whistler, writing on his solicitor's stationery, trying to convince the sculptor Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm, only days before the trial (20 November), to testify on his behalf (Boehm refuses). He writes:

Now Mac my dear Mac you must stand by me – This is a chance that will not occur again – and that, were the tables turned, and you were in my place, I should only be too eager to seize upon for your sake! – Indeed the cause of us doers and workers is at stake with the writers and praters –
On Monday next my case versus Ruskin comes off – and I shall call on you to state your scientific opinion of Whistler and his work in Art generally. [Albert] Moore also I shall have and we will see if professors like ourselves cannot carry the day over ill-conditioned pendrivers whose ignorance is only equalled [*sic*] by their arrogance and conceit –
I am bound to win you know! but I must not be deserted!²⁷

Whistler cleverly turns around Ruskin's charges of 'cockney impudence' and 'wilful imposture', of laziness and trickery, to make Ruskin and his fellow critics into 'praters' and 'pendrivers', defined by their 'ignorance' and 'arrogance and conceit'. Whistler, here as elsewhere, omits that Ruskin is an accomplished draughtsman (and hardly one to 'prate'). Whistler demands, with a hint of threat, the allegiance of his friends and fellow artists; when the majority fail to support him, as Merrill notes, 'He never trusted any of them again.'²⁸

Both parties at first demonstrate enthusiasm at the prospect of a public battle over aesthetics and what Ruskin calls 'art economy'. It is all 'nuts and nectar' to him, Ruskin declares, and he initially appears enthused about the opportunity to air his views in public in this novel way.²⁹ Alan Cole records in his diary as early as November 1875 that he has been present at a discussion between Whistler and

²⁷ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00322.

²⁸ Merrill, p. 84.

²⁹ Quoted in Merrill, p. 62.

Jacques Joseph Tissot on the subject of 'ideas on art unfettered by principles'. Later, in July 1878, Cole writes: 'J. turned up and I noted some of his remarks on Art for him.'³⁰ Whistler writes to Albert Moore three days before the trial, on 22 November, declaring that 'this is a chance for our side that may never occur again'. He asks Moore to 'suggest any thing in the way of fight' while at the same time proclaiming: 'We are sure to win.'³¹ The arguments to accompany this combative rhetoric are rehearsed most strikingly six months before the trial, in an interview with the *World* published on 22 May 1878. The piece, 'Mr. Whistler at Cheyne Walk', is a statement of principles, padded out with questions about Whistler's home life. Renamed 'The Red Rag' – the provocation that ends in a slaying – in *The Gentle Art*, Whistler amends it to a declaration in the first-person, without the question and answer format or the domestic details.³² It is, as Merrill states, 'a stylistic manifesto'.³³ In it he declares: 'I care nothing for the past, present, or future of the black figure [in *Harmony in Grey and Gold*], placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of the picture.' In fact, to say that this article – or any of Whistler's writings or utterances – is a statement of 'principles' is somewhat contradictory, since principles are precisely what he is seeking to eradicate from the art work. An often-quoted passage provides a concise summary of one of the views Whistler takes pains to convey during the trial:

Art should be independent of all clap-trap – should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my works 'arrangements' and 'harmonies'.³⁴

³⁰ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 03432.

³¹ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 04167.

³² Unusually, and indeed tellingly, Whistler deviates here from the chronological order that characterizes the rest of the book, placing 'The Red Rag' just before the *Ten O'Clock* lecture (published in 1888), rather than risk detracting from the initial impact of the Ruskin trial by placing it at the beginning. In its new position, it also serves as a short introduction to Whistler's fullest account of his principles, and most famous manifesto.

³³ Merrill, p. 68.

³⁴ Whistler, 'The Red Rag', *Gentle Art*, 126-28.

Whistler's first testimony of the trial takes place under direct examination by one of his own counsel. He uses this forum to present unchallenged the views he expresses earlier in the interview which becomes 'The Red Rag'. He tells William Petheram:

By using the word 'nocturne' I wished to indicate an artistic interest alone, divesting the picture of any outside anecdotal interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. A nocturne is an arrangement of line, form, and colour first. The picture is throughout a problem that I attempt to solve. I make use of any means, any incident or object in nature, that will bring about this symmetrical result.³⁵

He gets away with such unembarrassed talk of aesthetics because the validity of his theories is central to the trial. Proving that Ruskin's criticism is libellous involves proving that his own theories are sincerely held and that at the very least they represent a coherent, defensible system rather than a simple blind with which to deceive the public. Ruskin defends his charge of 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face' as being an accurate description of 'a manner which is calculated to draw attention chiefly by its impertinence'.³⁶ Whistler writes to Albert Moore before the trial warning that Ruskin has 'an army of volunteers ready to swear that Whistler's work is mere impudence and sham'.³⁷ He has trouble, throughout his career, convincing people of the sincerity of his beliefs. Invoking the aristocratic privilege of the artist, he demands the right to ignore the criteria of consistency or fairness, hence his expressions like, 'It was our amusement to convict – they thought we cared to convince!' and 'I am not arguing with you – I am telling you.'³⁸ Without question, he indulges in flippant contradictions and, as Ruskin charges, attention-seeking gestures. The right that Whistler is defending, and that many of his critics, including Ruskin, fail to acknowledge, is the right of artists to maintain a serious

³⁵ Merrill, p. 144.

³⁶ Ruskin, 'My Own Article on Whistler', in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1907), XXIX, 585-87 (p. 586).

³⁷ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 04167.

³⁸ *Gentle Art*, pp. 334 and 51. The first expression additionally invokes the royal 'we', as a quotation above uses the third person; the second expression, meanwhile, was often quoted by Ezra Pound, especially in his later years: see for example *Ezra Pound Speaking: Radio Speeches of World War II*, ed. by Leonard Doob (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 187 and 205.

purpose in their art while simultaneously – and separately – engaging in a publicity campaign to attract potential buyers. As Anderson and Koval argue, the trial ‘had as much to do with the economic rights of the artist to make a living as with any aesthetic proclamation’.³⁹ In fact, this dual purpose of the artist’s right to livelihood combined with particular aesthetic concerns forms the basis of the majority of artistic manifestos, from Blake to Wyndham Lewis.⁴⁰

In the cross-examination by Sir John Holker, Whistler declares, ‘I hold that none but an artist can be a competent critic.’⁴¹ This is the most important and controversial statement of the trial, the battle cry that forms the basis of *Art and Art Critics*, and yet in the context of the trial it is quite irrelevant, even counterproductive. This makes the statement all the more interesting, because it shows Whistler’s defiant use of the courtroom as a venue for publicizing his views. As plaintiff in the trial, Whistler must prove that the critic’s pronouncements carry weight, and are therefore damaging, especially when the critic uses his respected position in society to launch a personal and vindictive attack. Whistler goes so far as to say about *Fors Clavigera*, rather unconvincingly but for the purpose of establishing Ruskin’s credibility and therefore his power, ‘I see it on the tables of most persons I know.’⁴² He must prove that Ruskin’s criticism in *Fors* is unusually harsh and therefore deserving of special attention; that under normal circumstances he would be content to allow fair criticism of his work. Another contradiction Whistler must overlook for practical reasons is the decision to enlist an art critic as a witness in his defence. William Michael Rossetti, long a champion of avant-garde art, admits in his testimony: ‘I do not paint myself, but I have been in the habit of criticizing works of art, sometimes with severity.’⁴³ Whistler manages to erase this contradiction, along with any suggestion that his battle

³⁹ Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval, *James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth* (London: John Murray, 1994), p. xv.

⁴⁰ I am thinking in particular of William Blake’s ‘Advertisement’ and ‘Preface’ to the Catalogue of 1809. See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Blake’s manifestos, and Chapter 4 for the theme of livelihood in the manifestos of Wyndham Lewis.

⁴¹ Merrill, p. 148. Note that the phrasing Whistler uses – ‘I hold that ...’ – suggests a form of declaration or manifesto. The American Declaration of Independence, for example, contains the famous phrase, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident.’ See also Jacques Derrida’s close reading of this statement in ‘Declarations of Independence’ (Chapter 1, note 55).

⁴² Merrill, p. 143.

⁴³ Merrill, p. 156.

with the critics was not single-handed, in his own version of the trial published in *The Gentle Art*. Here, as Merrill notes, Whistler ‘pointedly omitted the testimony of the three witnesses who spoke on his behalf [including Rossetti], so that the victory, such as it was, could be construed as his alone’.⁴⁴ To suggest that this is a subtle sleight of hand, however, is to misread Whistler’s actions – Whistler habitually and blatantly misquotes for polemic effect, ignoring cries of ‘foul’. In *The Gentle Art*, he uses marginal notes to lay siege to the central text when his enemies are speaking, and – consistent with common practice in manifesto writing – never makes any claim to objectivity or fairness in his presentation of evidence.

There is a noticeable irony in the central premise of Whistler’s lawsuit. The premise is that Ruskin oversteps the mark into libel by using ‘violent language’ to attack the artist personally, rather than merely criticizing his work. A barrister for Whistler, George Freeman, writes to Whistler’s solicitor, James Anderson Rose, just before the trial:

As however the [defendant] has travelled beyond criticism of the picture & launched violent criticism of the [plaintiff] himself & his motives & as in such cases the temperance or violence of the language used is largely to be considered the libel itself will be sufficient & the proper evidence for the proof of malice.⁴⁵

This path of action is ironic given Whistler’s cultivation, at the time of the trial and for many years afterwards, of a violent image as the ‘slayer’ and ‘scalper’ of critics. (Writing to Frances Leyland in Spring 1876, for example, he playfully interjects into a discussion of new painting techniques: ‘My enemies all round I shall route and ruin and in short slay all over the place!’⁴⁶) The reputation first takes root with a spate of actual violence in the late-1860s, including in an incident with Seymour Haden, his brother-in-law, in which Haden falls or is pushed by Whistler through a plate-glass window in Paris, resulting in Whistler’s expulsion from the Burlington Fine Arts Club. In this early battle, Whistler vows to pursue the matter of honour with a certain type of manifesto – what he calls ‘an explanation and refutation of the charges

⁴⁴ Merrill, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 11999.

⁴⁶ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08056.

brought against me'.⁴⁷ A letter draft of this manifesto exists in the hand of William Michael Rossetti, who helps with its composition. In it Whistler addresses the club, declaring: 'I happen to be a Virginian, a cadet of the Military Academy of West Point, & for many years a resident in France', apparently believing this will provide all the explanation needed.⁴⁸ His belligerent demeanour is evident in his battle with Ruskin, and as a result of the high-profile trial his image as a general in the war between artists and critics becomes an integral and lasting part of his reputation. This is the real beginning, then, of the swashbuckling artist figure described, a year after his death, in the sensational opening paragraph of Haldane Macfall's *Whistler: Butterfly, Wasp, Wit, Master of the Arts, Enigma* (1905):

He flits across the Victorian years – gay, debonair, laughing, quarrelsome, huffy – a dandified exquisite of a man, insolent, charming, unexpected – a wit amongst the chiefest wits – and he drew his rapier upon them all! hidalgic, swaggering; blithely stepping into frays for mere love of a quip; like one of those tempestuous dons of his beloved Velasquez, hot upon his honour always, just to keep his blood jiggling. Strutting it like gamecock, he fought his duel; drew blood; and, almost before his blade was wiped, had forgotten his man and, with flashing eyeglass and choleric eye, was peering for another.⁴⁹

In the wake of the trial Whistler's correspondence shows an escalation of the combative rhetoric which precedes it. In a letter to a friend, Dr. George Bird, he actually compares the 'fight' with Ruskin, as he calls it, to the physical fight with Haden a decade earlier. The comparison comes in reference to his new pamphlet, *Art and Art Critics* (1878), which he urges his friend to buy in multiple copies, though not to give as Christmas gifts, which would prevent others from purchasing it themselves. (The pamphlet is issued on 24 December, the same day as the letter is sent, a month after the trial.) He writes, with little in the way of seasonal goodwill: 'You remember that I "shoved Seymour Haden on ten years"! well I rather fancy this will let old Ruskin down to the end of his Almanack with a run!'⁵⁰ Comments to his

⁴⁷ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 09390.

⁴⁸ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 05246.

⁴⁹ Haldane Macfall, *Whistler: Butterfly, Wasp, Wit, Master of the Arts, Enigma* (London and Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1905), pp. 9-10.

⁵⁰ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00303.

solicitor, James Anderson Rose, reveal that he realizes the potential of the trial for his career even as he is counting the cost of the disastrous farthing's damages awarded in his favour. 'As you say look what an advertisement the whole affair has been', he writes in a letter received by Rose on 6 December, '– but my dear Rose the Philistines are upon me!'⁵¹ In one key letter to Rose, received 30 November, just days after the trial, Whistler outlines his strategy for spinning the verdict to his advantage, giving the 'battle' broader symbolic meaning and then using this common cause, in part, to elicit financial backing from his allies. The manifesto for this ideological battle is *Art and Art Critics*, which encapsulates both the ideas Whistler brings into the trial and the slant he puts on the outcome. He tells Rose:

[Y]ou will see that the matter may further assume in the eyes of the Public a larger and I think indeed the more proper standing. That is the question at issue has really been not merely a personal difference between Mr Ruskin and myself, but a battle fought for the painters in which for the moment Whistler is the Quixotte [*sic*]! – It is proposed that a subscription be made to pay the costs on our side – and it seems to me quite in keeping with our dignity that it should be so – Only this must be done openly with public announcement in the journals and publication of all names ... In short a *demonstration* on the part of all those concerned – I shall have fought for the *principle* of the thing, and I also will *subscribe* my mite to the general fund – This must be done while the iron is hot[.]⁵²

Rose does write a draft of this circular requesting help with costs from the trial, but it is never printed. The aggressive wording of the draft, with its references to 'duelling' and flogging, reflects Whistler's image. Nevertheless, the document does not emphasize 'the principle of the thing', but only the personal libel, which might explain (along with signs that support would not be forthcoming in any event) why it is abandoned. It begins:

The age of duelling has happily passed away and the physical condition & reported illness of one of the parties precludes the

⁵¹ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08751. In the same letter he complains that 'things are awfully hot here' and pleads with Rose: 'Do get me out of this mess.'

⁵² *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08750.

suggestion of the use of the horse whip but a British Jury have decided the following is a criticism of Works of art (set out libel)

... Under the circumstances the admirers of Mr Whistler's works & those who appreciate his manly Courage in seeking redress for personal insult (not criticism which he courts) – have determined to make this personal appeal for pecuniary assistance to enable Mr Whistler to resume his artistic work[.]⁵³

Instead of relying on such a plea for charity, Whistler puts his energies into the polemical pamphlet. In the letter to Bird on the day of publication he encourages multiple purchase and word of mouth, 'so that the run on the thing may keep up!' He adds with typical business acumen, 'Miss Bird must go herself too – The ladies you know are the ones to win the world with and especially they must eagerly cry out in full Piccadilly for Whistler's pamphlet!'⁵⁴

The pamphlet opens with the complaint that the true 'spirit of this matter', the real meaning of the trial, has been overlooked by the press. Whistler's task is to set the record straight, to publish what he sees as the truth. It is not too much of a stretch to compare this opening, in its basic structure (not to mention the incidental use of a similarly supernatural vocabulary), with Marx's famous opening sentence of *The Communist Manifesto*: 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism.' This 'nursery tale', Marx writes, is what brings about the need for a manifesto: 'Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies', in order to replace the false tale with the true one.⁵⁵ In a similar way, Whistler states, following his initial complaint: 'Now the war, of which the opening skirmish was fought the other day is Westminster, is really one between the brush and the pen.'⁵⁶ To prove his thesis, he begins by attacking British criticism in particular, which he describes as humourless and heavy-handed compared with its

⁵³ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 13286.

⁵⁴ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00303.

⁵⁵ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 218.

⁵⁶ *Gentle Art*, p. 25. It is interesting to note that Whistler proudly sends a copy of this pamphlet, with its warlike rhetoric, to the library at West Point, despite the fact that he left the military academy without graduating. This detail is substantiated by a letter of thanks sent from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York on 26 August 1879. See *Correspondence*, ref. no. 05876.

French counterpart.⁵⁷ He then moves on to the daily papers, which aim to 'do good to Art':

Poor Art! what a sad state the slut is in, an these gentlemen shall help her. The artist alone, by the way, is to no purpose, and remains unconsulted; his work is explained and rectified without him, by the one who was never in it ... poor devil!⁵⁸

It is this 'poor devil', as soon becomes apparent, that Whistler intends to provide a voice for, in this manifesto and in the long succession of pamphlets and letters to come. The artist is excluded not only from the process of judging art, but also from decisions surrounding its value and ownership. This is the subject of a much later case, *Eden v. Whistler*, which runs roughly concurrent with the Wilde trials in 1895. A pamphlet is produced in the same style as *Art and Art Critics*, containing commentary, trial transcripts, and clippings from the press. The testimony by Whistler's representative in court demonstrates again the similarity between the legal argument and the manifesto. In summarizing Whistler's position, it is stated:

[I]t is a fact universally recognised, [that] the artist does not give up his work ... save by the formal consent of the artist. The artist is the master of his work from the elemental point of view, seeing that he is its creator. The artist is the owner of his creations. He continues to be the master and owner of his work till the very last moment, till the day when he is himself completely satisfied. ...

These principles, gentlemen, are firmly established.⁵⁹

To return to *Art and Art Critics*, the tone becomes increasingly radical as it progresses toward the final call to action. The seeds of this call are sewn at the midpoint of the argument, when Whistler states:

⁵⁷ *Gentle Art*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁸ *Gentle Art*, p. 29. The masculinist tone of this passage is very much in keeping with the rhetoric of later avant-garde manifestos by Pound, Lewis, Marinetti, and others.

⁵⁹ James McNeill Whistler, *Eden Versus Whistler: The Baronet and the Butterfly: A Valentine with a Verdict* (Paris: Louis-Henry May, 1899), p. 31. The full title of this work is a manifesto in itself. It continues from the above, in part (!): *Being a Most Rare and Fascinating History, from the Palace of the Courts, Wherein is Shown, with Much Wit and Circumstance, How the Gentle Master, Unsuspecting, was Sighted, Tracked, Waylaid, Circumvented, and Run to Earth by Commercial Knight of Untiring Industry!*

The Attorney-General said, 'There are some people who would do away with critics altogether.'

I agree with him, and am one of the irrationals he points at – but let me be clearly understood – the *art* critic alone would I extinguish.⁶⁰

At the bottom of the same page he declares, in the same uncompromising tone: 'No! let there be no critics! they are not a "necessary evil," but an evil quite unnecessary, though an evil certainly.' In the concluding pages he attacks 'mediocrity', 'dilettantism', 'ignorance and vanity', and other targets that he treats again at length in his *Ten O'Clock* lecture. Educating the public on art is another sin he feels the critics have committed, and he evokes an image of 'the public, dragged from their beer to the British Museum'.⁶¹ Wilde later finds occasion to mock Whistler's hypocrisy on this subject, in the opening sentence of a review of the *Ten O'Clock*: 'Last night, at Prince's Hall, Mr. Whistler made his first public appearance as a lecturer on art, and spoke for more than an hour with really marvellous eloquence on the absolute uselessness of all lectures of the kind.'⁶² Speaking out about art without taking the position of the critic is a recurring problem in artistic manifestos.⁶³ The dilemma is sometimes solved, as it is in Whistler's case, by countering the measured tones of criticism with exaggerated rhetorical gestures and 'unreasonable' polemic, creating a new language better suited to ideas of genius and creativity. In this sense it bears a resemblance to camp, in that the artist seeks to regain power from the critic by embracing and enacting the negative image forced upon him (or her), while at the same time mocking the gestures of power.⁶⁴ An example of this would be Whistler adopting Ruskin's style of the preacher and reformer, and fusing it with the Barnumesque huckster and the comic figure that he is often accused of being. Whistler's pamphlet ends in a flurry of exclamation points, and a call for Ruskin's resignation as

⁶⁰ *Gentle Art*, pp. 29-30.

⁶¹ *Gentle Art*, p. 32.

⁶² Oscar Wilde, 'Mr. Whistler's Ten O'Clock', *Pall Mall Gazette* (21 February 1885), 1-2.

⁶³ Wilde experiences similar trouble on his North American tour, navigating between his roles as artist-'apostle' and lecturer-critic. See Part Two of this chapter, 'Apostle of Aestheticism: Oscar Wilde's American Performance'.

⁶⁴ For more on Wilde and camp, see David Schulz, 'Redressing Oscar: Performance and the Trials of Oscar Wilde', *The Drama Review*, 40 (1996), 37-59, or Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Century* (London: Cassell, 1995).

Slade Professor. He accuses Ruskin of 'talking for forty years of what he has never done', and makes the audacious demand that he 'resign his present professorship, to fill the chair of Ethics at the university'.⁶⁵ As a public statement (and advertisement) of principles, and a call to action based on these principles, the pamphlet operates fully as a manifesto. It works in connection with Whistler's performance during the trial itself, which is widely covered in the media.⁶⁶ Whistler finds his public voice in the course of these events, and uses it to speak out continuously in published letters, pamphlets, and lectures, on his own behalf and on behalf of fellow artists, in the two decades that follow. He writes about this new tendency from his temporary exile in Venice in January 1880. The letter is one of reassurance to Marcus B. Huish, art dealer and Director of the Fine Art Society, who had written previously to enquire about Whistler's progress on the series of etchings he has been commissioned to create. In the course of his explanation, Whistler embarks on the subject of 'the dimensions of [the] work ... in relation to the means used' – a fine medium like etching, for example, should only be executed on a limited scale – which is also the subject of the manifesto 'Propositions', with its numbered list of tenets, included in *The Gentle Art*. Whistler stops himself in the middle of this lecture, and writes:

But this is not a letter! – I shall find myself in the midst of another pamphlet so by the way you had better carefully keep this – for who knows – I may borrow it for an extract – Meanwhile I am not sorry that in this moment of your anxiety you should find me enunciating theories and offering doctrines as a means of reference – for I wish you to see in this very preoccupation and certainty in what concerns my work a reason for rejecting doubtful suggestions from outsiders – The 'Venice' my dear Mr Huish will be superb[.]⁶⁷

The 'certainty' that animates Whistler's writing is characteristic of the manifesto generally, and a vital element of the artistic manifesto in particular. Arrogance replaces the need for arguments based on solid reasoning or evidence. In his court

⁶⁵ *Gentle Art*, p. 34.

⁶⁶ For further discussions of this media coverage, see Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, and Catherine Carter Goebel, *Arrangement in Black and White: The Making of a Whistler Legend*, 2 vols (Ph.D. thesis, 1988).

⁶⁷ *Correspondence*, ref. no. 02992.

appearances Wilde will be shown to place similar importance on rhetoric and self-presentation.

Wilde v. Queensberry

The following analysis of the Wilde trials will first consider pre-trial documents and opening statements in relation to the acts of publishing and making public. The Marquess of Queensberry's notorious calling card, for example, will be considered as a manifesto, albeit a very brief one. Another task will be to look at possible motives for Wilde's decision to bring what he knew would be highly publicized proceedings against Queensberry. Sir Edward Clarke's argument for the prosecution on the opening morning, along with Wilde's first testimony, will provide us with a sense of Wilde's case against Queensberry as it looked in the preliminary stages. With regard to Wilde's rhetorical style in court, two are especially apparent: the evasive, 'camp' style that contrasts so noticeably with the exaggerated caution of legalese and the consciously plain, 'earthy' language of the opposing side in all three trials; and a more 'sincere' style used occasionally to give expression to high ideals, or what are intended to appear as such. In the criminal trials and their aftermath, petitions resembling manifestos are drawn up calling for Wilde's release. Then there is Wilde's own 'extra-judicial appeal', the letter known as *De Profundis*.⁶⁸ Despite obvious differences, this letter resembles *Art and Art Critics* in its attempt to fulfil one of the manifesto's traditional functions, that of 'making known past actions'.⁶⁹ Metaphors of darkness and bringing to light are especially prominent in the criminal trials, and these metaphors tie in with a broader theme of this chapter: public disclosure versus private affairs, making manifest and keeping secret, concealing and revealing.

⁶⁸ This phrase is used in a negative sense to describe Whistler's pamphlet *Art and Art Critics* in an anonymous review in the London *Art-Journal* (April 1878), 63-64. The review also states that, 'As a literary production, the brown-paper pamphlet is as poor, angry, inconclusive, and indescribably vulgar as we conceive anything to be.'

⁶⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), quoting the earliest definition of 1647.

The offensive inscription left on Queensberry's card, 'For Oscar Wilde posing somdomite [*sic*]', is the manifesto that sets these trials in motion.⁷⁰ It is comparable to Ruskin's famous libel, the accusation that Whistler was merely 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'. The etymology of the word 'manifest' (which it shares with 'manifesto') is given by Skeat as 'struck by hand'.⁷¹ It could not be more relevant in this case, as Queensberry's card is delivered in place of his threat to physically thrash Wilde for being seen in public with his son.⁷² The card is 'a public protestation', matching Johnson's definition.⁷³ It is also akin to a declaration of war, in keeping with the manifesto's use by heads of state in the seventeenth century.⁷⁴ In his own words at the deposition, Queensberry states: 'I wrote that card simply with the intention of bringing matters to a head.'⁷⁵ This would seem to imply a duel, but that custom had been replaced relatively recently in England with the more popular practice of the libel suit. Putting the accusation in writing and leaving it at Wilde's club meant first that the private dispute had become public, and second that Wilde had the cause and means to answer the libel publicly, as he possessed hard written evidence, 'struck by hand', of Queensberry's abusive behaviour. Considered as a manifesto, the card is similar in kind to the 'Round Robin' issued by Wyndham Lewis and his fellow artists in 1913 to signal their break from Roger Fry's Omega Workshops. Lewis's letter is used not only to instigate this break – as Queensberry's card is intended to cause, ultimately, the break between his son and Wilde – but also to damage the reputation and career of the target, Fry, just as Queensberry's card is meant to hurt its recipient. The 'Round Robin' is sent to patrons and supporters of the

⁷⁰ It is interesting to note the testimony of the porter who handled the card: he testifies that he 'could not understand' the handwriting on it, and that he 'placed it in an envelope', concealing it. Wilde also testifies to the card's illegibility: 'I read what was on the card as well as I could'. See Holland, p. 44.

⁷¹ Walter Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, rev. ed (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910).

⁷² Wilde writes to Lord Alfred Douglas in the summer of 1894: 'Your father is on the rampage again – been to Café Royal to enquire for us, with threats, etc.' See *Letters*, p. 598.

⁷³ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Times Books, 1979).

⁷⁴ One example of the definition of 'manifesto' as being originally 'a formal document explaining why a state or nation declared war' is given in *Black's Law Dictionary*, 7th edition (St Paul, MN: West Group, 1999).

⁷⁵ Holland, p. 22.

Omega Workshops, and it begins with the plain statement of intent: 'we beg to lay before you the following discreditable facts'.⁷⁶

In his opening case for the prosecution on 3 April 1895, Clarke states that Wilde 'felt it incumbent upon himself to take some proceeding in the matter because here for the first time there was the *publication* by Lord Queensberry of the accusation'.⁷⁷ This accusation, according to Clarke's indictment against Queensberry, was aimed 'to bring [Wilde] into public contempt[,] scandal and disgrace'. Furthermore, it states that Queensberry 'did write and publish and cause to be written and published of him [Wilde] ... a false[,] scandalous[,] malicious and defamatory libel'.⁷⁸ Before this event Queensberry had limited himself to a visit to Wilde's home and the utterance of verbal threats, some of which Wilde recounts under questioning from Clarke. Clarke tempers his client's accusation of libel with the mention of 'the natural hesitation which [Wilde] would have in bringing to public notice the hideous and frightful suggestions which we are now forced in this court to discuss'.⁷⁹ Clarke also raises in his opening statement 'a much graver issue' than the simple presentation of the card, which might have been done in a moment of anger. This 'issue' is Queensberry's plea as defendant, which declares 'that that statement [on the card] is true and that it was *for the public benefit* that that statement was made'.⁸⁰ Queensberry's reasons, as he describes them in his plea, for leaving the offending card, thus fulfil the most common definition of the manifesto: that it is a declaration 'of public importance' which is issued not to a particular group but to society as a whole.⁸¹

The 'two allegations' (as Clarke calls them) made in Queensberry's plea on the subject of literature provide us with a significant clue about Wilde's decision to proceed with such a potentially damaging case. These allegations, ostensibly used to give weight to Queensberry's accusation, describe Wilde as having 'published with his name on the title page' *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as the collection of

⁷⁶ For a more detailed analysis of this letter, see Chapter 4, pp. 122-25.

⁷⁷ Holland, p. 38. Italics have been added for emphasis.

⁷⁸ Holland, p. 285.

⁷⁹ Holland, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Holland, p. 27. Emphasis added.

⁸¹ OED.

epigrams, 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young'. The allegations appear at the end of the 'plea of justification' for the defence, following the accusations involving Edward Shelley, Sydney Mayor, Frederick Atkins, Maurice Schwabe, Alfred Wood, Charles Parker, Earnest Scarfe, Herbert Tankard, Walter Grainger, Alfonso Harold Conway, and others 'to the defendant unknown', all of which are intended (but ultimately fail in this trial) to establish grounds for the more serious charges against Wilde, not only of 'posing' but of committing illegal acts.⁸² *Dorian Gray* is characterized in the plea as being 'designed and intended by [Wilde] ... to describe the relations, intimacies and passions of certain persons of sodomitical and unnatural habits, tastes and practices', while the epigrams and maxims are implicated mainly by sharing the company of similarly 'sodomitical' writings in the pages of the *Chameleon*, a publication by Oxford undergraduates.⁸³

These allegations are aptly described by Merlin Holland as the 'poisoned bait' used by Queensberry's defence to lure Wilde into a case that would otherwise have consisted chiefly of the 'catalogue of offences with young men'. Had the case been only about these offences, Holland argues, it might have prompted from Wilde a decision to withdraw. The added attraction of a battle over artistic principles, however, would make the lure hard to resist. 'There is little Wilde would have relished more', Holland writes, 'than to stand in the witness box and defend his art.' He points out that the literary component is also 'intended to justify the allegation of "posing"', but that this is only of secondary importance to its function as a trap.⁸⁴ Interestingly, Carson's cross-examination begins with the 'literary part' even though these accusations come at the end of the plea for the defence, and are less obviously damaging, as they can only suggest the suspect nature of Wilde's 'pose'. Michael Foldy argues persuasively on this point that 'Carson elected to attack Wilde's strength ... and so to lull Wilde into a false sense of security and superiority before burying him.'⁸⁵ The strategy has the added outcome of prompting some of Wilde's most famous declarations on the subject of art, and of turning the first trial, or at least

⁸² Holland, pp. 287-290.

⁸³ Holland, p. 290.

⁸⁴ Holland, pp. xxxv-vi.

⁸⁵ Michael Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 6.

Wilde's early testimony in it, into an unusual but highly publicized and highly influential manifesto.

One difficulty in considering Wilde as a producer of manifestos lies in the contradictory image of the writer versus the form. The manifesto – even the extravagant artistic kind – is meant to be sincere in its aims, its language unclouded by irony or subtlety. Janet Lyon describes its reputation as being that of 'the no-nonsense genre of plain speech, the genre that shoots from the hip'.⁸⁶ Lyon argues that it has remained relatively unexamined as a form, at least until recently, precisely because it 'appears to say only what it means'.⁸⁷ Wilde, on the other hand, although he is certainly outspoken, projects insincerity rather than sincerity – he proclaims the victory of style over substance and artifice over nature. Hence the accusation of 'posing' which, as we have seen, he shares with Whistler, whom Ruskin accuses of 'wilful imposture'. But while on the surface the two forms – the manifesto as it has traditionally been used, especially in politics, and the declarations, couched in wit and paradox, made by Whistler and Wilde – may appear different, both use language to produce an immediate and forceful impact on the reader or the listener. The chief aim is to overwhelm by rhetorical force (as Whistler puts it, to 'convict'), if not to convince by way of reason. In the context of the artistic manifesto as it flourishes across Western Europe in the late nineteenth and especially the early twentieth century, it is questionable whether Wilde's inversions are out of place at all. As Puchner argues, referring to the early manifestos of Tzara and Marinetti, 'the operations of quotation, parody, distancing, and displacement' are central to the avant-garde form, and these elements have roots in the genre's longer history as well.⁸⁸ For Wilde, however, speaking in London in 1895, his perceived insincerity is a liability to his success in the courtroom, and it makes him an easy target for his adversaries, including Carson.

In Wilde's opening testimony in the first trial, there are several instances of the epigrammatic and paradoxical speech for which he is well known. When he recounts the events that led to his public dispute with Queensberry, for example,

⁸⁶ Lyon, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Lyon, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Puchner, 'Manifesto = Theatre', p. 460.

Wilde recalls making the remark: 'I never write except for publication.'⁸⁹ (The quip is a rebuttal to Queensberry's accusation that Wilde has been blackmailed over an incriminating letter.) This kind of wit features as testimony and also as evidence in the trial, the latter sort appearing in the form of 'Phrases and Philosophies' and 'A Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'. The 'Preface', which is included in Caws's recent anthology of manifestos, is first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in March 1891. Its primary modes are wit, especially through inversion, and parody. The previous month's issue of the *Review* features another piece by Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. Taken together these two examples illustrate contrasting styles in Wilde's use of rhetoric. This contrast is also seen in the most distinctive testimony of the trials: the witty, evasive, practiced style of the epigrams, on one hand, and the more direct, idealistic expression of 'The Soul of Man' and *De Profundis* on the other. An example of the latter style is Wilde's speech in the first criminal trial about the 'Love that dare not speak its name'.⁹⁰ This 'serious' side of Wilde is also revealed in 'The Poets and the People: By One of the Latter' (1887), another manifesto anthologized by Caws. It ends with a call to action, something quite unexpected in Wilde: 'The people are suffering, and are likely to suffer more; where is the poet who is the one man needful to rouse the nation to a sense of duty and inspire the people with hope?'⁹¹ It is perhaps not completely devoid of irony, but on the surface, at least, it wears a convincing mask of sincerity.

In the *Ten O'Clock*, Whistler claims that 'Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong.'⁹² Jonathan Dollimore describes Wilde's similar but more extreme position on matters of nature and art as a 'transgressive aesthetic' in which 'Nature and reality signify a prevailing order which art wilfully, perversely, and rightfully ignores.'⁹³ This aesthetic is manifested in the 'literary part' of the first trial, and it is this style, based on what Dollimore calls 'insincerity, inauthenticity, and unnaturalness', that Carson seizes

⁸⁹ Holland, p. 58. He later contradicts this statement, both in the same trial and in *De Profundis*.

⁹⁰ Hyde, p. 236.

⁹¹ Caws, p. 16.

⁹² Whistler, *Gentle Art*, p. 143.

⁹³ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 10.

upon in his cross-examination.⁹⁴ When Wilde seals his fate with the offhand remark that he did not kiss Walter Grainger because 'he was a peculiarly plain boy', Carson forces him to repeat the defence that it was only 'a flippant answer'. Wilde had stated: 'At times one says things flippantly when one should speak more seriously, I admit that, I admit it – I cannot help it.'⁹⁵ Earlier that morning, on the second day of the trial, Wilde states 'emphatically', after a long period of cross-examination, on the subject of his preference for the company of young men: 'I don't like the sensible and don't like the old. I don't like them.'⁹⁶ Dollimore makes the point in *Sexual Dissidence* (1991) that, as he puts it,

One of the many reasons why people were terrified by Wilde was because of a perceived connection between his aesthetic transgression and his sexual transgression. 'Inversion' was being used increasingly to define a specific kind of deviant sexuality inseparable from a deviant personality[.]⁹⁷

Wilde himself would later employ this association in a desperate petition to the Home Secretary from Reading Gaol, written on 2 July 1896. Referring to Nordau's book, which he calls 'Degenerescense', Wilde portrays himself as a victim of a disease, an example of 'the intimate connection between madness and the literary and artistic temperament', rather than the perpetrator of a criminal offence.⁹⁸ In his book, Nordau links Wilde's characteristic expressions of wit with signs of 'deviant' behaviour by diagnosing 'a malevolent *mania* for contradiction'.⁹⁹

The style of testimony Wilde is forced to defend as mere flippancy actually includes many of his most important, and manifesto-like, courtroom declarations. Aesthetics and sexuality are indeed linked, but in the positive sense that the 'flippant' answers and witty epigrams are of a piece with the transgressive desire and 'anti-essentialism' (in Dollimore's phrase) that Wilde defends in his testimony. To return to the comparison with Tzara, who proclaims the principle of 'continual

⁹⁴ Dollimore, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Holland, pp. 208-9.

⁹⁶ Holland, p. 166.

⁹⁷ Dollimore, p. 67.

⁹⁸ 'Wilde's First Petition to the Home Secretary', published by the Public Record Office, #HO 45/24514.

⁹⁹ Nordau, p. 319. Emphasis added.

contradiction' by enacting it everywhere in his manifesto, in Wilde's testimony, and in the epigrams cited as evidence in the trial, form and content are fused seamlessly. Puchner argues that even when Dada presents a manifesto of negation, the manifesto 'continues to communicate to its audience what dada is not'.¹⁰⁰ Negation is simply another strategy of the manifesto: it does not break the generic limits any more than Wilde does by declaring his principles using constructions that are, as he says at one point during the first trial, 'perfectly nonsensical'.¹⁰¹ The paradoxical style used by Wilde is, of course, a dangerous one in the context of the trials. There is an obvious conflict between his evasive, shifting style and the mode of expression demanded by the courtroom, as the transcripts, with their record of restatement and apparent changes of mind, illustrate. It is worth noting, as Foldy does in his analysis of the trials, that '[d]uring the Victorian era, "effeminacy" traditionally referred to "a male person or institution weakened by luxury or inactivity," and was identified with so-called "feminine" virtues'; these are said to have included 'secrecy, subtlety, subterfuge, and equivocation'.¹⁰² Having looked briefly at what might have been called 'subtlety' and 'equivocation' in the trial, in the form of Wilde's subtle and paradoxical wit, we will next explore the language of 'secrecy' as it is used by the prosecution in the criminal trials to raise the spectre of a homosexual underworld of which Wilde is a part. Clarke's defence against this strategy by the prosecution focuses on similar evidence, citing for example Wilde's decision to pursue a public trial.

On the second morning of the libel trial, Carson questions Wilde about the lighting and décor in Alfred Taylor's rooms. He asks if the furnishings in the place where Wilde was said to have met most of the young men in the trial were 'luxurious', and whether Taylor 'always kept a double set of curtains drawn across the windows and day and night lighted the room with candles or gas'. Wilde calls these descriptions 'quite untrue'.¹⁰³ The point is raised again that afternoon when Carson opens his case for the defence. Speaking to the jury in the language of a circus

¹⁰⁰ Puchner, 'Screeching Voices', p. 119.

¹⁰¹ Holland, p. 77.

¹⁰² Foldy, p. 89.

¹⁰³ Holland, pp. 154-55.

huckster, promising sensational details to come, he portrays Taylor's rooms as a place of decadence and vice:

You will hear the kind of life that this man Taylor lived, the extraordinary den that he kept in Little College Street with its curtains always drawn, the luxurious hangings of his windows, his rooms gorgeously and luxuriously furnished with the perpetual change of varied perfumes ... the daylight never admitted; always the shaded light of candles or of lamps or of gas[.]¹⁰⁴

The trial is cut short, however, and Carson is denied his chance to raise this spectre more fully for the court.

