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The Ego Made Manifest





The Ego Made Manifest

*Max Stirner, Egoism,
and the Modern Manifesto*

Wayne Bradshaw



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Preface

There is a prevailing tendency to depict Max Stirner as a forgotten figure from the fringes of nineteenth-century German idealism. From this perspective, he was the father of the philosophical dead end that was egoistic anarchism: a withered branch of a historically ineffectual movement, remembered largely because of its suggestion that criminal activity was a form of revolutionary action. Egoists subscribed to extreme forms of anarchism, such as the illegalism of the Bonnot gang, and defended theft, assault, and even murder. When Stirner's ideas found a wider audience, it was only briefly. His book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (The Ego and Its Own), was published in 1844 and—after being summarily dismissed by his contemporaries in the German intelligentsia—was almost immediately forgotten. Critics and historians acknowledged that it experienced a vogue at the end of the nineteenth century but suggested that interest in the book was once again brief. In any case, Stirner's egoism only held lasting appeal to rebels, nihilists, cranks, and criminals. All the better, then, that his ideas seem destined to be consigned to the dustbin of history. So went the established wisdom about Max Stirner.

It needs pointing out that many of these still widely accepted truisms about Stirner and his reception are false. Only recently has scholarship begun to recognize the geographical and temporal breadth of Stirner's readership, as well as his historical importance. With each year and each new book addressing Stirner's legacy the suggestion that he was merely an intellectual fad entertained at the turn of the twentieth century has become increasingly untenable. The persistent depiction of Stirner as an anarchist is anachronistic, and accusations that he was a nihilist ignore his troubled attempts to provide subjective foundations for love and creativity. In a variety of disciplines—chiefly philosophy, art history, and literary criticism—Stirner's influence on avant-garde and modernist conceptions of individuality is being recognized as of increasing importance. If the current trend continues, it is only a matter of time until he is acknowledged as a figure whose significance to the modernist project is comparable to the likes of Henri Bergson and William James.

In the pages that follow I have endeavored to demonstrate Stirner's important contribution, not only to the development of broadly modernist literary trends, but, more specifically, to the early development of the avant-garde literary manifesto between 1880 and 1914. Stirner provided an egoistic justification for individuals to write manifestos that not only rebelled against tradition, but took ownership of history, culture, and the movements they proselytized for. From *The Communist Manifesto*, published just four years after Stirner's magnum opus, through to English Vorticism's satirical approach to revolt, Stirner was never far from view, and his ideas proved popular with a diverse range of polemicists from a wide array of artistic and political movements. The trajectory of Stirner's reception placed him at the center of many developments in manifesto writing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and while much remains to be written about Stirner's reception it is abundantly clear—as you will soon see—that his ideas were as crucial to the shape and tone of the modern manifesto as any of those put forward by Marx and Engels. Far from being a forgotten thinker from the dying days of German idealism, Stirner was a pervasive influence on the radical individualism that energized many literary responses to the modern condition, not least the manifesto.

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England: From Imagism to Vorticism

Wyndham Lewis was certainly not England's first manifesto writer, but English polemics that included the word manifesto in their title before 1914 tended to be narrowly political or stylistically dull. Nevertheless, by the time that the first manifestos of *Blast* were published in July 1914 English authors had already made innovative contributions to the field of literary polemic through works that eschewed—or rejected outright—the label of manifesto. In her anthology *Manifesto* (2001), for example, Mary Ann Caws includes James Abbott McNeil Whistler's famous "Ten O'Clock lecture" (1885) and two of Oscar Wilde's essays, "The Poets and the People: By One of the Latter" (1887) and the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).¹ Whistler and Wilde were both associated with the Symbolist milieu in Paris, and through it had connections to intellectual aristocracy, anarchism and—if only indirectly in 1885—the newly arriving egoism of Stirner. As Caws points out, "[i]t was Mallarmé, Whistler's close friend, who, with the poets Francis Viéél-Griffin and George Moore, translated" Whistler's lecture "into French and helped to spread its renown" (2). There were other English pioneers in literary polemic, too, but early instances of the modern use of manifesto were far less innovative.² One such example was a tract written by George Bernard Shaw in 1884, which purported to be "A Manifesto" for

¹ While it is hard to know what Wilde knew of Stirner, it is worth pointing out that on at least two occasions he "explicitly referred to himself as an anarchist" (Goodway 75), and that he would have been aware of recent developments in the pederasty movement. There is certainly a Stirnerian aspect to Wilde's characterization of individuality being subsumed by possessions in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891): "Private property has crushed true Individualism, and set up an Individualism that is false. It has debarred one part of the community from being individual by starving them. It has debarred the other part of the community from being individual by putting them on the wrong road, and encumbering them. Indeed, so completely has man's personality been absorbed by his possessions that the English law has always treated offences against a man's property with far more severity than offences against his person, and property is still the test of complete citizenship" (13).