In the criminal trials that follow, where Taylor and Wilde are tried jointly, the image of the gas-lit 'den' is central to the prosecution's case. It appears, for example, in the first criminal trial when Charles Gill for the prosecution asks Wilde if he noticed that 'no one could see in through the windows' of Taylor's rooms. Wilde replies that the rooms were merely 'Bohemian', and that he did not notice any peculiarities.¹⁰⁵ It is also true of the second criminal trial, in which Sir Frank Lockwood, the Solicitor-General, leads the prosecution. In his opening speech on the third day of the trial, Lockwood presents the questionable but undoubtedly effective logic that '[a]cts like those alleged are not committed in the light of day, but as far as possible with the strictest secrecy and concealment'. The jury, he implies, will be forced at times to draw its own conclusions, relying on the 'pose' rather than hard evidence. It is important to note, as H. Montgomery Hyde does in his commentary, that the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885), under which Wilde and Taylor are charged, 'made indecencies between males an offence even if practiced *in private*'.¹⁰⁶ Lockwood asks Wilde if Taylor's windows were 'curtained', and by this time Wilde is practised enough to answer, 'Yes, but not obscured.'¹⁰⁷

Clarke defends Wilde against this line of questioning by using language rich in metaphors of light. He insists in his closing speech that Wilde had given 'a clear,

¹⁰⁴ Holland, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ Hyde, pp. 239-40.

¹⁰⁶ Hyde, p. 371. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁷ Hyde, p. 315.

coherent and lucid account of the transactions' at Taylor's.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, in the previous trial, he asks: 'Is there any one instance in which there has been the slightest attempt at secrecy?'¹⁰⁹ In the course of the trials, Wilde might be said to undergo different and contradictory journeys of becoming: in one sense he is emerging, being revealed or 'outed' to the public; in another sense, however, his public persona is given a shadowy extra dimension, a new identity hinted at euphemistically in the press but left to readers' speculation – never made manifest – never clearly defined or brought to light.

Press coverage of the trial further emphasizes the language of darkness versus light, visibility versus invisibility, and speaking out versus being silenced. The day after Wilde's arrest, 6 April 1895, a number of articles are published condemning him in these terms. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, declares: 'It will be a public benefit ... if the exposure of a chief representative of the immoral school leads to a clearer perception of its tendency and a heartier contempt for its methods', and it calls Aestheticism 'the visible enemy of those ties and bonds of society'.¹¹⁰ Taking a different approach, the *Echo* writes: 'the best thing for everybody now is to forget all about Oscar Wilde, his perpetual posings, his aesthetical teachings, and his theatrical productions. If not tried himself, let him go into silence, and be heard of no more.'¹¹¹ On the previous day, the final day of the libel trial, one article describing Carson's summing up for the defence includes a striking allusion to Whistler. The *Evening News* (5 April 1895) makes explicit the obvious but seldom spoken comparison with the trial of two decades earlier, in which the other famous Aesthete is attacked for his strange and 'unnatural' art. 'Mr. Carson', the paper states, 'went on to paint a horrid *nocturne* of terrible suggestions, a thing of blackness, only half defined, but wholly horrible'.¹¹² In the *Ten O'Clock* Whistler repudiates the kind of imagery associated with the more decadent side of Aestheticism, even though his own paintings – most obviously the series of 'Nocturnes', including *The Falling Rocket* – were associated with precisely this 'unhealthy' trend in art. Perhaps to silence his critics, he attacks in

¹⁰⁸ Hyde, p. 322.

¹⁰⁹ Hyde, pp. 246-47.

¹¹⁰ *Daily Telegraph* (6 April 1895), p. 76.

¹¹¹ *Echo* (6 April 1895), quoted in Foldy, p. 52.

¹¹² Quoted in Schulz, p. 46.

his lecture the 'curious converts to a weird *culte*', and tells his audience: 'It is false, this teaching of decay.'¹¹³ The images of darkness used against Wilde in his three trials are, of course, similar to the descriptions of the hideous portrait locked in the dark room in *Dorian Gray*. Scenes from the novel are described at length in the first trial, where Clarke contrasts the 'brightness and brilliancy' of the portrait as it first appears, and the 'undiminished personal beauty' of Dorian, with the face ravaged by the effects of vice and age.¹¹⁴

The trials end on 25 May 1895 with Wilde's conviction on several counts of gross indecency and the sentence of two years' hard labour. During his imprisonment, several manifesto-like documents are produced, or planned, which relate to the trial and its outcome. The most famous of these is the long letter first published by Ross in 1905 under the name *De Profundis*, also known as *Epistola: in Carcere et Vinculis*. A number of other articles and petitions are also put forward at the time asking for Wilde's release. *De Profundis* is a manifesto in the sense that it explains past actions; most of the articles and petitions are manifestos insofar as they demand immediate action or plead an urgent case. One example in the French press is by the aptly named Hughes Rebell, whose 'Défense d'Oscar Wilde' appears in the *Mercure de France* (August 1895).¹¹⁵ In Britain, campaigns of support meet with more reluctance or resistance, and as a result some petitions that are planned or drafted, including one by More Adey in December 1895, fail to materialize.¹¹⁶ Stuart Merrill's attempt, the previous month, to petition to Queen Victoria from Paris asking for Wilde's release, fails to gain much support from either the French or English-speaking world. Henry James's response to the petition, described in a letter to Merrill from Jonathan Sturges, is typical of the lukewarm reception such projects received. Sturges writes:

I do not think he will sign the petition, though I know that he feels sorry for Oscar ... James says that the petition would not have the

¹¹³ *Gentle Art*, pp. 152-54. Although it is not unusual for Whistler to sprinkle French into his English, his use of the word '*culte*' here appears to be a deliberate attempt to give his subject an extra shade of sinister otherness.

¹¹⁴ Holland, p. 42. It is interesting to recall here that, according to Ellmann, in an early version of *Dorian Gray* Wilde has Dorian kill off a painter who 'clearly and libellously' resembles Whistler. See Ellmann, *Wilde*, p. 261.

¹¹⁵ See Ellmann, *Wilde*, pp. 452-53, for other examples from the French press.

¹¹⁶ The same is true in the case of Whistler, as described above.

slightest effect on the authorities here ... and that the document would only exist as a manifesto of personal loyalty to Oscar by his friends, of which he was never one.¹¹⁷

Wilde's own petitions to the Home Secretary, including the one mentioned above relating to Nordau, also have little effect.

De Profundis, written during the last months of his incarceration, is Wilde's attempt to give his interpretation of the trial and his relationship with Bosie – to set the record straight, in other words, by issuing a manifesto aimed equally at his lover and the world. The half-serious title given by Wilde to Robert Ross, *Epistola: in Carcere et Vinculis*, suggests a type of manifesto used in Catholicism: the 'encyclical', a letter containing official statements from the Vatican, which is handed down periodically to its bishops.¹¹⁸ Wilde puts great stock in the eighty-page letter, as his comments to More Adey three months before his release from prison demonstrate:

It is the most important letter of my life, as it will deal ultimately with my future mental attitude towards life, with the way in which I desire to meet the world again, with the development of my character: with what I have lost, what I have learned, and what I hope to arrive at[.]¹¹⁹

In *De Profundis* Wilde suggests importantly that he conducts his legal action against Queensberry as an artist defending his art. 'Having assailed me as a private gentleman and in private, as a public man and in public, he ultimately determines to make his final and great attack on me as an artist, and in the place where my art is being represented' – in the theatre.¹²⁰ The action fails, but he attempts again in this retrospective manifesto to clear his name.¹²¹ As he writes to Robert Ross (1 April 1897): 'I am not prepared to sit in the grotesque pillory they put me into, for all

¹¹⁷ *Letters*, p. 643.

¹¹⁸ Wilde writes to Ross (1 April 1897): 'For indeed it is an Encyclical letter, and as the Bulls of the Holy Father are named from their opening words, it may be spoken of as the "Epistola: in Carcere et Vinculis".' See *Letters*, p. 782. Wyndham Lewis uses this term in 1930 to describe a manifesto in his epic satirical novel, *The Apes of God*. For further analysis of Lewis's 'Encyclical', see Chapter 4, pp. 144-47.

¹¹⁹ From a letter dated 18 February 1897. *Letters*, p. 678.

¹²⁰ Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 128.

¹²¹ It should be recalled here that although the manifesto is usually a forward-looking genre, especially in the Modernist period, the *OED* defines its purpose as 'making known past actions' as well as 'explaining the reasons or motives for actions announced as forthcoming'.

time'.¹²² Instead, he declares in *De Profundis* to his multiple audiences – himself, Bosie, the prison officials, the public – that he has been ‘the supreme arbiter’ of ‘style in art’.¹²³ Stating for the record his own legacy, and setting up a parable of his own downfall, he begins: ‘I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age.’ He then goes through a list of his contributions:

I treated art as the supreme reality and life as a mere mode of fiction. I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me. I summed up all systems in a phrase and all existence in an epigram.¹²⁴

As a genre, the manifesto seeks to bring to light and to establish facts, as well as to declare intentions. The Wilde trials are now regarded in this revelatory way in both social and literary terms. On one hand, Wilde’s testimony brings out of obscurity ‘the love that dare not speak its name’; on the other, it states on behalf of art what art should not say itself, for ‘No work of art ever puts forward views of any kind.’

The Question of Influence

In comparing the two libel trials, the fundamental question is whether Wilde is ‘lured’ into taking action against Queensberry by Whistler’s precedent in his landmark trial against Ruskin. The point is important because I am seeking to establish an early example of the transmission and development of the artistic manifesto from one artist to another in the decade preceding the advent of the historical avant-garde. In the previous section I mention Holland’s theory of the ‘bait’ laid out for Wilde by Carson. This ‘bait’ is the section of Queensberry’s plea of justification which alleges that ‘Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young’ and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* ‘were calculated to subvert morality and to encourage unnatural vice’.¹²⁵ Holland makes the case that Wilde ‘was well acquainted with the trials for obscenity and immorality in 1857 of two of his best-loved French authors: Flaubert for *Madame*

¹²² *Letters*, p. 780.

¹²³ *De Profundis*, p. 147.

¹²⁴ *De Profundis*, p. 151.

¹²⁵ Holland, p. 291.

Bovary and Baudelaire for *Les Fleurs du mal*', and that these trials might well have influenced him.¹²⁶ It is strange then that nowhere in Holland's book is there any mention of Whistler or the trial against Ruskin. *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* – first published in 1890 and then in an expanded edition in 1892 – opens with a reprint of the trial and the pamphlet, *Art and Art Critics*. Wilde could hardly have avoided noticing Whistler's book, not least because it includes his own, very public, correspondence with Whistler. It also includes his review, drastically and mischievously edited by Whistler, of the *Ten O'Clock*. The trial against Ruskin, a British libel trial with disastrous short-term consequences for the plaintiff's career, bears far greater relevance to Wilde's first trial than the French obscenity trials that he knew only as historical events. He would have been wise to treat the Whistler trial as a cautionary tale. Instead, he may have chosen to notice only that Whistler enjoys a degree of victory over Ruskin in the end – most recently, from the perspective of Wilde's action against his own tormentor, with the sale of *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* in 1892.

Frank Harris, in his biography of Wilde, insists that he warned his friend to recall the Whistler precedent before pursuing a libel action against Queensberry. According to Harris's dramatic account, Wilde approaches him in order to ask him to 'testify for instance that *Dorian Gray* is not immoral'. He agrees, but adds that he has strong misgivings: 'I am certain that in matters of art or morality an English court is about the worst tribunal in the civilised world.' He warns Wilde:

You must remember the Whistler and Ruskin action. You know that Whistler ought to have won. You know that Ruskin was shamelessly in fault; but the British jury and the so-called British artists treated Whistler and his superb work with contempt.¹²⁷

Whistler possessed a talent for turning his failings into victories, and he returns from self-imposed exile in Venice in 1880 to rebuild his reputation, calling himself the 'Master' and using his notoriety as an 'enemy' to his advantage, as Wyndham Lewis would do in the 1920s. Whistler, however, was never in danger of facing criminal

¹²⁶ Holland, p. xxxv.

¹²⁷ Frank Harris, *Oscar Wilde* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1959), pp. 113-14.

charges. In this respect, the two libel trials represent entirely different spheres of action: on one hand, there is Whistler's parody of the legal proceedings, and his victory through increased media exposure; on the other, there is Wilde's experience, in which a literary debate, with its displays of wit, rapidly becomes a contest with real consequences. Unlike Whistler, Wilde's manifesto contains a real threat to society, and is truly subversive. It is a rare example of a crossover between the political genre and its mirror image in, or utilization by, the art world. The threat that Wilde represents is double-edged: it is a threat from the sexual margins, and from the geographical margins – a challenge issued by an Irishman to the English aristocracy.

It is necessary to begin with a brief description of the manifesto's conflicted stance on the subject of influence. The tension arises between a desire to acknowledge predecessors, and an even stronger desire to break completely with the past. One example of the former tendency is the Pre-Raphaelite 'List of Immortals', drawn up by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Holman Hunt in August 1848, at the inception of the movement. It is described by Hunt as a 'manifesto of our absence of faith in immortality, save in the perennial influence exercised by great thinkers and workers'. Stars are awarded to the constituents that make up the list, to a maximum of four (for Jesus Christ), and the idea is to have it signed by initiates, in keeping with the manifesto's standard phrase of 'we the undersigned'. It includes figures ranging from 'Early Gothic Architects' and 'Early English Balladists' to Cromwell, Joan of Arc, and Tennyson.¹²⁸ A later example, similarly serio-comic (with greater emphasis on the comic), is the list of 'Blasts' and 'Blesses' in the first issue of Wyndham Lewis's pre-war periodical, *Blast*. This device is most likely borrowed directly from Apollinaire's 'L'Antitradition futuriste' (1913), which proclaims '*merde aux*' enemies of the past and '*rose aux*' allies of the present, creating a kind of shorthand to describe the principles of the movement. In the case of *Blast*, these must include the principles of humour and contradiction, given that many items appear in both columns. Writing on this aspect of the manifesto in the context of Russian Futurism, with obvious relevance to the lists in *Blast*, Katerina Clark argues:

¹²⁸ *The P.R.B. Journal*, ed. by William E. Fredeman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 106-7.

the basic device of the avant-garde manifesto, the catalogue of names, is a favorite not only because of its incantatory-cum-performance value, but also because, given that the essence of their movement is so radically other that it cannot be conveyed directly, they try to capture it by maneuvering within a series of paradoxical juxtapositions of nouns.¹²⁹

The desire to break with or to deny influences entirely becomes increasingly prevalent with the growing competition between movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, the past rejected in this case is often the recent past, including the older generation of living artists, rather than the more distant, and less threatening, past.

The transmission of principles from one generation of artists to the next is often acknowledged in a condensed 'history' section of the manifesto, a preamble invoking the ideas and even the names of influential figures. So for example Jean Moréas, in 'Le Manifeste Symboliste' (1886), declares:

Readers will accuse this aesthetics of obscurity: we aren't surprised. What can you do? Weren't Pindar's *Odes*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Goethe's *Faust Part II*, Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony* said to be ambiguous?¹³⁰

Wilde acknowledges Whistler's influence in one of his American lectures, 'The House Beautiful' (1882), which in turn is a manifesto for the Aestheticism in the decorative arts. He refers to Whistler's rich decoration of the Peacock Room and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, his design for a simple breakfast room. Wilde tells his audience: 'You should have such men as Whistler among you to teach you the beauty and joy of colour.'¹³¹ Wilde also recognizes Whistler's importance as a figure of public controversy – what Whistler, in 1883, calls 'the *succès d'exécution*'.¹³² He contemplates this negative form of status, and the irony of its desirability, in his parable of 'The Master', published with other 'poems in prose' in the *Fortnightly*

¹²⁹ Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 45.

¹³⁰ In Caws, 50-51 (p. 50).

¹³¹ Oscar Wilde, 'The House Beautiful', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and others (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1999), 913-25 (p. 916).

¹³² *Gentle Art*, p. 107.

Review in July 1894. He tells the story of Joseph of Arimathea meeting a young man who 'had wounded his body with thorns and on his hair had he set ashes as a crown'. The young man tells him that he is not weeping for Christ, but for himself: 'All things that this man has done I have done also. And yet they have not crucified me.'¹³³

Wilde's performance on the witness stand reflects his debt to Whistler, particularly in his reaction to Carson's cross-examination in the 'literary' part of the trial. 'Instead of expounding his theory of art as an enhancement and expansion of life,' as Ellmann argues, 'he presented himself as an amoral artist and scorned the moral mob.'¹³⁴

In 1890, years after Wilde unburdens himself of his discipleship to the 'Master', Whistler launches an accusation of plagiarism at his former student. (It is not the first time, either: in 1888 Whistler publishes a letter in the *World*, complaining, 'he dines at our tables and picks from our platters the plums for the pudding he peddles in the provinces', and also, that he 'has the courage of the opinions ... of others!'¹³⁵) To make his latest charge, Whistler refers back to a lecture Wilde gives in London on 30 June 1883, shortly after returning from his North American tour.¹³⁶ He claims that he had, 'in good fellowship, crammed him, that he might not add deplorable failure to foolish appearance, in his anomalous position, as art-expounder', adding:

He went forth, on that occasion, as my St. John – but, forgetting that humility should be his chief characteristic, and unable to withstand the unaccustomed respect with which his utterances were received, he not only trifled with my shoe, but bolted with the latchet!¹³⁷

Wilde, nearing the peak of his fame and no longer willing to tolerate this kind of treatment, responds to Whistler's 'venom and vulgarity' with the charge that 'the only thoroughly original ideas I have ever heard him express have had reference to his own superiority as a painter over painters greater than himself'.¹³⁸ A sketch by Max Beerbohm portrays this epistolary battle as a fencing match wherein a tiny Whistler

¹³³ Oscar Wilde, 'The Master', in *Complete Works*, 901-02.

¹³⁴ Ellmann, *Wilde*, p. 421.

¹³⁵ *Gentle Art*, p. 164.

¹³⁶ See 'Lecture to Art Students', in *Collected Works*, XI: *Essays and Lectures* (1909), 199-212.

¹³⁷ *Gentle Art*, p. 237.

¹³⁸ *Gentle Art*, p. 239.

triumphs over a giant Wilde (the caricature probably has as much to do with actual physical stature than symbolic meaning). It is explained by the caption: 'Mr. Whistler rather worsted him in "Truth."'¹³⁹

The rivalry takes on an increasingly violent tone of the type that is mirrored in the aggressive rhetoric of many manifestos, especially in the early twentieth century. One instance of this violence is Wilde's abandoned plan to have Dorian murder Whistler in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Another is the language Whistler uses in letters to describe his erstwhile disciple. It was not unusual for Whistler to 'kill off' his adversaries, including art critics like Harry Quilter of *The Times*, who then become 'dead' to him, and even (as mentioned above) to 'scalp' or 'slay' particularly offensive enemies. He turns this language on Wilde during their dispute in *Truth* in 1890. Claiming to have discovered 'his latest proof of open admiration', in the form of a line Whistler believes Wilde to have borrowed for 'The Decay of Lying', he writes: 'I had forgotten you, and so allowed your hair to grow over the sore place. And now, while I looked the other way, you have stolen *your own scalp!*'¹⁴⁰ It is this aggressive tone that causes Arthur Symons to comment on the pair, in a way that is also representative of wider opinion at the time: '[Wilde's] only rival in talk was Whistler, whose wit was unpleasantly bitter.'¹⁴¹

In seeking to demonstrate a line of influence from Whistler to Wilde specific to the context of their legal trials, I would hesitate to claim the kind of deeper indebtedness that Whistler does in his letters. (The two men naturally, in their public correspondence, use extravagant rhetoric to inflate their own public personas.) Specifically as regards the trials, however, I would argue that Wilde finds the 'lure' of a public forum impossible to resist. *Wilde v. Queensberry*, in fact, lends itself well to dramatic interpretation. At the 2003 Edinburgh International Book Festival, Merlin Holland presented his new edition of the trial by performing 'scenes' from the cross-examination in the 'character' of his grandfather, with Owen Dudley Edwards acting

¹³⁹ Reprinted in Ellmann, opposite p. 498.

¹⁴⁰ *Gentle Art*, p. 238.

¹⁴¹ Arthur Symons, unsigned review of the *Collected Works* (1908), first published in the *Athenaeum* (16 May 1908); reprinted in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Karl Beckson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 294-301 (p. 300).

as Edward Carson.¹⁴² Holland describes his edition of the trial, based on a newly discovered transcript, as being ‘laid out as a play with proper names for ease of reading, though in the MS the “characters” are generally designated “Q” or “A”’.¹⁴³ Searching for a way to explain Wilde’s decision to pursue the case to the end, Holland posits ‘a perverse element of wanting to play out in court a theatrical piece whose prologue he felt he had “written,” but whose outcome was known only to the Fates’. He adds that the ‘British legal system ... had an additional attraction’, in that ‘Wilde knew he would be allowed to “perform” to the court himself’, rather than through an intermediary.¹⁴⁴ Whistler and Wilde both rehearse their lines in advance, in letters, plays, and table talk, and many of the epigrammatic phrases used in the trials, as well as the principles they express, have a familiar ring to them.

2.2 Apostle of Aestheticism: Wilde’s American Performance

Affectation is the target of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Patience, or Bunthorne’s Bride*. The American debut of the ‘Aesthetic Opera’ takes place in New York City on 22 September 1881. The actor Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson recalls in his memoirs that Richard D’Oyly Carte, the promoter of *Patience*,

knowing that the American public was not familiar with the craze on which the play was built, sent Oscar Wilde on a lecture tour in order to prepare the ground for Bunthorne and his chorus of admiring ladies, and very successful this ingenious advertisement proved.¹⁴⁵

The tour lasts almost a year and includes 138 speaking engagements across the United States and Eastern Canada.¹⁴⁶ Wilde, hired as the ‘real’ Reginald Bunthorne, is intended to convey the kind of affectation lampooned in the comic opera. Wilde does convey affectation, but this affectation, expressed in his love of the mask and the epigram, is a means of subversion rather than simple comic vanity. Wilde

¹⁴² Edinburgh International Book Festival, 11 August 2003.

¹⁴³ Holland, pp. xl-xli.

¹⁴⁴ Holland, pp. xxxiv-xxxvi.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Leslie Baily, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (London: Cassell, 1952), p. 185.

¹⁴⁶ Ellmann, *Wilde*, pp. 178-81.

manipulates the artificiality of his role and turns D'Oyly Carte's invitation to public ridicule into an opportunity to advertise his public persona and his principles. The manifesto that Wilde performs in America, based in three lectures, is less about the outdated fad of Aestheticism and more about Oscar Wilde the rising poet and playwright. Live performance distinguishes Wilde's lecture tour from other early examples of the artistic manifesto, which often appear in prefaces or exhibition catalogues, and links it to the manifestos of the pre-war avant-garde. In *Vera, or The Nihilists*, Wilde's first play and the one he attempts to stage during his visit to America, Vera's brother Michael is dismissive of written propaganda. In a meeting of the conspirators, he declares in response to Professor Marfa's essay on violence and revolution: 'I think little of pen and ink revolutions. One dagger will do more than a hundred epigrams.'¹⁴⁷ With his widely publicized tour as the Apostle of Aestheticism, Wilde makes an important leap toward the publicly-performed, image-driven manifesto.

The lectures give Wilde the opportunity to declare his opinions on art in general and Aestheticism in particular. The two most widely performed lectures, 'The Decorative Arts' and 'The House Beautiful', offer advice on how to beautify nation and home, respectively. The appearance these lectures (and their lecturer) take could be said to represent, to embody, their content. They are about superficiality, and they are presented by an 'aesthete' wearing knee breeches and surrounded by sunflowers or lilies. In this sense the lectures would appear to follow the role described in *Patience*: the aesthete is a sham, a faddist who is 'distinguished by an eccentricity of taste tending to an unhealthy admiration for exhaustion, corruption and decay', as one handbill states.¹⁴⁸ But Wilde indicates otherwise in a letter sent during the first month of his tour to Archibald Forbes, a war correspondent and rival lecturer with whom he was having a public feud: 'I have something to say to the American people ... that I know will be the beginning of a great movement here'.¹⁴⁹ The term 'Aestheticism' can refer either to a fashion in attitude and dress, or to the more radical intellectual

¹⁴⁷ Oscar Wilde, *Vera, or The Nihilists*, in *Complete Works*, 681-720 (p. 688). Elsewhere, Prince Paul quips: 'I find the most violent proclamations from the Executive Committee, as they call it, left all over my house. I never read them; they are so badly spelt as a rule' (p. 698).

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Baily, p. 179.

¹⁴⁹ *Letters*, p. 88.

trend described by Thomas Mann, in his essay comparing Wilde to Nietzsche, as 'the first head-on assault upon the hypocritical morality of the middle-class Victorian age'.¹⁵⁰ Wilde's manifestos bring the serious and trivial definitions together. His particular talent for rehabilitating clichés – for which 'revolutionary' inversions Regenia Gagnier has compared him to the more 'serious' aphorists Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard¹⁵¹ – is displayed in his approach to D'Oyly Carte's offer of an American tour. He takes a label of ridicule, the Apostle of Aestheticism, and turns it to his advantage, while he addresses both esoteric and popular aspects of the movement. The Irish playwright Dion Boucicault, who was living in New York at the time of Wilde's arrival, writes in a letter: 'Carte thought he had got hold of a popular fool. When he found that he was astride of a live animal instead of a wooden toy, he was taken aback.'¹⁵²

Wilde lands in New York armed with, in Whistler's words, 'the courage of the opinions ... of others!'¹⁵³ Some opinions come from Ruskin, whose name appears frequently in the lectures, and others derive from Pater, whose name does not. Added to these influences is the voice of Bunthorne, which Wilde is encouraged to imitate for his audience. His lectures are less controversial, at first glance, than might have been expected. There is indeed some truth in the answer Wilde reputedly gives the customs officer in New York: 'I have nothing to declare except my genius'.¹⁵⁴ But the artistic manifesto rarely gives us any real information other than the declaration of its own genius: eschewing reasoned argument, it convinces by force of style. It is generally associated with the 'new' and the progressive in art and politics, but this defining newness is more often achieved by changing direction than by breaking a new path. A familiar road may appear strikingly different when seen from a speeding motorcar, and this is how the Italian Futurists revive the Symbolist ideas of a passing age with the imagery of a new age. Wilde preaches the wisdom of the Ancient

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Mann, 'Nietzsche's Philosophy in Light of Recent History', in *Oscar Wilde: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Richard Ellmann (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 169.

¹⁵¹ Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987), pp. 7-8.

¹⁵² *Letters*, p. 135.

¹⁵³ *Gentle Art*, p. 164.

¹⁵⁴ Ellmann, *Wilde*, p. 152.

Greeks, the Romantics, and the Pre-Raphaelites, among others, but everything he borrows is inscribed with his own signature before it is returned to the public sphere.

Wilde's transatlantic journey follows the path not of the Irish immigrants who fled the Famine only a few decades earlier, but of a new kind of immigrant to America: the touring celebrity. Dickens, Twain and Thackeray were among the most famous authors to have crossed the Atlantic on their lecture tours, and Yeats would make his mark in 1903-04. Wilde has more in common, however, with theatrical oddities like William (Buffalo Bill) Cody, particularly when he leaves the cities of eastern America for the newly created towns and cities of the West. As Malcolm Bradbury points out in *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 'other writers had come under the auspices of the well-known lecture agencies ... Wilde's [tour] was sponsored by the British theatrical impresario D'Oyly Carte'.¹⁵⁵ In Memphis, Wilde is mistaken for Buffalo Bill. Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith's daily account of the tour, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America (1882)*, published in 1936, describes a cheering crowd standing outside Wilde's train carriage thinking he is Cody, while a brass band, which happened to be waiting for the train, strikes up 'See the Conquering Hero'.¹⁵⁶ Wilde competes with the circus in Kansas City, where the local *Times* reports that his audience diminished as 'a large proportion of local aesthetes [went] over to the East Side to see Zazel fired out of a cannon'.¹⁵⁷ Like the travelling circus, the touring Wilde is promoted as a potential danger that can nevertheless be witnessed safely from a distance as a thrilling spectacle.¹⁵⁸ The further west that Wilde travels, the more he faces the challenge of being received not as a known figure of a contemporary movement, but as a symbol of everything that is foreign and 'other' – the voice and image of European decadence. The Chicago *Daily News* gives Wilde a typically hostile reception in the form of a poem, which concludes:

Here in the energetic West
We have no vacant niches

¹⁵⁵ Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1995), p. 203.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis and Smith, p. 359.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, p. 332.

¹⁵⁸ As Dollimore argues, 'One of the many reasons why people were terrified by Wilde was because of a perceived connection between his aesthetic transgression and his sexual transgression' (p. 67).

For clowns with pansies in the vest
Or dadoes on the breeches.

We do not live by form or rule,
We love our wives and lassies;
We like to look at Western mules,
But not aesthetic asses.¹⁵⁹

In Act One of *Patience*, Reginald Bunthorne sings: 'Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high aesthetic band, / If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medieval hand'.¹⁶⁰ If walking down Piccadilly in Aesthetic costume takes courage, it is nothing like the courage it would have taken to visit the smaller towns on Wilde's itinerary dressed in knee-breeches and wearing either lily, poppy, or pansy.

From the beginning of the tour, slippages appear between the role Wilde is expected to play and his actual performance on and off the stage. Where the audience expects, for example, an English gentleman who attracts women by 'uttering platitudes / In stained-glass attitudes', they are given an Irish republican whose 'attitudes' and sexual orientation are dangerously ambiguous. At least one critic sees in Wilde the worst combination of roles: the serious impostor. Ambrose Bierce, writing in his weekly 'Prattle' column for the San Francisco *Wasp* (31 March 1882), mounts a bitter denunciation of Wilde in his role as leader of the 'English Renaissance'. He states:

He is the leader, quoth'a, of a renaissance in art, this man who cannot draw – of a revival of letters, this man who cannot write! This little and looniest of a brotherhood of simpletons, whom the wickedest wits of London, haling him dazed from his obscurity, have crowned and crucified as King of the Cranks, has accepted the distinction in stupid good faith and our foolish people take him at his word.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, pp. 165-66.

¹⁶⁰ W. S. Gilbert, *Patience; or, Bunthorne's Bride*, in Gilbert, *Original Plays*, 4 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1923), III, 91-130 (p. 103).

¹⁶¹ Ambrose Bierce, 'Prattle', *Wasp* (31 March 1882), in *The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco* <<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/bierce.html>> [accessed 10 July 2005]

Bierce is no fool, and in his 'rhapsody' as he calls it – most likely in imitation of Whistler's musical titles – he parodies his own voice as the indignant columnist, not wanting to appear to side with the humourless Philistines in his judgement of Wilde. (In fact, he sounds remarkably like Whistler in his use of frequent exclamations and flamboyant strings of alliteration.) He is wrong, however, when he says that Wilde accepts the role 'in stupid good faith'. Rather he annexes the part, just as he annexes the material of his lectures, and makes it entirely his own.

Wilde could have watered down his lectures to suit his increasingly rural audiences. Instead, the lectures evolve and come to resemble manifestos in their particular features. 'The Decorative Arts', which replaces 'The English Renaissance' by mid-February 1882, and 'The House Beautiful', used as an alternate lecture from March, are both more prescriptive than the traditionally descriptive art lecture that opens the tour. As such, they speak increasingly from 'within' the movement, rather than describing its history and roots in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. These lectures state unequivocal rules about art: which elements should be 'banned' and which preserved. They criticize the present state of art in England and America, and suggest sweeping remedies. The fact that they deal with 'decorative' rather than 'imaginative' art (in Wilde's terms) is not only in keeping with the aims of Aestheticism, but it also forms a tie with Italian Futurism and other movements of the later avant-garde. The aim is to integrate art into life, and in so doing to change life itself, the same way that Futurism aspires to revolutionize every aspect of life, including fashion and cooking.¹⁶² Like Futurism, too, Wilde's 'rules' are often deliberately exaggerated or misleading, serving only to produce the desired reaction in the audience.

The manifesto is often as much a visual performance as it is a written or spoken text. In Wilde's case, the key visual element is costume. Aesthetic costume makes an easy target for the American press: a cartoon in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on 21 January 1882, for example, portrays 'Oscare Wild' studying his 'lecture profits' in a room surrounded by costumes and props, including a trunk

¹⁶² Hence Vorticism's declaration in opposition to Futurism: 'We do not want to make people wear Futurist Patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers. We are not their wives or tailors.' See 'Long Live the Vortex!', p. 7.

labelled 'Aesthetic Paraphernalia' and a long-haired wig on a stand on the mantelpiece.¹⁶³ But for Wilde personal appearance, in addition to being a gimmick used to create scandal, also illustrates a particular doctrine. He tells one reporter: 'another reason for my wearing this costume is based on a principle ... and that is that one should do as one preaches'.¹⁶⁴ He cites William Morris as a contrary example, as one who preaches but fails to practice the doctrine of Aesthetic dress.

It is ironic that Wilde is often ridiculed on the tour precisely for practising what he preaches, rather than affecting objectivity towards his subject. One of his subtler American critics, the Chicago Presbyterian preacher David Swing, writes in the *Alliance* on 3 March 1882:

Mr. Wilde mars his work by his personal peculiarities. These would not matter if he did not make himself an illustration of his art theory. He teaches and then says, 'Look at me', and thus the 'me' becomes a part of the renaissance.¹⁶⁵

The argument is that, contrary to expectation, his theories are sensible enough, but the costume distracts attention. It encourages the perception that he is a buffoon with nothing important to say – a mere Bunthorne, in other words. Wilde sometimes uses costume to illustrate his theories, and other times to contradict them. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, his conservative dress confounds a group of Harvard students who come intending to mock him in their Aesthetic garb, and find themselves the only 'Aesthetes' in the room. Control is important, and often elusive, during the tour: Wilde manipulates his appearance in part to gain control over his own publicity and the message he wants to deliver to his audiences. The outrageous costumes demonstrate contempt for complacency and resistance to ridicule. They also show his dedication to, rather than critical distance from, the doctrines he preaches. Wilde's most emphatic message, the one that is stated clearly in all three lectures, is that art must bear 'the impress of a distinct individuality'.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ See Lewis and Smith, p. 317.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, p. 276.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, p. 214.

¹⁶⁶ See 'The English Renaissance', in *Essays and Lectures*, p. 122, and 'The House Beautiful' and 'The Decorative Arts', in *Complete Works*, pp. 914 and 932.

The texts of Wilde's lectures demonstrate three very different approaches to the problem of his role in the tour, but each offers resistance as a defining characteristic. 'The English Renaissance' infuses a lengthy description of the history of Aestheticism in England with a surprisingly strong dose of republicanism and revolution, and their relation to innovation in the arts. 'The Decorative Arts' is shorter and more prescriptive, and overturns its 'feminine' subject matter by addressing itself to a male audience and emphasizing the rational, democratic and utilitarian aspects of the movement while rejecting the idea of art as a trivial luxury, as 'pansies in the vest' and 'dadoes on the breeches'. In contrast, 'The House Beautiful' addresses itself to a specifically female audience and, rather than resisting the audience's preconceptions, it indulges them to the point of parody.

In his first lecture Wilde defines 'The English Renaissance' as 'the union of Hellenism ... with the intensified individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit'.¹⁶⁷ His aim in the lecture is to review 'the general ideas which characterise the great English Renaissance of Art in this century, to discover their source ... and to estimate their future'.¹⁶⁸ As he soon discovers, the lecture he has prepared in advance is too long, too historical, and too full of contradictions in its collage of the ideas of Ruskin, Pater, Morris, and Whistler. Despite this weakness of offering the merely descriptive, the lecture succeeds by speaking directly to the republican values of its American audience. In 'Impressions of America', a lecture Wilde gives after returning to England, he tells his audience:

The Americans are the best politically educated people in the world. It is well worth one's while to go to a country which can teach us the beauty of the word FREEDOM and the value of the thing LIBERTY.¹⁶⁹

Ellmann argues that as a side-effect of the tour Wilde 'rediscovered himself as an Irishman', having previously dispensed with his nationalism and his accent while at

¹⁶⁷ 'The English Renaissance', p. 112.

¹⁶⁸ 'The English Renaissance', p. 111.

¹⁶⁹ Oscar Wilde, 'Impressions of America', in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Richard Ellmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 6-12 (p. 12).

Oxford. With this comes a rediscovery of his republican roots, and an appreciation for the American system.¹⁷⁰

Political revolution is linked with revolutionary action in the arts. The audience of 'The English Renaissance' is flattered by Wilde's declaration that, 'at a time when even such spirits as Coleridge and Wordsworth lost heart' over the direction of the French revolution, 'noble messages of love blown across seas came from your young Republic'.¹⁷¹ He draws a comparison with America's rejection of British rule when he describes the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as having 'three things that the English public never forgives: youth, power and enthusiasm'.¹⁷² Speaking like a true Marxist, he pinpoints the origins of the English Renaissance: 'it is to the French Revolution that we must look for the most primary factor of its production, the first condition of its birth: that great Revolution of which we are all the children'.¹⁷³ Wilde may seem, from his costume and reports in the press, to bring a message that is trivial and even antiquated, but behind this façade is a description of the artist as an activist, the arbiter of social and political change. He goes even further to suggest that the French Revolution, a source of inspiration for generations of artists, was itself inspired by art. He declares: 'the prelude to that wild storm which swept over France in 1789 and made every king in Europe tremble for his throne, was first sounded in literature'.¹⁷⁴ The republican theme is the most surprising aspect of the lecture, and must also have been the most puzzling to fans of *Patience* who expected something lighter in tone. Wilde warns his audience to question their preconceptions, telling them: 'you must not judge of aestheticism by the satire of Mr. Gilbert'.¹⁷⁵

Bunthorne advises his disciples to 'lie upon the daisies, and discourse in novel phrases of your complicated state of mind', and in 'The English Renaissance' Wilde

¹⁷⁰ Ellmann notes (in *Wilde*, pp. 185-86) the 'disapproving headlines' in the *Irish Nation* when Wilde arrives in New York: 'Speranza's Son ... Phrasing about Beauty while a Hideous Tyranny Overshadows His Native Land'.

¹⁷¹ 'The English Renaissance', p. 114.

¹⁷² 'The English Renaissance', p. 120.

¹⁷³ 'The English Renaissance', p. 114.

¹⁷⁴ 'The English Renaissance', p. 122.

¹⁷⁵ 'The English Renaissance', p. 136.

sometimes appears to fulfill this role.¹⁷⁶ In places he criticizes what Bunthorne calls 'idle chatter of a transcendental kind', taking the Ruskinian view that 'that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most clearly to the perfect facts of physical life'.¹⁷⁷ Elsewhere in the lecture, however, he plays Bunthorne to perfection, referring to the neglected 'sensuous element of art'.¹⁷⁸ Wilde presents a more unified front in 'The Decorative Arts'. Here he upsets the expectations of anyone seeking a Bunthorne-style entertainment. He dispenses with virtually all traces of the popular aesthete, and delivers a new manifesto with values uniformly opposed to those advertised in *Patience*. This time he speaks directly to the crowd, from 'within' the Aesthetic movement rather than from the historian's perspective. He tells the audience, 'what you want most here is not that higher order of imaginative art of the poet and the painter, because they will take care of themselves', but rather 'decorative art'. 'The art I speak of will be a democratic art made by the hands of the people and for the benefit of the people', he declares. These words are lifted from the conclusion of 'The English Renaissance' and given primary importance at the beginning of his new lecture.¹⁷⁹ Wilde closes 'The Decorative Arts' with a stern warning to America: 'all art must begin with the handicraftsman, and you must reinstate him to his rightful position. Until you do art will be confined to the few ... a luxury for the rich and idle'.¹⁸⁰

During the first month of Wilde's tour, an article in the weekly *Nation* expresses horror at the sort of men's clothing that Wilde promotes. The magazine objects to it as being indicative of idleness and even anti-democratic. 'Display of any kind is foreign to our modern notion of the perfectly well-bred man', the author states. 'Democracy is against the aristocratic beaux. Time, in the modern community, has a commercial value.'¹⁸¹ 'The Decorative Arts' playfully and defiantly overturns this objection, declaring: 'We must not be deceived by the attempt to draw the fine line of distinction between what is beautiful and what is useful. Utility is always on

¹⁷⁶ *Patience*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁷ 'The English Renaissance', p. 117.

¹⁷⁸ 'The English Renaissance', p. 133.

¹⁷⁹ 'The Decorative Arts', p. 926.

¹⁸⁰ 'The Decorative Arts', p. 927.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, p. 148.

the side of the beautifully decorated article.’¹⁸² Wilde offers his own reworking of Plato’s republic (and Ruskin’s), emphasizing the ‘rational’, the ‘healthy’, and the utilitarian, as well as the use of bright colours.¹⁸³ He declares:

Stately and simple architecture for your city, bright and simple dress for your men and women – those are the conditions of a real artistic movement; for the artist is not concerned primarily with theory but with life itself.¹⁸⁴

Wilde shrugs off the Bunthorne role, throws out the clichés of the movement he represents, and declares his new rules for an ideal society. He encourages schools of art to ‘place themselves in a more immediate relation with trade, commerce, and manufacture’, and to teach ‘rational design’. The ‘conditions of art’, he tells his audience, lie not in the ‘smoke and grime’ of English cities, but in a ‘clear, healthy atmosphere’, for, as Wilde tells his critics, ‘sickly or idle or melancholy people don’t do much in art, believe me’.¹⁸⁵ He attempts to overturn the caricature of *Patience*, as sung by Bunthorne himself in a verse often quoted in the press:

A pallid and thin young man –
A haggard and lank young man –
A greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery,
Foot-in-the-grave young man!¹⁸⁶

Wilde tells his audience that ‘aesthetics ... is not mere dainty ornament and luxury, but the expression of strength, utility, and health’.¹⁸⁷ The Aestheticist movement is modern, not ‘medieval’, and the subject matter of art should reflect this: ‘Instead of this servile imitation of romantic ages,’ he says, ‘we should strive to make our own age a romantic age.’¹⁸⁸ He continues in this vein: ‘[T]he saint is now hardly prominent enough a feature to become a motive for high art, and the day of kings and

¹⁸² ‘The Decorative Arts’, p. 928.

¹⁸³ This last element, bright colours, contrasts the muted tones of Whistler’s palette, which had become (rightly or wrongly) associated with Aestheticism.

¹⁸⁴ ‘The Decorative Arts’, p. 931.

¹⁸⁵ ‘The Decorative Arts’, p. 932.

¹⁸⁶ *Patience*, p. 126.

¹⁸⁷ ‘The Decorative Arts’, p. 932.

¹⁸⁸ ‘The Decorative Arts’, p. 930.

queens is gone; and so art should now sculpture the men who cover the world with a network of iron and the sea with ships.'¹⁸⁹ In the same month that Wilde writes 'The Decorative Arts' he also pens a preface for a book of poems by Rennell Rodd, announcing the young poet to be part of a new movement in England. He writes to J. M. Stoddart, the New York publisher, making it sound more like another manifesto of his own than the preface to a friend's work: 'The preface you will see is most important, signifying my new departure from Mr. Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, and marks an era in the aesthetic movement.'¹⁹⁰ Wilde closes his new lecture with a comment on the accusations of indecency that he already faced in the press because of his first book of poems. He anticipates the manifestos of his later career, including his statements in court and the epigrammatic 'Preface' to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by declaring: 'The most practical school of morals in the world, the best educator, is true art: it never lies, never misleads, and never corrupts.'¹⁹¹

Wilde subverts the role of the aesthete through very different means in his 'House Beautiful' lecture. He still begins by linking a just society to the flourishing of the arts, though it is 'the position of women' in this case, more than the craftsman, which must be honoured.¹⁹² Women, who make up the majority of his audiences, are several times addressed as 'you', while men are referred to as 'they' or 'them'. ('Men say they don't particularly care how they dress, and that it is little matter. I am bound to reply that I don't believe them and don't think that you do either.'¹⁹³) Wilde parodies the role of the cultural critic in this lecture, as one who guides the public. By his extreme fidelity to the role of the serious advisor in all matters of taste, he mocks anyone who would take that advice seriously. The dictum repeated here, that 'any system of art should bear the impress of a distinct individuality', is made ridiculous by a barrage of miniscule home improvement tips that follows, leaving no piece of silverware or embroidery unchecked. Hyperbole is the chief device, calling attention to the triviality of the role he is hired to play, and ridiculing the complacency of those

¹⁸⁹ 'The Decorative Arts', p. 933. This is the kind of proto-Futurist declaration that Vorticism uses, inversely, to prove how passé Futurism is: 'Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery', sneers their opening manifesto ('Long Live the Vortex', p. 8).

¹⁹⁰ *Letters*, p. 96.

¹⁹¹ 'The Decorative Arts', p. 936.

¹⁹² 'The House Beautiful', p. 913.

¹⁹³ 'The House Beautiful', p. 924.

who would pay for such advice. 'The revolving stool should be sent to the museum of horrors', he tells his audience. Similarly, 'Two pictures should not be hung side by side – they will either kill one another, or else commit artistic suicide'. He tells his audience, with a hint of contempt (though also perhaps indulging their social aspirations): 'You have to use delicate things to accustom your servants to handle them securely; it will be a martyrdom for a long time at first, but you may be content to suffer in so good a cause.'¹⁹⁴

Wilde tells a reporter for the Salt Lake City *Herald* that there is something missing from Morris's proclamations on 'aesthetic dress' when 'he goes about himself in the very shabbiest and ugliest of nineteenth century clothes'.¹⁹⁵ By the same token, without the living specimen of Aestheticism, the 'distinct personality' of the purely decorative, there would be something missing from Wilde's lecture on 'The Decorative Arts'. His presence turns the lecture hall itself into 'The House Beautiful'. The 'pen and ink revolutions' mentioned by Michael in *Vera* are incomplete without action, the 'dagger' of the live spectacle, text and body together. The same is true of later manifestos: the ideas of Vorticism cannot be separated from *Blast*'s violent puce wrapper and exaggerated font, the message of Italian Futurism exists as much in the excited delivery of Marinetti or on the front page of *Le Figaro* as in the numbered tenets of its declarations, and the full impact of the proclamations of Zurich Dada could only have been felt in their performance at the Cabaret Voltaire.

In his lectures to America as the Apostle of Aestheticism, Wilde is a true precursor to the historical avant-garde and its most distinctive form, the manifesto. When the frenzied production of manifestos in the early twentieth century eventually subsided, a particular kind of manifesto – the kind developed and rigorously defined by Marinetti – became too closely identified with the form. The manifesto is a more fluid and eclectic genre than this strong association with one set of characteristics allows. It is a style of writing that by its very nature must constantly be reinvented, in terms of its appearance on the page, its performance in the lecture hall, cabaret or city-street, and its rhetorical tricks. The manifesto in Britain, which has been largely

¹⁹⁴ 'The House Beautiful', pp. 921-22.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Lewis and Smith, p. 276.

ignored with the exception of Vorticism and Imagism, takes a remarkably different form to its counterparts in Continental Europe. It is more often individual than group-oriented, and tends to be reactive rather than utopian and visionary. Wilde develops his audacious and iconoclastic persona more fully in the late eighties and early nineties; the Wilde we see on tour in America is more idealistic, and he attempts to express these ideals directly in parts of his lectures. His career reaches an important turning point in 1882, and at this juncture we can see, in an exemplary form, the development of the artistic manifesto. The revolutionary political form of the French Revolution and of Marx is modified with the theatrical element, and the desire to make the manifesto itself a work of art. When this happens, the manifesto ceases to be a straightforward proclamation on the political model and it becomes part poetry, part painting, or in this case, part drama. The artistic manifesto is often, and unwisely, taken at its literal meaning as a clear statement of principles, but in art, if not in politics, it is seldom so plain.

3. Rhetoric and Renaissance: Manifestos in Scotland and Ireland, 1890-1905

The Other Nineties

On 10 December 1954, Hugh MacDiarmid writes to the novelist Neil Gunn to explain what the 'nineties' mean to him. Gunn, who began his career as a contributor to MacDiarmid's *Scottish Chapbook* (1922-23) and *Scottish Nation* (1923), had written two weeks earlier asking MacDiarmid why, in a BBC Radio broadcast, he had 'placed' Gunn's rural novels not among the texts of the Scottish Renaissance, but in the decade that stood (Gunn said) 'for an ultra-sophistication, for men like Beardsley and Oscar Wilde'. MacDiarmid's reply begins by positing a different set of associations, and a different 'renaissance':

The 'Nineties stood not only for Beardsley, Wilde, etc. – but also for the Celtic Renaissance (i.e. the Celtic Twilight stuff), e.g. Patrick Geddes with his Celtic Renascene, the early Yeats poems etc. That was the point of my reference so far as you were concerned.¹

He proceeds to tell Gunn, whose novels have indeed been described as carrying into the twentieth century Fiona Macleod's 'vision of a doomed and marginal Celticism',² that his intention was only 'to disassociate myself from romantic idealisations of Gaelic "spirituality", etc. ... in accordance with my own Marxist tenets'. Somewhat strangely, MacDiarmid invokes a younger generation of critics³ to make the case that Gunn does not belong in the 'Scottish Renaissance Movement' proper ('as laid down by me at the outset in the *Scottish Chapbook*'). In effect he tells his friend, whom he had recruited to the movement 'at the outset', that history has judged him to be

¹ *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), pp. 270-71.

² Murray G. H. Pittock, 'Sharp, William [Fiona Macleod] (1855-1905)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36041>, accessed 16 March 2005.

³ MacDiarmid writes: 'There have been a great number of essays on [the Scottish Renaissance] in American, Canadian, French, German & other reviews & books lately and all these writers ... omit your name altogether'. In *Letters*, pp. 271-72.

‘something entirely different’, a throwback to the previous generation, and an older ‘renaissance’.⁴

The Scottish Renaissance inaugurated by MacDiarmid in the twenties has its share of manifestos, which is not surprising given the decade in which it takes place and the radical politics of the man at the head of the movement.⁵ ‘The Chapbook Programme’ in particular, published in the second issue (September 1922), sets out in straightforward manifesto style an agenda for the magazine and the movement it claims to represent, starting with ‘The principal aims and objects’ and ending with a vow to ‘meddle wi’ the Thistle’.⁶ It is a mix of the practical (*‘Should you wish to help us, kindly send us the names of friends likely to be interested’*) and the polemical, seen in the objective: ‘To insist upon truer evaluations of the work of Scottish writers than are usually given in the present over-Anglicised condition of British literary journalism’.⁷ Following in the wake of artistic movements like Vorticism, Imagism, Russian and Italian Futurism, and Dada, and political events like the 1916 Easter Rising, someone wishing to formulate a national movement in the arts with accompanying propaganda would have any number of existing templates and texts from which to borrow. But what about the late-nineteenth-century movements referred to in MacDiarmid’s letter, the twin renaissances – one famous, the other nearly forgotten – led by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, William Sharp and Patrick Geddes? How did they draw up their manifestos, what did they wish to proclaim, and how do their declarations of principle compare with the later examples of Marinetti, Loy, Tzara, Pound, or Wyndham Lewis?

For a short time, in the mid-nineties, the two separate movements appear ready to fuse together and create a single Celtic Renaissance. Roy Foster describes a point at which pan-Celticism is ready to take hold, aided by an alliance of two of its

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ MacDiarmid writes disparagingly on the subject of artistic manifestos in Scotland: ‘Scottish artists have not written much. They have been unfortunately free from the habit of issuing manifestos.’ See Hugh MacDiarmid, *Aesthetics in Scotland*, ed. by Alan Bold (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984), p. 73.

⁶ ‘The Chapbook Programme’, *Scottish Chapbook*, 1.2 (September 1922), 2. This vow is repeated in Part Three of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1926): ‘To meddle wi the thistle and to pluck / The figs frae’t is my metier, I think.’ The reference is to the famous motto of the Order of the Thistle, ‘*Nemo me impune lacessit*’, commonly translated into Scots as, ‘Wha daurs meddle wi me’.

⁷ *Ibid.*

leading lights. In June 1896, Yeats 'had written excitedly to Sharp about the need to further "the mutual understanding and sympathy of the Scotch Welsh and Irish Celts"; this seemed about to happen'.⁸ The following year, Yeats and Lady Gregory's first collective proclamation is for a *Celtic* Theatre, though it is soon replaced by the call for an *Irish* Literary Theatre. In two letters written on the same day in 1898, in fact, Yeats uses the former name when he discusses plans with Lady Gregory ('Immediately after that ... we can announce the Celtic Theatre'), and the latter name when he explains the 'case' for the new project to Thomas Patrick Gill:

People should be asked to support the Irish Literary Theatre on patriotic grounds, but they should first be made to feel [*sic*] that there is an actual school of Irish spiritual thought in literature & that their patriotism will support this. Ireland is leading the way in a war on materialism, decadence, triviality as well as affirming her own individuality. That is our case.⁹

The letters show that Yeats is uncertain about – or at least unwilling to commit to – a single vision. The 'patriotic grounds' for founding a new theatre in Dublin are of minor importance in his letters to Lady Gregory at this time, but to potential supporters he is willing to highlight this aspect, and augment it with his reassurance that the Irish Literary Theatre will help in the spiritual battle against 'materialism' and 'decadence', rather than contributing to the moral and social decline that has its source, one would guess, in Yeats's other home: London.

3.1 Proclaiming Identities: City, Nation, and Self in Patrick Geddes and William Sharp's *Evergreen*

The first issue of the *Scottish Chapbook* opens with the acknowledgement of an earlier Scottish literary review that also makes a call for renewal: Patrick Geddes and

⁸ Foster, *Life*, I: *The Apprentice Mage* (1997), 166.

⁹ *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by John Kelly and others, 3 vols to date (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986-), II, pp. 302-03.

William Sharp's *Evergreen* (1895-97). The manifesto, or 'Causerie', that launches the *Chapbook* pays homage to the 'forgotten' *Evergreen* of the previous generation –

that, while the organ of a band of social reformers in one of the poorest quarters of Edinburgh, it also touched an international note, and kept up the spirit of the best ideals in literature and art. Naturally, this being so, it speedily became defunct, and the movement of which it was the organ scarcely outlasted it.¹⁰

Mentioned alongside the *Evergreen* is *Lyra Celtica* (1896), edited by Elizabeth Sharp with a preface by William Sharp. Their poetry anthology is even more a relic of the Celtic Twilight than the *Evergreen*, and it receives dismissive treatment by the young MacDiarmid. He quotes a representative line from the preface to make his point: 'Scotland is again becoming the land of Old Romance'.¹¹ That Sharp also edits the progressive, Geddes-funded *Evergreen*, and serves as managing director of his publishing house, Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, is not mentioned by MacDiarmid. He portrays the still living and very active Geddes – the leader of that 'band of social reformers' he applauds – as a worthy predecessor. By contrast the late, unfashionable Sharp, whose career in the nineties masquerading as Fiona Macleod is preceded by a decade in London doing literary odd jobs, represents all that Modernism, and modern Scotland, wish to leave behind.¹² These two examples of the earlier Scottish renaissance – the *Evergreen* and *Lyra Celtica*, Geddes and the Sharps – having been evoked for MacDiarmid's readers, are dismissed in a single line: 'The Scottish literary revival proved to be a promise that could not be kept.' This re-enacted demise sets the stage for the new renaissance that is the purpose of MacDiarmid's efforts in 1922. 'To-day', he declares, 'there is a distinct change in the air.'¹³

How fair is this assessment of the 'failed' Scottish renaissance and its most prominent figures? Even a cursory glance at the *Evergreen* and the *Scottish*

¹⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), 'Causerie', *Scottish Chapbook*, 1.1 (August 1922), 2-5 (p. 4).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Responding to Sharp's hyperbolic claim in the 'Preface' to *Lyra Celtica*, for example, that 'there are more than a hundred Gaelic singers in Western Scotland whose poetry is ... as beautiful as any that is being produced throughout the rest of the realm', MacDiarmid quips: 'He must have imagined that miraculous band in some inconceivable moment of transition between himself and "Fiona Macleod"'. (*Ibid.*)

¹³ *Ibid.*

Chapbook, placed side by side, reveals how similar they are in character, and this might tell us something about broader resemblances between the movements. Both periodicals feature the 'lion rampant' motif on their covers: the more costly and ornate *Evergreen* has the image embossed in leather on the back cover, paired with the thistle, while the *Chapbook*'s cheaper design has a drawing of it printed on the front in black ink on red paper, beside the motto: 'Not Traditions – Precedents'. This motto, on the one hand reflecting its Modernist tendencies, also reveals a similarity with its predecessor. The *Evergreen* states in one of its manifestos, the 'Prefatory Note' to the second (Autumn 1895) issue, that it seeks to 'pass, through Decadence, towards Renaissance'.¹⁴ 'The solution', this piece insists, 'lies through action, through experiment'. The dominant theme of the *Evergreen*'s first two issues is rebirth, but, like the *Chapbook*, it refers back to a historical precedent before attempting to move forward and establish precedents of its own.¹⁵ This simultaneous backward- and forward-looking aspect serves in the case of both the *Evergreen* and the *Chapbook* to ground the project, thus establishing its feasibility: if it must succeed where earlier attempts have failed, at least these earlier attempts, which enjoyed their own fleeting victories, did exist.

Just as the *Chapbook* acknowledges Geddes and Sharp's efforts toward a Scottish revival, the *Evergreen* prefaces its own endeavours by invoking Allan Ramsay's eighteenth-century anthology of the same name. Ramsay's *Ever Green* (1724), as well as exhibiting the same interest in folklore and primitivism that Sharp (in particular) fosters in his *Evergreen*, also 'sought to preserve the country's status as a cultural centre'¹⁶ – an aim championed by Geddes in his multiple roles and later by MacDiarmid in numerous publishing ventures. Following his friend and mentor Ezra Pound, MacDiarmid attempts in the *Chapbook* to 'make it new'. He cannot do this, however, without first acknowledging a pre-existing 'it' – the attempt by the previous generation to stage its own cultural revival – especially with the living Geddes acting

¹⁴ Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford, 'Prefatory Note', *Evergreen*, 2 (Autumn 1895), 8.

¹⁵ This feature is common to the manifesto more generally. For a discussion of the manifesto's acknowledgement of predecessors, see 'The Question of Influence' in Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 54-60.

¹⁶ Murray J. H. Pittock, 'Ramsay, Allan (1684-1758)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23072>, accessed 16 March 2005.

as a continuing inspiration. The *Evergreen*, as its name suggests, is a more conservative periodical than the revolutionary *Chapbook*, whose 'Programme' indicates an aggressive nationalist stance. Nevertheless, many of the 'principal aims' it declares – including the interest in Franco-Scottish ties, the publication of contemporary Scottish poets, and the desire to 'bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation' – are shared by the *Evergreen*.

The personal relationship between Geddes and Sharp lasts only about as long as their professional collaboration. Their friendship is brief but intense, unfortunately dissolving into an acrimonious split in 1896. Evidence of the intensity of their initial bond is that Sharp was godfather to Arthur Allhallow Geddes, born on Halloween in 1894, only weeks after the two first met.¹⁷ The next year Geddes and Colleagues began publishing books written by Sharp as Fiona Macleod, including *The Sin-Eater and Other Tales* (1895). Sharp's letter to Anna Geddes in January 1895, signed 'Fiona Macleod and William Sharp', further demonstrates the intimate nature of the friendship between the two couples:

I often think of you and Geddes: and always with a glow of pleasure, and, if you will allow me to say so, of affection. My wife, who liked you both so much, now says she is quite in love with both of you!

Well, were you very surprised when Geddes told you that W.S. and Fiona Macleod are one and the same person?¹⁸

The optimism of this new friendship and collaboration in the mid-nineties is perhaps symptomatic of the new earnest endeavours emerging in Scotland and Ireland to coincide with the end of Aestheticism's campaign against 'earnestness' (in the common sense of the word). New links between nationalism, civic projects, and the arts and sciences, like the link between Sharp and Geddes, produced metaphors of rebirth and regeneration to replace, to some extent, the reigning images of decadence

¹⁷ I am indebted to Professor William Halloran for providing me with details of the friendship between Sharp and Geddes via email during 2004-05, as well as transcripts of their correspondence not yet available on the online William Sharp 'Fiona Macleod' Archive (London: Institute of English Studies, University of London School of Advanced Study), <http://www.sas.ac.uk/ies/cmpps/Projects/Sharp/>. The letters cited below by collection are to be added to the online archive in the near future.

¹⁸ NLS Geddes Collection. Letter dated 10 January 1895.

and 'degeneration'. Even in the writings of Fiona Macleod, which still reflect the image of the 'doomed Celt', there is a hint at 'renaissance'. In the long dedication to Edith Wingate Rinder ('E. W. R.') that serves as an introduction to *Pharais*, the author states: 'A passing race: and yet, mayhap not so.'¹⁹

Identity emerges as a central theme in the *Evergreen* and the manifestos it contains. Sometimes it is an explicit topic of debate, while at other times, as in the case of Sharp's dual identity, it is implicit. The magazine's often conflicted sense of place – its loyalties to Edinburgh, Scotland, London and to a cosmopolitan intellectual community – is one aspect of this complex identity. Another is the sexual identity of Sharp and his more productive alter ego, Fiona Macleod. Like MacDiarmid, Sharp writes under a variety of pseudonyms during his career, going to great lengths to keep their identities distinct and convincing. In the case of Fiona, her reputation as the leading Scottish author in the Celtic revival of the nineties easily overshadows Sharp's own modest fame. Given that the two personalities profess different opinions (as well as different religions²⁰), it is important to ask what if any effect this masquerade has on the magazine. With 'decadence' and 'degeneration' being prevailing themes for artists and critics in the period in which the *Evergreen* is published – the first issue appears only weeks before Oscar Wilde's case against the Marquess of Queensberry goes to trial – another important question is how the magazine attempts to construct an alternative identity as an agent of renewal and rebirth. What is its relationship to a more 'decadent' contemporary like the *Yellow Book* (1894-97), for example? By pursuing these lines of investigation, I hope to draw a clearer picture of the *Evergreen* and, by extension, to bring into focus new aspects of the history and character of the manifesto.

In the *Evergreen*'s outward appearance there is little to suggest a conflict of identity. The 'Northern Seasonal' appears to be a 'quality' magazine devoted to Celtic folklore and the 'nature cult', without much sign of deeper political allegiance

¹⁹ William Sharp (Fiona Macleod), *Pharais: A Romance of the Isles* (Derby: Harpur and Murray, 1894), p. ix.

²⁰ Sharp's background is Protestant, though he might also be described as Pagan, while Fiona Macleod is revealed by Sharp to be Catholic. See Flavia Alaya, *William Sharp – 'Fiona Macleod': 1855-1905* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 165.

or programme. The pattern of lion rampant and thistle that features on the back cover is somewhat hidden, and the front cover indicates London and Edinburgh as places of publication. Drawings, etchings and woodcuts adorning the pages emphasize the seasonal theme – each of the four issues represents a different season – and the images tend to be more vaguely pastoral than markedly Celtic in style.²¹ The table of contents is divided into four sections, the same for each issue but with seasonal variations. In the first issue, there is ‘Spring in Nature’, ‘Spring in Life’, ‘Spring in the World’, and ‘Spring in the North’. Only the last section, with its Gaelic titles and a piece by Geddes on ‘The Scots Renaissance’, suggests a specifically Scottish character.

Fiona Macleod’s contributions, several of them in each issue, provide the most obvious link to Scottish nationalism, although this link proves somewhat ambiguous. She is at this time, as William Sharp describes her in a letter dated 27 September 1895, ‘the head of the Scots-Celtic movement – as W. B. Yeats is of the Irish-Celtic’.²² In the same letter, Sharp describes the *Evergreen* as ‘the organ of “Young Scotland”’, which again invites a comparison with the more established literary revival in Ireland. Yeats, for his part, includes Fiona Macleod in a list of upcoming playwrights for the Irish, or rather ‘Celtic’, Literary Theatre in the movement’s first manifesto in 1897.²³ Yeats reflects in *Autobiographies* that Sharp ‘attributed to her the authorship of all his books that had any talent’. He differs in this respect from the majority of critics who, once the truth comes out, are disparaging of

²¹ The main exception to this is the occasional use of decorative ‘initials’ reminiscent of the Book of Kells or similar illuminated manuscripts.

²² Letter to Edmund Clarence Stedman. Held in the Library of the University of British Columbia.

²³ ‘The Celtic Theatre’ (August 1897), reprinted in Foster, *Life*, I, 184. The document, which Foster describes as a ‘manifesto’, is in Yeats’s handwriting, ‘with many excisions and afterthoughts’. It begins: ‘We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence, will be written with a high ambition; <we pro> and to make a beginning next spring, with two plays, a play of modern Ireland and in prose by Mr Edward Martyn & a play of legendary Ireland & in verse by Mr W B Yeats. <Plays> We expect to follow them <by> with plays by Mr George Moore, Mr Standish O’Grady, Miss Fiona MacCleod [*sic*] & others, in other years; & <to> so to to [*sic*] build up a Celtic & Irish dramatic school.’ Earlier, in 1895, Geddes and Sharp had listed Yeats as a future contributor to the *Celtic World*, a periodical which never materialized. As Kelly notes, Yeats must have been asked to contribute to the *Evergreen* as well (*Letters*, II, 55).

Sharp's feminine side.²⁴ Sharp resists associating Fiona with the political side of the Celtic movement, however, and this becomes a source of conflict with Yeats in the late-nineties, as well as point of contention with subsequent generations of Scottish nationalists, not least MacDiarmid. The 'Fiona' pieces in the first issue of the *Evergreen* include the incantatory poem 'The Bandruidh', with its accompanying note explaining that the title refers to 'the Green Lady, i.e. Spring'. There is also a short story, 'The Anointed Man', which concerns seven brothers, the Achannas, brought up on the remote island of Eilanmhor. Of these, the narrator tells us, it is 'Upon James, the seventh son, [that] the doom of his people fell last and most heavily'; his story involves a 'tragic undoing' followed by a 'piteous end'. James's older brother is given the 'strange and unaccountable name' of Gloom – though the name is hardly surprising in the context of the gothic romance. Of the five other brothers, only the eldest, the 'anointed' Alastair, survives, the rest dying tragic deaths before the story begins.²⁵

The tone of 'The Anointed Man' is at odds with the rest of the Spring number. It is drenched in images of 'dreary cold', 'bleak, sodden pastures', 'blighted potatoes', and 'grey lands'.²⁶ In contrast, J.J. Henderson's story 'The Return' is more typical: it shows a young man, Philip, fleeing the city for the countryside, where he immediately experiences an awakening ('All his apathy was gone') and is reunited with his love, Agnes. She tells him: 'The future is all ours.'²⁷ These two stories represent one of the central conflicts in the *Evergreen*, in terms of its nationalism. Geddes's vitality lends to many of the pieces, including the manifestos, a strong air of optimism. This extends to the project of 'The Scots Renaissance' as outlined by Geddes at the end of the first issue. It conflicts, however, with the view of a doomed Celtic race that defines many of the Fiona pieces. In addition, Fiona Macleod's pan-Celticism, while it opposes what Sharp sees as Anglo-Saxon materialism, is too diffuse to be pinned down to the service of a narrower, more pragmatic political

²⁴ Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 341. Before he knew the truth about Sharp-Macleod, in fact, Yeats seems to have preferred the elusive female poet to her less talented intermediary. For a summary of the critical reception of Sharp-Macleod, see Alaya, pp. 4-10.

²⁵ Fiona Macleod (William Sharp), 'The Anointed Man', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 101-05.

²⁶ 'The Anointed Man', pp. 102-03.

²⁷ J. J. Henderson, 'The Return', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 69-75 (p. 74).

nationalism. In this respect, at least, Sharp and Geddes hold similar views, as the manifestos co-authored by Geddes demonstrate.

Geddes's essay-manifesto, 'The Scots Renaissance', represents the most explicit discussion of Scottish nationalism in the *Evergreen*. It begins on an elegiac note with a commemoration of the death of John Stuart Blackie, the University of Edinburgh professor whose great popularity manifests itself in a long funeral procession through the streets of the city. The piece opens, 'Blackie was buried yesterday', and Geddes describes 'the working people in their thousands and tens of thousands [who] lined the way from St. Giles' to the Dean'.²⁸ The occasion for mourning, however, quickly becomes a jubilant demonstration of hope for the future:

Coming down the Mound, in full mid-amphitheatre of Edinburgh, filled as perhaps never before, with hushed assemblage of city and nation, the pipes suddenly changed their song, ceased their lament, and 'Scots Wha Hae' rang out in strenuous blast; the anthem of a Renascent – ever renascent – unconquerably renascent people.

The death of Robert Louis Stevenson the previous December is recalled ('it is but one step in thought to that solitary Samoan hill'); the two men are named 'the leader of nationality' and 'the leader of literature', respectively. Geddes uses these winter deaths in the inaugural spring issue of the *Evergreen* to frame his challenge: 'What then – save "Finis Scotiae!" – can remain for us to say?'²⁹ He begins to answer by acknowledging 'signs that some reaction' to Scotland's troubles 'is at hand'. But this 'reaction' is negative: it takes the form of a 'narrower' nationalism ('we have gone on increasing our libations and orations every St. Andrew's Day') that ignores the true problems facing the country, whether in education, science, law, literature, or medicine.³⁰ 'Where then lies the true patriotism?' he asks. The final answer, despite his opening eulogy, is that it lies 'primarily in energy for the living; only secondarily in honours to the dead'. This 'living Scotland', with its 'renascent' architecture and 'artistic life', is centred in Edinburgh, in accordance with Geddes's belief in the metropolis as a concentration of the intellectual life of a nation. Edinburgh is used

²⁸ Patrick Geddes, 'The Scots Renaissance', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 131-39 (p. 132).

²⁹ 'The Scots Renaissance', p. 133.

³⁰ 'The Scots Renaissance', p. 134.

consistently in Geddes's writings as a model or microcosm for larger geo-political phenomena. Indeed, at the end of the piece there is a small drawing of the city in silhouette: fittingly, it is unclear whether the time of day depicted is dusk or dawn, though we might assume it is the latter. This position between past and future, ending and beginning, that runs through the *Evergreen* is reinforced at the conclusion of the piece, again in the context of Scottish (or more broadly, Celtic) nationalism. The closing lines overlay the opening image of a public funeral with a seasonal image of the Resurrection:

Such is our Scottish, our Celtic Renaissance – sadly set betwixt the Keening, the watching over our fathers dead, and the second-sight of shroud rising about each other. Yet this is the Resurrection and the Life, when to faithful love and memory their dead arise.³¹

Edinburgh struggles for precedence with the greater Scottish nation in the pages of the *Evergreen*, but ultimately the city triumphs. If this is not made sufficiently clear in 'The Scots Renaissance' of the first issue, then it is made clear in the 'Envoy' of the final issue. The 'Envoy' is one of two short manifestos which bookend the *Evergreen*'s two-year, four-season run. Its counterpart is Geddes and Victor Branford's 'Prefatory Note', in the second issue of Autumn 1895. This lists the *Evergreen*'s main concerns as being 'the Celtic Renaissance, now incipient alike in Literature and Art' – the confident tone already marking a progression from the issue of the previous spring – as well as 'the revival and development of the old Continental sympathies of Scotland'.³² Both these aims appear at first to be national in character, but upon closer inspection they also can be seen to fix the Scottish capital in an international context, and to emphasize its cosmopolitanism. The declaration reads: 'while we would renew local feeling and local colour, we would also express the larger view of Edinburgh as not only a National and Imperial, but a European city', and further, that 'we would ... share in that wider culture-movement which knows neither nationality nor race'. There follows a reference to 'our open and growing group', a community whose numbers swelled with visitors each August for

³¹ 'The Scots Renaissance', p. 139.

³² 'Prefatory Note', p. 8.

Geddes's highly successful summer school held in University Hall. In addition the 'Prefatory Note' mentions 'our illustrious guest' – to the summer school of 1895 and to the Autumn issue – the French geographer and anarchist Elisée Reclus, who contributes an article on his idea of 'La Cité du Bon Accord', again in keeping with Geddes's civic philosophy and focus.

The second short manifesto, the 'Envoy' signed by Geddes and the poet William MacDonald, comes at the end of the winter issue of 1896-97. This piece emphasizes the strong local identity of the magazine, referring to

our little group of townsmen and gownsmen, who for these ten years past have been quietly gathering themselves together among the nooks and byways, the ways and outlooks of our ever ruinous, ever renascent Old Town.³³

The eclectic membership and sometimes conflicting views of the group (which increase, not least between Geddes and Sharp, as the magazine reaches its final number) are alluded to as well. The 'frankly experimental' magazine, it states, has had 'no central authority, still less constraint ... its artists and writers have been each a law unto themselves'. Now, at the end of this 'first venture', the disparate groups involved, including 'naturalist', 'sociologist', and 'Celticist', will 'develop apart' 'in fresh gatherings and meetings ... Scottish or cosmopolitan, in new initiatives at home or afield'. This statement makes it clear that the *Evergreen* has been a local project with international connections and ambitions, only secondarily concerned with the issue of Scottish nationalism. The *Evergreen*'s nationalism is diluted further still by the broader concept of Celticism. Sharp defines this group in the prospectus for an unrealized second publication, the *Celtic World*, which is included in a letter to Geddes in March 1895. The magazine was to include 'Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Manx, Cornish, & Breton writers'.³⁴

³³ Patrick Geddes and William MacDonald, 'Envoy', *Evergreen*, 4 (Winter 1895-96), 155-56 (p. 155).

³⁴ NLS, Geddes Collection. Sharp's 'very strong list' promises to include Yeats, Douglas Hyde, and George Russell (AE). Although he would be editor, he tells Geddes: 'I think it best that the Editorial indication should be either | Published by Patrick Geddes and Colleagues | or simply Edited and Published in Edinburgh.'

The emphasis placed on Edinburgh, in both its national and international contexts, may be explained with reference to Geddes's geographical and sociological interests. The Outlook Tower on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, which Geddes purchased in 1892, is widely regarded as the symbol – and the literal manifestation – of his vision.³⁵ The building and its eight floors of exhibits, with the famous camera obscura at the top, was a civic museum that aimed to show visitors 'the universe as seen from this point in Edinburgh'.³⁶ The survey began at the top with 'Edinburgh and its region' (including a view of the street below through the camera obscura), and proceeded down through 'ever-widening geographical and cultural zones' – Scotland, Britain, the British Empire, Europe, and the World – to ground level.³⁷ Like Yeats's Thoor Ballylee, the Outlook Tower is a manifesto in architecture, a monumental symbol of its caretaker's vision. Together with the *Evergreen* and the publishing house of Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, the Tower is the site from which Geddes and Sharp launch their local, national, and cultural renaissance. Its goal, in Elizabeth Sharp's words, was 'to recreate an active centre and so arrest the tremendous centralising power of the metropolis of London'.³⁸

The Outlook Tower is a symbol of resistance and a challenge to London's hegemony as a centre of innovation and cultural production. But William Sharp's ambition stretches even further than his wife's letter suggests. He tells Geddes, in January 1895, after receiving the offer of a job at Geddes and Colleagues:

If you intend me to be the literary 'boss' in the firm ... I would give my best thought, care, & experience to making the venture a success in every way, & ultimately a potent factor in the development of Scotland & of [Edinburgh] in particular ... one effort would be to centralise in Edinburgh all the Celtic work now being done by Scottish, Irish, and Welsh writers.³⁹

³⁵ See, for example, the short section on the Outlook Tower in Volker M. Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 78-80.

³⁶ Philip Mairet, *Pioneer of Sociology: The Life and Letters of Patrick Geddes* (London: Lund Humphries, 1957), p. 70.

³⁷ Welter, p. 78.

³⁸ *William Sharp: A Memoir*, ed. by Elizabeth Sharp (London: Heinemann, 1910), p. 249. Hereafter called *Memoir*.

³⁹ NLS, Geddes Collection.

This is a very bold plan given the success of the Irish Literary Revival at the time. In 'The Scots Renaissance', Geddes calls for a 'Literature of Locality' – a phrase that does little to define its own parameters.⁴⁰ *Evergreen* readers may wonder whether Scotland itself is the 'locality' described, or if the nation is only a loose coalition of smaller, more distinct regions. In either case, the phrase suggests a radical decentralization, shifting focus away from the centre and toward the Celtic fringe, where the Outlook Tower would provide a different perspective, 'as seen from this point in Edinburgh'.

The foundations of the *Evergreen* project are, in a very literal sense, rooted in Edinburgh. Not only is the magazine a reincarnation of Ramsay's eighteenth-century publication of the same name; it is actually conceived in premises linked directly to Ramsay. As Mairet informs us, Geddes had purchased Ramsay Garden, just up the Royal Mile at the Castle Gate, in 1894, as one of his several renovation projects in the Old Town. His family moved into one of the flats that he converted from Ramsay's set of garden homes, while the other flats were earmarked for use by university lecturers and visiting scholars, as well as the Sharps.⁴¹ This property, like the Outlook Tower, serves as a perfect symbol of thought and action united: Geddes and his circle meeting on the spot where Ramsay himself once lived and worked on his own *Ever Green* and his own renaissance. On the subject of the previous *Ever Green*, Geddes writes: 'This little collection of old-world verse, with its return at once to local tradition and living nature, was as little in harmony with the then existing fashion of the day in literature as its new namesake would hope to be with that of our own, – the all-pervading "Decadence."'⁴²

Israel Zangwill, writing in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in February 1896, sees in Geddes's renovation projects an attempt to 'make of Edinburgh the "Cité du Bon Accord" dreamed of by Elisée Reclus'.⁴³ The author, writing on the *Evergreen* and 'the regeneration of Old Edinburgh' for his regular column, describes being led by

⁴⁰ 'The Scots Renaissance', p. 137.

⁴¹ Mairet, p. 70.

⁴² 'The Scots Renaissance', p. 136.

⁴³ Israel Zangwill, 'Without Prejudice', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 8 (1896), 327-36 (pp. 327-28).