² The mission statement found at the end of several volumes of the Pre-Raphaelite journal, *The Germ* (1850) is another example of the kind of works that should be considered as part of a broader English tradition of literary treatise.

the Fabian movement. Another “Fabian Manifesto” was written by Edward R. Pease, and it appeared in *The New Age* in November 1907, only months after the journal’s first positive review of Stirner’s book. Pease’s manifesto was little more than an essay declaring the Fabian Society’s position on privatizing the railways. By comparison Shaw’s manifesto was strongly influenced by the work of Marx and Engels, but exhibited only the occasional glimmer of his usual wit:

That the most striking result of our present system of farming out the national Land and Capital to private individuals has been the division of Society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinners at one extreme, and large dinners and no appetites at the other.

(Shaw, “A Manifesto” np)

None of these works included numbered demands, gave the impression of collaborative authorship, or declared the founding of a radical new movement. These elements of manifesto writing only appeared in England after the translation of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. There were, however, more direct precedents to the manifestos in *Blast*, and these had numerous connections to the reception of Stirner’s book.

Several Imagist programs, including those by Pound, had circumstantial links to the spread of Stirnerian egoism. Pound was the ostensible leader of the Imagists in 1913, and even before he worked with Marsden he was espousing radical individualism and intellectual aristocratism. Once he became involved with Marsden’s journal the connections between Imagism and egoism became more concrete. From the second half of 1913 references to Pound’s school of poetry began to regularly appear in *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*. The first of these was an article by Rebecca West titled “Imagisme” that was published in *The New Freewoman* that August. West’s piece quoted extensively from Frank Stuart Flint’s essay of the same name, as well as from Pound’s “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste,” both of which were originally published in the American journal *Poetry* in March 1913. A comparison of Pound’s approach to manifesto writing before and after his contact with Stirnerian egoism hints at the importance of Stirner’s ideas to the development of the manifesto in English modernist circles.

Pound first introduced American readers to Imagism in January 1913, when he discussed the new movement in an editorial for Harriet Monroe’s Chicago-based journal, *Poetry* (1912–). Writing from London and maintaining an illusion of distance from what was fundamentally his movement, Pound observed that “[t]he youngest school here that has the nerve to call itself a school is that of

the Imagistes” (“Status Rerum” 126). Imagism borrowed heavily from French Symbolism, but replaced the symbol—along with its associated notion of suggestion through correspondence—with the supposedly more precise concept of the image. Even the Gallicization of *Imagisme* reflected the extent of the French movement’s influence on the new school. Pound differentiated Imagism by its focus on technical competence:

Space forbids me to set forth the program of the Imagistes at length, but one of their watchwords is Precision, and they are in opposition to the numerous and unassembled writers who busy themselves with dull and interminable effusions, and who seem to think that a man can write a good long poem before he learns to write a good short one, or even before he learns to produce a good single line.

(126)

At the very least, Imagists seemed to reject a dogmatic approach to aesthetics, and Pound suggested that “[t]o belong to a school does not in the least mean that one writes poetry to a theory” (126). Readers of *Poetry* would have to wait until March for a meaningful explanation of what was meant by the word image in this context.

Ironically, Flint observed in “Imagisme”—a work which set out the tenets of the movement—that Imagism had no manifesto. While he set forth three numbered rules for would-be Imagists, he denied any comparison to revolutionary art movements such as Futurism.³ He suggested:

The Imagistes admitted that they were contemporaries of the Post Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto. They were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found it in the best writers of all time,—in Sappho, Catullus, Villon.