Geddes on a tour of the Old Town, where he is clearly impressed at the physical manifestation of the *Evergreen*'s rhetoric of renewal. 'There stand the houses he has built – visible, tangible, delectable', writes Zangwill, 'concrete proofs that he is no mere visionary!' The strong practical element of Geddes's programme for a cultural renaissance sets it apart from the plethora of utopian visions which are suggested by Zangwill's dismissive phrase, 'mere visionary'. The activities overseen by Geddes in the mid-nineties, which combine literary and scientific experimentation with grassroots civic projects, are given expression in the *Evergreen* manifestos and form in the architectural symbolism of the Outlook Tower and Ramsay Garden. What Geddes later – for example in the manifesto for *The Making of the Future* (1917) – calls 'Civism' is already at the centre of his philosophy in the *Evergreen* period, despite the passing interest in a broadly defined nationalism.⁴⁴ This 'Civism', combined with Geddes's internationalism, eventually leads to the proposal for a 'Congrès International des Villes' (1910) to work towards peace and stability outside the failed nexus of nation-states.⁴⁵

As for Sharp, his own cosmopolitan ideology is summarized in the 'Notes' to *Lyra Celtica*, where he declares, in his description of Yeats: 'In the world of literature there is no geography save that of the mind.'⁴⁶ The *Evergreen* editor, as Flavia Alaya tells us, sought to 'support national movements while opposing political nationalism'.⁴⁷ In this aim, she argues, he was not alone:

Behind him ... were his Edinburgh colleagues of the *Evergreen* group ... who seem to have been totally reluctant to make their own Celtic 'renaissance' either an entirely Gaelic movement or a nationalistic one.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford, *The Making of the Future: A Manifesto and a Project* (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1917), p. 4. 'Civism' is grouped with 'humanism' and 'regionalism' as the three 'elements of reconstructive doctrine'. It includes, among other things, 'repair and renewal of historic cities' and 'the tidying up of confused industrial towns'.

⁴⁵ Welter, p. 75.

⁴⁶ *Lyra Celtica*, ed. by Elizabeth Sharp, introduction and notes by William Sharp (Edinburgh: Patrick Geddes and Co., 1896), p. 399.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of this theme in Sharp's career, see Alaya's chapter, 'The New Cosmopolitanism', in *William Sharp – Fiona Macleod*, 146–72.

⁴⁸ Alaya, p. 150. The language issue arises again with MacDiarmid's renaissance, and he, like Sharp, cites the example of the Belgian Literary Revival for an argument in favour of writing in the dominant language. He declares of Scottish literature, 'Most of it is, of course, and must continue to be, written in English. But it is not English on that account, although it is denounced on that score by the ardent

Alaya quotes Geddes, who states in the second volume of his *Memoir* that ‘our little scholastic colony in the heart of Edinburgh symbolises a movement which while national to the core, is really cosmopolitan in its intellectual reach’.⁴⁹ Sharp’s letters to Geddes at this time speak to the confusion of interests. One letter, for example, sees Sharp propose a ‘series of short books of fiction’ by international authors which ‘might be called “The Evergreen Series”: or, say, the “Cosmopolitan” Series’, making the two names appear interchangeable.⁵⁰ In her book on Geddes, Helen Meller provides a simple solution to the dilemma of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in the *Evergreen* project. Using Alaya’s chapter on Sharp’s cosmopolitanism as the basis for her argument, she writes: ‘The paradox was resolved in that their sense of national identity was built on a perception of place, and it was a romantic sensitivity to place which was the key to cosmopolitanism.’⁵¹ However, the strain of these competing ideas of place and identity is not so easily overcome as Meller’s statement suggests. As we shall see, one result of these tensions is the manifestation of an alter ego, Fiona Macleod, who embodies Sharp’s Celticism – almost as if this second identity is necessary to contain, in a more suitable ‘package’, the side of Sharp’s character that was not compatible with the urbane, professional, cosmopolitan Sharp. This ‘identity crisis’ is linked to the manifesto by the important *fin-de-siècle* motif of the mask – so beloved of Yeats – and the practice of concealing and revealing, which has been discussed already in Chapter Two in relation to another of Sharp’s contemporaries, Oscar Wilde. These themes also testify to the manifesto’s ambiguous and problematic authorship, and the strategic uses to which its attribution – group, anonymous, pseudonymous, or otherwise – is put by those seeking a safe position from which to make contentious, sometimes even dangerous, declarations.

minority bent upon the revival of the Doric.’ See MacDiarmid, ‘Scotland and Belgium’ (1922), reprinted in *The Raucle Tongue Volume I*, ed. by Angus Calder et al (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), 28-30 (p. 30).

⁴⁹ Alaya, p. 50.

⁵⁰ NLS, Geddes Collection. Letter dated 29 April 1895.

⁵¹ Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 100.

One of my arguments in this thesis has been that manifestos ‘declare’ implicitly as well as explicitly. A good illustration of this point is the *Yellow Book*’s conscious omission, in thirteen volumes, of any clear manifesto. This absence, in effect, ‘declares’: it creates a negative or anti-manifesto that is perfectly suited to the message of *l’art pour l’art*. The magazine serves no larger purpose than the display of art; it does no ‘work’ of any kind. Thus, it has no message to relate other than itself.⁵² The *Evergreen*, in contrast, does include a number of manifesto-like statements, some of which are discussed above. Sharp is not a signatory to any of the *Evergreen*’s explicit declarations, but with his dual presence in each issue, as William Sharp and Fiona Macleod, he makes a bold declaration of cultural and sexual identity – even if this declaration would have gone undetected by the majority of readers.⁵³ During the winter of 1895, immediately preceding the *Evergreen*’s first issue, Sharp makes a solo journey to the Isle of Arran. From here, he writes to Elizabeth about his increasing feeling of being ‘two people’:

There is something of a strange excitement in the knowledge that two people are here: so intimate and yet so far-off. For it is with me as though Fiona were asleep in another room.... I am eager to see what she will do – particularly in *The Mountain Lovers*. It seems passing strange to be here with her alone at last ...⁵⁴

The years 1894-96, roughly the period of the *Evergreen* and of Sharp’s fruitful collaboration with Geddes, are the most productive ones for Fiona Macleod, under

⁵² In one important sense, this is untrue: the magazine does do the work of advertising John Lane’s authors (a function shared by the *Evergreen* with regard to Patrick Geddes and Colleagues). But this work, though it is no great secret, remains separate from the internally-coherent narrative upon which the magazine sells itself – that it is the voice of English Aestheticism and the English avant-garde.

⁵³ Exceptions to this rule were a few close friends, like Geddes and Yeats, and those acquaintances who managed to put the facts together themselves, like Richard Le Gallienne who, in his review of *Pharais* in the *Star* in 1894, made his suspicions public. As Halloran tells us, ‘Sharp immediately telegraphed him “For God’s sake, shut your mouth” and promised to tell him more when they met.’ (William F. Halloran, ‘W. B. Yeats, William Sharp, and Fiona Macleod: A Celtic Drama, 1897’, in *Yeats Annual*, 14 (2001), 159-208 (p. 182).

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Memoir*, p. 244. Halloran, in the article cited above, points to a letter Sharp writes to his friend John Elder, dated 20 November 1880, in which he articulates the feeling that he possesses both male and female qualities: ‘Don’t despise me when I say that in some things I am more a woman than a man – and when my heart is touched strongly I lavish more love upon the one who does so than I have perhaps any right to expect returned’ (*Memoir*, p. 33). Halloran also mentions even earlier evidence of this doubleness, in a poem from the previous year entitled ‘Motherhood’. See ‘A Celtic Drama’, p. 204.

which name several titles are published in Britain and America. In a letter sent at the end of April 1895 and signed 'Wilfion' – which Elizabeth Sharp describes as the name she gives her husband for 'the inner and third Self that lay behind that dual expression'⁵⁵ – Sharp describes further his growing sense of doubleness, and the creative outpouring which (when unhindered by illness) accompanies it:

I am longing to be regularly at work again – and now feel as if at last I can do so. ...

More and more absolutely, in one sense, are W. S. and F. M. becoming two persons – often married in mind and one nature, but often absolutely distinct. I am filled with a passion of dream and work.⁵⁶

Sharp's literary transvestism even manifests itself in outward physical signs, according to Yeats's secondhand account of one incident. While visiting Yeats in Ireland in the late summer of 1897, Sharp tells Yeats's friends Martin Morris (Lord Killanin) and Edward Martyn – to their apparent horror – the story of a sexual encounter he had with Fiona:

He had been somewhere abroad when he saw the sidereal [*sic*] body of Fiona enter the room as a beautiful young man, and became aware that he was a woman to the spiritual sight. She lay with him, he said, as a man with a woman, and for days afterwards his breasts swelled so that he had almost the physical likeness of a woman.⁵⁷

It should be mentioned here that Fiona Macleod, according to Elizabeth Sharp and scholars (including William Halloran in 'A Celtic Drama'), was inspired to a greater or lesser degree by Sharp's lover at the time, the Celticist and translator Edith Wingate Rinder. The first Fiona novel, *Pharais*, is dedicated to Rinder, who also contributes several pieces to the *Evergreen*. Halloran tells us that on at least one occasion Sharp introduces Rinder as Fiona Macleod (to George Meredith, in June 1897), but then decides this practice is too risky to repeat.⁵⁸ Far from explaining away

⁵⁵ *Memoir*, p. 423.

⁵⁶ *Memoir*, p. 285.

⁵⁷ In Yeats, *Memoirs*, ed. by Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 129.

⁵⁸ 'A Celtic Drama', p. 182.

the significance of Sharp's alter ego, however, this bit of detective work only adds another dimension to a very complex case.

Jack Worthing, the confessed 'Bunburyist' in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which has its debut the same month Sharp is on Arran dreaming of his two selves, admits that although he is Jack in the country he chooses to be 'Earnest' when he stays in London. Eventually he learns, much to his surprise and delight, that he really is called Earnest; 'naturally', as he tells Gwendolen; in earnest.⁵⁹ Sharp makes a similar arrangement, and also finds his true self in the mask. Fiona Macleod is country-born, reclusive, and given to mysticism, while 'William Sharp' is, in Elizabeth's words, 'of the intellectually observant, reasoning mind – the actor'.⁶⁰ For Sharp, in contrast to Wilde's character, the rural self takes precedence, and becomes what Sharp calls his 'truest self'. He describes his new identity using this phrase in a letter to one of the few initiates to his well-kept secret, Catharine Janvier (later an *Evergreen* contributor), shortly after *Pharais* is published in 1894:

I can write out of my heart in a way I could not do as William Sharp ... My truest self, the self who is below all other selves, and my most intimate life and joys and sufferings, thoughts, emotions and dreams, must find expression, yet I cannot save in this hidden way.⁶¹

To meet the demands of modern life, Sharp, like Jack and Algernon, finds it necessary to be two people at once. Like Wilde, Sharp subscribes to the contrary notion of the truth of masks. Fiona comes to represent Sharp's new interest in all things Celtic and spiritual, and his retreat from the rootless (though London-based), cosmopolitan, materialist life he lived previously. He uses the *Evergreen*, in conjunction with the publishing firm of Geddes and Colleagues, to give voice to and further her career. The question that must be asked, however, is whether this new identity represents the commodification of an exaggerated or artificial self (of the

⁵⁹ At the end of the play, Jack declares: 'I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Earnest, didn't I? Well, it is Earnest after all. I mean it naturally is Earnest.' Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *Complete Works*, 357-419 (p. 418).

⁶⁰ *Memoir*, p. 223.

⁶¹ *Memoir*, p. 227.

type that Regenia Gagnier describes in the case of Wilde⁶²) or whether she embodies a more sincere quest for the 'truest self', albeit through the mask. Alaya notes that, for all his connections with Aestheticism, 'there is yet nothing amused, indifferent, or cynical' in Sharp's commitment to radical politics, including feminism, and his belief in the social relevance of art.⁶³

It is admittedly very difficult to believe that Fiona Macleod is an invention entirely untainted by commercial concerns. Sharp was known in London circles, after all, as a bit of a hack. Richard Le Gallienne records Wilde's remark that 'Whenever a great man dies, Hall Caine and William Sharp go in with the undertakers.' (Both published books on Dante Gabriel Rossetti immediately following his death – Sharp's first three books, including the Rossetti biography, are all published in 1882.)⁶⁴ Wilde makes Sharp the subject of more than one quip, despite the fact that Sharp had included two of his early poems ('Libertatis Sacra Fames' and 'On the Sale by Auction of Keats's Love Letters') in *Sonnets of This Century* (1886). He tells Le Gallienne in a letter: 'Poor Sharp! He is really irresistible – he is so serious and so foolish.'⁶⁵ Yeats recounts yet another disparaging comment Wilde makes about Sharp. 'Have you heard Oscar's last good thing?' he writes to Katharine Tynan on 28 February 1890. 'He says that Sharp's motto should be *Acutus descensus averni* (sharp is the descent into Hell). The phrase as you know begins in the orthodox way *Facilis* (easy).'⁶⁶ Although he admires Fiona Macleod, Yeats shares Wilde's contempt for Sharp as a sort of go-between. His feelings erupt when Sharp offers to chair a meeting of the Irish Literary Society in 1897: Yeats declares that this 'would bring ridicule on the whole movement', and the arrangement is cancelled, causing a row between the

⁶² Gagnier writes: 'The late-Victorian dandy ... had no patrons, so he needed a product. He produced himself. The commodification, or commercial exploitation, of the dandiacal self ... amounts to the reinscription of art into life' (p. 7).

⁶³ Alaya, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Wilde, *Letters*, p. 270. The status of these remarks could be called gossip: Le Gallienne was himself a good friend of the Sharps, and Sharp stayed with him in London on occasion. See for example Sharp's letter of 6 January 1895 responding to an invitation from Le Gallienne (U. of Texas at Austin).

⁶⁵ Letter postmarked 5 December 1888. See Wilde, *Letters*, p. 375.

⁶⁶ Yeats, *Letters to Katharine Tynan*, ed. by Roger McHugh (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1953), pp. 111-12.

two men.⁶⁷ Fiona Macleod does seem to be an identity that is deeply and passionately felt by Sharp – much more so, for example, than his earlier use of pseudonyms (for largely practical reasons) in the *Pagan Review*. The unavoidable fact, however, is that in his alter ego with the impossibly exotic name,⁶⁸ Sharp creates a perfect author for the nineties, sufficiently ‘other’ by way of both culture and gender to become, for a brief time, the bestselling novelist that Sharp himself was not. Since he was, to those who met him, more Londoner than authentic Scotsman in his manner, the revelation of Fiona Macleod must have seemed like another cunning trick. One could read his treatment of the generous and idealistic Geddes in their business relationship as further evidence of an opportunistic streak. Near the beginning of his collaboration with Geddes, in January 1895, Sharp expresses a desire to free himself of ‘all this miscellaneous pen-work’, and London with it. He tells Geddes: ‘I have a profound & chronic distaste for London & London life: and a nostalgia for the north.’ But he adds: ‘The chief drawback to any change is the problem as to some surety in income’.⁶⁹

Alaya’s clear-headed summary of Sharp’s fate at the hands of twentieth-century criticism provides a good starting point for studying his contributions to the *Evergreen* under two very different identities. Alaya, writing in 1970, describes Sharp as ‘a literary figure in utter disrepute’.⁷⁰ Decades of anti-romantic criticism in the earlier part of the century help to establish the general bias against him, but it is the ‘Celtic siren’ (as Edmund Gosse describes Fiona Macleod) who is the main target of critical disdain. Some critics, like Paul Elmer More in *The Drift of Romanticism* (1913), seek to isolate and exorcize Fiona Macleod from the more ‘hard-headed’

⁶⁷ Quoted in Foster, *Life*, I, 180.

⁶⁸ As the letters show, ‘Fiona’ was a name that puzzled many of her readers. Responding to a letter from the Welsh poet Ernest Rhys, Sharp, writing as Fiona, recounts her own history in a typically fanciful manner (23 November 1896): ‘It may interest you to know that the name which seems to puzzle so many people is (though it does exist as the name “Fiona,” not only in Ossian but at the present day, though rarely) the Gaelic diminutive of “Fionaghal” (i.e. Flora). For the rest – I was born more than a thousand years ago, in the remote region of Gaeldom known as the Hills of Dream. There I have lived the better part of my life, my father’s name was Romance, and that of my mother was Dream. I have no photograph of their abode, which is just under the quicken-arch immediately west of the sunset-rainbow. You will easily find it. Nor can I send you a photograph of myself. My last fell among the dew-wet heather, and is now doubtless lining the cells of the wild bees.’ (Quoted in *Memoir*, pp. 279-80.)

⁶⁹ NLS, Geddes Collection. Halloran dates the letter as 20 January 1895.

⁷⁰ Alaya, p. 4.

writing done by Sharp under his own name.⁷¹ Alaya concludes that to distinguish between two 'Sharps' does no favours to his oeuvre, and she points out that this practice has been used mainly to 'pass judgement' on the part of his work more closely associated with 'decadence' and the 'Celtic Twilight'.⁷² Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid reaching the conclusion that there are indeed two styles: in the *Evergreen*, at least, Sharp speaks with two distinct voices. What is important is to see how the pseudonym is used to express something that could not previously be expressed, or to give this expression the fundamental ingredient of authenticity.

The difference in the *Evergreen* pieces is chiefly between the odes to nature that Sharp publishes under his own name, and the stories and poems based on Celtic mythology that appear under the name Fiona Macleod. Sharp's poems, one in each of the first three issues, celebrate in turn the north wind ('Spirit of dauntless life, / And Lord of Liberty!'), a mountain brook ('Brown, wandering water, / Dear, murmuring water'), and the ocean ('O Sea, thou terror!').⁷³ The poems show neither great depth nor detail, being content mainly to follow the conventions of their genre. They are simple and restrained, despite frequent exclamations. The Fiona Macleod pieces are more numerous and varied: they include four stories, and seven poems in a range of styles. To write from a woman's perspective is evidently not Sharp's simple concern: in one poem, Fiona Macleod assumes a male point of view to write about her lost bride.⁷⁴ Instead, Sharp can be seen to use Fiona Macleod as a means to greater extravagance, both in style and in content. Whereas the poems under Sharp's own name are conventional and relatively impersonal – allowing for the passionate tendencies of the romantic ode – the poems and short stories of Fiona Macleod are much riskier ventures, more energetic and at the same time darker and more 'decadent' in style. They seem to be, in effect, more revealing – a contradiction given the 'lie' of their authorship, but consistent with Sharp's claims about finding his 'true'

⁷¹ Gosse is quoted in Alaya, p. 6. Her use of More, who propagated the theory of the 'hard' Sharp as distinct from the 'soft' Fiona, appears on p. 8.

⁷² Alaya, p. 7.

⁷³ Sharp, 'The Norland Wind', in *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 109; 'The Hill-Water', in *Evergreen*, 2 (Autumn 1895), 107-09; and 'Oceanus', in *Evergreen*, 3 (Summer 1896), 31.

⁷⁴ 'A Summer Air', *Evergreen*, 3 (Summer 1896), 104-5.

voice. It is the Fiona Macleod pieces, taken as a whole, that make up Sharp's manifesto.

Sharp explores the use of multiple pseudonyms in an earlier solo effort in magazine publishing, the single-issue *Pagan Review*. Here, as in the *Evergreen*, his authors have well-developed separate identities, which Sharp goes to some lengths to protect from disclosure. Again there is a parallel with MacDiarmid, who supplies his own fictional contributors for early publishing ventures including the *Scottish Chapbook* and the *Scottish Nation*.⁷⁵ Wyndham Lewis, too, uses the magazine format as an outlet for his prodigious polemicizing, although his alias, the 'Enemy', is not a secret one.⁷⁶ Sharp's *Pagan Review* features stories, poems, plays, and essays by no less than seven contributors, as well as employing a fictional assistant, W.H. Brooks, to handle correspondence. At least one contributor, W.S. Fanshawe, is even said to have published under his own name. A note explains that Fanshawe's book must be ordered through Mr. Brooks, 'Lest any miscarriage or delay occur, owing to Mr. Fanshawe's absence abroad'.⁷⁷ A story entitled 'The Pagans: A Romance', written under the name Willand Dreeme, is typical of the content. Wearing its literary flamboyance on its sleeve, it opens with a quote from Oscar Wilde. Another contributor is named Verlayne, and if this allusion is not enough, the editorial notes at the back draw curious attention to it, pairing the pseudonym with its source while conversely trying to reinforce the illusion of the pseudonymous author's existence by attacking him (that is, Sharp attacking Sharp). 'Mr. Verlayne's motive is at least original,' the note states, 'if, possibly, in its treatment, as Paul Verlaine said of a certain *pièce de fantaisie* by Rimbaud, *un peu postérieure à cette époque*'.⁷⁸

The most striking piece in the *Pagan Review* is its manifesto, which is simply signed: 'The Editor'. 'Foreword', as it is called, is an exemplary declaration of intent. It so thoroughly lays out the character and intentions of the magazine that after reading it one understands completely Elizabeth Sharp's contention that 'the one

⁷⁵ In fact, as in the case of Sharp-Macleod, Grieve is the editor of these early publications and MacDiarmid is a contributor (MacDiarmid is 'born' in the first issue of the *Scottish Chapbook*, August 1922). See Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid* (London: John Murray, 1988), pp. 134-35.

⁷⁶ See my discussion of Lewis's 'Enemy' phase in the second part of Chapter 4.

⁷⁷ *Pagan Review* 1 (15 August 1892), back cover.

⁷⁸ *Pagan Review*, p. 41.

number had served its purpose', and after it no further issues were necessary.⁷⁹ The values espoused in the manifesto, including atheism, equality between the sexes ('copartnery'), the cult of youth, and 'the sacredness of the individual', are typical of progressive thinking at the time and the widespread interest in anarchism. The rhetoric, however, has more in common with pre-war avant-garde periodicals like *Blast* than with the *Yellow Book*. It begins by declaring: 'We aim at thorough-going unpopularity', and proceeds to shun the interest of "'They'", "the general public"'.⁸⁰ Slogans, rather than carefully phrased sentences, mark the piece: 'The new paganism is a potent leaven in the yeast of the "younger generation"', is one example; another reads, 'It is LIFE that we preach ... Life to the full, in all its manifestations, in its heights and depths'.⁸¹ At the same time, it steps outside its own rhetoric to make an interesting confession about the relationship between the manifesto and the movement, or in this case the magazine, for which it speaks:

These remarks, however, must not be taken too literally as indicative of the literary aspects of *The Pagan Review*. Opinions are one thing, the expression of them another, and the transformation or reincarnation of them through indirect presentment another still.⁸²

The review also aims at sexual openness, which was perhaps intended to be its selling point (and one of the meanings implicit in the term 'paganism'). Men and women being of 'profound and fascinating' interest to one another, it argues, 'it is natural that literature dominated by the various forces of the sexual emotion should prevail', although the editor promises to resist the extremes of 'some of our French *confrères*'.⁸³

A contemporary review of the *Evergreen* in the *Sunday Times* calls it 'the first serious attempt we have seen ... to combat avowedly and persistently the decadent spirit which we have felt to be over-aggressive of late'. The reviewer seems to have

⁷⁹ *Memoir*, p. 204.

⁸⁰ *Pagan Review*, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Pagan Review*, pp. 2-4.

⁸² The manifesto ends with another key description of the manifesto's rhetoric in relation to its realization. It states: "'Much cry for little wool", some will exclaim. It may be so. Whenever did a first number of a new magazine fulfil all its editor's dreams or even intentions?' *Pagan Review*, pp. 3-4.

⁸³ *Pagan Review*, p. 3.

skipped over the Fiona Macleod pieces in reaching this conclusion; it would not be surprising, in fact, to learn that the reviewer's impression had been derived entirely from William MacDonald and J. Arthur Thomson's 'Proem', which begins the first issue of the *Evergreen*. The 'Proem' is a manifesto of 'Renascence': reflecting the spring theme, it declares, 'behold! the world is young again and visionary'.⁸⁴ At the same time, it states: 'we do not ignore the Decadence around us, so much spoken of', and decries the 'clever writers emulously working in a rotten vineyard ... healthy young men eager for the distinction of decay'.⁸⁵ The authors attack 'moral vulgarity', 'egotism', and even the epigram, which is judged 'a means of masking its emotional impotence, its bankruptcy of generous human qualities'.⁸⁶ The programme outlined 'against the background of Decadence' is one of civic pride, a return to nature, and practical plans for urban renewal ('So we may draw a little nearer to the City Beautiful'). The focus of these aims is not Scotland per se, but Edinburgh: 'Before all others there is our own, unique in the world ... what might not this city become!'⁸⁷ The theme of regeneration against the prevailing tide of 'decadence' is translated into sociological terms in Geddes's article, 'Life and its Science'. In these terms the broad aim is 'to cleanse and change the face of cities, to re-organise the human hive', metaphors suggesting the possibility of eugenics.⁸⁸ Sharp's contribution to this push for renewal is to be a lecture at the summer school of 1895, entitled, 'Disintegration: Degeneration: Regeneration', as well as one on 'The Celtic Renascence'. The lectures were to be part of a series of ten on the subject of 'Life and Art'; during the first lecture, however, Sharp suffered a major heart attack, and the series was cancelled in order that he could recuperate.⁸⁹

The *Evergreen* may appear to be a minor event in the careers of Geddes and Sharp, but it is worth examining precisely because of the collaboration between them represents a conscious attempt to unite science and art. The *Evergreen* also provides interesting examples of manifestos for an earlier Scottish renaissance, and it is

⁸⁴ William MacDonald and J. Arthur Thomson, 'Proem', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 9-15 (p. 9).

⁸⁵ 'Proem', p. 10.

⁸⁶ 'Proem', pp. 11, 15.

⁸⁷ 'Proem', pp. 12-15.

⁸⁸ Patrick Geddes, 'Life and its Science', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 29-37 (p. 37).

⁸⁹ *Memoir*, p. 251.

influential on the later renaissance engineered by MacDiarmid. There is a further link between the *Evergreen* and the ‘rebirth’ out of the ‘all-pervading “Decadence”’ in Britain and Europe generally, and Scotland and Edinburgh in particular, at the turn of the century. Finally, it describes an alternative form in which authors ‘make manifest’: that is, in Sharp’s case, with the use of a pseudonym and a separate identity as Fiona Macleod. The success of Sharp’s ‘manifesto’ is reflected in Yeats’s praise: he calls her the ‘real voice of the Celt’.⁹⁰

3.2 Manifest Influence: Blake, Nietzsche, and Nationalism in Yeats’s Early Manifestos

Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till truth obeyed his call

— W. B. Yeats
(from ‘An Acre of Grass’, 1938)

In February 1893, the same month that saw the publication of their edition of *The Works of William Blake*, W. B. Yeats sent a letter to Edwin Ellis announcing plans for a new ‘Irish Magazine’. ‘I mean [*sic*] to try & make it the organ of what the journalist’s [*sic*] delight to call “the New” this or that’, he writes. ‘In this case it will be the new poetry and the new mysticism’.⁹¹ *The Irish Home Reading Magazine*, which appeared the following year for a brief two issues, proved to be a minor footnote to the poet’s career, but it illustrates an important theme. Ellmann suggests that when we think about Yeats at that time ‘we remember how dissatisfied he was with himself, how eager to be “self born, born anew”’.⁹² His constant, restless desire

⁹⁰ Yeats uses this phrase writing in the *Sketch* (28 April 1897). The piece is reprinted in Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, ed. by John P. Frayne, 2 vols (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970-75), II, 108-10.

⁹¹ *Collected Letters*, III (1994), 352.

⁹² Ellmann, *Yeats*, p. 99.

to reinvent himself and the world around him resulted in the production, over the course of his career, of announcements on a variety of topics. These range from the birth of a new periodical, society, or movement, to more general principles and even the large-scale system that is described in *A Vision*. The manifesto, in other words, is a useful genre for Yeats because it facilitates his constant quest for self-renewal, his urge to make and remake, to create masks, and to prophesy about coming events. It also lends itself easily to the apocalyptic, and indulges the kind of 'epochal thinking' that Leon Surette calls the 'one universal feature of modernism'.⁹³

Broadly speaking, the manifesto may be characterized by Yeats's phrase, 'the revolt of the soul against the intellect'.⁹⁴ Caws writes in the introduction to her recent anthology that the manifesto 'always has a madness about it'.⁹⁵ It is most easily distinguished from the essay by its 'fanaticism', to borrow a term Yeats used to describe his own work. It dismisses measured argument in favour of an immediate impact, and although it may become an historical marker, in execution it is very much of the moment. In some cases it may be a straightforward statement of plans and aspirations, similar to an advertisement or public notice. More often it is a frenzied attack on the existing order and on rivals, and is defined by its violent rhetoric. It is when you 'lose your patience and sharpen your wings to conquer', as Tristan Tzara states in his *Dada Manifesto* of 1918.⁹⁶ Yeats's manifestos are for the most part divided between these two tendencies: his theatre manifestos, for example, are usually moderate in tone and act as public announcements for the movement; on the other hand, there are occasions, as in his last public address, *On the Boiler* (published posthumously in 1939), when he promises to speak bluntly – 'without tact or discretion'.⁹⁷

Yeats and Ellis's edition of Blake, published by Quaritch in 1893, is in many ways a flawed work. Geoffrey Keynes, who is responsible for the first definitive

⁹³ Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), p. 70.

⁹⁴ *Collected Letters*, I, 303.

⁹⁵ Caws, 'The Poetics of the Manifesto', p. xix.

⁹⁶ Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto', p. 297.

⁹⁷ Yeats, *On the Boiler*, p. 32.

edition of Blake, writes in a letter in 1938: 'This is a very fine book, but it was a work of enthusiasm rather than of accurate scholarship'.⁹⁸ In Harold Bloom's view, 'The Ellis-Yeats edition of Blake has received little analysis', this is 'largely deserved neglect'.⁹⁹ However, the Quaritch edition, as well as being 'the first attempt by anyone to interpret Blake's system in detail', is also notable because it contains two very striking manifestos.¹⁰⁰ The first is the 'Descriptive Catalogue' to Blake's exhibition of sixteen paintings in 1809. According to a more recent edition of Blake, it is 'the only work that Blake actually published in printed form'.¹⁰¹ Mona Wilson, in her *Life* (1927), verifies the nature of this text: 'The *Catalogue* is not merely a commentary on the sixteen exhibits, it is a manifesto'.¹⁰² Even more interesting for our purposes is the second manifesto, commonly known as the 'Public Address', which is contained in Blake's notebook of 1809-10.¹⁰³ These two texts, taken together, represent the first true manifestos of art in English: that is, they are the first texts to adapt what had been chiefly a political form to the purpose of stating arguments and principles relating to art.¹⁰⁴

Blake's 'Public Address' does not simply appear to be a prototype of the artistic manifesto that proliferated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The editors, Yeats and Ellis, actually label it as such, referring to it as a 'manifesto' in four separate places in their prefatory notes. Their notes tell us:

⁹⁸ Quoted in Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), p. 47.

⁹⁹ Harold Bloom, *Yeats* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 69.

¹⁰⁰ Adams, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰¹ *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David Erdman (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1988), p. 797.

¹⁰² Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake* (London: Nonesuch, 1927), p. 207.

¹⁰³ Yeats and Ellis explain, 'The following sketch from a prospectus to the engraving of Blake's 'Canterbury Pilgrim,' is collected from fragmentary notes in the MS Book. They are here placed in what seems the order in which they were written by the author then. Gilchrist's second volume contains them in a somewhat fanciful sequence. Sentences are dropped and pages transposed without any ascertainable reason. What was, at best, a series of hurried and angry jottings comes forth as a 'Public Address' in an order which adds to their incoherence, and with a title which their author's MS does not place at their head. In putting the words 'Public Address' here the only object is that readers may recognize at a glance what Gilchrist has given under that name'. In *The Works of William Blake*, ed. by Edwin Ellis and William Butler Yeats, 2 vols (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), II, 381.

¹⁰⁴ It could be argued that Blake was beaten to the punch by Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), which looks rather sententious beside Blake's pieces but is certainly a valid contender for this title, and exhibits the same revolutionary fervour.

Paragraphs intended for a late place in the prospectus – or address were often written by Blake on early pages of his note-book just as blank space offered itself on turning over the leaves, long after its later pages had been crowded with sentences intended for the opening lines of his manifesto.¹⁰⁵

This is a very early example in English¹⁰⁶ of a reference to an artistic declaration using the political or military term ‘manifesto’ – the term did not become common currency among British artists and critics until after Marinetti’s ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’, which appeared on the front page of *Le Figaro* in 1909 and was reprinted in English shortly thereafter. The author of these notes on ‘Public Address’ appears more likely to be Ellis than Yeats. Yeats, candidly enough, inscribes his own copy of the book: ‘The writing of this book is mainly Ellis’s. The thinking is as much mine as his ... except in the case of the “literary period” [,] the account of the minor poems, and the account of Blake’s art theories which are all [Ellis’s] own except in so far as we discussed everything together’.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Yeats does reveal his close familiarity with the ‘Public Address’ by quoting it in a letter giving advice to George Russell (AE) in October 1904. ‘Had you attacked the paper [the *Leader*], not fearing to fall into a passion ... it would have been Quixotic & probably useless but at least you would have written a fine essay, & to use Blakes phrase, turned your enemy into ornament [*sic*].’¹⁰⁸ Incidentally, Yeats does occasionally use the term ‘manifesto’ himself, as for example in a letter to Lady Gregory on 13 November 1898: ‘I have just heard from the Sec of the Pan Celtic Congress ... He asks me to write their manifesto.’¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Blake*, II, 382. The other three appearances of this word are as follows (with emphasis added): first, in a note, ‘No. 19 is the next page which had blank space enough left in 1810 to encourage a continuance of the *manifesto*’ (382); then, after the main text, ‘So we come in connected sentences to the end of the *manifesto*’ (388); and finally, again in a note, when the text resumes, ‘The *manifesto* begins on the next p. 61, overleaf’ (392).

¹⁰⁶ Artistic manifestos are much more common in Paris in the 1890s; see Bonner Mitchell, ed., *Les Manifestes littéraires de la belle époque, 1886-1914: Anthologie critique* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1966).

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Adams, pp. 47-48.

¹⁰⁸ *Collected Letters*, III, 658. The relevant passage from Blake reads: ‘I will pour Aqua fortis on the Name of the Wicked & turn it into an Ornament & an Example to be Avoided by Some & Imitated by Others if they Please.’

¹⁰⁹ *Collected Letters*, II, 301.

Blake – or more precisely the editor of his journal fragments – chooses to begin the ‘Public Address’ with an explanation. ‘The originality of this production makes it necessary to say a few words.’¹¹⁰ It soon becomes apparent that the modest-sounding ‘few words’ will in fact be an outpouring of Swiftian ‘savage indignation’. Blake attacks ‘blockheads’, ‘ignorant journeymen’, and imitators. ‘Englishmen!’ he cries, ‘rouse yourselves from the fatal slumber into which booksellers and trading dealers have thrown you.’ He preaches, as Whistler would later do in combat with Ruskin, against ‘finish’ in art, and defends ‘spots and blemishes, which are beauties’. ‘Whoever looks at any of the great and expensive works of engraving which have been published by English traders’, he writes, ‘must feel a loathing and disgust; and, accordingly, most Englishmen have a contempt for art, which is the greatest curse which can fall upon a nation’.¹¹¹ His attacks are fierce and often personal, like many later manifestos, rather than reasonable or judicial: ‘What kind of intellect must he have who sees only the colours of things and not the forms of things?’ he asks. What is again typical of the manifesto, which often blends social and political with artistic issues, is his tendency to treat art as a national concern, and one of great importance: ‘Let us teach Buonaparte and whomsoever it may concern that it is not the arts that follow and attend upon Empire, but Empire that attends upon and follows arts’.¹¹² As a true manifesto, the subject matter and style of ‘Public Address’ are out of all proportion to the exhibition in a drapier’s shop for which they have been written. ‘Countrymen! Countrymen!’ he exclaims, ‘do not suffer yourselves to be disgraced!’¹¹³

It should be noted that some of the affinities between the ‘Public Address’ and the manifesto are a result of the former text’s piecemeal structure. Loosely arranged, eye-catching fragments are a common feature of the manifesto genre, along with similar attention-getting rhetorical devices like epigrammatic speech and the use of slogans. This is what gives some of Nietzsche’s writing, too, the appearance of a manifesto. Both Blake and Nietzsche contribute to the adaptation of the political form

¹¹⁰ *Blake*, II, 383.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Blake*, II, 384.

¹¹³ *Blake*, II, 385.

for its use in the cultural arena, and both exercise a major influence on the public declarations of the Modernist period. In addition, they share an iconoclasm that becomes a hallmark of the artistic manifesto. Blake writes, 'The contemptible idiots who have been called great men of late years ought to rouse the public indignation of men of sense of all professions.' He asks, after separating the 'blockheads' from the 'geniuses': 'Can I speak with too great contempt of such fellows?' Misled patronage is one broad target, and hyperbole and polemic are the arrows: 'If all the princes in Europe like Louis XIV and Charles I were to patronize such blockheads, I, William Blake, a mental prince, would decollate and hang their souls as guilty of mental high treason'.¹¹⁴ Such outlandish and violent rhetoric would be shocking in any other genre; it is only when they are seen as manifestos that his texts make sense. He blasts the 'enemies of Genius' and demands from the 'amateurs of art the encouragement which is my due. If they continue to refuse, theirs is the loss, not mine, and theirs is the contempt of posterity ... I go on, and nothing can hinder my course'.¹¹⁵ On the subject of his persecutors, of which there appear to be many, he calls for 'public protection against the villains', and admits: 'I am mad, or else you are so. Both of us cannot be in our right senses. Posterity will judge by our works.' The piece ends, again at the discretion of the editors, with Blake insisting: 'Resentment for personal injuries has had some share in this public address, but love to my art, and zeal for my country a much greater.'¹¹⁶

Yeats and Ellis defend Blake's manifestos in an introductory essay entitled 'Blake the Artist'. Although they admit to having 'long ago turned with angry despair from the critical writings of a man who called Rubens an outrageous devil, Correggio an effeminate demon, and the Venetian masters, in general, journeymen and knaves', the editors still acknowledge 'the duty of ascertaining what [Blake's views] meant, and whether they were important'.¹¹⁷ To this end they work toward their eventual (and insightful) conclusion:

¹¹⁴ *Blake*, II, 386.

¹¹⁵ *Blake*, II, 387.

¹¹⁶ *Blake*, II, 391.

¹¹⁷ *Blake*, II, 308.

We understand how terrible to him was the solitary struggle ... with all that was, in his day, accounted most authoritative and irrefutable in the canons of art and poetry. Then the words about his spiritual warfare ... can be understood as in no way exaggerated or high-flowing.¹¹⁸

Foster argues that Yeats's work on Blake 'crystallized lofty ideas about the dangers of fashionability, the role of an audience, and the public's hatred of the unusual',¹¹⁹ and evidence of these lessons can be read in his and Ellis's comments. The idea of the solitary artist (the 'unassisted wrestler' to borrow another striking phrase) doing battle with the social or artistic establishment is at the heart of the manifesto, and it is what makes the manifesto a romantic, revolutionary form. With the French Revolution, as Perloff argues, 'the manifesto had become the mode of agonism, the voice of those who are *contra*'.¹²⁰ Earlier in 'Blake the Artist', the editors summarize a key element of the manifesto when they describe Blake's technique as 'warfare of aggrandizement for the artistic kingdom of his favourites, and of exterminating hatred against his hinderers and oppressors'.¹²¹ The 'faction-fighting' (as opposed to 'sublime wisdom') that they find in these texts is also typical of the genre. Although manifestos may aspire to display the wisdom of their beliefs, they are often filled with petty, strategic attacks on their contemporaries. Despite their criticisms, the editors defend Blake's sanity and conclude importantly that 'it is sometimes well to turn back and read at first hand a protest from a pioneer'.¹²²

'For Yeats,' Adams argues, 'Blake was the first prophet of the religion of art'.¹²³ In addition to its roots in political and legal oratory, the manifesto also imitates the religious sermon, with art being the new expression of the spiritual, and the artist or poet taking on the role of prophet. The critic, too, as Ruskin's sermons in *Fors Clavigera* demonstrate, sometimes assumes the role of the preacher. This is what leads Whistler, in his *Ten O'Clock*, to open his lecture with mocking regret: 'It is with great hesitation and much misgiving that I appear before you, in the character of The

¹¹⁸ *Blake*, II, 318.

¹¹⁹ Foster, *Life*, I, 100.

¹²⁰ Perloff, p. 82.

¹²¹ *Blake*, II, 310. Yeats describes his approach to *On the Boiler* in similar terms: 'I shall curse my enemies and bless my friends.' See Wade, p. 900.

¹²² *Blake*, II, 311.

¹²³ Adams, p. 54.

Preacher.'¹²⁴ The contemporary interest in blending art and religion, or replacing or infusing one with the other, forms part of the background to Yeats's study of Blake.

However, Yeats would have been drawn to Blake's unabashed mixture of mysticism and art for reasons other than rhetoric. During the years 1889-93, Yeats is deeply immersed in the occult – first with Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society and then with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn – and he considered the research on Blake to be part of this general activity. In a letter to his early political mentor, John O'Leary, in July 1892, Yeats strongly defends his interest in magic and its connection to his interest in Blake. 'If I had not made magic my constant study', he writes, 'I could not have written a single word of my Blake book.' He adds that, 'The mystical life is the centre of all that I do & all that I think & all that I write.'¹²⁵ In his book on Modernism and the occult, Surette argues that while fellow initiates like George Russell, A. R. Orage, and MacGregor Mathers were more 'scholarly and interpretive in their occult speculation', Yeats and Blake, with Emmanuel Swedenborg, were of the 'visionary' school.¹²⁶ This distinction has a bearing on the prophetic, apocalyptic style of manifestos they produce, and it helps to explain the impetus they felt in making such proclamations. A letter to Florence Farr in December 1895 demonstrates the almost merry delight that Yeats takes in occult experiments, not to mention the idea of an impending apocalypse. He writes: 'Could you come and see me Monday and have tea and perhaps divine for armageddon [*sic*]?'¹²⁷

There is an apparent contradiction, however, between the occult and the manifesto that should be acknowledged. The occult seeks to preserve doctrine, usually by concealing it, while the manifesto is, by definition, an attempt to make principles or intentions known, plainly visible, and (usually) public. This seeming divergence in motivation is qualified, however, in a statement by the theosophist G. R. S. Mead. Mead writes, in 1913, that 'gnosis or wisdom is published in an outer

¹²⁴ *Gentle Art*, p. 135.

¹²⁵ *Collected Letters*, I, 303.

¹²⁶ Surette, p. 27.

¹²⁷ *Collected Letters*, I, 477.

(exoteric) form, but its esoteric sense is understood only by the enlightened'.¹²⁸ This distinction allows for a convergence of the two streams, and it may also help us to understand what Yeats has in mind when he describes his most personal and esoteric work, *A Vision*, as a 'political and literary testament intended to give a philosophy to the [nationalist] movement'.¹²⁹ Yeats appears to believe, at this moment, that it is possible for such a prophetic work to serve as both private and public doctrine.

The first of Yeats's manifestos appears while he and Ellis are completing their edition of Blake in the early nineties. The more nationalistic pieces he writes at this time appear, in the wake of the scandal surrounding Charles Stewart Parnell, in *United Ireland*, a Parnellite journal.¹³⁰ Three weeks before the death of Parnell in October 1891, Yeats writes an article, 'A Reckless Century: Irish Rakes and Duellists', based on research for an uncompleted book on the subject. Here he manages to remodel the apparently frivolous material – Irish rakes of the eighteenth century – into something resembling a manifesto for Irish cultural and political independence. 'The Hellfire Club' and others, as John Frayne argues, 'were all, whether they knew it or not, preparing the way for the Celtic Revival'.¹³¹ 'I find nothing but fortunate prophecies in that dead century', Yeats writes. 'I see there the Celtic intensity, the Celtic fire, the Celtic daring ... needing only the responsibility of self-government and the restraint of a trained public opinion.' He prophesies that, 'The vast energy that filled Ireland with bullies and swashbucklers will some day give us great poets and thinkers'.¹³² The blend of artistic and political aims is worth noting, as is the violent imagery, which anticipates the style of avant-garde manifestos in the coming decades. Most interesting, though, is how little weight Yeats gives to the lack of Irish patriotism felt by these rebels of the Anglo-Irish gentry, who had not 'listened as yet to the terrible raillery of Swift'.¹³³ He makes heroes of them on the basis of their 'reckless and turbulent spirit' alone, and insists, 'The energy that filled them is

¹²⁸ Quoted in Surette, p. 105.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Ellmann, *Yeats*, p. 202. Ellmann notes that *A Vision* is still used by 'present-day Theosophists' (p. 71).

¹³⁰ See John P. Frayne, 'Introduction', in *Uncollected Prose*, I, 27.

¹³¹ Yeats, 'A Reckless Century: Irish Rakes and Duellists', *UP*, I, 198-202 (p. 199).

¹³² 'A Reckless Century', p. 202.

¹³³ 'A Reckless Century', p. 201.

still in our veins, but working now for the public good.' He argues: 'Their swords were strong, at any rate, though they were not turned often enough, or persistently enough, towards the enemies of their country'.¹³⁴ Yeats seems to suggest that what is needed is to channel this energy into a movement, using, among other things, the persuasive rhetoric of the manifesto. Two weeks later, in a review of a book by Wilde for the same magazine, he draws parallels between the 'escapades of the rakes and duellists' and 'Mr. Wilde's shower of paradox' (while admitting the latter is far less likely to prove fatal). Again, Yeats finds material for what must be called his patriotic propaganda in a fairly unlikely place. He writes of Wilde: 'I see in his life and works an extravagant Celtic crusade against Anglo-Saxon stupidity'.¹³⁵ In fact, Yeats's own attitude toward violent and subversive aristocrats could be said to reflect Wilde's controversy-courting portrayal of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the notorious art critic and murderer, in 'Pen, Pencil and Poison', published in *Intentions* earlier that same year.

The following year, in October 1892, Yeats publishes his first true manifesto, 'Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature'. At first he seems to equivocate on the issue of his allegiance to the promotion of a national literature in Ireland, as far as this activity might conflict with the Rhymers' Club and its 'new doctrine of letters' calling for an autonomous art. By the middle of the piece, however, it is apparent that Yeats has succeeded in forging a decisive plea for a national literature.¹³⁶ He scolds Ireland initially for its provincialism, its 'utter indifference to art', as compared with the Rhymers' emphasis on 'music of cadence, and beauty of phrase'. In spite of the sophistication of the London craft, though,

¹³⁴ 'A Reckless Century', p. 202.

¹³⁵ 'Oscar Wilde's Last Book', *UP*, I, 202-05 (pp. 203-04).

¹³⁶ Yeats, 'Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature', *UP*, I, 247-50 (p. 248). Some attention had been given to the issue of promoting a national art previous to Yeats's calls to action, though none was devoted so directly and forcefully to the cause. One example of an earlier plea for a national art comes from Thomas Davis, who writes in the *Nation* (c. 1840), 'To collect into, and make known, and publish in Ireland, the best works of our living and dead artists, is one of the steps towards procuring for Ireland a recognised National Art. And this is essential to our civilisation and renown. The other is by giving education to students and rewards to artists ... perchance, to facilitate the creation of some great spirit.' See Davis, 'Creative Art', in *Thomas Davis: Essays and Poems* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1945), 115-16 (p. 116).

One thing cannot be said. It is not possible to call a literature produced in this way the literature of energy and youth ... Here in Ireland we are living in a young age, full of hope and promise – a young age which has only just begun to make its literature.¹³⁷

What Yeats calls 'rough energy' is again the source of Irish promise, and the driving force behind the manifesto's call to action: 'Can we but learn a little of their skill ... we may make all these restless energies of ours alike the inspiration and the theme of a new and wonderful literature.'¹³⁸ Phrases beginning with the manifesto's revolutionary 'we' are repeated again and again, creating the rousing rhythm of the closing paragraphs.¹³⁹ Words like 'devotion', 'passion', 'conviction', and 'reverie' are used to raise the rhetorical pitch. Yeats declares that, 'Men are growing tired of mere subtleties of form' and 'self-conscious art'. Anticipating Patrick Geddes's dichotomy of English 'decadence' and Scottish 'renascence', England here is 'sunset', while Ireland is 'dawn'.¹⁴⁰

The most famous statement of principles and intentions in Yeats's early work is 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', published in *The Rose* in 1893. In this poem he places himself within a history of Irish poets and orators ('True brother of a company / That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong') that he himself has worked to establish through his editorial work and advocacy. He asks for the nation's faith and makes a pledge ('While still I may, I write for you'), at the same time showing some anxiety that his readers will fail to discern the dedication to nationalist issues that lies alongside his interest in the spiritual ('things discovered in the deep / Where only body's laid asleep'). Here too is a restatement of the difficulty Yeats experiences acting the role of aesthete in London while assuming the mask of statesman in Dublin.¹⁴¹ He ends the poem with the hope, 'That you, in the dim coming times, / May know how my heart went with them' – 'Davis, Mangan, Ferguson'. Another,

¹³⁷ 'Hopes and Fears', p. 249.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Lyon discusses the manifesto's use of the pronoun 'we' at some length. See Lyon, pp. 23-26.

¹⁴⁰ 'Hopes and Fears', p. 250.

¹⁴¹ Cullingford makes the case that at the end of the nineteenth century Yeats 'was better known for his protests than for his poetry' (p. 40).

perhaps greater, part of Yeats's legacy was yet to be fulfilled: his work to establish an Irish Literary Theatre.

The announcement of the Irish Literary Theatre is accompanied by a change in the style of Yeats's manifestos. Previous to the flurry of activity that takes place between the first announcement, in January 1899,¹⁴² and the Theatre's first production, in May 1899, Yeats's style of public address tends toward passionate idealism. For his new project, co-authored with Lady Gregory, he adopts a more pragmatic style, which is better suited to canvassing financial support for specific projects and events. A letter to one of the Theatre's guarantors, Thomas Patrick Gill, in November 1898, promises that they will sit down in the near future to 'discuss best how to announce the theatre project'. The letter seems to anticipate another passionate declaration of Irish cultural independence from 'decadent' England, as Yeats argues for support 'on patriotic grounds' and tells Gill that 'Ireland is leading the way in a war on materialism, decadence, [and] triviality'.¹⁴³

It is surprising, then, that when 'Important Announcement – Irish Literary Theatre' first appears in the Dublin *Daily Express* on 12 January 1899, it is little more than a list of names and a summary of immediate plans. Despite its modest form, the manifesto does manage to convey important information, and it would have made an impact on its readers by the ambition and scale of the project it describes, if not by the power of its rhetoric. The list of names of the Theatre's guarantors is also very impressive. It includes, as the manifesto states, 'representatives from all sections of opinion': from W. E. H. Lecky, Lord and Lady Ardilaun, and the Right Honourable C. T. Redington, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland; to Maud Gonne, John O'Leary, and Douglas Hyde. French precedents, including the *Théâtre Libre* in Montmartre and the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*, are mentioned, while English ones are not. A history of the movement is outlined, along with an account of the struggle to 'change the law' to

¹⁴² 'The Celtic Theatre' (August 1897), mentioned above, is the first attempt made at putting 'an old project for an Irish theatre' into manifesto form. In October of that year it becomes the Irish Literary Theatre, but the first public airing of the project is held up until January 1899. (Foster, *Life*, I, 183-85.)

¹⁴³ *Collected Letters*, II, 302. The letter also shows that Yeats is not above tailoring his arguments to suit his audience: in this case, he appeals directly to Gill's nationalism and his firmly held religious beliefs. (For more on this, see Kelly's biographical note for Gill [*Collected Letters*, II, 100]).

allow the performance of plays in smaller, more affordable halls. Finally, there is a promise ('we propose to give our first performance in May'), and an interesting strategy of deferral in the statement that, when certain 'necessary arrangements' are made, 'the support of your readers will be asked for' – support that is already being solicited in this open letter.¹⁴⁴

Two days later, another version of the manifesto appears in the same paper, providing greater details of the Irish Literary Theatre. The tone is again diplomatic, this time even including London as a precedent; there is an appeal to 'national feeling', tempered by the promise of formal innovation and a certain degree of difficulty ('We believe that common playgoers ... will come in time to like us'). There is a carefully worded warning that 'it may be their duty to condemn ... that passing and modern Ireland of prosaic cynicism and prosaic rivalries', but the only direct attack is on 'what are called the Irish educated classes'. The 'curious imaginative sterility' shown by this particular segment of Irish society, 'has its source in that spirit of antagonism to the life about them, which until recently has cut them off from the foundations of literature, and left their imaginations cold and conventional'.¹⁴⁵ The conservative, unionist elements of Trinity College are perhaps the only 'safe' opposition for this broad-based movement, and it is not the last time Yeats will use this group as an easy target.

Another attack on the Anglo-Irish establishment is launched in 'The Academic Class and the Agrarian Revolution', published in the *Daily Express* in March 1899. The piece represents a return to Yeats's more passionate style of manifesto after the cold diplomacy of the Irish Theatre announcements. Foster is correct in stating that 'it was ... tactically important to distance the Irish Literary Theatre from the dead hand of establishment approval, and his brilliant manifesto ... should be seen as part of this campaign'.¹⁴⁶ Yeats takes as his starting point Trinity College Professor Robert Atkinson's contentious comment that 'All folklore is

¹⁴⁴ 'Important Announcement – Irish Literary Theatre', *UP*, II, 138-39.

¹⁴⁵ 'The Irish Literary Theatre', *UP*, II, 139-41.

¹⁴⁶ Foster, *Life*, I, 206. Yeats recalls in *The Trembling of the Veil*: 'When I look back upon my Irish propaganda of those years I can see little but its bitterness ... If I must attack so much that seemed sacred to Irish nationalist opinion, I must, I knew, see to it that no man suspect me of doing it to flatter Unionist opinion'. See *Autobiographies*, p. 233.

essentially abominable.' Having thus quickly established the 'spirit of antagonism' of 'our academic classes', Yeats proceeds to isolate this group, declaring that 'almost all Irishmen who have any fine taste in the arts, any gift for imaginative writing, any mastery over style, have come from beyond its influence, or have a fierce or smouldering anger waiting to thrust it to its fall.' The metaphors become increasingly violent as Yeats warms to his new adversary. He writes: 'Our academic class has worked against imagination and character ... and eternity is putting forth its flaming fingers to bring its work to nothing.' This class cannot be allowed to simply die out, even though it is in its decline, because it is 'still destroying the imaginative life of the minds that ... come under its influence'. Yeats sees a promising new 'movement' and solution to Ireland's woes in the Gaelic League, which was founded a few years earlier, in 1893. The League, he declares, is attracting 'all young minds that have a little literature and a little ideality'. 'Our academic class has hated enthusiasm,' he adds, 'and here is a movement which has made a religion of the arts.' For the final rallying cry of this manifesto, Yeats conjures an image of two generations in direct physical confrontation. He declares, 'Until the young have pushed these men from their stools ... we shall not have a natural and simple intellectual life in Ireland.'¹⁴⁷

Yeats's commitment to the nationalist cause, so powerfully expressed in his early manifestos, changes significantly with his experiences during the first years of the Irish Literary Theatre in its various guises. From Frank Hugh O'Donnell's indignant (if ineffectual) pamphlet, *Souls for Gold! A Pseudo-Celtic Drama in Dublin*, published two weeks before the first ILT staging of *The Countess Cathleen* in May 1899,¹⁴⁸ to the more alarming withdrawal of Maud Gonne and other nationalists from the Irish National Theatre Society in September 1903, in protest against J. M. Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, Yeats experiences his share of controversy. Despite the rift that appears in the INTS, Cullingford argues, 'There was no simple confrontation between art and patriotism: he had not deplored the poetry of Young Ireland in defence of ... art for art's sake.'¹⁴⁹ Yeats was still a nationalist, in his own mind, but preferred (to use Ellmann's distinction) 'national art' to 'nationalist

¹⁴⁷ 'The Academic Class and the Agrarian Revolution', *UP*, II, 149-52.

¹⁴⁸ For a full summary and text of the pamphlet, see *Collected Letters*, II, 669-80.

¹⁴⁹ Cullingford, p. 55.

propaganda'.¹⁵⁰ As Yeats himself phrases it in 'The Reform of the Theatre', written in response to the protests of 1903,

we must learn that beauty and truth are always justified of themselves,
and that their creation is a greater service to our country than writing
that compromises either in the seeming service of a cause[.]¹⁵¹

Paired with his growing distaste for nationalist propaganda at this time is a growing appetite for controversy and confrontation. One striking example of this is the publication, in a special edition of the *United Irishman* on 1 November 1902, of a new play, *Where There is Nothing*, accompanied by an article, 'The Freedom of the Theatre'.¹⁵² A contemporary review of the play, headlined 'A Drama of Revolt', states: 'The whole thing resembles a sometimes eloquent prose pamphlet, for the dissemination of Mr. Yeats's views; a pamphlet cast in dramatic form, but with its pamphlet purpose writ large on it.'¹⁵³ Yeats anticipates this criticism, given the hostile reception of previous plays he had written and staged. He writes:

I have put my stick into so many beehives that I feel a little anxious.
Someone is sure to say I have written a mischievous attack upon the
Law, upon Church and State, upon Sobriety, upon Custom and even
upon the Sun in his strength. I have some reason to expect this[.]¹⁵⁴

In the play, the hero Paul Ruttledge is accused by his mother of 'doing uncomfortable things'.¹⁵⁵ Paul is consumed by a desire for 'the happiness of men who fight ... the endless battle'.¹⁵⁶ He tells Father Jerome:

¹⁵⁰ Ellmann, *Yeats*, p. 179.

¹⁵¹ Yeats, 'The Reform of the Theatre', *Samhain: An Occasional Review of the National Theatrical Company*, 3 (October 1903), 9-12 (p. 9).

¹⁵² One reason for their timely publication, in addition to the issues discussed here, is Yeats's desire to stake his claim on the material itself, which had been the subject of an ongoing dispute with George Moore.

¹⁵³ 'A Drama of Revolt', an unsigned review first published in the *Academy and Literature* (4 July 1903); reprinted in *W. B. Yeats: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 138-40 (p. 139).

¹⁵⁴ 'The Freedom of the Theatre', *UP*, II, 297. *Where There is Nothing* was never produced in Dublin in Yeats's lifetime, perhaps due in equal parts to the threat of riots and to the author's realization, expressed in his memoirs, that it was simply 'a bad play' (*Autobiographies*, p. 454).

¹⁵⁵ Yeats, *Where There is Nothing*, in *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966), 1064-1167 (p. 1067).

¹⁵⁶ *Where There is Nothing*, p. 1097.

Sometimes I dream I am pulling down my own house, and sometimes it is the whole world that I am pulling down ... I would like to have great iron claws, and to put them about the pillars, and to pull and pull till everything fell into pieces[.]¹⁵⁷

Words have a strong performative function for Paul, as they do in many manifestos. When Father Jerome says, 'I hope you don't believe all you say', Paul replies: 'Perhaps not. I only know that I want to upset everything about me.'¹⁵⁸ After joining a band of tinkers in Act One, encouraging them to Dionysian excess in Act Two, and eventually becoming a heretical prophet in Act Four, Paul finally succumbs to the fatal blows of a superstitious mob in Act Five. Before he is martyred, Paul utters his last words: 'Where there is nothing, there is God.'¹⁵⁹

The speculation that Yeats's discovery of Nietzsche may have had some impact on the play is relevant to our discussion of the manifesto.¹⁶⁰ In fact there are clear echoes of Nietzsche throughout, as for example when Paul declares, 'My wild beast is Laughter, the mightiest of the enemies of God', and when he tells his followers, 'we could bring back the old joyful, dangerous, individual life'.¹⁶¹ In *The Gay Science* (1887) Nietzsche writes:

the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves!¹⁶²

Similarly, the music Paul hears, 'made of the continual clashing of swords', reverberates with a passage from Nietzsche such as, 'we are delighted by all who love, as we do, danger, war, and adventure'.¹⁶³ The dealer John Quinn must have noticed the resemblance because, as John Kelly points out, he sends Yeats his copy of

¹⁵⁷ *Where There is Nothing*, p. 1071.

¹⁵⁸ *Where There is Nothing*, p. 1072.

¹⁵⁹ *Where There is Nothing*, p. 1164. Yeats had previously published a short story bearing this title in the *Sketch* (21 October 1896).

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Otto Bohlmann, *Yeats and Nietzsche* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 59-62.

¹⁶¹ *Where There is Nothing*, pp. 1099 and 1157.

¹⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by Bernard Williams, trans. by Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 161.

¹⁶³ *Where There is Nothing*, p. 1098; *Gay Science*, p. 241.

Thus Spake Zarathustra immediately after reading the first draft of *Where There is Nothing*. Quinn expresses reservations about Nietzsche's 'exaltation of brutality' to Yeats, but admits 'he has a wonderful epigrammatic style, and in recalling some of the dialogue of your play I was reminded of certain passages of *Zarathustra*'. He goes on: 'since I sent the book to you I have received Lady Gregory's letter telling me that the play is finished so that you probably will not want to bother with the book at all'. In his reply, Yeats tells Quinn: 'Before I knew why you had sent it, I read out one or two bits to Lady Gregory, and said it sounded to me like Paul's talk.' These letters so far suggest that the resemblance is only a coincidence, or possibly that Yeats is using a general idea of Nietzsche's philosophy he has picked up from contemporary articles or conversations with friends. However, he adds: 'I have enlarged and enriched [the play] in the last couple of weeks. And I will probably make a few more alterations before it comes out.'¹⁶⁴ Two months later, in a letter to Lady Gregory (26 December 1902), he admits to reading Nietzsche (whom he calls 'that strong enchanter') 'so much that I have made my eyes bad again'. He declares that the play 'is at last finished, sermon & all & is going to press. I have written in a good deal here & there. Sermon gave me most trouble but it is right now.'¹⁶⁵ These comments suggest that Yeats might have followed Quinn's implicit advice and added material from Nietzsche to the revised edition of the play, especially for Paul's passionate sermon. Unfortunately, the original similarities are strong enough to make it difficult to discern any later, more direct correspondences. In his notoriously revisionist memoirs, Yeats claims: 'I had caught sight of Tolstoy's essay about the Sermon on the Mount lying on a chair and made the most important act pivot upon pacifist commonplace.'¹⁶⁶

The influence of Nietzsche is important not only in itself but for the way it ties together other figures who are important to Yeats's manifesto style. These figures include 'unacknowledged legislators' (to use Shelley's famous phrase) like Shelley and Blake, as well as William Morris. Yeats tells Lady Gregory that Nietzsche 'completes Blake & has the same roots', and adds, 'I have not read anything with so

¹⁶⁴ Letter dated 22 October 1902. *Collected Letters*, III, 239.

¹⁶⁵ *Collected Letters*, III, 284.

¹⁶⁶ *Autobiographies*, p. 454.

much excitement, since I got to love Morris's stories which have the same curious astringent joy.'¹⁶⁷ Yeats draws two interesting comparisons in 'William Blake and His Illustrations to *The Divine Comedy*' (1897), which is included in the collection *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903).¹⁶⁸ 'One is reminded of Shelley, who was the next to take up the cry,' he says of the revolutionary Blake, 'but still more of Nietzsche, whose thought flows always, though with an even more violent current, in the bed Blake's thought has worn.'¹⁶⁹ In a letter to Quinn in February 1903, after digesting the three volumes of Nietzsche Quinn had by that time sent, Yeats writes: 'In some ways he completes or rather modernises the doctrine that I learned from Blake, and ... the kind of socialism I learned from William Morris.'¹⁷⁰ Foster notes that when *Ideas* was published in 1903, at this important junction in Yeats's career, it produced an immediate impact: 'Despite the familiarity of some of the pieces, reviewers treated the book as a unity: it was seen as a manifesto for [Yeats]'s idiosyncratically spiritual idea of poetry's function.'¹⁷¹ In the case of *Where There is Nothing*, published in its revised form the same month,¹⁷² Yeats is announcing the Irish Literary Theatre as an important new force in drama. This announcement is intended especially for the wider world, including America, where Quinn had arranged for its publication. Yeats is also promoting himself as an international figure – poet, playwright and political speaker – as he will continue to do the following autumn with an extended American

¹⁶⁷ *Collected Letters*, III, 284. Harold Bloom calls *Where There is Nothing* 'Yeats's most Blakean work', primarily because of its 'apocalyptic' impulse, and also notes the play's 'attempt to work out the implications of a Blakean-Nietzschean world-view' (Bloom, pp. 144-46). Similarly, Surette argues that Yeats 'read Nietzsche as a fellow occultist' and 'derived some of his apocalyptic imagery from Nietzsche', as well as absorbing, and later sharing with Pound, Nietzsche's central idea of the 'triumph of an elite over the undeserving masses' (Surette, pp. 166-72). Yeats compares the character Paul to William Morris for his struggle for truth and his nobility and strength (letter quoted in *Plays*, p. 1167). Morris's friendship with the young Yeats – they first met in April 1886 – 'had a significant and lasting influence upon his later political attitudes'. See Cullingford, pp. 16-28.

¹⁶⁸ 'I got the title of this book out of one of Blake's MSS works if I remember rightly', Yeats tells Quinn in his inscription to Quinn's copy of the American edition (*Collected Letters*, III, 313). The title also suggests Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), although there is no direct evidence that this was a source.

¹⁶⁹ Yeats, 'William Blake and His Illustrations to The Divine Comedy', in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 116-45 (p. 130). The reference to Nietzsche seems to have been added for the 1903 edition.

¹⁷⁰ *Collected Letters*, III, 313.

¹⁷¹ Foster, *Life*, I, 293.

¹⁷² It was published as the first volume of *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, 5 vols (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903-07).

tour.¹⁷³ Commenting much later on his rush to write and publish *Where There is Nothing* and the accompanying article in its defence, Yeats admits: 'I was young, vain, self-righteous, and bent on proving myself a man of action.'¹⁷⁴

The dispute with hardline nationalists, including Maud Gonne, in 1903, was due in part to differing views about the use of propaganda. 'Let us sing our political songs with ardour, shouldering our pikes while we sing if we be so minded,' Yeats writes, 'but do not let us always call them great poetry.'¹⁷⁵ For Yeats, of course, the reverse is also true; that art should not be compromised by its service to nationalism. It must be above censorship, and free to express negative as well as positive aspects of the culture it represents. In 'The Freedom of the Theatre', he equates the 'reign of the moralist' with 'the reign of the mob'.¹⁷⁶ As Cullingford demonstrates, Yeats first learned his nationalism from John O'Leary, who worked as secretary to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and who followed the nationalist tradition of Henry Grattan, Wolfe Tone, and Thomas Davis. He remained committed to O'Leary's 'individualist and libertarian' brand of nationalism throughout his life, refusing Arthur Griffith's 'subordination of private judgement to Irish interests'.¹⁷⁷ Yeats discusses this freedom at length in the first of four tenets listed in 'The Reform of the Theatre', which is an artistic manifesto by even the strictest definition.¹⁷⁸ 'Truth and beauty judge and are above judgement', he declares in defiance to mob patriotism. 'They justify and have no need of justification.'¹⁷⁹ Two years earlier, writing to Lady Gregory about *Beltaine*, he states: 'The only thing I really care about is the get up of the thing. I have always felt that my mission in Ireland is to serve taste rather than any definite propaganda.'¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ Yeats describes his mission in a letter at the time: 'I have come over to lecture upon the intellectual movement in Ireland and kindred subjects' (*Collected Letters*, III, 465).

¹⁷⁴ *Autobiographies*, p. 454.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Cullingford, p. 12.

¹⁷⁶ 'The Freedom of the Theatre', *UP*, II, 295-99 (p. 298).

¹⁷⁷ Cullingford, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁸ An interesting project would be to compare this and later theatre manifestos published in *Samhain* to the manifestos Edward Gordon Craig, Yeats's friend and collaborator, publishes in his own theatre journal, the *Mask*, between 1908 and 1929.

¹⁷⁹ 'Reform of the Theatre', p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ *Collected Letters*, III, 74.

Yeats had always been wary of the damaging effects that propaganda could have on art, but he becomes more outspoken on the subject during the crisis in the Irish National Theatre. While he is on his lecture tour of America in March 1903, for example, he gives the Chicago *Daily News*, which had asked him to speak on 'what Ireland needs', an interview Foster describes as 'a deliberately anti-propagandist manifesto'. 'The greatest need is more love for thoughts for their own sake', he tells the paper. 'At present if a man make us a song, or tell us a story, or give us a thought, we do not ask "is it a good song, or a good story, or a true thought?" but "will it help this or that propaganda?"'¹⁸¹ In the third of a series of three articles published in the *United Irishman* in October 1903, 'The Irish National Theatre and Three Sorts of Ignorance', Yeats continues his attack on what he calls 'obscurantism'. He argues: 'Extreme politics in Ireland were once the politics of intellectual freedom also, but now ... even extreme politics seem about to unite themselves to hatred of ideas.' 'Men have served causes in other lands and gone to death and imprisonment for their cause', he declares, 'without giving up the search for truth, the respect for every kind of beauty.'¹⁸² Yeats stands firm against political propaganda when it threatens the arts, but he still uses the manifesto – a form that is inextricably linked to propaganda and politics – for the promotion of his various artistic ventures. In the opening notes to the October 1903 issue of *Samhain*, Yeats declares, definitively and somewhat mischievously: 'Though one welcomes every kind of vigorous life, I am, myself, most interested in "The Irish National Theatre Society," which has no propaganda but that of good art.'¹⁸³

Yeats continues to publish his manifestos in various journals to the end of his life, producing increasingly strong statements. After the demise of *Samhain*, manifestos and journals under Yeats's control become more markedly antagonistic, challenging, and provocative towards the nation; and art continues to hold primary significance, with national issues always a close second. The two are never

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Foster, *Life*, I, 291-92.

¹⁸² 'The Irish National Theatre and Three Sorts of Ignorance', *UP*, II, 306-08 (p. 308).

¹⁸³ Yeats, 'Notes', *Samhain*, 3 (October 1903), 3-8 (p. 4). In his memoirs, Yeats calls *Samhain* 'a little annual published in the interests of the movement' (*Autobiographies*, p. 447). Not only was Yeats editor of the official magazine, he was also president of the Society at the time.

completely separate; but where the nation may need to change to accommodate art, similar demands on art are never made. In 1906, Yeats writes – ‘complaining of the mild policies of two Dublin magazines’, as Ellmann tells us – of the city’s need for ‘some man who knows his own mind and has an intolerable tongue and a delight in enemies’.¹⁸⁴ When asked in 1924 to provide a direction, a blessing, and a manifesto to the new Dublin literary review called (with that decade’s abundant optimism) *To-Morrow*, Yeats immediately agrees.¹⁸⁵ His enthusiasm is much in evidence in a letter to Olivia Shakespear (21 June 1924):

I heard that a group of Dublin poets, a man called Higgins¹⁸⁶ and the Stuarts and another, whose name I do not know, were about to publish a review. I said to one of them ‘Why not found yourselves on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, most bishops and all bad writers being obviously atheists.’ I heard no more till last night when I received a kind of deputation. They had adopted my suggestion and were suppressed by the printers for blasphemy ... They are to put the offending parts into Latin and see if the printers will stand that; and begin an agitation ... My dream is a wild paper of the young which will make enemies everywhere and suffer suppression, I hope a number of times[.]¹⁸⁷

A strong appetite for controversy is immediately apparent in this letter. What is not so evident, but is equally important, is the link between the doctrine of *A Vision* and the form of the manifesto. Contrary to the usual notion of an occult system being available only to a few chosen initiates, Yeats seems to desire the widest possible audience for his principal doctrine, and his words suggest a belief that his system can effect real change in the world. This, argues Perloff, is a contradiction contained within the manifesto itself, as it is later developed by Marinetti and the Italian Futurists. It was to be ‘a genre that might meet the needs of a mass audience even as, paradoxically, it insisted on the avant-garde, the esoteric, the antibourgeois’.¹⁸⁸ ‘To

¹⁸⁴ Ellmann, *Yeats*, p. 182.

¹⁸⁵ Foster notes: ‘It is clear that [Yeats] wrote the manifesto which formed the editorial of the first issue’, and he adds, ‘To experienced readers of [Yeats], the piece needed no signature.’ *Life*, II, 268-73.

¹⁸⁶ F. R. Higgins later arranged for the printing of *On the Boiler*, Yeats’s last manifesto; in fact his mismanagement of the task resulted in its being published only after Yeats’s death.

¹⁸⁷ Wade, p. 706.

¹⁸⁸ Perloff, p. 81.

All Artists and Writers', the manifesto in *To-Morrow*, calls for a new spiritualism in art, and borrows from Blake for its argument. The emphasis on 'the ancient sovereignty' of the soul is translated into anti-materialist artistic practice. 'We condemn ... those who would escape from banal mechanism through technical investigation and experiment', it states. 'We proclaim that these can bring no escape, for new form comes from new subject matter, and new subject matter must flow from the human soul restored to all its courage, to all its audacity.' In the final lines, the signatories 'declare that [the soul] can do whatever it please, being made, as antiquity affirmed, from the imperishable substance of the stars'.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ 'To All Artists and Writers', *UP*, II, 438-39.

4. Wyndham Lewis and the Manifesto in British Modernism, 1910-1930

Alone (or) in a Crowd

Ezra Pound writes in the *New Age* in 1913 that 'indiscriminate enthusiasm' and 'a propaganda' are two necessary preconditions for a renaissance in the arts.¹ The conditions are given at the start of his series entitled 'America: Chances and Remedies' (1 May – 5 June 1913), but he could as easily have been describing the formula for the more local campaigns of Imagism and Vorticism.² It is Wyndham Lewis and not Pound, however, that we will be discussing in this chapter as the guiding figure in the creation of a manifesto tradition in twentieth-century Britain. This is the case not least because Pound, already an exile in London, departs for the Continent in December 1920. His farewell manifesto, 'Axiomata', is published in the *New Age* on 13 January 1921. In the numbered list of tenets he states that 'Dogma is bluff based upon ignorance.' If he still believes in propaganda for the right cause – and his ongoing push for Major Douglas's Social Credit and other enthusiasms testify to this belief – he is nonetheless wary of the pitfalls of belief, as 'Axiomata' shows. 'Belief is a cramp, a paralysis, an atrophy of the mind in certain positions', he writes, and he emphasizes the point by repeating it.³ London has come to represent this mental 'paralysis' for Pound, as Dublin is shown to do in James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). Pound begins his quest for a new intellectual community in Paris; fittingly he is joined there by the Joyces a few months later.⁴

¹ Ezra Pound, 'America: Chances and Remedies', *New Age*, 13.1 (1 May 1913), 9-10 (p. 9).

² 'Imagism' and 'A Few Don'ts' appear in the March issue of *Poetry* the same year, and *Blast* appears a year hence.

³ Ezra Pound, 'Axiomata', reprinted in Caws, 360-63.

⁴ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 482. Ellmann puts the date for the Joyces' arrival in Paris at 8 July 1921, and adds: 'Pound was immediately and entirely at their disposal.' It should be noted that Joyce himself, being 'refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails' (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [New York: Viking, 1964], p. 215), does not write any manifestos. Instead, others write manifestos on his behalf, with or without his support. One example is Baroness Else Von Freytag-Loringhoven's 'The Modest Woman', published in the *Little Review* of July-August 1920. Mixing praise for Joyce with criticism for Americans in

Long before donning the mask of the Enemy in the late 1920s, Lewis the provocateur tests the patience of London's artistic circles. Considered by many of his peers to be indelicate and overbearing, Lewis's behaviour is, like the manifesto, something of an anomaly in London. Even his closest rival, Pound, is excused for being soft-spoken and considerate in person – Lewis himself writes of Pound in the first issue of the *Enemy* (January 1927) that 'a kinder heart never lurked beneath a [more] portentous exterior'.⁵ If a kind heart was lurking beneath Lewis's own prickly persona, he did not let it show. The first Vorticist manifesto begins contemptuously: 'BLAST First (from politeness) ENGLAND'. It is only by blasting, the manifestos suggest, that the artist in England will rise above the 'heavy stagnant pools of Saxon blood, incapable of anything but the song of a frog'.⁶ These tactics do little to win for 'Wyndy Lewis' (as he is dubbed by the *New Age*) friends amongst peers, patrons, or the press.⁷

Lewis's career as a polemicist and propagandist from his break with Omega to his reinvention as the Enemy divides neatly into two halves. First he is the group leader, the 'crowd master': organizer of the Omega insurrection, the Vorticist group, and later the artists exhibiting together as Group X.⁸ There is a brief period of indecision about his direction after the First World War,⁹ when he emerges from the trenches to publish in quick succession *The Caliph's Design* (1919), followed by the Group X manifesto (1920), and shortly thereafter a new periodical, the *Tyro* (1920). Group X, a very tenuous grouping anyway, is the exception here, the evidence of uncertainty. *Caliph* and the *Tyro*, however, point to a new and independent Lewis, 'a

general, she reveals near the end, 'I have not read "Ulysses." ... Sometime I will read him – have no doubt'. Nevertheless, she taunts the reader: 'Such one you dare approach – little runt? Whatever made you read him – *Little Review* – anyway?' In Caws, 324-26.

⁵ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Revolutionary Simpleton', *Enemy*, 1 (January 1927), 27-192 (p. 61).

⁶ From 'Manifesto I' and 'Manifesto II', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 11-43 (pp. 11 and 32).

⁷ C. E. Bechhöfer, 'More Contemporaries', *New Age*, 15 (1914), 308.

⁸ The first part of 'The Crowd Master', a short story by Lewis based on his journey by train from Berwick-upon-Tweed to London during the mobilisation, is published in *Blast*, 2 (1915), 94-102.

⁹ Paul O'Keefe relates the story of Lewis's injunction to the Sitwells, handed down over dinner in 1919, that he should remain thirty-seven until further notice. Lewis tells them: 'I'm thirty-seven till I pass the word round!' O'Keefe argues that it is the 'need to make up for the time lost' during the war, rather than a crisis of 'vanity', that prompts the decision. In *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Pimlico, 2001), p. 214.

solitary outlaw and not a gang', as well as a writer first and a painter second.¹⁰ His manifestos, even in the earlier period, often dramatize this tension between the group and the independent artist. *Blast* describes itself as 'popular, essentially', but explains that this 'means the art of ... individuals'. Group X, despite its name (which could suggest anonymity as well as the more prosaic head count of its members), operates on the idea that 'Each member sails his own boat.'¹¹ Lewis's satirical magnum opus, *The Apes of God*, published in 1930 under the protective cover of a manifesto-pamphlet, *Satire and Fiction*, represents the culmination of his growing dispute with Bloomsbury and with what he calls 'the communizing principle'.¹²

4.1 'With Expletive of Whirlwind': Wyndham Lewis and the Arrival of the Avant-Garde Manifesto in England, 1913-1922

Wyndham Lewis is the figure most closely associated with the manifesto in English twentieth-century art and literature. Unusually, he is as well known for his manifestos, especially the Vorticist manifestos contained in the two issues of *Blast*, as for his fiction and paintings. Lewis's only peers in this regard – those who share a notoriety based on that singularly marginal form, the manifesto – lived outside Britain: Marinetti, for instance, or Tristan Tzara. Lewis laments a lack of truly radical talent in pre-war London in his memoir, *Rude Assignment* (1950), when he recalls putting *Blast* together. 'I wanted a battering ram that was all of one metal', he writes. 'A good deal of what got in seemed to me soft and highly impure. Had it been France, there would have been plenty to choose from.'¹³ Despite its flaws, and its short-lived existence, Vorticism has been called 'the only attempt in history (with the dubious exception of Pre-Raphaelitism) to start in England an artistic revolution that had not

¹⁰ Lewis, 'Editorial', *Enemy*, 1 (January 1927), ix-xv (p. ix).

¹¹ 'Group X', in *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, ed. by Walter Michel and C.J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 184-86 (p. 184).

¹² Lewis, *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator* (London: Chatto, 1931), p. vii.

¹³ *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), pp. 138-39.

already occurred on the continent'.¹⁴ With Vorticism and its journal, *Blast*, whose first issue consists largely of manifestos, Lewis secures his place in twentieth-century British art – quite an achievement given the ephemeral nature of both the manifesto and the little magazine.

The term 'manifesto' occurs regularly in Lewis's writing only during the Vorticist period of 1914-15. For the rest of his career, Lewis describes his pronouncements on art and literature as 'propaganda', 'treatises', or simply 'blasts', and he calls himself a 'polemicist' or 'pamphleteer'. In a 1931 preface, for example, he refers to his 'bull-dog pamphleteer-double', who defends him against his enemies.¹⁵ The various polemical pamphlets and articles that Lewis produces throughout his career share a set of characteristics with the manifestos in *Blast*; using the term 'manifesto' outside of its narrow application to the pre-war avant-garde is therefore justified. The persistent use, in Lewis criticism, of the term 'manifesto' to describe a section of Lewis's writing also suggests its appropriateness as a generic term. David Trotter, for instance, describes 'Inferior Religions' as the 'scintillating manifesto' of Lewis's 1927 collection of short stories, *The Wild Body*.¹⁶ Similarly, Paul Edwards calls *The Caliph's Design* 'a manifesto for [architectural] modernism'.¹⁷ The term can sometimes be applied so broadly as to lose all but its most basic meaning as a statement of principles relating to art. In a recently aired BBC4 television documentary about the controversial auctioning off piecemeal of André Breton's personal possessions, one interviewee, Jean-Michel Goutier, declares that Breton's collection of art objects was, in its totality, 'a manifesto'.¹⁸ The present analysis will avoid such vague applications of the term without either restricting the field to those texts labelled manifestos by Lewis himself (which would have an

¹⁴ Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1954), pp. 63-64. Writing shortly after Kenner, in 1956, Lewis called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 'the last contradictory impulse' in England before *Blast* once again 'broke in upon this lethargy' six decades later. See Lewis, 'The Vorticists', p. 381. In January 1915, Ezra Pound signs a letter to Lewis 'Salutations to the brethren', possibly alluding to the earlier movement. See *Pound / Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Timothy Materer (London: Faber, 1985), p. 9.

¹⁵ Lewis, *Diabolical Principle*, p. viii.

¹⁶ David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 290.

¹⁷ Paul Edwards, "'It's time for another war": The Historical Unconscious and the Failure of Modernism', in *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War*, ed. by David Peters Corbett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 124-53 (p. 125).

¹⁸ *André Breton's Naughty Bits: Surrealism for Sale*. BBC 4. Aired on BBC 2, 18 February 2004.

arbitrary result), or on the other hand adhering to the rigid contours of a pre-war European avant-garde description of the form. Two important phases of Lewis's activity as a writer of manifestos will be covered in the first half of this chapter: the very active period from 1912-1917, when Lewis works most closely with Ezra Pound, and the postwar years 1919-1921, in which Lewis attempts to reinvigorate the London art scene as well as his own war-damaged career.

The first thing resembling a manifesto to come from Lewis's hand is a mischief-making 'round robin' letter he circulates in October 1913 on behalf of himself and three other discontented members of Roger Fry's Omega Workshops. The three-page letter advertises 'discreditable facts' about the organization, starting with the accusation that Fry had 'secured the decoration of the "Post-Impressionist" room at the Ideal Home Exhibition', which was taking place at the time, 'by a shabby trick', cutting Lewis out of an important share in the commission.¹⁹ The second complaint involves Fry's 'policy of restraining artists' from exhibiting outside the group. This might be 'justified', the letter states, if Omega's own shows were not 'badly organised, unfairly managed, closed to much good work for petty and personal reasons, and flooded with the work of well-intentioned friends of the Direction'.²⁰ One of the rebels, Frederick Etchells, cites a combination of Lewis's persuasiveness and Fry's 'complacency' as his reason for taking part in the rebellion.²¹ (Etchells's art appears in both issues of *Blast*, but his signature does not appear on any manifesto except the 'Round Robin'.) This manifesto, like the majority of Lewis's 'blasts', is directed at what he invariably and metonymically refers to as 'Bloomsbury', indicating both his target of criticism and, implicitly, his audience.

Placing this first attempt at the manifesto side by side with the 'real' manifestos in *Blast* reveals obvious differences, as well as subtler similarities. While it is not quite a manifesto, the 'Round Robin', like many of Lewis's public declarations, shares certain properties with the manifesto form. The most obvious

¹⁹ *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963), pp. 47-48. For a full account of the controversy, see Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, 2 vols (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), I, 92-93.

²⁰ *Letters*, p. 49.

²¹ Quoted in Cork, *Vorticism*, I, 98.

difference is that, unlike the *Blast* manifestos which announce themselves loudly as being 'manifestos', the 'Round Robin' conceals its manifesto-like declaration inside the quieter medium of the defamatory circular letter. The *Blast* manifestos, like the manifestos of Italian Futurism, are intended to serve more than just the limited purpose of propaganda: they are creditable expressions in their own right, a genre unto themselves. This is demonstrated by an advertisement for *Blast* in the *Egoist* of 15 April 1914, in which 'manifesto', printed in large capital letters, figures most prominently in the table of contents, dwarfing the list of short stories, poems, and essays that follows.²² Another key difference is that the *Blast* manifestos lay down the principles of a movement, Vorticism. The dissenting members of the Omega Workshops, conversely, are a group only in negative terms, insofar as they are united in opposition to what they see as Fry's unjust leadership, and in their decision to leave Omega. Both texts do have their signatories, however, and both assume the authority of a 'body of individuals whose proceedings are of public importance'²³ in order to issue a 'public protestation'.²⁴ The 'Round Robin' resembles a legal document in this way, being a formally-worded public notice that presents a piece of evidence to interested parties (Omega's patrons and shareholders): 'we beg to lay before you the following discreditable facts'.²⁵ Furthermore, it has been argued that 'Lewis hoped to provoke a libel suit from Fry', which would have meant publicity for his breakaway group; sadly, 'none was forthcoming'. Lewis even went so far as to consult a lawyer before drafting the letter, apparently motivated by hope rather than fear.²⁶

The language of the 'Round Robin' alternates between the measured phrases of its legal challenge and the florid rhetoric later seen in *Blast*. Lewis, in a letter drafted (but not sent) to Clive Bell during the crisis, writes: 'You must excuse me for having expressed myself with certain *heat and precision*'.²⁷ Marinetti, in a letter to the Belgian painter Henry Maassen in 1909 or 1910, declares that a manifesto

²² For a picture of the ad see Cork, *Vorticism*, I, 234.

²³ *OED*.

²⁴ See Johnson's *Dictionary*.

²⁵ *Letters*, p. 47.

²⁶ Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 98. Edwards argues that 'Fry was able to escape what was tantamount to a legal challenge from Lewis because of the "bad taste" of the letter.'

²⁷ *Letters*, p. 51. Emphasis added.

requires, above all, 'de la *violence* et de la *précision*' in order to be effective.²⁸ The key passage of the 'Round Robin', which comes near the end of the letter, presents a dramatic critique of Omega's principles. It employs some familiar Modernist tropes pioneered by Lewis, Pound, and T.E. Hulme, including the contrast made between Bloomsbury's outdated Victorian domestic prettiness (Fry's group is described as an eccentric, sickly, and almost perverse 'family') and the hard, 'vigorous' and impersonal qualities of their own art. Consequently it would not look out of place in *Blast*:

The Idol is still Prettiness, with its mid-Victorian languish of the neck, and its skin is 'greenery-yallery', despite the Post-What-Not fashionableness of its draperies. This family party of strayed and Dissenting Aesthetes ... were compelled to call in as much modern talent as they could find, to do the rough and masculine work without which they knew their efforts would not rise above the level of a pleasant tea-party, or command more attention.²⁹

Lewis and his rebel artists claim to represent the 'modern talent' and 'do the rough and masculine work' at Omega. They later declare in *Blast*: 'Our Vortex rushes out like an angry dog at your Impressionistic fuss.'³⁰ The image of *Blast* is hard and brutal, expressed in the bold type and lurid colour of its wrappers.

Design, and its lack, is another feature that clearly distinguishes the two texts. Lewis would have been familiar with examples of avant-garde manifesto layout and the typographic innovations of Marinetti and others when he composed the 'Round Robin'.³¹ He evidently decided against such a radical presentation. Instead, the document takes the unassuming form of a letter, speaking directly, that is privately, to the recipient ('Dear Sir'), whose confidence it tries to solicit. *Blast*, conversely, seems to shout to a crowd, and wins over its audience with its daring and charisma. The letter does, however, display in its choice of language an intention to disrupt, slander,

²⁸ Quoted in Perloff, p. 81.

²⁹ *Letters*, p. 49.

³⁰ 'Our Vortex', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 147-49 (p. 149).

³¹ The 'Round Robin' follows the groundbreaking Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in March 1912, where 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' was reprinted in the catalogue. Lewis may also already have seen Apollinaire's 'L'Antitradition futuriste' of 1913, with its influential 'Merde aux' and 'Rose aux' lists.

and simultaneously announce and enact a rupture, all of which are characteristic of the more radical type of manifesto. If it is less dynamic in its use of language, or less like poetry than the manifestos of *Blast*, it must be remembered that the 'Round Robin' is purely an artistic and not a hybrid *literary*-artistic manifesto, and its relationship with the written word is therefore more likely to be a pragmatic one. The letter concludes: 'No longer willing to form part of this unfortunate institution, we the undersigned have given up our work there.'³² The resignation comes only three months after Lewis had joined Omega. Jeffrey Meyers argues that the 'Round Robin' is 'a critical turning-point' for Lewis. 'It stigmatized Lewis in the eyes of the art world as an instigator of rude public combats.'³³ Deploying the boisterous manifesto in this quiet world was seen, in the words of Clive Bell (one of its victims), as 'vulgarity' and 'provincialism'. Bell recalls telling Lewis: 'you ought not to bombard the town with pages of suburban rhetoric'.³⁴ This is Lewis's first 'blast' against Bloomsbury, and it contains the germ of all of his subsequent pronouncements on art.

The most striking aspect of *Blast* in the context of British Modernism is that it appears to ally itself with militant politics. In doing so it creates something of an anomaly in the history of the artistic manifesto in Britain, where movements (when they exist at all) tend to avoid the kind of social praxis seen, for example, in Marinetti's Futurism or Bréton's Surrealism. Some recent scholarship, including Janet Lyon's *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (1999) and Alex Houen's *Terrorism and Modern Literature* (2002), has emphasized the relationship between artistic and political militancy in the pre-war period. Lyon uncovers interesting correspondences between the Vorticists and Suffragettes, while Houen investigates Vorticism's relationship with syndicalism. The crucial piece of evidence for both readings is *Blast*'s 'blessing' of figures who represent, in Timothy Materer's words, 'the same disruptive movements that George Dangerfield credits [in *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935)] with destroying the Liberal establishment in

³² *Letters*, p. 50.

³³ Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 39.

³⁴ Quoted in Meyers, p. 44.

England before the war: the Labour movement, the Ulster rebels, and the Suffragettes'.³⁵ My own reading, however, leans toward the scepticism expressed by Leon Trotsky, who distinguishes between 'the Communist, who is a political revolutionist, and the Futurist, who is a revolutionary innovator of form'. The avant-garde, for Trotsky, borrows the gestures of political revolution in order to bring about innovation in form and a 'break with the past', but only within these narrow limits.³⁶ This is even more true for Lewis than it is for Marinetti, who confirms his political ambitions in 1919 by running as a Fascist Party candidate.

In 1914, political revolution holds essentially a metaphorical significance for Lewis. Politics and economics do register as concerns, but only as they impact on the production of art. Political upheaval becomes 'real' for Lewis when it disrupts the art world, as it does when the Suffragettes escalate their campaign of vandalism in the weeks prior to the appearance of *Blast* in July 1914. The more famous incidents, including Mary Richardson's slashing of *The Rokeby Venus* by Velazquez at the National Gallery on 10 March, and Mary Wood's attack on Sargent's portrait of Henry James at the Royal Academy on opening day (4 May), caused some of the London galleries to be 'barricaded' against further injury, according to Dangerfield.³⁷ This alone would have created tension in London's artistic community: as Wees observes, 'The Vorticists had some cause for worry. On 4 June 1914, a hatchet-bearing suffragette had destroyed two drawings at the Doré Gallery where several of

³⁵ *Pound / Lewis*, p. 63. For notes to the 'blessed' and 'blasted', see Appendix II in William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972).

³⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, trans. by Rose Strunsky (London: RedWords, 1991), pp. 161-62. Trotsky's argument is even more apt in relation to Vorticism. Lewis and Pound drew a sharp line between art and politics, despite occasionally cheering on ('blessing') the representatives of analogous, but in their terms wholly separate, rebellions in other areas of society. Trotsky, of course, was neither entirely opposed to nor wholly sceptical of the involvement of artists in revolutionary politics. *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* (1938), co-written with André Breton but signed only by Breton and Diego Rivera (owing to concerns about personal safety that proved well justified), demonstrates Trotsky's commitment in this regard. The manifesto seeks 'to free intellectual creation from the chains that bind it and to allow all mankind to climb those heights that only isolated geniuses have reached in the past'. Reacting specifically against Stalinism, it declares: 'Independent revolutionary art must gather its forces ... to assert out loud its right to exist.' See Caws, 472-77.

³⁷ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), p. 307. The report in *The Times* (5 May 1914) on the 'Academy Outrage' reproduces a statement by Wood read at the weekly meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union at Knightsbridge Hall: "I have tried to destroy a valuable picture because I wish to show the public that they have no security for their property nor their art treasures until women are given political freedom" (p. 8).

the Vorticists exhibited their own work', bringing events even closer to home.³⁸ (The Doré was also the venue for the second major Futurist exhibition in April 1914.) This prompts 'To Suffragettes', the patronizing note, made much of by Vorticism's critics, which appears in the back pages of the first issue of *Blast*, and uses hyperbole and bravado to mask its evident anxiety. 'If you destroy a great work of art', it declares, 'you are destroying a greater soul than if you annihilated a whole district of London. Leave art alone, brave comrades!'³⁹

Lyon's stated aim in one chapter of her book is 'to show how the rhetoric and tactics of the militant women's movement were enfolded into the foundations of English modernism'.⁴⁰ She illustrates commonalities using contemporary press coverage, and by comparing avant-garde art manifestos with polemical tracts taken, for example, from Christabel Pankhurst's *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (1913). Significant omissions are brought to light in her evidence. *Blast*'s 'word of advice' to Suffragettes – the anxious sounding 'stick to what you understand' – is revealed as a disingenuous lie: Lyon shows that many Suffragettes were practicing artists, and some had, as she states, 'exhibited widely in England and France'. A significant number had also attended the Slade School of Art and Design, just as Lewis and several other Vorticists had done.⁴¹ The Suffragette movement has received minimal coverage in Lewis criticism, and this omission can only be called a victory for Lewis in his effort to create 'water-tight compartments' to contain and keep separate pre-war art and politics.⁴² 'There were no politics then', Lewis insists in *Blasting and Bombardiering*. 'I might have been at the head of a social revolution, instead of merely being the prophet of a new fashion in art.' He goes on to acknowledge, with hindsight, that Vorticism was 'Art behaving as if it were Politics', but insists: 'I swear I did not know it. It may in fact have been politics. I see that now. Indeed it must have been. But I was unaware of the fact.'⁴³

³⁸ Wees, p. 19.

³⁹ 'To Suffragettes', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 151-52 (p. 152).

⁴⁰ Lyon, p. 94.

⁴¹ Lyon, p. 107. Lyon bases this evidence on Lisa Tickner's study, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

⁴² 'Our Vortex', p. 147.

⁴³ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: John Calder, 1982), p. 32. In 'The Code of a Herdsman', published in the July 1917 *Little Review*, one of Lewis's rules is 'Do not play with

Lewis's testimony certainly begs scrutiny. The fault in Lyon's argument, however, lies elsewhere. Too often it conflates Marinetti's iconoclastic Futurism with the more conflicted, often artistically conservative principles of Vorticism. The key point of interplay between Vorticists and Suffragettes centres on the vandalism of works of art. As Lyon points out, the 'blast' aimed at Suffragettes 'was probably composed ... during the height of the May-June painting slashings of 1914'.⁴⁴ However, she moves on without examining the importance of these actions, which, as we have seen, directly threatened both Old Masters paintings (valued especially by Pound) and Vorticist paintings. Lyon describes the 'new avant-garde' as 'eager ... to jettison past art'.⁴⁵ While this certainly applies to Marinetti's Futurism, which imagines 'the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift ... discoloured and shredded', it is an important point of disagreement between Futurism and Vorticism.⁴⁶ The Vorticists might have tried to discredit their Bloomsbury rivals by labelling them 'aesthetes' and belated Victorians, but they also disapproved of Futurism's appetite for destruction. Peter Nicholls's comments on this point, with specific reference to Pound, are illuminating:

Pound's sense of his own origin in 'a half-savage country, out of date' drove him in search of connections with precisely that older, Latin culture which Marinetti sought to destroy. Futurism was certainly exhilarating, but Pound could not subscribe to Marinetti's denigration of 'art' and his worship of the present.⁴⁷

Similarly, in an article published one month prior to the first issue of *Blast*, Lewis argues:

Museums and Galleries should be very strictly kept for students and Artists only. In fact, it would be a cowardly and foolish thing for the Futurists to destroy the Museums. They should be seized, rather, and kept as the private property of the Artists. It is only women and

political notions ... for that is a compromise with the herd.' Reprinted by the Wyndham Lewis Society (Glasgow, 1977), p. 4.

⁴⁴ Lyon, p. 109.

⁴⁵ Lyon, p. 111.

⁴⁶ 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 23.

⁴⁷ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 172.

canaille that destroy beautiful things. The true Futurist will not destroy fine paintings.⁴⁸

Lewis is chastising Marinetti here for publicly supporting the Suffragettes and their tactic of vandalism – as he did in March 1912 when he joined their window smashing campaign in London⁴⁹ – rather than defending art above all other concerns.

Like Whistler before him, Lewis argues that the artist lives outside of ‘any milieu or time’.⁵⁰ In terms of rejecting the past, Lewis and the other Vorticists are only concerned with what they consider to be an unhealthy or ‘morbid’ worship of the past, where history intrudes upon the present; they see nothing wrong with progress based on past traditions. ‘Kill John Bull With Art’, another of Lewis’s manifestos, published in the *Outlook* two days before *Blast* appeared, reinterprets Marinetti’s destructive proposals, toning them down while at the same time refusing to be outdone in the issuing of extravagant pronouncements. ‘We, like Mr Marinetti, or rather *much more than* he, are happy, and can well do without the Past’, he declares. ‘Our fathers are part of us, and the more we live instead of idling about their ashes the more we honour them, as of course we ought to do.’⁵¹ Breaking away from the past, in the *Blast* manifestos as in most avant-garde manifestos, really means breaking away from the immediate past, or from movements in the present that are considered ‘*passéist*’. The manifesto calls for a renewal that is usually, perhaps inevitably, based on principles borrowed from someone or something distant enough in time (Rembrandt) or space (Japan) as to seem innovative. Use is made of a very limited sense of the term ‘past’, to denote the ideals that must be broken away from in order to undo the stagnation of the present, in this case the pre-War period. This was a time

⁴⁸ ‘A Man of the Week: Marinetti’, reprinted in *Creatures of Habit*, p. 31. It may be noted in passing that, aside from contemporary references, Lewis’s proposal for restricted access to museums could as easily have come from Whistler.

⁴⁹ For Marinetti’s own account of the march, see ‘Suffragettes and the Indian Docks’, in Marinetti, *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Flint (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), 341–42. Marinetti puts himself in control (‘Several of us captain the tide of women along the street’) and then, when ‘all hell breaks loose’, at the centre of the action: ‘two huge horses with two immense policemen on them charge down on our suffragettes and we all go tumbling head over heels’.

⁵⁰ ‘Long Live the Vortex’, p. 7. This echoes Whistler’s declaration, in the *Ten O’Clock* lecture, that ‘The master stands in no relation to the moment at which he occurs.’ *Gentle Art*, pp. 154–55.

⁵¹ Reprinted in *Creatures of Habit*, p. 38. Emphasis added.

when, as Pound later recalls, 'so few DID'.⁵² Pound, in fact, sums up Vorticism's relationship with the past most plainly, writing in the *Egoist* a few days before the publication of *Blast*. 'We do not desire to cut ourselves off from the past', he writes. 'We do not desire to cut ourselves off from great art of any period, we only demand a recognition of contemporary great art.'⁵³

The opening manifesto of *Blast* tries to defend art against the intrusion of life, and to preserve its autonomy in a way that belies its secret bonds with Aestheticism. 'We want to leave Nature and Men alone', it declares. 'We believe in no perfectibility except our own.'⁵⁴ It is possible to read *Blast* as being essentially reactive, heavily imbued with satire, and more critical than creative in its arguments. It seeks no change in the outside world, only in the world of art: even here the revolution, bold in design, is fairly timid in its plan of action. Lewis's Vorticist manifestos look like their European and Russian avant-garde counterparts, but this is misleading: Vorticism uses the language of politics, revolution, and social change *against* its adversaries in those realms, while seeking to preserve the separate, privileged domain of the artist. Lewis uses political language and a political form (the manifesto) to *undermine* the idea of praxis, to parody and to protect against the intrusion of politics. Politics are brought into the equation in order to be refuted, and the language of politics is used to this end as well, just as Whistler, in the *Ten O'Clock*, takes up the role of the adversary, and the pen and podium, in order to vanquish the critic (notably Ruskin) from the realm of art. Lewis, with the help of Pound, may be seen as 'shoring up', the way T. S. Eliot would, using fragments of political discourse in a defensive gesture against the actual intrusion of politics into the realm of art, or, more generally, against the rising chaos in the months leading up to the outbreak of hostilities. In fact it is the war, when it finally comes, that convinces Lewis of the futility of this late Aestheticism. It is therefore mistaken to consider the Vorticist manifestos 'backwards', as it were, from the point of view of Lewis's (and Pound's) later incursions into politics: it is the war that brings about the desire for praxis, and the desire to influence outside events. We see this in Lewis's immediate post-war

⁵² Doob, p. 108.

⁵³ Quoted in Cork, *Vorticism*, I, p. 257.

⁵⁴ 'Long Live the Vortex', p. 7.

manifestos, most notably *The Caliph's Design*. The influence of the Suffragettes or the syndicalists on Vorticism, though present in some aspects of the movement, should not be over-emphasized.

Lewis's first major manifesto after *Blast*, and after the armistice, is both a continuation of and a departure from his earlier endeavours. Published in October 1919 by the Egoist Press, *The Caliph's Design* is, in Lewis's words, 'a sixty-page pamphlet dealing with the art position generally'.⁵⁵ It is a continuation of his pre-war writing insofar as it 'was another *Blast*, and it continued the criticism of *Blast No. 1* and *Blast No. 2*', as Lewis writes in his introduction to the 1939 edition.⁵⁶ In the same introduction he states: 'I was no longer a "vorticist"', but he describes himself using this label in several places in the pamphlet.⁵⁷ The targets are also familiar: they include Bloomsbury, dilettantism, and the taste for contemporary French painting championed by Roger Fry and Clive Bell. The differences, however, are equally striking. *The Caliph's Design* dispenses with the principle of autonomy that underpins *Blast*, and in so doing appears to signal an attempt by Lewis, in the immediate post-war years, to engage with uncharacteristic sincerity in the kind of praxis shared by the revolutionary manifestos of contemporary movements like Constructivism and De Stijl.⁵⁸ It is a call to action in life as well as in art, and in architecture and design as well as in painting, as the subtitle makes immediately clear. 'Architects!' it shouts: 'Where is Your Vortex?' Paul Edwards argues that, as an architectural manifesto, *The Caliph's Design* 'marks the aborted beginning of international Modernism in London'

⁵⁵ From a letter to John Quinn dated 3 September 1919, in *Letters*, p. 110.

⁵⁶ Reprinted in *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, p. 129.

⁵⁷ To cite one colourful example, he states: 'But alas! although like the Caliph, a vorticist, I have not the power of life and death over the Mahmuds and Hasans of this city. Otherwise I should have no compunction in having every London architect's head severed from his body at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, unless he made some effort.' Lewis, *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is Your Vortex?* (London: Egoist Press, 1919), p. 18. (This edition hereafter referred to as *Caliph*.)

⁵⁸ Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner's 'Realistic Manifesto' (1920), for example, declares: 'In the squares and on the streets we are placing our work convinced that art must not remain a sanctuary for the idle, a consolation for the weary, and a justification for the lazy. Art should attend us everywhere that life flows and acts ... at the bench, at the table, at work, at rest, at play; on working days and holidays ... at home and on the road ... in order that the flame to live should not extinguish in mankind.' Similarly, the first manifesto of De Stijl (1918) declares its support for 'all who work to establish international unity in life, art, culture, either intellectually or materially.' Both reprinted in Caws, 396-400 (p. 400) and 424-25 (p. 425).

– a manifesto without a movement, in other words, which is not uncommon.⁵⁹ But despite the revolutionary fervour that can be seen in parts of *The Caliph's Design* – ‘You must get Painting, Sculpture, and Design out of the studio and into life’⁶⁰ – it is ultimately a manifesto for a very well-ordered ‘new order’, framed as a return to common sense and even an Arnoldian ‘sweetness and light’ from the decadence and chaos that have reigned, respectively, in art and life.

Edwards suggests that a feeling of ‘sympathy’ gained from the war might have ‘led Lewis in 1919 to ... actively propose a practical application of the formal inventions he and others pioneered in their geometrical paintings’.⁶¹ Lewis’s description of *The Caliph's Design* to John Quinn does suggest a change of heart. He tells Quinn, ‘It is an appeal to the better type of artist to take more interest in and more part in the general life of the world.’⁶² In the pamphlet itself he says with candour, ‘I write in these notes for a socially wider and not necessarily specialist public.’⁶³ In this period Lewis also makes proposals for municipal art (‘Art Saints for Villages’) and art education (‘Why Picasso Does It’), and he demonstrates the desire to reach a larger audience by publishing articles in the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Sunday Express*.⁶⁴ To ascribe to Lewis a feeling of ‘sympathy’, however, is too charitable, for the ‘interest’ in ‘general life’ encouraged by Lewis, whatever his claims, is still that of the ‘herdsman’ to the ‘herd’. ‘The Code of a Herdsman’, a fictional manifesto published in the *Little Review* during the war, defines these two groups: the ‘herdsman’ is equated with the ‘mountain people’, the few, who stand aloof from the many living ‘down below’.⁶⁵ Just prior to *The Caliph's Design*, in the *English Review* of April 1919, Lewis continues his advice to the herdsman-artist. Speaking now in pragmatic terms, and no longer using fictional characters, Lewis declares: ‘he must not be taught, but policed, simply, this big public. The public of

⁵⁹ Paul Edwards, ‘Afterword’, in Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is Your Vortex?* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1986), p. 150.

⁶⁰ *Caliph*, p. 7.

⁶¹ Edwards, ‘Afterword’, p. 149.

⁶² *Letters*, p. 110.

⁶³ *Caliph*, p. 22.

⁶⁴ The two articles cited are reprinted in *Creatures of Habit*. For a detailed description of Lewis’s publications during these years, see Omar S. Pound and Philip Grover, eds, *Wyndham Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson and Sons, 1978).

⁶⁵ *Code*, p. 5.

the few thousands, on the other hand, must be carefully instructed and made into a real and responsive chorus ... The artist has many responsibilities in these Islands!’⁶⁶ These ideas coalesce in the wide-ranging manifesto based around the parable of the Caliph, whose design, ‘a little vorticist effort’, is executed (upon pain of execution) by a ‘responsive chorus’ made up of his chief engineer and architect: ‘And within a month a strange street transfigured the heart of that cultivated city.’⁶⁷ The authoritarian character of the parable is modified somewhat in the ‘Author’s Preface’, which emphasizes order and harmony as primary objectives: ‘we could even dispense with a Caliph’, it states. ‘There need not be any bloodshed. It is a fair and smiling world!’⁶⁸ Indeed a faint but unmistakable image of the horror of war remains imprinted on Lewis’s *tabula rasa*, seen for example in the criticism of Picasso, who is considered as being ‘rather equivocal and unsatisfactory in the light of present events’.⁶⁹

By the time he reaches the middle of the first part of this lengthy manifesto, Lewis is already slackening his rhetorical pace, and easing off his adversarial stance as if wearied from his years of ‘blasting’ before and during the war. He bemoans the fact that

The propaganda, explanatory pamphlets, and the rest, in which we, in this country, have to indulge, is so much time out of active life which would normally be spent as every artist wishes to spend his time, in work, in a state of complete oblivion as regards any possible public that his work may ever have. Yet were one’s ideas on painting not formulated ... an impossible condition would result for an artist desirous of experimenting.⁷⁰

If society were to employ the artist ‘usefully’, in a public capacity, to reorder the appearance of the world into something more beautiful and consistent, Lewis argues, the artist would no longer have to be marginalized, or even oppositional. Artists like Lewis do not seek to be ‘in the position of freaks, the queer wild men of cubes, the

⁶⁶ ‘What Art Now?’ Reprinted in *Creatures of Habit*, 46-49 (p. 48).

⁶⁷ *Caliph*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ *Caliph*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ *Caliph*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ *Caliph*, p. 20.

terrible futurists', he insists. 'No pleasurable thrill accompanies these words when used about one's own very normal proceedings.'⁷¹ Towards the end of Part One, Lewis imagines new possibilities for machinery, 'a new resource', apart from the violent applications he has witnessed in the war, or the violent dynamism 'worshipped' by the Futurists. 'Absorbed into the aesthetic consciousness,' he argues, showing naivety that is characteristic of some of his later prophesies, 'it would no longer *make* so much as a pop-gun: its function thenceforward would change.' Like Whistler, the utopia Lewis imagines is one in which the artist is both central – 'suitably honoured' – and conveniently invisible, left to 'pursue their trade without further trouble'. The manifesto, then, is for the moment cast in a negative light, an ugly necessity in the real world, where the artist 'has no role in the social machine, except that of an entertainer, or a business man'.⁷² *The Caliph's Design* represents a last plea from the artist for a 'social' role, and when this plea is rejected, with the failure of Group X and the Tyro projects in the following two years, Lewis goes 'underground', in his own description,⁷³ and emerges several years later wearing the mask of the Enemy.

A principal tenet in 'The Code of a Herdsman' is: 'Contradict yourself. In order to live, you must remain broken up.'⁷⁴ Whether it is this strategy at work, or simply that *The Caliph's Design* is a pamphlet containing 'rough notes; not planned, but written down hastily ... as some problem presented itself', as Lewis later describes it, the manifesto shifts positions dramatically from one chapter to the next.⁷⁵ The clearest division, in fact, is straight down the middle: Parts One and Two present the sort of general diagnoses and remedies that are typical of the manifesto, whereas Parts Three and Four deal more specifically with the contemporary art scene under the headings 'Paris' and 'The Studio Game', respectively. The second half of this division begins more properly at the end of Part Two, with the chapter entitled, 'Fashion'. It is here that the strident calls to action give way to the detached, external

⁷¹ *Caliph*, p. 21.

⁷² *Caliph*, p. 29.

⁷³ See Lewis, 'I go Underground', in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, pp. 212-16.

⁷⁴ *Code*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Rude Assignment*, p. 168.

voice of the artist-as-critic, which describes 'the Intellectuals, the Art World' from without. The voice begins:

The Victorian age ... indulged men so much that they became guys of sentiment. Against this 'sentimentality' people of course reacted. So the brutal tap was turned on, and for fifty years it will be the thing to be brutal, 'unemotional' ... And so your fashions go, a matter of the cold or the hot tap, simply.⁷⁶

This criticism of being 'perpetually in some raw extreme' marks a crucial point in Lewis's writing: it is the curious moment when a text that begins as a radical proclamation turns against itself, conflicted, and attacks exactly what it represents – the fashionable movement, the extreme position taken for its own sake, Vorticist 'brutality'. It becomes, in a sense, a polemic against polemics. At this moment a new figure emerges, an early incarnation of the Enemy, who is able to see outside of fashion, 'to gaze at a number of revolutions at once, and catch the static and unvarying eye of Aristotle, a few revolutions away, or the later and more heterodox orb of Christ'.⁷⁷ The discussion of fashion continues in Part Three, where it is seen to be a 'useful substitute for conviction', and even 'the substitute for religion', a herd activity.⁷⁸ Lewis then introduces a strange qualifier, but one that is consistent with 'The Code of a Herdsman', which instructs the disciple to 'Exploit Stupidity'.⁷⁹ He writes: 'What we really require are a few men who will *use* Fashion, the ruler of any age ... to build something in Fashion's atmosphere which can best flourish there.'⁸⁰

In Part Four of *The Caliph's Design* Lewis mounts a sustained attack on his enemies in Bloomsbury. The long discussion of French painting which precedes this attack only serves to further belittle his true target, not simply because the critics Lewis associates with Bloomsbury are dedicated to promoting French art, but by implying that Fry and Bell are not worthy of direct attention until the closing pages of the manifesto. The attack itself upholds the pattern that begins in 1913 with the 'Round Robin' and culminates in the satirical novel *The Apes of God* in 1930. Lewis

⁷⁶ *Caliph*, p. 41.

⁷⁷ *Caliph*, p. 41.

⁷⁸ *Caliph*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ *Code*, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Caliph*, p. 49.

abandons the position of the detached observer and, employing satirical devices of the coarser kind, portrays his adversaries as effete homosexuals and relics of Aestheticism. He attacks 'all the colour-matching, match-box-making, dressmaking, chair-painting ... carried on in a spirit of distinguished amateurish gallantry and refinement at the Omega workshops',⁸¹ despite his own interest, expressed in a letter to Quinn, in forming a not wholly dissimilar art collective with Group X.⁸² The tone of this section drops with each juvenile pun on aesthetes who are 'receptive' as opposed to 'creative'. The 'heir to the aesthete of the Wilde period' is described as 'a very good example of how to receive rather than to give'.⁸³ The point of Lewis's criticism, that it is counterproductive 'to accept what is already in the world, rather than to put something new there', the paralysing effect of the critic-centred art scene, is a valid and familiar target of the avant-garde manifesto. As the passage just quoted illustrates, however, Lewis's criticisms are invariably expressed using simplistic analogies of heterosexual reproduction. 'Unsatisfied sex accounts for much', Lewis continues. 'You wonder if it is really a picture, after all, and not a woman *or something else* that is wanted ... These bawdy connoisseurs should really be kept out of the galleries. I can see a fine Renoir, some day, being mutilated: or an Augustus John being raped!'⁸⁴ *The Caliph's Design* begins as a 'true' manifesto, full of radical proposals. Following the model of the manifesto that heralds the beginning of a movement, for example, Lewis argues in Part One: 'The first great modern building that arose in this city would soon carry everything before it', creating 'a new form-content for our everyday vision'.⁸⁵ Later he turns to criticize movements and fashions in art, exhibiting signs of a transition from his Vorticist self to that 'solitary outlaw', the Enemy. The pamphlet concludes, predictably, with an attack on Bloomsbury and Aestheticism, connecting this manifesto to earlier and later writings by Lewis. These final pages provide some striking examples of the manifesto's arsenal of dirty rhetorical tricks.

⁸¹ *Caliph*, p. 63.

⁸² Lewis writes to Quinn about the members of Group X 'taking a shop or office, where it is proposed to sell objects made by them ... and especially to have a business address from which the poster, cinematograph and other industries can be approached'. See *Letters*, p. 112.

⁸³ *Caliph*, p. 63.

⁸⁴ *Caliph*, p. 66.

⁸⁵ *Caliph*, p. 34.

Lewis's last collective manifesto is published the following year in the catalogue of the Group X exhibition at Heal's Mansard Gallery in March 1920. The group includes several ex-Vorticists, including Dismorr, Etchells, Hamilton, and Wadsworth, and although Lewis is not the principal organizer of the group, he is its chief propagandist. The Group X manifesto, written by Lewis, has the appearance of being another step away from *Blast*, but in a different direction from *The Caliph's Design*. Whereas the latter represents bold departures from formalism, on the one hand, and group organization, on the other, Group X represents a tentative (and short-lived) return to the idea of the artists' collective. The name itself points in two directions: first, to the number of painters, and second, to the ambiguous nature of their corporate identity. Gone is the important 'we' of the *Blast* manifestos: the 'opinions' of Group X are discussed by an 'I', Lewis, who refers to 'the ten original members' – which must include himself – as 'they'.⁸⁶ This sense of distance is exaggerated by the opening lines, 'The members of this group have agreed to exhibit together twice annually, firstly for motives of convenience, and with *no theory or dogma* that would be liable to limit the development of any member. Each member sails his own boat.'⁸⁷ This nautical metaphor is expanded, however, and begins to generate some of the violent partisan tones of Vorticism. While it is not 'a piratic community', the 'peaceful traders' of Group X are 'naturally armed to the teeth, and bristling with every device to defend the legitimate and honourable trafficking' of their goods. The group's important function as protection of the artist's livelihood, by the assumption of 'strength in numbers', therefore remains active. Some of the 'piratic' character, too, is in evidence: instead of attacking Futurism, Group X targets the rival group the Seven and Five Society, which it calls 'six and ten, or something'.⁸⁸ It also continues the pre-war opposition to the Royal Academy (which 'no effort can reform short of the immediate extinction of every man, woman and child at present connected with it'), the New English Art Club, and the London Group, which was seen as having been taken over by Roger Fry. Against these

⁸⁶ Lewis tells Quinn: 'I have ... formed a group of ten painters: Etchells, Roberts, Wadsworth, Kauffer, Dismorr, Dobson (a sculptor), three others and myself.' See *Letters*, pp. 111-112.

⁸⁷ 'Group X', p. 184. Emphasis added.

⁸⁸ 'Group X', p. 185.

English institutions and the 'clammy cloak of provincial narrowness', it proclaims allegiance to a pan-European movement in the arts, advocating closer ties with 'France, Spain and Italy'.⁸⁹ The Group X manifesto, or what Lewis calls the 'general indications of policy', is a timid creature when placed beside the puce monster of Vorticism.⁹⁰ But it is more of a manifesto than its opening lines suggest, and it marks an end to Lewis's ambivalent involvement with groups and movements.

Lewis devotes a substantial amount of writing to reflections on his relationship with the group structure. One of his main contentions, and one that is highly relevant to the manifesto's slippery speaking position, is that the individual should *act* like a group, whether or not he or she is actually representing a group. In 'The Code of a Herdsman', for example, the (fictional) author advises his disciple to 'Use your epithet as though it were used by a whole nation', in other words, confidently. Similarly, 'Yourself must be your caste.'⁹¹ Commenting on his pre-war activities in his last published article, in 1956, Lewis claims: 'I expended a good deal of energy in order to create the impression that a multitude existed where there was in fact not much more than a very vigorous One.'⁹² When he became the Enemy in the late twenties, little changed because, as Lewis later recalled, he still acted and felt like the surviving member of a lost 'herd'. This 'herd', according to Lewis, had reached its apex in the eighteenth century:

I felt it to be an accident – a disagreeable one – that I was straying around by myself. I was a group animal, behaving as one of the solitary breeds by chance (I never confused myself with lions or eagles). ... In England there had been numbers of us at one time. I knew that from the books I read.⁹³

Lewis was not as alone as he might have thought: he shares with Yeats the sense of being at once (in Lewis's words) a 'solitary outlaw' and a 'multitude'. He also draws strength from the same lineage; from the 'savage indignation' of Swift and his contemporaries. Yeats writes in 1937: 'Talk to me of originality and I will turn on

⁸⁹ 'Group X', p. 186.

⁹⁰ 'Group X', p. 184.

⁹¹ *Code*, pp. 3-4.

⁹² Lewis, 'The Vorticists', p. 382.

⁹³ *Rude Assignment*, p. 213.

you with rage. I am a crowd. I am a lonely man. I am nothing.'⁹⁴ As Janet Lyon demonstrates, the manifesto always stands, in some sense, for an imaginary group.⁹⁵ The 'we' it so often employs is used to obscure its limitations and lay claim to an authority it rarely, if ever, actually possesses, whether that authority purports to come from the state, the vox populi, or from history. Lewis boasts of having 'all the confidence of a herd',⁹⁶ but his manifestos are also clear examples of the anxiety and compensatory aggressiveness that Puchner has described.⁹⁷

For Lewis, acting like a crowd involves adopting multiple, and often contradictory, identities or masks. 'Cherish and develop, side by side, your six most constant indications of different personalities', the 'Code' states. 'Never fall into the vulgarity of being or assuming yourself to be one ego.'⁹⁸ This, then, is not only a tactic to be adopted by the 'herdsman' but also an ideology to follow: the ideology of what Lewis elsewhere calls the 'split-man'.⁹⁹ As Lewis's biographical details show, he followed this strategy in his daily life, concealing from friends and colleagues the fact that he was married, and using multiple addresses.¹⁰⁰ Lewis employs the espionage metaphor directly when he contrasts the 'bogus battalion' he represents as the voice of Vorticism with the 'single spy' he becomes in *The Caliph's Design*.¹⁰¹ As we have seen, Lewis speaks once more on behalf of a collective with Group X, but afterward abandons all collaborations, even refusing, for example, to become a signatory of a manifesto proposed by Ezra Pound in 1936. While Lewis often recognizes, as he does in the Group X manifesto, the need for artists to organize in order to protect their interests, he also sees this reaction by artists against a hostile environment as having negative side-effects, including 'the large-scale and well-organised coterie, like the "Bloomsburies"', which becomes a threat in itself.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Yeats, 'A General Introduction for my Work', in *Essays and Introductions*, 509-26 (p. 522).

⁹⁵ See Lyon, pp. 23-26.

⁹⁶ *Rude Assignment*, p. 213.

⁹⁷ Puchner, 'Screeching Voices', pp. 114-115.

⁹⁸ *Code*, p. 4.

⁹⁹ This is the title Lewis gives to Part V of *The Apes of God*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), pp. 141-73.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, O'Keefe, *Some Sort of Genius*.

¹⁰¹ Wyndham Lewis on Art, p. 69.

¹⁰² *Rude Assignment*, p. 114.

The *Tyro* (1921-22), according to William Wees, 'signalled a new, purely individualistic phase in Lewis's career'.¹⁰³ In his autobiography Lewis admits to 'what must have seemed an exaggerated individualism on my part'.¹⁰⁴ The Tyros, Lewis's fantastic, satirical creatures, appear in one exhibition of paintings, which includes a famous portrait of Lewis himself as a Tyro, and they serve to illustrate the first issue of the magazine. By the time the second issue appears, however, the Tyros have already been superseded by early drawings of the 'Apes' that will populate Lewis's epic satire, *The Apes of God*, which begins to appear in serialized form in the *Criterion* in 1924. The *Tyro* is founded partly in opposition to Roger Fry's control and influence, and in this sense it is a continuation of Lewis's grand project of maintaining a viable alternative to, in Lewis's terms, Bloomsbury's unhealthy monopoly on the London art scene. It is ironic, then, and very telling, that Ezra Pound expresses doubts about the magazine's wider appeal. 'Cant see that TYRO is of interest outside Bloomsbury', he writes to Lewis, indicating that although Lewis is critical of the London coteries, he has also trapped himself to some extent within the confines of that milieu, and will have to seek his audience there.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, Lewis demonstrates a desire for wider contacts by invoking in the first issue of the *Tyro*, as he does in the Group X manifesto, 'the great European movement in painting and design' as a potential ally in the battle against what he calls the 'aesthetic chauvinism' of England.¹⁰⁶

If Lewis's 'Tyro' period has a manifesto, it is 'The Children of the New Epoch' from the *Tyro*'s first issue (1921). It begins with a performative gesture that is characteristic of the manifesto: 'We are at the beginning of a new epoch, fresh to it, the first babes of a new, and certainly a better, day.'¹⁰⁷ This appears to be another attempt at the post-war *tabula rasa* seen in *The Caliph's Design*. It also suggests the

¹⁰³ Wees, p. 210. It might be useful to recall another landmark in Lewis's career: his first one-man show, *Guns*, which is held at the Goupil Gallery in 1919.

¹⁰⁴ *Rude Assignment*, p. 212. An ambitious five thousand copies were printed of the second *Enemy*, as compared with only one thousand copies of each issue of the *Tyro* (see *Bibliography*, cited above). It is also interesting to note that the *Tyro* was, as Edwards points out, 'produced like a weekly' rather than like an art magazine: see Edwards, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ Pound / Lewis, p. 127.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Objects of this Paper', reprinted in *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, 193-94 (p. 193).

¹⁰⁷ 'The Children of the New Epoch', first published in the *Tyro*, 1 (1921); reprinted in *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, 195-96 (p. 195).

kind of grand-scale, 'epochal thinking' which Leon Surette calls the 'one universal feature of modernism', and which is a prominent feature of many manifestos.¹⁰⁸ But how seriously such a pronouncement can be taken is questionable. The Tyro is a new breed, they are novices by definition; it might be assumed that these 'children' possess a certain amount of potential. But the Tyro is, in Lewis's words, 'a "novice" to real life', a dilettante, and again we see a picture emerge of the inauthentic, unprofessional artist who is always Lewis's target, even if in this case Lewis includes himself in the satire.¹⁰⁹ Alan Munton argues that a 'transformation of life and culture throughout Europe', a Golden Age, 'appeared imminent' to Lewis and other avant-garde artists before the war.¹¹⁰ The expression of such hopes in the immediate post-war, however, must be treated warily. Lewis seems to divide himself between drawing a satirical picture of the post-war artist, and genuinely trying to make the best of the wasteland in which he finds himself. He declares, 'There is no passage back across ... to the lands of yesterday', as if it were a genuine opportunity.¹¹¹ But the silence that follows the Tyro period, when for several years Lewis goes 'underground', testifies to the difficulty he has in discovering a 'new epoch' worth celebrating. When Lewis resurfaces with the 'Man of the World' project (broken up into a series of books on various subjects), he presents a complex vision of the new age, but this time he is bent upon undoing it rather than attempting, even half-heartedly, to sing its praises. 'The Children of the New Epoch' warns of 'a sort of No Man's Land atmosphere' before the beginning of the new phase, but it does not suggest for how long this atmosphere might take hold.

4.2 An Uneasy Peace: The Manifesto and High Modernism

In the immediate post-war years, one theme dominates many artistic manifestos: the so-called *rappel à l'ordre*, placing emphasis on discipline, rationalism, and neo-

¹⁰⁸ Surette, p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ 'Dean Swift with a Brush', p. 359.

¹¹⁰ Alan Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis: War and Aggression', in *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War*, 14-37 (p. 35).

¹¹¹ 'The Children of the New Epoch', p. 195.

Classicism. Apollinaire's 'L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes', published posthumously in the *Mercure de France* on 1 December 1918, is the definitive example. As much an appeal to French nationalism as it is an artistic declaration, its significance in the latter sense is nevertheless fundamental in setting the tone of the post-war avant-garde in Europe. The declaration begins with an evocation of the 'strong intellectual discipline' of the French (and their 'spiritual kin'), and ends with the assertion that the classical virtues of 'order' and 'duty', combined with 'liberty', are the guiding principles of the 'new spirit'. A typical passage addresses the pre-war 'excesses' of the Futurists:

[Y]ou will not find in France the 'words at liberty' [Marinetti's *parole in libertà*] which have been reached by the excesses of the Italian and Russian futurists, the extravagant offspring of the new spirit, for France abhors disorder. She readily questions fundamentals, but she has a horror of chaos.

Added to this, Apollinaire declares: 'the poet puts aside any high-flown purpose. There is no longer any Wagnerianism in us'.¹¹² The attacks on Germany and Romanticism are neither surprising nor very new in 1918. *Blast*'s second issue, the 'War Number' of July 1915, takes aim at similar targets. Lewis states in the opening editorial: 'Germany has stood for the old Poetry, for Romance.' (For this reason, he continues, 'it appears to us humanly desirable that Germany should win no war against France or England'.)¹¹³ In England, a Classicist streak runs through the manifestos of Pound and Lewis and extends back into a longer tradition. Even so, the 'call to order' stands in opposition to many aspects of the pre-war avant-garde, in particular any form of 'excess' (here *Blast* must share the guilt). The first post-war manifestos, including *The Caliph's Design*, its attacks on Bloomsbury notwithstanding, represent a reigning in of rhetorical violence and a new interest in the language of restoration, stability, and rebuilding. Similarly, Lewis's *Enemy* finds

¹¹² Reprinted in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 226-27.

¹¹³ Wyndham Lewis, 'Editorial', *Blast*, 2 (1915), 5-6 (p. 5). At the same time, Lewis qualifies his attack, somewhat bravely, with the recognition that he is describing 'Official Germany'. 'But unofficial Germany has done more for the movement that this paper was founded to propagate ... than any other country. It would be the absurdest ingratitude on the part of artists to forget this.'

fault with the casual endorsement given by the editors of *transition* to violent rhetoric and revolution.

The rejection of the use of metaphorical violence in the expression and promotion of artistic ideas is perhaps best exemplified by Hugo Ball's departure from Dada in 1917.¹¹⁴ As he makes clear in *Flight Out of Time* (1927), Ball conceived of Dada as fundamentally positive and regenerative. 'Our debates are a burning search, more blatant every day,' he writes in April 1916, 'for the specific rhythm and the buried face of this age – for its foundation and essence; for the possibility of its being stirred, its awakening.'¹¹⁵ When the movement – as it later becomes – is taken over by the entrepreneurial Tristan Tzara, whose nihilist sentiments soon come to the fore, Ball abandons art for politics and then religion.¹¹⁶ The manifesto enters into Ball's decision in two ways: first, because he announces his initial departure from the group in his 'Dada Manifesto'¹¹⁷, which he reads before performing his sound poetry at the first public 'soirée' in July 1916; and second, because it is this very aspect of Dada, the *faux*-militaristic movement-and-manifestos element, that he finds objectionable. As he writes shortly before he rejoins the group briefly in March 1917: 'art is being changed into philosophy and religion in its principles and on its very own territory ... Art itself appears to want to convert'.¹¹⁸

Lewis sees himself, in his *Blast* phase and later in the guise of the Enemy, as an exception in Britain, where moderation always prevails. 'Severity of any kind

¹¹⁴ As Nicholls observes, 'Almost from the first, the Dadaists would occupy a deliberately ambiguous position, condemning the barbarity of war while drawing on those same destructive energies to fuel their own anti-culturalism.' *Modernisms*, pp. 223-24. Although he participates in this ambiguity, Ball is more uncomfortable with it than the others; when the 'destructive energies' increase, he is forced to depart.

¹¹⁵ Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. by John Elderfield, trans. by Ann Raimés (New York: Viking, 1974), p. 59.

¹¹⁶ Ball maintains a belief throughout his Dada phase in the separation of politics and art. As he writes on 15 May 1917: 'Politics and art are two different things.' *Flight*, p. 114.

¹¹⁷ The manifesto offers some thoughts on the meaning of Dada to the audience, while at the same time addressing his fellow Dadaists. It states near the beginning: 'In German it means "good-bye," "Get off my back," "Be seeing you sometime."' Then later: 'To make of it an artistic tendency must mean that one is anticipating complications ... dada, you friends and also-poets, esteemed sirs, manufacturers, and evangelists. Dada Tzara, dada Huelsenbeck'. Reprinted in *Flight*, pp. 219-21. In his diary entry for 5 August 1916 he makes this purpose clear, and asks, 'Has the first manifesto of a newly founded cause ever been known to refute the cause itself to its supporters' face? And yet that is what happened.' *Flight*, p. 73.

¹¹⁸ *Flight*, p. 99.

repels her', he writes with disgust in *Rude Assignment*. 'Severity, like Satire, will only in the end be tolerated in the foreigner'.¹¹⁹ This is certainly true during the war, when many journalists find the continuing existence of a militant avant-garde distasteful. The London correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* writes in a review of the London Group show in March 1915 of how much things have changed since the previous year:

In those days it was easy to feel defiant and superior. The enemy was convention. Nowadays, there is another enemy and it is difficult to be wild and desperate and defiant and to be superior ... it is difficult, at the moment, to see any art as daring and strange.¹²⁰

A similar view is expressed by John Cournos in the *Egoist* (January 1917) under the title, 'The Death of Futurism'. Cournos glosses over some key differences between Futurism and Vorticism, as he will do in his 1923 novel *Babel*, but the point he makes is quite accurate, and the fact that he meets with no resistance from the magazine's editors suggests his view is widely held at the time. He boasts, in fact, that 'Nothing is easier to prove than that Futurism is dead', along with 'Vorticism and all those "brother" arts, whose masculomaniac spokesmen spoke glibly ... of "the glory of war" and "contempt for women"' (this is of course taken from the first Futurist manifesto). 'WAR was in the minds of both', he continues, '... the Vorticist manifesto even speaks of a "laugh like a bomb." To talk of a laugh like that was all very well in times of peace'.¹²¹ Lewis himself admits, in a singularly unreflective attack on Marinetti launched from the 'War Number' of *Blast*: 'The War has exhausted interest for the moment in booming and banging'.¹²²

To get a sense of exactly what (besides the war itself) the post-war retreat from bloody rhetoric is reacting against, one only has to go back as far as February 1914 and Pound's notorious *Egoist* essay, 'The New Sculpture'. It begins with a

¹¹⁹ *Rude Assignment*, p. 132.

¹²⁰ *Manchester Guardian* (13 March 1915), quoted in Jonathan Black, 'Taking Heaven by Violence: Futurism and Vorticism as seen by the British Press c. 1912-20', in *Blasting the Future! Vorticism in Britain 1910-1920*, ed. by Black and others (London: Philip Wilson, 2004), 29-39. The exhibition included Lewis, Wadsworth, and Nevinson, none of whom had yet enlisted.

¹²¹ John Cournos, 'The Death of Futurism', *Egoist*, 4.1 (January 1917), 6-7.

¹²² Lewis (unsigned), 'Marinetti's Occupation', *Blast*, 2 (1915), 26.

review of a Quest Society meeting where guest speakers included T. E. Hulme (who delivered 'an almost wholly unintelligible lecture on cubism and new art at large') and Wyndham Lewis (who 'compared the soul to a bullet'). Pound then launches into a violent polemic – almost a manifesto in itself – and declares: 'The artist has at last been aroused to the fact that the war between him and the world is a war without truce. That his only remedy is slaughter. This is a mild way to say it.' He continues in his 'mild' way to describe the artist as an aristocratic figure who 'must live by craft and violence' in order to survive. Curiously, Pound adopts the speaking position of the artist midway through the piece, abandoning his previous identities as first an art critic and then a disgruntled gallery-goer ('We are sick to death of the assorted panaceas, of the general acquiescence of artists'). As an artist, he declares: 'We turn back, we artists, to the powers of the air, to the djinns who were our allies aforetime, to the spirits of our ancestors. It is by them ... that we shall mount again into our hierarchy.' (The 'djinn' ancestry will of course feature again in *The Caliph's Design*.) By the end of the essay, which starts calmly enough, Pound is issuing a call to violent revolution by the artist over the masses: 'we artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control'.¹²³

Michael Levenson argues in *A Genealogy of Modernism* that 'the founding of the *Criterion* in 1922' represents the best 'mark of modernism's coming of age ... because it exemplifies the institutionalization of the movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy'.¹²⁴ If we take this argument to be generally acceptable, if not absolute, then the appearance in the magazine two years later of Lewis's provocative 'Encyclical' excerpt from *The Apes of God* could be seen as a similarly defining moment for the manifesto as a genre, marking its 'accession to cultural legitimacy' in the country that resisted it more than any of the other major countries in Europe. Such legitimacy had arguably been granted much earlier in France,¹²⁵ for example, but even there the manifesto enjoys an unusual amount of attention in the first half of the

¹²³ Ezra Pound, 'The New Sculpture', *Egoist*, 1.4 (16 February 1914), 67-68.

¹²⁴ Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 213.

¹²⁵ That is, with *Le Figaro's* momentous decision to print 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' on its front page, 20 February 1909.

twenties. The genre's success is due to the efforts of artistic entrepreneurs like Tristan Tzara, whose aggressive marketing of Dada drives out original members Ball and Huelsenbeck, and to André Breton, whose 'Manifesto of Surrealism' appears in 1924. Then of course there is Marinetti, whose continuing exploits always manage to gain mention in the features pages of *The Times*, just as they did before the War. This upsurge in manifesto writing is aided by the fact that revolutionary political models are everywhere to be found, especially from 1916 onwards. Artistic manifestos often strive to reproduce their tone of urgency and importance, even if in some cases, as Martin Puchner argues, the marginal position and uncertain authority that they share with documents of political agitation result in the 'demonstrative over-confidence and aggressiveness that will remain marks of the genre'.¹²⁶ Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* appears in 1924 (translated into English the following year), with a lengthy analysis of Russian and Italian Futurisms and their manifestos.¹²⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid's manifestos for a national renaissance in the *Scottish Chapbook* and the *Scottish Nation*, mentioned in the previous chapter, deviate briefly to include a 'programme' and a 'plea' for what he refers to later in the decade (still favourably) as 'a species of Scottish Fascism', anticipating the political extremism that will affect artistic manifestos more generally in the thirties.¹²⁸ A somewhat less radical form of nationalist manifesto appears in 1924 as far afield as the Dominion of Canada, in the form of Lionel Stevenson's 'Manifesto for a National Literature', published in *The Canadian Bookman*.¹²⁹ In Ireland the same year, Yeats, an old hand at the form, participates in the manifesto 'boom' with his anonymous declaration 'To all artists and writers', which he gives to the editors of *To-Morrow* for their debut issue.

¹²⁶ Puchner, 'Screeching Voices', p. 114.

¹²⁷ See Trotsky, pp. 157-90.

¹²⁸ See MacDiarmid (writing as C. M. Grieve), 'Plea for a Scottish Fascism', *Scottish Nation* (5 June 1923), 6-7, and 'Programme for a Scottish Fascism', *Scottish Nation* (19 June 1923), 10-11. The 'Programme' states: 'The entire Fascist programme can be readapted to Scottish national purposes and is ... *the only thing that will preserve our distinctive national culture*' (p. 11). MacDiarmid writes to Compton Mackenzie on 11 April 1929 about his activities with the National Party of Scotland (formed in 1927): 'The party is steadily eliminating the moderatist, compromising, democratic, element, and all the young people are coming round to the realisation for the need of – and readiness to institute – a species of Scottish Fascism.' In *Letters*, pp. 393-94.

¹²⁹ Stevenson makes a hopeful comparison between the Canadian situation and 'the Irish literary revival of the past thirty years'. Reprinted in *Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Editorials and Manifestos*, ed. by Douglas M. Daymond and Leslie G. Monkman, 2 vols (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1984-85), I, 203-08.

To return to Lewis, the early twenties sees him move toward the Enemy phase that will dominate his activities in the second half of the decade. The 'Encyclical' is the second excerpt of his epic satire, *The Apes of God* (1930), to be published by Eliot in the *Criterion* – 'Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man' appears in the previous issue of February 1924. It is with the 'Encyclical' that Lewis truly proclaims his role as the adversary of 'amateurs', 'apes', and 'mock artists' who are stealing valuable space in studios and column-inches from professional artists like himself. The fictional voice, a very thinly disguised Lewis, begins by stating: 'I am a party [of the society described]; but it is from amongst the parties that the acting judge is ultimately chosen ... what we call a judge is a successful partisan'.¹³⁰ Compared with the first *Enemy* editorial three years later, this gesture of honesty can be seen in both: as the Enemy, Lewis 'repudiates any of those treacherous or unreal claims to "impartiality," the scientific-impersonal, or ... detached omniscience'. In contrast to the author of the 'Encyclical', Lewis's claim to outsider status carries with it a higher degree of disinterestedness. He states:

My observations will contain no social impurities whatever; there will be nobody with whom I shall be dining tomorrow night ... whose susceptibilities, or whose wife's, I have to consider. If the public is not aware of the advantages it derives from such circumstances as these, it is time it awoke to its true interest.¹³¹

In *The Apes of God*, this 'document' is actually the work of the unseen Pierpoint, passed down the chain of mentor-figures from Horace Zagreus to Daniel Boleyn. It is framed by Zagreus as something very like the Papal edict from which its name derives. He explains to Dan Boleyn in a covering letter: 'it is written by a man who is in everything my master – I am nothing, he is everything. It speaks for itself.' Dan, accordingly, 'took up with a reverential carefulness the typewritten pages'.¹³²

Lewis's 'Encyclical' is a good example of the manifesto in the high Modernist period because it represents an attack on one bastion of Modernism (Bloomsbury, or

¹³⁰ Lewis, 'The Apes of God. Extract from Encyclical Addressed to Daniel Boleyn by Mr. Zagreus', *Criterion*, 2 (1924), 300-310 (p. 300).

¹³¹ Lewis, 'Editorial', p. ix.

¹³² *Apes of God*, p. 117.

its equivalent) from the safety of another (the *Criterion*). The 'Apes of God' are defined as 'the prosperous mountebanks who alternately imitate and mock at and traduce those figures they at once admire and hate'.¹³³ It is not merely a complaint or a satirical portrait of these 'Apes', however: it is a true manifesto, the war-cry of an artist against his enemies, with everything seemingly at stake, and livelihood above all. Like Whistler's challenge on the resale of paintings without the artist's benefit (in his trial against William Eden in 1898, and the subsequent pamphlet¹³⁴), the 'Encyclical' describes and seeks to alter economic conditions for the artist. It is a more sophisticated type of artistic manifesto, in that it deals with real conditions rather than imagined utopias. The decline of a useful sort of patronage – 'like the classical patrons of the Renaissance' – is shown to have been supplanted by a new class of moneyed bohemians with lower standards and tighter purse-strings. 'They are the *unpaying* guests of the house of art: the crowd of thriving valets who adopt the livery of this noble but now decayed establishment, *pour se donner un air*; to mock, in their absence, its masters.'¹³⁵ Worse still, some of these 'amateurs' are further distracted by the belief that they can paint, and they join the 'ever-swelling tribe of mock-artists'.¹³⁶

The first practical problem identified with these 'hordes' is that they are 'occupying the studios that were presumably intended in the first place for painters'. New studios are built 'on such a sumptuous scale that no genuine painter ... can afford to rent them'. In fact, 'the last person likely to occupy them is an artist'.¹³⁷ Paul O'Keefe records that Lewis himself was evicted from his studio at 44 Holland Street in Kensington, 'for non-payment of rent', in early 1925. This event seems to have been the result of his unflattering portrait of Sidney Schiff, a generous patron, as one of the 'Apes'.¹³⁸ Schiff, who was also a translator of Proust, is identified here as 'a pseudo-Proust', and in *The Apes of God* becomes Lionel Kein. Pierpoint promises Dan that he will meet this figure along with 'a family of "great poets"' (the Sitwells,

¹³³ 'Encyclical', p. 307.

¹³⁴ Whistler's pamphlet of the trial, cited above, is entitled *Eden versus Whistler: The Baronet and The Butterfly: A Valentine with a Verdict* (1899).

¹³⁵ 'Encyclical', p. 305.

¹³⁶ 'Encyclical', p. 309.

¹³⁷ 'Encyclical', p. 303.

¹³⁸ O'Keefe, pp. 254-57.

who in the novel become the Finnian Shaws). These are examples of 'the Ape of God proper' – the 'active' or 'productive' amateurs who 'produce a little art themselves', as opposed to the pseudo-patrons, who 'are careful not to involve themselves economically'.¹³⁹ The presence of these amateurs is identified as the cause of increasing envy among artists and 'this atmosphere of restlessness, insecurity, and defamation'. Accusations of envy and defamation are levelled at Lewis himself when *Apes* is published in full, and this passage in particular reads like a spiteful 'secret history', a tale of conspiracy written by an unsuccessful artist who airs his personal grudges using a thin veil of satire. In London, as opposed to Paris, the 'Ape'-world 'has taken the form of a very select closed club. Its members consist of moneyed descendants of Victorian literary splendour ... all "geniuses," before whose creations the other members of the Club ... swoon with appreciation.'¹⁴⁰

With the ending, however, the piece recaptures its true manifesto tone. Zagreus (in the *Criterion* version) declares: 'I have laid bare for you the present predicament of art'. He reiterates that he makes no pretense to impartiality, and says, 'I am not a judge, but a party. All I can claim is that my cause is not an idle one'. It is important to note the use of 'I' and 'you': in the context of the novel, this simply suggests that one character is speaking to another (in this case the mentor to his disciple, or his disciple's disciple). Published as an autonomous extract, the manifesto-like qualities of the text come to the fore. There is a direct address to the reader, who is included within the frame of the piece as 'you'. 'I appeal less to passion than to reason', the voice tells the reader in the closing lines. 'The flourishing and bombastic role that you may sometimes see me in, is an effect of chance, or is a caricature ... rather than what I in any way am myself.'¹⁴¹

Lewis uses the fictional manifesto form elsewhere in his career, and it is not uncommon to the genre as a whole. Authorship of some of Tzara's Dada manifestos is handed over to 'Monsieur Antipyrine' or 'Monsieur AA the Antiphilosopher', as in

¹³⁹ 'Encyclical', pp. 305-06.

¹⁴⁰ 'Encyclical', p. 307.

¹⁴¹ 'Encyclical', pp. 309-10.

‘Monsieur AA the Antiphilosopher Sends Us This Manifesto’.¹⁴² Lev Zack’s manifesto for the pre-war Russian group, the Mezzanine of Poetry, and its almanac *Vernissage*, is written as a dinner invitation, addressed to selected guests from the movement’s ‘tenants’. It begins: ‘Darling! Please, come to the vernissage of our Mezzanine! Both our landlady and we, the tenants, eagerly request your presence.’ It concludes: ‘We will treat you to a dinner which, while not copious, will be refined in its simplicity; and, in refined and simple dress, the Most Charming One will come out to meet you.’¹⁴³ Lewis employs a fictional frame for his manifestos in several instances. Perhaps the best example is ‘The Code of a Herdsman’, subtitled ‘A set of rules sent by Benjamin Richard Wing to his young friend Philip Seddon enclosed with a letter.’ Although it is published in the *Little Review* in July 1917 as one of the ‘Imaginary Letters’ series, archival evidence suggests it is part of the story ‘The Crowd’, which is featured as an excerpt (without the ‘Code’) in the second issue of *Blast*.¹⁴⁴ As in the ‘Encyclical’, the fictional frame is a set of rules handed down from a mentor to his disciple, this time organized in numbered tenets. These eighteen commandments instruct the protégé as to how to behave in relation to the ‘herd’, as well as providing him with specific tips on writing. Like the *Criterion* version of the ‘Encyclical’, this piece operates even more effectively as a manifesto when it is cut apart from the larger fictional work, and here too the reader inhabits the role of the ‘young friend’ or disciple.

The appearance of the ‘Encyclical’, a provocative manifesto announcing Lewis’s new persona as outsider and Enemy, in the pages of the *Criterion*, Modernism’s magazine of record, is a considerable feat for a genre that has often been sidelined. Lewis might have judged it necessary to smuggle his proclamation in under the cloak of fiction: a decade later Pound offers Eliot his own manifesto and has it rejected. Pound’s manifesto, which he describes to Lewis as a ‘Blast’ he hopes will ‘at any rate cheer the worthy and infastidiate the opposers of light’, is sent to Eliot and potential signatories in 1936. Evidently aware of the Enemy’s preferred

¹⁴² Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. by Barbara Wright (London: Calder, 1992).

¹⁴³ Lev Zack, ‘Overture’ (1913), trans. by Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle, in Caws, 226-29.

¹⁴⁴ Reissued as a pamphlet with editorial comments by the Wyndham Lewis Society (cited above).

mode, Pound tries to convince Lewis to sign by telling him, 'There are times for lone hunt // times when two or more brains more effective than one.'¹⁴⁵ He does not succeed in convincing either Lewis or Eliot, however, and the planned revival of the 'antient spirit of BLAST and 1912-17' fails.¹⁴⁶ After the brief intersection of his oppositional stance with mainstream legitimacy in 1924, Lewis alienates himself to ever greater degrees over the course of the decade. This action appears to be partly a matter of choice and partly necessity. In the first *Enemy* editorial he writes: 'Outside I am freer.' But he also complains to Pound: 'Enraged at my writings (such as *Apes* in *Criterion*) and fearing worse, the big Rolls Royces have tried to starve me out!'¹⁴⁷ Rather than seek the patronage of fashionable avant-garde magazines, he uses the *Enemy* to attack such rival publications, notably *transition*.

Lewis's dispute with the *transition* circle in Paris is at the heart of the *Enemy*, which appears in three numbers between January 1927 and January 1929. The 'de luxe and bulky one-man review', as the editors of *transition* – Eugene Jolas, Elliot Paul, and the associate editor Robert Sage – call the *Enemy*, features, like *Blast*, a number of Lewis's polemical editorials.¹⁴⁸ There are also longer essays, like 'The Revolutionary Simpleton' and 'The Diabolical Principle', which are reissued as books or chapters of books. Unlike *Blast*, none of these writings explicitly take the form of manifestos. The present analysis, therefore, will be based on the assumption (already invoked in previous chapters) that editorials, pamphlets, catalogues, and other materials can, depending on their function in a specific context, perform a double duty as manifestos. This assumption is less necessary in the case of *transition*, which produces several manifestos of its own (most notably the 'Revolution of the Word' manifesto) and translations of manifestos by the Surrealists ('Hands Off Love') and other fellow travellers. In the course of the dispute between Lewis and

¹⁴⁵ *Pound / Lewis*, pp. 189-90. Materer's note about the 'enclosure' to this letter of 29 October 1936 reads: 'This was probably the "Manifesto" Pound prepared in 1936 to urge the continuance of the "renovation of writing" that began in the days of *Blast* and *The English Review* and its extension into social and political life.'

¹⁴⁶ *Pound / Lewis*, p. 172. Pound is actually referring here to *Apes of God*. His proposals to Lewis in this vein were many during the twenties and thirties.

¹⁴⁷ Materer, p. 153.

¹⁴⁸ Eugene Jolas and others, 'First Aid to the Enemy', *transition*, 9 (1927), 161-76 (p. 163).

transition, important questions are raised about the use and style of manifestos, the political connotations of the genre, and the different types of violence associated with this extreme form of expression. As Lewis writes, in a sentence that manages to embody both his particular subject, sarcasm, and the 'stammering' style of his favourite 'transitionist' opponent, Gertrude Stein, while also raising the question of proper rules of engagement: 'I have no idea if I am allowed to employ sarcasm here but I risk that because I wish to be truthful about Paul and it is impossible without sarcasm to be truthful about Paul, or about Jolas.'¹⁴⁹

Lewis attacks many aspects of what he calls 'the Stein quarter' in the first two issues of the *Enemy*. In the second issue (September 1927) he taunts: 'I anticipate no direct reply from the Stein quarter, for directness is not the forte of my enemies.'¹⁵⁰ This is true in the case of Bloomsbury: Lyon makes the observation that 'in an era saturated by artistic manifestoes, no one associated with Bloomsbury-Omega ever produced a manifesto'.¹⁵¹ Nor, for that matter, does anyone in this group produce a direct reply to Lewis's many attacks.¹⁵² In contrast, *transition* answers Lewis's challenge with the editorial 'First Aid to the Enemy' (1927), while at the same time protesting that space for such a rebuttal is limited: 'he is not given to succinct expression and we see little value in devoting a hundred and fifty pages to an analysis of his mistakes'.¹⁵³ This consideration must also hold for the present study, for the reason that much of the dispute falls outside its relatively narrow focus. Instead, I will confine my analysis to the picture that emerges, in the rival magazines' blasts and

¹⁴⁹ 'The Diabolical Principle', originally published in *Enemy*, 3 (January 1929). This and all subsequent references to this essay will be to Lewis's book, *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator* (London: Chatto, 1931). The quote referred to here appears on p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ 'Editorial Notes', *Enemy*, 2 (September 1927), xi-xxxi (p. xi).

¹⁵¹ Lyon, p. 113.

¹⁵² Although the statement is true in the strictest sense, and useful as it relates to Lewis, many of the shorter essays and prefaces produced by artists and writers associated with Bloomsbury could be called manifestos. In the case of Woolf, for example, Jane Goldman has recently described 'Modern Fiction' (1919, 1925) as 'the manifesto of the new from which so many of our ladders of literary modernity start'. See Goldman, p. xx. Clive Bell's *Art* (1914) also comes to mind, and has been called 'a forceful and graspable manifesto for the broad aesthetic commitments of early twentieth-century Modernism' (*Art in Theory*, p. 113).

¹⁵³ 'First Aid', p. 173. Lewis shows a certain imprecision in levelling at the Paris expatriate circle the very same charge he so often directs at Bloomsbury – that of being 'sly, furtive, anonymous and indirect', as he writes in *Satire and Fiction* (p. 19). He discovers that the accusation is not so apt for the editors of *transition*, though it matters little as his rhetoric is really meant to describe, by contrast, his own open and direct polemical style.

counter-blasts, of two apparently distinct types of manifesto. On one side, there is the individualist, broadly reactionary, and often satirical manifesto of the Lewis type; on the other, there is the group-oriented, neo-romantic, revolutionary manifesto that makes generally positive claims. Other adjectives may be added to describe the two sides, and each side employs a certain number of overlapping terms ('clear', 'direct') for its particular style. The majority of manifestos written in English between the wars could be placed into one of these two camps. Such binary divisions, however, must arouse our suspicions, and this one is no different: take them beyond their most basic descriptions (e.g., individual vs. group) and their usefulness and validity will be tested.

Lewis says a great deal about his own manifesto production in this period, because his practice, like his position relative to Bloomsbury, is an important aspect of his Enemy persona. The opening editorial of the first issue of the *Enemy* sets out, as a manifesto should, to define the magazine, its audience, and its aims, as well as the means by which these aims will be accomplished. Some of this self-definition recalls statements made in the 'Encyclical' of three years previous. Nevertheless, it is a striking attempt to set out a new stall in the already crowded literary scene of the late twenties. 'By name this paper is an enemy', it begins impressively, and continues:

there is no movement gathered here (thank heaven!), merely a person; a solitary outlaw and not a gang ... the nearest big revolutionary settlement lies some distance behind me. I have moved outside. I found it impossible to come to terms with the canons observed in it. Outside I am freer.

Already in the first paragraph of the magazine Lewis has established an 'outlaw' identity and a cynical perspective on 'revolutionary settlements' with their restrictive dogmas. In doing so he separates himself from the bulk of polemicists in 'an era saturated by manifestos', to repeat Lyon's phrase. He is 'unpartisan', yet rejects 'unreal claims to "impartiality," the scientific-impersonal, or all that suggestion of detached omniscience'.¹⁵⁴ He will be independent, without being invisible.

¹⁵⁴ 'Editorial', p. ix.

Anticipating the charge that he is merely a reactionary (a charge *transition* will make), he claims to be the true bearer of the revolutionary spirit, in contrast to those who uphold 'that spurious doctrine of fashionable "revolt," no longer anything but a parody of the real article'. Also surprisingly, he defends 'genius' and 'personal energy', those fundamentals of Romanticism, against the 'mass-psychology' of the age.¹⁵⁵ He talks politics, he says, only to rid them from art: 'in the attempt to exorcise politics from art, I have had to have ... much commerce with them'.¹⁵⁶

If the first issue of the *Enemy* contains 'sufficient explosive material to blow up half Bloomsbury', the second issue is no less provocative.¹⁵⁷ This time the target is *transition* proper (as opposed to the Paris milieu generally), which has its debut in April 1927 and appears monthly during its first year of publication. Thus by the time the second issue of the *Enemy* is published in September, half a dozen issues of *transition* have already established it as an umbrella for many of Lewis's 'enemies' to shelter under, including Joyce and Stein (the two foci of the first *Enemy*), Marinetti, Hemingway, the novelist and publisher Robert McAlmon (parodied in the *Enemy* as 'Bud Macsalmon'¹⁵⁸), and the Surrealists. Especially relevant to the manifesto are Lewis's identification of *transition* as the voice of Anglo-American expatriates in Paris, and his view that it is a 'political paper' which condones violent revolution, a theme he will expand on in 'The Diabolical Principle' of the third issue.¹⁵⁹ His view is expressed in a clumsy syllogism: 'The real foundation for *transition* is *Dada* [not Joyce], which group has become the *Super-realist* [i.e. Surrealist] group now'. The Surrealists 'are the intellectualist wing, more or less, of the communist party in Paris'; therefore the editors of *transition* are communists.¹⁶⁰ (Lewis does not mention here the additional 'evidence' that Jolas and Paul are signatories to the Surrealist manifesto

¹⁵⁵ 'Editorial', p. x.

¹⁵⁶ 'Editorial', p. xv.

¹⁵⁷ This quotation is attributed to Beverley Nichols in the *Sketch* (9 January 1927), included amongst other notices for *Enemy* 1 on the inside front cover of *Enemy* 2.

¹⁵⁸ 'The Revolutionary Simpleton', p. 67.

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, 'Editorial Notes', p. xxvii. Lewis introduces *transition* in the opening editorial of *Enemy* 2, under the subtitle 'Art and "Radical" Doctrines'. He places emphasis on the idea that its existence proves his conspiracy theory – that the Paris community 'is as much a propagandist establishment as the most efficient and best-run political holiday-school can be ... it acts as one body, it has one mind'. In *transition*, 'their affiliation is ... manifested beyond dispute' (p. xxiii).

¹⁶⁰ 'Editorial Notes', p. xxiv.

in defence of Charlie Chaplin, 'Hands Off Love', which is published in *transition* the same month that the second *Enemy* appears.¹⁶¹) More seriously, Lewis accuses Jolas and Paul of dangerous naivety in their endorsement of radical politics: 'Europe has had the lessons of War and Revolution burnt into it', he writes. 'America, and even England, have not.'¹⁶² He promises that, in the third issue, he will 'suggest means for ridding ourselves of those convulsive, politico-artistic forms of radical propaganda, with a view to getting a purer form of art'.¹⁶³

transition's reply comes in December 1927, and in its sixteen pages 'First Aid to the Enemy' strongly defends the magazine and its contributors. As a statement of principles expressed in the same 'vigorous style' it appreciates in Lewis ('Unlike his cautious countrymen'), the editorial acts as a manifesto for the magazine.¹⁶⁴ The piece portrays Lewis as a former revolutionary turned reactionary bigot, set on 'defend[ing] the West against the dark powers of the East' as well as 'the classical ideal against the spirit of disorder, or the romantic conception of life'. The editors paint an exaggerated picture of the 'old Tory': 'Mr. Lewis nurses a game leg with one hand and with all his thwarted fury shakes a fist at the parade as it passes him by.'¹⁶⁵ They challenge all the main points of Lewis's platform as it is expressed in the *Enemy*. Beginning with 'his methods', they overturn his claim to directness and simplicity. (He had written: 'The road of genius is usually straight, and what it utters it utters simply.'¹⁶⁶) They accuse him of being 'about seven tenths bluff. He pretends to be clear-minded and systematic when in reality he is merely burying his muddle-headedness in pseudo plain-talk.'

¹⁶¹ September 1927 sees the publication of *transition* No. 6 and *Enemy* No. 2.

¹⁶² 'Editorial Notes', p. xxviii. Lewis repeats his opposition to violence in art in *Satire and Fiction* (1930). He writes: 'I am called a rebel, I am called a reactionary ... But that our drama need be a "catastrophic" *tragedy of blood* is not true. That is *not* good. To degrade it into something savage and provincial, that cannot be good ... to *sadify* and to ensanguine the noblest of our plots ... on all hands artists are mixing blood and bombast, more and more, into their inventions, to satisfy this roaring Pit' (p. 51).

¹⁶³ 'Editorial Notes', p. xxxi. Lewis makes a similar statement in an attack on Marinetti in *Blast*: 'We most of us nowadays are forced to be much more useful than we ought to be. But our painting at least should be saved the odour of the communistic platform or the medicine chest.' 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast*, 2 (1915), 38-47 (p. 40).

¹⁶⁴ 'First Aid', p. 164. Lewis refers to the rebuttal as a manifesto in his next (and last) issue of the *Enemy*: "'Is it our purpose purely and simply to amuse ourselves'" Jolas-Paul wrote in one of their best manifestos (a most awfully interesting one, beautifully written) and that is what I do too.' Lewis, 'Enemy Bulletin', *Enemy*, 3 (January 1929), p. 7.

¹⁶⁵ 'First Aid', pp. 165-66.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis, 'Editorial Notes', p. xi.

The stinging accusation is backed by several examples of excessive 'verbiage' and 'digression'.¹⁶⁷ Far from being avant-garde, he is 'dolefully behind'. Lewis often belittles his enemies by calling them 'insignificant', 'impotent', and 'amateurish'. All of these charges are returned to him: in painting he is a poor imitator of Picasso; 'literature will recover' from the kicks he delivers; the *Enemy* is only a 'haphazard and long-winded pamphlet'.¹⁶⁸

The two sides in the dispute paint each other with similarly broad brush strokes. Lewis applies to *transition* the template he has used to describe Bloomsbury for more than a decade, as well as calling simply 'communist' the obviously eclectic and politically-noncommittal magazine, while *transition* converts Lewis's reactionary tendencies into a narrow nationalism and bigotry that hardly rings true. The same applies to style: Lewis accuses the 'transitionists' of being evasive and irrational, and 'If ... direct, they are invariably violent and frantic', while *transition* replies by contrasting its own sober directness (even resorting to 'direct statistical statements') with Lewis's 'weakness for reckless and inaccurate generalization'. The *transition* editors even go so far as to counter-attack: 'We will not permit "The Enemy" to slip out of his error ... We, too, like direct replies.'¹⁶⁹ It is interesting, in terms of the manifesto, to note the declarations that each side is forced to make in defence of its principles. 'First Aid to the Enemy' concludes with a series of emphatic statements about its position:

The editors of *transition* ... are no more Communists than they are Fascists, for all forms of politics are outside the range of our interests. ... Contemporary society seems to us to be in an abysmally dark state and we are entertained intellectually, if not physically, with the idea of its destruction. ... In plain and direct words, for the edification of Mr. Lewis, we believe in a new romanticism, more volatile than that of the past We have no set of rules for the use of our contributors. We simply want fresh flowers instead of dead weeds.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ 'First Aid', p. 164.

¹⁶⁸ 'First Aid', pp. 162-63; p. 172. The word 'pamphlet' as used here is intentionally weak, presumably to act as a negative substitution for the stronger 'manifesto'.

¹⁶⁹ 'First Aid', p. 174.

¹⁷⁰ 'First Aid', pp. 175-76.

Lewis makes his reply to *transition*'s editorial in 'The Diabolical Principle', published a year later in the third issue of the *Enemy*. Once again, his attack focuses on the collective nature of the 'transitionists' – who are said to represent all 'highbrow "radical" journalism'¹⁷¹ – and their endorsement of revolutionary violence. He contrasts his own individual manifestos with the 'massed answer' of Paul, Jolas, and Sage, and ridicules the weakness inherent in 'collecting together into an alarmed editorial knot to defend their principles'.¹⁷² In this answer, Lewis writes, they 'presented themselves to their readers as good romantic american "radicals," confronted with a deep-dyed conservative "Britisher": national prejudice was invoked, that is to say, for the occasion'. He returns *transition*'s claim to being the victim of narrow prejudice with the accusation of jingoism and writing 'to a stirring patriotic air' – something at odds with the magazine's avowed internationalism.¹⁷³ After writing, in defence of his own tolerant spirit, that 'Harlem is much more interesting than Montparnasse', Lewis moves on to the subject of politics in art.¹⁷⁴ In a fictional question and answer form, he debates the topic with the editors of *transition* (Paul and Jolas, who are rendered as 'P.A.J.'). One exchange is as follows:

P. A. J. Why do you attack radicalist Reviews which give opportunities to artists and writers to experiment?

L. Because there is no occasion to be radicalist or to hold any political creed to patronize or to practice experiment in an art.¹⁷⁵

Not only does Lewis speak for *transition* in this way, but he goes further, having 'L' enunciate his enemy's position directly to 'P.A.J.' in a 'candid statement', and then stating that because the editors cannot make such an honest statement of principles themselves, they are more dangerous still to the 'free artist'. This 'candid statement' is exaggerated in the extreme – 'P.A.J.' confesses, in the manner of the guilty party at a show trial:

¹⁷¹ *Diabolical Principle*, p. x.

¹⁷² *Diabolical Principle*, pp. 13 and 10.

¹⁷³ *Diabolical Principle*, p. 13-14.

¹⁷⁴ *Diabolical Principle*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁵ *Diabolical Principle*, pp. 27-28.

"I have no respect for the artist except in terms of his political or economic usefulness ... his violences of self-expression, the more tortured the better as far as I am concerned – all the romantic *storm and stress* in brief – can be made to second the political interests I serve and, further, into this feverish chaos of his thought I am enabled to insinuate as a subject-matter ... ideas and tendencies that are congenial to me as an agent of catastrophic political reform."¹⁷⁶

The most important part of the Lewis-*transition* debate, in its relation to the manifesto, comes in the section subtitled 'The New Philistinism'. Here Lewis addresses his own reputation for 'incandescent rhetoric' and prose filled with 'storm and stress', and contrasts it with the danger of real violence that he sees in the position of his 'romanticist adversaries'. First of all, he argues, 'rapidly executed polemical essays, directed against a tireless and innumerable people ... can hardly be conducted in any other way'. The manifesto is 'a sudden barrage of destructive criticism laid down about a spot where temples, it is hoped, may under its cover be erected'.¹⁷⁷ In contrast to this practice is the violence 'for violence sake' of the 'transitionist radicals':

The violences of expression I spoke of disparagingly are violences that are deliberately sought and which are artificially entertained and exploited, as *violences*, for violence sake. They are always given an as it were physical connotation.¹⁷⁸

The first part of 'The Diabolical Principle' ends with a section called 'My Bill of Rights', which declares: 'Yet surely to root politics out of art is a highly necessary undertaking: for the freedom of art ... depends entirely upon ... non-practical, non-partisan passion'.¹⁷⁹ The second part deals with 'diabolism' proper, and is less relevant to the manifesto except in relation to what Lewis perceives as the rise in 'romantic nihilism' and 'art for revolution's sake' with the American expatriates of the *transition* circle. The lighthearted manner in which Jolas and his followers approach 'evil' is captured in its absurdity by Lewis: 'Here is their chance! Why not

¹⁷⁶ *Diabolical Principle*, p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ *Diabolical Principle*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁷⁸ *Diabolical Principle*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁷⁹ *Diabolical Principle*, p. 40.

give “evil” a trial? [Jolas] pleads. Why not take Lautréamont as a model? Just once! Just for fun – one vacation, or one week-end.’¹⁸⁰

In fact, Lewis’s claims about *transition*’s political affiliations are largely unfounded. As Dougald McMillan’s study of the magazine tells us, *transition*’s contributors ‘maintained a nearly incompatible independence of doctrine and method’.¹⁸¹ McMillan points out that, unlike the authors in their adopted France, ‘English and American authors had no strong tradition of participation in movements with leaders, official organs, programmes and manifestos.’¹⁸² The most important manifesto of the magazine’s principles (as opposed to the manifestos of other groups that it agrees to publish) is the ‘Revolution of the Word’ manifesto of June 1929, six months after the final issue of the *Enemy* appears. Ironically, this manifesto shows common cause with many of Lewis’s beliefs, including artistic autonomy or ‘pure art’ (‘Pure poetry is a lyrical absolute that seeks an a priori reality within ourselves alone’), freedom from political or social elements (‘We are not concerned with the propagation of sociological ideas, except to emancipate the creative elements from the present ideology’), and an elitist approach (‘The plain reader be damned’). This last, Poundian tenet of the programme is followed in parentheses by a quotation from Blake, which might also be taken as a nod to Lewis, Pound, and the spirit of 1914: ‘Damn braces! Bless relaxes!’¹⁸³ Jolas defends his manifesto by stating, again in terms Lewis would find sympathetic:

The creator is always an individualist. This does not prevent him from seeing his work in relation to the general mythology of his group. But he always sees himself as an autonomist of the spirit, a nonconformist, a rebel, a subversive element in any group as far as his inner life is concerned. If that were not the case, and he were merely running along the line of the social movement, he would doubtless be obliged to lower his intellectual values in order to reach the masses.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Diabolical Principle*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁸¹ Dougald McMillan, *transition: The History of a Literary Era, 1927-1938* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p. 5.

¹⁸² McMillan, p. 113.

¹⁸³ ‘Proclamation’, *transition*, 16-17 (June 1929); reprinted in Fitch, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Eugene Jolas, *Man from Babel*, ed. by Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 110.

Even the 'Revolution of the Word' manifesto, McMillan concludes, is followed most actively by Jolas himself, and a handful of journalists.¹⁸⁵ In what might be called a final vindication for Jolas against Lewis's accusations, André Breton rejects the 'Revolution of the Word' manifesto in his preface to a Salvador Dalí exhibition catalogue in October 1929.¹⁸⁶

'Almost' – Lewis writes in his curious syntax, in a 1939 introduction to a selection of 'pamphlets, articles and manifestos' – 'I have become a professional writer in the process of defending my paintings'. He adds: 'Whistler's admirable pamphleteering was a phenomenon of the same kind'.¹⁸⁷ Parallels between Lewis and Whistler, as well as definite traces of Whistler's influence, are apparent in many places throughout Lewis's working life. Possibly the strongest link, and at the same time a mark of their divergence, is *Satire and Fiction*, published in 1930 to 'explain' and 'defend' *The Apes of God*. Its eclectic contents include press clippings, 'notes' by the author, a circular letter, testimonials from friends, a reader's report, and a facsimile of a handwritten rejection letter from the *New Statesman*, concerning Roy Campbell's favourable review of the book (the rejection being put forward as evidence of a wider conspiracy). 'Enemy Pamphlet No. 1' is redolent of Whistler's exhibition catalogues and numerous other ephemeral publications, which acted simultaneously as advertisements for the artist, attacks on his enemies, and entertaining narratives for the fashionable reader. The dual function of advertisement and attack, in particular – with a pedagogical element sometimes added for good measure – is what makes these pamphlets manifestos. The following analysis will examine in brief Whistler and Lewis's shared, and contrasting, approaches to the manifesto.

The 'admirable pamphleteering' that Lewis describes begins in the aftermath of Whistler's trial with Ruskin in 1878 and continues virtually unabated until the artist's death in 1903. The pamphlets, issued in plain brown covers and stamped with

¹⁸⁵ McMillan, p. 114.

¹⁸⁶ Jolas, p. 277.

¹⁸⁷ Lewis, 'The Skeleton in the Cupboard Speaks', in *Wyndham Lewis the Artist: From 'Blast' to Burlington House* (London: Laidlaw and Laidlaw, 1939), 67-94 (pp. 67-68).

Whistler's trademark butterfly insignia, include a lecture, court proceedings, polemical essays, and exhibition catalogues. His writing and his persona, brought together in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890), are seldom considered to be a serious influence on the London avant-garde that comes to prominence a decade after his death. Indeed, there would seem to be little common ground between the figure who represents Aestheticism almost as much today as he did during his own lifetime, and 'hard' Modernists like Pound and Lewis. This oversight occurs despite considerable evidence: the young Pound, for example, writes about Whistler, emulates his physical appearance, invokes his name as part of Vorticism's 'ancestry' in the pages of *Blast*, and even reads the Pennells' definitive *Life of Whistler* to Yeats during one of their winters together at Stone Cottage in Sussex (1913-14).¹⁸⁸ Two points of connection between Whistler and his would-be disciples can be found in the titles of magazines edited by Pound and Lewis in the late-twenties: *Exile* and *Enemy*.¹⁸⁹

A cursory study of definitions and etymologies reveals that the manifesto has always been about 'making enemies'. *Black's Law Dictionary* defines the manifesto as 'A formal written declaration, promulgated by a prince, or by the executive authority of a state or nation, proclaiming its reasons and motives for declaring a war'.¹⁹⁰ It is one of a group of terms adapted from military origins, in the same company as 'avant-garde', and 'polemic', which derives from the Greek word for 'war'. This connection to war is important, and it manifests itself in Whistler's pose as a 'West Point man' just as it does in Lewis's tough stance as the Enemy. There is also a legal dimension to the history of the term, revealed in the seventeenth-century definition of the manifesto as a 'proof' or 'piece of evidence'.¹⁹¹ Whistler, being 'a man of pugnacious or litigious turn' in William Michael Rossetti's phrase, often plays

¹⁸⁸ Hugh Kenner, *The Mechanic Muse* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 25. This was a crucial moment for the London avant-garde, with many key events, including the publication of *Blast*, coming in the nine months or so leading up to the outbreak of war.

¹⁸⁹ Pound's *Exile* (four issues, 1927-28) and Lewis's *Enemy* (three issues, 1927-29).

¹⁹⁰ *Black's Law Dictionary*. This definition is softened somewhat in the first *OED* entry, in 1908, which omits specific mention of war and adds a concession to democracy: 'or by an individual or body of individuals whose proceedings are of public importance'.

¹⁹¹ 'Manifesto', *OED*.

the role of plaintiff in his artistic disputes.¹⁹² The same approach can be seen in Lewis's manifestos, from the 'Round Robin' of 1913 to *Satire and Fiction* in 1930. In seeking recompense for a perceived injury, Whistler acts by turns as a butterfly broken on the wheel of criticism, and a butterfly that hides a formidable sting. Lewis uses a similar strategy in his pre-emptive strike against critics of *The Apes of God*, alternately playing the victim and the criminal. He always insists on the relationship between the two roles: he becomes an 'outlaw' not through choice but through necessity.

Lewis shows an early interest in Whistler. He writes to his mother from Paris¹⁹³ in 1905 with great enthusiasm, declaring that 'the Whistler show is coming' and vowing to 'try and profit by it'.¹⁹⁴ In the decades that follow, Lewis's antagonistic behaviour draws comparisons with Whistler, even before he reaches his Enemy phase. One example is a letter Paul Nash writes to Lewis during a disagreement in 1919, obviously intending to wound his adversary's pride. 'Altho' I recognise you as a man of wit', he writes, '... it is not of the spontaneous order. There is nothing of the Whistler about you'.¹⁹⁵ There is, in fact, something of the Whistler about Lewis, as there is about Pound, and it comes across most readily in his manifestos. They employ the same individualist, *contra persona* and theatrical violence as the pieces brought together by Whistler in *The Gentle Art*. During the *Blast* period, Lewis (with the help of Pound) actively seeks to recoup Whistler as a kindred spirit and to exorcize his associations with Aestheticism. Later, in his Enemy pamphleteering, Lewis employs some of the same tactics used by Whistler against his

¹⁹² Quoted in Pennell, *Life of Whistler* (1908), I, 119.

¹⁹³ Lewis, like Whistler, was 'Paris-finished', to borrow Lewis's own phrase. See Wyndham Lewis *the Artist*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁴ Extracts from two separate letters, in Lewis, *Letters*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹⁵ The letter, dated 21 August 1919, is in Lewis, *Letters*, p. 108. Louis Untermeyer makes a similar criticism of Pound in his review of *Pavannes and Divisions* for the *New Republic* (17 August 1918). Untermeyer writes: 'The nimble arrogance of Whistler has been a bad example for him. For where Whistler carried off his impertinences with a light and dazzling dexterity, Pound, a far heavier-handed controversialist, begins by being truculent and ends by being tiresome.' Reprinted in *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Eric Homberger (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 144. In fact, the light touch and spontaneous quality of Whistler's wit is arguable, as his often cruel and petty public exchanges with Oscar Wilde demonstrate. Horace Gregory writes: 'His wit, more often than not, had the thrust of a poisoned sword through the side of his opponent; it was seldom as light as he wished it to be; the thrust was too urgently pressed'. *The World of James McNeill Whistler* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1959), p. 243.

critics: most notably, using the press notices he receives as material for his own propaganda. Observing the maxim 'there is no such thing as bad press', though not so wholeheartedly as Whistler, Lewis follows Whistler's groundbreaking lead in marketing himself as the Enemy of critics and Philistines. The reader of his caustic manifestos is encouraged to side with him against boorish and provincial critics, or against overly-sensitive, 'over-civilized' voices that try to suppress his satirical attacks.

The Whistler myth, which is supported by *The Gentle Art*, had a noticeable but largely underestimated impact on the pre-war avant-garde in Britain. Vorticism, in the voice of Pound, acknowledges its debt to Whistler in 1914 in the pages of *Blast*. Pound also affirms his allegiance elsewhere in this period: 'Our battle began with Whistler', he writes in *Gaudier-Brzeska* in 1916. 'Whistler was the only man working in England in the Eighties who would have known what we are at and would have backed us against the mob'.¹⁹⁶ Four years earlier, in October 1912, 'To Whistler, American' was the opening poem and de facto manifesto of the first issue of *Poetry* magazine. Here Pound seized upon Whistler's nationality, calling him 'our first great'; a role model to those younger artists 'Who bear the brunt of our America / And try to wrench her impulse into art'.¹⁹⁷ (Whistler is also an obvious role model for Pound as an American expatriate in London.) It is significant that neither Pound nor Lewis ever mention Whistler in their tirades against the Victorian era and Aestheticism.¹⁹⁸ Lewis would have recognized Whistler's enemies as well as his own in the 'amateur' artists he saw occupying Bloomsbury, who are kin to the 'dilettante', 'amateur', and 'aesthete' in Whistler's famous lecture.¹⁹⁹ Whistler rails against 'the false prophets, who have brought the very name of the beautiful into disrepute, and

¹⁹⁶ Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (London: John Lane, 1916), p. 145. An unsigned review of Pound's book in the *Dial* (15 August 1916) declared that one 'field of interest in Mr. Pound's book is - Mr. Pound; his humor, his rhetoric against the Philistine, and especially the theories of art held by the "vorticist" group. Under this ... heading Mr. Pound assumes, not without a certain right, the mantle of Whistler'. Reprinted in *Critical Heritage*, p. 120.

¹⁹⁷ *Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber, 1990), p. 235.

¹⁹⁸ Examples of these attacks in the first issue of *Blast* include 'BLAST / years 1837 to 1900' (p. 18) and 'CURSE / WITH EXPLETIVE OF WHIRLWIND / THE BRITANNIC AESTHETE' (p. 15).

¹⁹⁹ In the *Ten O'Clock* Whistler warns: 'the Dilettante stalks abroad. The amateur is loosed. The voice of the aesthete is heard in the land, and catastrophe is upon us'. *Gentle Art*, p. 152.

derision upon themselves', just as Lewis satirizes the 'Apes of God'.²⁰⁰ He takes aim at his old adversary Ruskin when he speaks of the 'Gentle priest of the Philistine', while Lewis, writing a half-century later, calls Fry 'the great apostle of British amateurism'.²⁰¹ Lewis reveals his own admiration for Whistler when he describes the young Pound's more widely recognized emulation of the 'Master':

That Pound was conscious of affinity [to Whistler] is suggested by the frontispiece to 'Pavannes and Divisions', in which he posed in raking silhouette, his overcoat trailing in reminiscence of [Whistler's portrait of] Carlyle²⁰² (though with swagger and rhetoric). But being an interloping American – like 'Jimmie' before him – aggressing among the sleepy islanders, ramming novelties down their expostulating throats – and so on – it would be the 'gentle master' at the easel (a 'Bowery tough' according to his disciple, Sickert, in conversation with me – tough in defence of his most gentle and defenceless art) rather than the sitter of whom Pound would be thinking: the author of 'The Gentle Art of Making Enemies', not the old sage responsible for 'Latter Day Pamphlets'.²⁰³

Satire and Fiction is published following the release of a private edition of *The Apes of God*, and is intended as a pre-emptive strike against anyone seeking to undermine the novel's reception. It is also a bid for support for a popular edition. The pamphlet is a perfect example of the manifesto's ties to practical concerns of livelihood, which relate in turn to the aggressiveness of the form. Lewis writes: 'when you belong as I said to no "cell" or mutual-help-society (like "Bloomsbury," for instance) ... then, once more, the pamphlet must be called in ... *The Apes of God* has

²⁰⁰ *Gentle Art*, p. 136.

²⁰¹ *Gentle Art*, p. 150; Lewis, *On Art*, p. 58.

²⁰² Two decades later, in December 1938, Pound sat for a portrait by Lewis, and the result is remarkably similar. *Portrait of Ezra Pound* shows the subject again slumped in profile, slightly dishevelled looking, in a heavy black coat, but unlike the earlier portrait he appears to have dozed off momentarily. A piece of blue and white china sits on the table beside him, connecting him, through Ernest Fenollosa and Charles Lang Freer, back to Whistler. When the Tate Gallery bought the painting in 1939, it was a temporary neighbour to Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2*, the portrait of Carlyle, on loan from Glasgow. See O'Keefe, pp. 394-95.

²⁰³ *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 278. It is notable that Pound chose to use the photograph for this particular book, 'this collection of out of date manifestos and poorly disguised platitudes', as Louis Untermeyer disparagingly called it at the time. Reprinted in *Critical Heritage*, p. 143. Comparisons to Whistler abound at this time, and Pound admits in a letter to Iris Barry dated 13 July 1916 that a friend told him he was looking 'More like Khr-r-ist and the late James MacNeil Whistler every year'. In *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. by D. D. Paige (London: Faber, 1951), p. 135.

to be defended and explained, as well as written and published'.²⁰⁴ Although he has no 'cell', Lewis claims to speak for other artists who exist outside the coterie system. He states in *Rude Assignment*: 'in defending myself I play a not unuseful part, and defend many, many, other people'.²⁰⁵

Questions must be raised, however, about the way in which Lewis portrays himself as an outsider to the 'mutual-help-society', while at the same time advertising the support he receives from friends and critics. These two categories, in fact, often overlap in precisely the same way they do in Lewis's 'Bloomsbury'. The 'scandal of an attempt to sabotage a great work of art', far from being a general conspiracy, actually refers to an editor's quibble with a less than objective review offered by Lewis's friend. More than this, the pamphlet begins by asserting the favourable acclaim the book has otherwise been given: 'This manifesto ['The History of a Rejected Review' by the reviewer in question, Roy Campbell] has been occasioned by the strange behaviour of an editor. But by the Press as a whole *The Apes of God* has been well received. It has not been at all a bad Press'.²⁰⁶ 'Bloomsbury', however, although 'it no longer has that power *to suppress* that it used to possess', manages, in Lewis's words, 'to stage an embargo and a boycott, in that part of the reviewing-world that it can control or influence'. This influence, being 'anonymous' (one of the infuriating things about it), is hard to prove. Lewis seizes upon the one rejected review as an 'admirable example' of a corrupt system, while at the same time declaring that 'it is not so easy as all that to suppress, for its author's pen is still there behind it ... And in the present instance *The Apes of God* has found other defenders' – all of which begs the question as to whether a sixty-page pamphlet is really necessary, or is simply an exercise in self-promotion.²⁰⁷ The ambiguous message contrasts with the more unified presentation made by Whistler's pamphlets, where the artist is always alone against a mob of hostile critics and an ungrateful public. Lewis's presentation is perhaps more honest in its contradictory nature, but it is a far less effective piece of propaganda.

²⁰⁴ *Diabolical Principle*, p. ix.

²⁰⁵ *Rude Assignment*, p. 216.

²⁰⁶ *Satire and Fiction*, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ *Satire and Fiction*, pp. 7-8.

Whistler's goal in assembling *The Gentle Art*, according to the Pennells, 'was to expose for all time the stupidity and ridicule which he was obliged to face, so that his method of defence should be the better understood'.²⁰⁸ The 'method of defence' used by Whistler in his pamphlets involves a great deal of 'offence', as readers of *The Gentle Art* cannot fail to recognize. The strategies of 'offence' pioneered by Whistler (and, in a different sense, Wilde) contribute importantly to the shape of the artistic manifesto in Britain. Whistler's book embodies the violent and conflicted character of the manifesto. The success of Lewis's "'Enemy" campaigns' (as he calls them) depends on the degree to which he follows Whistler's lead as a provocateur, rather than simply portraying himself as the victim of a conspiracy of exclusion.²⁰⁹ With *Satire and Fiction*, he assembles the ingredients of a Whistlerian manifesto – a collage of press clippings, eye-catching 'headlines' ('Scandal of an attempt to sabotage a great work of art!'), and a one-sided explanation of events – but it all appears too heavy handed. This is due in part to the scholarly tone of Lewis's essays on 'satire' and 'fiction', and a general failure of humour throughout, but mostly it results from the use of positive, rather than negative, endorsements. Flattery is a favourite target of Lewis's, and he could hardly be said to be guilty of this practice himself, but the letters that this self-proclaimed 'outlaw' begs from famous friends like Yeats, H. G. Wells, Augustus John, and Richard Aldington, added to page after page of laudatory reviews, have the effect of repelling, rather than attracting, the prospective reader. Whistler employed a service to provide him with press-clippings, and he used only the negative ones in his pamphlets; even Eugene Jolas kept a scrapbook of articles denouncing *transition*.²¹⁰ Lewis, for his part, seems to have wavered at the crucial moment of his career as the Enemy, betrayed his own oft-repeated principles, and tried to assemble his own Bloomsbury-esque 'gang'.

Violence is central to Whistler's letters, both public and private. It usually emerges in response to his critics. His court case against Ruskin, for example, marks his first attempt to cultivate the violent image of an artist who, without losing his

²⁰⁸ Pennell, *Life of Whistler* (1908), II, 108.

²⁰⁹ Lewis outlines 'Forthcoming "Enemy" Campaigns' in the 'Editorial Notes' of *Enemy* 2 (p. xi).

²¹⁰ Whistler's press clippings are held at the University of Glasgow, while Jolas's scrapbook is in the Beinecke archives at Yale.

composure or his sense of humour, 'slays' his enemies. The violent metaphors used by Whistler express anger and frustration on one hand, and an exuberant sense of potency on the other. As his landmark second exhibition of Venice etchings and dry-points in 1883 draws to a close, Whistler describes the scene as the aftermath of a battle. 'The critics simply slaughtered and lying round in masses!' he exclaims. 'The people divided into opposite bodies, for and against – but all violent! – and the Gallery full! – and above all the Catalogue selling like mad!'²¹¹ (Using antagonism as a marketing tool is another of Whistler's important innovations; he passes the secret on to Wilde, and it later becomes a primary technique of the British avant-garde, and especially Lewis.) To Frances Leyland, in March 1876, he writes: 'My enemies all round I shall route and ruin and in short slay all over the place!'²¹² To the architect Edward William Godwin, in May 1878, he compares a minor victory in his dealings over the 'White House' in Chelsea to victory in war: 'I again fell back on my own resources – made a sudden flank movement – reserved my fire until I "saw the whites of their eyes", as was the practice of Gen[era]l Jackson when he whipped the Britishers before, and then let fly ... bang! down came the flag instantly!'²¹³ Metaphors of the American Civil War are common in the letters, and so are references to being 'on the warpath' and to 'scalping' his enemies. Joseph Comyns Carr is told, for example, 'you can fancy the pride with which I fasten your scalp to my belt! – You die hard though Joseph!'²¹⁴ A writer for the *Scots Observer* parrots Whistler's use of such broad American stereotypes in a favourable review of *The Gentle Art* (which was duly added to the book). He describes Whistler's method as follows: 'when he encounters [a critic] in the ways of error, he leaps upon him joyously, scalps him in print before the eyes of men, kicks him gaily back into the paths of truth and soberness'.²¹⁵

Whistler's writings also contain many instances in which the tools of his trade are employed, metaphorically, in violent exchanges with critics. Etching needles,

²¹¹ Letter from Whistler to Waldo Story, 1 or 7 March 1883. In *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08155.

²¹² Letter from Whistler to Frances Leyland, March 1876. In *Correspondence*, ref. no. 08056.

²¹³ Letter from Whistler to Edward William Godwin, 23 or 25 May 1878. In *Correspondence*, ref. no. 01744.

²¹⁴ Letter from Whistler to Joseph Comyns Carr, December 1878 or January 1879. In *Correspondence*, ref. no. 00543.

²¹⁵ *Gentle Art*, p. 277.

paintbrushes, and pens are used to 'slay,' 'pierce' and 'sting' his critics and adversaries. In the pamphlet *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics* (1878), apparently forgetting his new role as author, he talks of 'war' 'between the brush and the pen', that is, between himself and Ruskin.²¹⁶ Lewis, in his role as the Enemy, displays a similar bravado. He describes his pen as a 'dangerous polemical lance'; when he uses a typewriter it is a 'Corona rattling away like a machine-gun'. In the same 1931 preface (to *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator*), he acknowledges again Whistler's manifesto writing as a precursor to his own: 'Whistler's pen was never at rest, in defence of the creations of his brush – every creative act of the butterfly-brush was accompanied by a critical or *militant* operation of the pen'.²¹⁷ Lewis also employs a military metaphor to describe his important decision to give up 'the "group" game' – the involvement with artistic movements like Vorticism – and become a permanent outsider. He decides to launch his attacks of the twenties and thirties (he recalls in 1939), 'not as part of a rather bogus battalion, but as *a single spy*'.²¹⁸

Whistler's association with images like the butterfly-wasp, the demon of 'dainty cruelty',²¹⁹ and the elegant fighting birds of the Peacock Room all relate to his aristocratic-military pose. It is interesting to note that in the Dreyfus Affair that divided France at the turn of the century, Whistler is thought to have sided with the French military. If we are to believe Arthur Eddy, 'Whistler held some extraordinary opinions concerning the Dreyfus case', which were 'the outcome of his strong military bias'.²²⁰ Those who sided with the military in this case found themselves in the company of Charles Maurras and his paper, *L'Action française*, which seized upon the issue to gain support for an extreme right wing, monarchist platform. Maurras also found support a decade later among the British avant-garde through the interest of T.E. Hulme and others. There is a discernible strand of British modernism, from Whistler and Yeats to Pound, Hulme and Lewis, that is individual, aristocratic

²¹⁶ *Gentle Art*, p. 25.

²¹⁷ *Diabolical Principle*, pp. vi-viii.

²¹⁸ *Lewis the Artist*, p. 69.

²¹⁹ Phrase used by Whistler in a letter to Waldo Story, 5 February 1883. In *Correspondence*, ref. no. 09430.

²²⁰ Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Recollections and Impressions of James A. McNeill Whistler* (Philadelphia and London: Lippincott, 1903), p. 45.

and reactionary, and it is closely intertwined with the peculiar history of the manifesto in Britain. Contrary to any notion of the manifesto being an anonymous, collective production, Lewis, writing in 1931, attacks the '*communizing* principle', which he sees 'at work continually, producing larger and larger, and more and more closely disciplined, non-individualist units'. He insists that 'to create is to be individual', and he calls artistic collectives 'a syndicalist myth'.²²¹

T. S. Eliot writes, in a *Criterion* editorial published in January 1936: 'The discharge of collective manifestoes is not such a regular part of the activity of intellectuals in this country, as it is in France'.²²² While this is certainly true, even during the period of increased militancy that produces pamphlets like the *Left Review's* *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (1937), the emphasis must be placed on 'collective'. Lewis, like Whistler before him, produces numerous individual manifestos on art, in which the artist speaks out in defence of his (for it is always 'his') livelihood and principles. Pre-war 'isms', most notably Vorticism and Imagism, prove to be the exception rather than the rule in British art. *Blast's* opening manifesto, though it is anonymous and therefore suggests itself to be collectively authored, still redefines 'popular art' as 'the art of the individuals' – a prophesy fulfilled soon after with the disintegration of the Vorticist movement.²²³ Whistler serves as a model for Lewis, as he does for Wilde, Yeats, and Pound – one for whom 'making enemies' is a primary objective, an artistic philosophy as well as a marketing strategy.

²²¹ *Diabolical Principle*, p. vii.

²²² T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 265-69 (265). He elaborates: 'the consent of unlikely company is here rather the rule than the exception: the whole point of our manifestoes is often the surprising agreement of men of very different views ... in France, not only are the occasions which provoke manifestoes more frequent, but they more regularly assemble the signatories on party lines'.

²²³ Quotations appear in 'Long Live the Vortex', p. 7.

Conclusion

The genealogy mapped out in this thesis has been, of necessity, relatively narrow in its timescale. If it were to extend further back into the nineteenth century, The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood would be the entry immediately preceding Whistler's trial with Ruskin in 1878. The Pre-Raphaelite *Germ* (1850) is often taken as the original template for the 'little magazine' in Britain, just as the movement behind it is one of the formative modern artistic movements. But its importance to the manifesto is indirect at best, given its failure to produce an actual declaration of aims and principles. Before the Pre-Raphaelites there are the English Romantic poets, Shelley's 'unacknowledged legislators'. Romanticism and revolution are the most commonly cited origins of the modern manifesto, and indeed this history is accurate with regard to the political genre. Janet Lyon, for example, describes 'the form's emergence, early in the French Revolution, as the preeminent organ of counter-statist dissent'.¹ These origins, though they are also important for the artistic manifesto, do not adequately explain the sub-species as it emerges in Britain and Ireland in the late nineteenth century. The eighteenth-century satirists, for example, exert an important influence, which can be seen not only in the 'savage indignation' of the late Yeats but also in Wyndham Lewis, the self-proclaimed 'Dean Swift with a brush'.² Other sources for the manifesto in Britain include the political tracts of the seventeenth-century Diggers and Levellers, or the Chartists of the nineteenth century. There is little obvious trace of these texts, however, in the literary-artistic manifestos (by Whistler, Yeats, Wilde, Lewis, Pound, and others) that form the basis of the present genealogy.

The type of manifesto suggested by this thesis is individualistic and reactionary. The examples cited take the form, predominantly, of 'rude public combats', in Jeffrey Meyers's phrase describing the activities of Wyndham Lewis.³ The type originates in its modern guise, with the important performative element, in the letters, lectures, and polemical essays contained in Whistler's *The Gentle Art of*

¹ Lyon, *Manifestoes*, p. 13.

² See Lewis's interview in the *Daily Express* (11 April 1921), 'Dean Swift With a Brush: The Tyroist Explains His Art', reprinted in *The Complete Wild Body*, 357-59.

³ Meyers, p. 39.

Making Enemies. Soon afterwards it is tempered by the more literary wit of Wilde. Wilde's public performances, starting with his physical embodiment of a facile form of Aestheticism in the early 1880s and concluding with the trials of 1895, also contribute significantly to the manifesto. The performances reinforce two elements pioneered by Whistler: self-advertisement, with the artist's public persona being used as a brand to add value to the product; and the drama of self-sacrifice, whether it be to the critics or the Philistine public. Later incarnations of this type of manifesto, including the writings of Lewis, emphasize the professional artist's plight in a hostile marketplace, particularly when he – for it is nearly always 'he' – refuses to take cover by 'communizing' with other artists. This professional interest dates back to Whistler's case against Ruskin, and it is also the basis for Lewis's gripe against the Bloomsbury 'apes'.

It has been the task of this thesis to outline a history of the manifesto in a certain time and place. Future work on the manifesto in Britain and Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century will no doubt construct alternative genealogies. These might treat the writings of Fry, Bell, Woolf, Eliot, and others in greater depth than the present study allows. The decision to exclude from my survey Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1922), for example, will strike some readers as an important omission. Eliot, however, unlike Pound or Lewis, refuses to let go of rational debate and let himself fall into the sort of unrepentant propaganda that marks the manifesto style of his contemporaries. Neither does he perform his manifesto with the aid of a theatrical alter ego, in the manner of Whistler (the Butterfly), Sharp (Fiona MacLeod), Wilde (the Apostle of Aestheticism), Lewis (the Enemy), or Yeats (the Old Man on the Boiler, among others).

The decision not to consider Woolf's essays as manifestos seems to me, in retrospect, to be less defensible. Not only does Woolf experiment with performative manifestos, as in 'A Room of One's Own' (1929), but also, with *Three Guineas* (1938), she offers a reply to the aggressively masculinist style favoured by the principal figures in this thesis. Woolf proves in *Three Guineas* that she is not immune to the sort of violent anger born out of frustration that animates 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909). The first guinea, she writes, 'should be earmarked

“Rags. Petrol. Matches”. And this note should be attached to it. “Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies.”⁴ But rather than giving in to this destructive rage, she sets it up as only one of several possible reactions to the challenges and barriers faced by women in Britain. Her approach is defined by its broad, multi-vocal style, and by the composure of the editor who controls these different voices. Hermione Lee argues, in a way that suggests a similar definition of the manifesto to the one that I have chosen to employ: ‘For all its anger and practical energy *Three Guineas* is a utopian meditation, not a manifesto.’⁵ Indeed, rather than being simply ‘one of the boys’, *Three Guineas* may be read as a critique of the manifesto as it exists in the present genealogy.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), p. 42.

⁵ Hermione Lee, ‘Introduction’, in Woolf, *Three Guineas*, vii-xviii (p. xvii).

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