(Flint 199)

This program actively rejected the label of manifesto. Flint further differentiated “Imagisme” from the Futurist manifestos by refusing to acknowledge his connection to the movement. In contrast to the repeated use of “I” and “we” in Marinetti’s manifestos, Flint and Pound maintained a façade of distance, and referred to the Imagists as though they were not members of the group. Even

³ Flint’s three rules were:

1. Direct treatment of the “thing,” whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome (Flint 199).

in writing down the rules of the movement for publication, Flint maintained that the Imagists “had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only, and they had not published them” (199). The effect was a confected disinterest that correlated with Imagism’s position that poetry was a science. It was no less a posture than Marinetti’s bluster and swagger.

In some respects, “Imagisme” was a real example of what Martin Puchner calls “rear-guardism” in *Poetry of the Revolution* (2006). There, he suggests that “[r]ear-guardism, which culminates in Lewis but includes a wider range of figures, is a defensive formation that places itself within the field of advancement but is sceptical of its most extreme practitioners; it seeks to correct and contain the avant-garde’s excess without falling behind and losing touch with it entirely” (108). Lewis’s Vorticism was, much like Marinetti’s Futurism, not so much a rear-guard action as an effort to reconcile egoistic will and collective might. Without recourse to Stirner’s notion that the collective was in fact the property of the individual, Flint and Pound seem to have rejected the manifesto as a product of revolutionary dogmatism. After being forced to account for Marsden’s egoism, however, Pound evidently shifted his opinion enough to become a signatory to the Vorticist manifesto—and contributed a manifesto of his own to *Blast*.

“The Serious Artist”

Nevertheless, there were aspects of Pound’s Imagism which helped account for his subsequent transition to Vorticism, with its clear debt to egoism. On a personal level, Moody suggests that Pound’s instincts “were all for an exclusive élite of superior individuals like himself” (215). Like Marsden and Stirner, “[h]e too would have the young learn to say ‘I,’ and to go in fear of conventions and abstractions and clichés” (Moody 220). These attitudes about the relationship between the individual artist and society found their way into the content of “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste.” Like Stirner, Pound warned against abstract concepts, and proposed that prospective poets should “[g]o in fear of abstractions” (“A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” 201). He even cautioned against dogmatism in the context of Imagism itself:

To begin with, consider the three rules recorded by Mr. Flint, not as dogma—never consider anything as dogma—but as the result of long contemplation, which, even if it is some one else’s contemplation, may be worth consideration.

(201)

For the first time Pound also attempted to clarify what Imagists meant by the term image, and he suggested that “[a]n ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (200). As a presentation of the subjective psychological experience, the image begins to resemble the “unspeakable self” which Lanson had seen as Mallarmé’s debt to Stirner.

David Ashford suggests just how similar Imagist poetry must have initially appeared to Marsden’s own egoistic aspirations for art. He observes that “the poems that Pound submitted to her journal must in themselves have seemed the most perfect vindication of her own hopes for the medium; a new mode of poetry that would represent that psychological process whereby the mind converts an object into Idea” (Ashford 77). If Pound did not see himself as an egoist, Marsden may nonetheless have seen nascent egoism in Pound. She invited him to justify his vision of poetry in the form of a leading article titled “The Serious Artist,” the first instalment of which was published in October 1913. This article forced Pound to theorize about poetry in a way he generally avoided on principle, and at this hurdle he faltered:

I take no great pleasure in writing prose about aesthetic. I think one work of art is worth forty prefaces and as many apologiæ. Nevertheless I have been questioned earnestly and by a person certainly of good will. It is as if one said to me: what is the use of open spaces in this city, what is the use of rose-trees and why do you wish to plant trees and lay out parks and gardens?

(“The Serious Artist” 161)

Pound spent the rest of the article grappling with an argument that poetry was as much of a science as chemistry, and that the serious artist provided data necessary for understanding human nature. Marsden described the exercise as “agnosticism and the vague waving of hands” (“The Art of the Future” 182).

While Marsden was clearly unmoved by “The Serious Artist,” the article revealed a significant effort on Pound’s part to fuse intellectual aristocratism, psychological realism, and technical precision into a coherent approach to art. Partly due to Marsden’s prompting, Pound seems to have developed a theory—though he would have suggested a *science*—of art which nonetheless accommodated elements of egoism. The subject of art was still Imagism’s direct treatment of the “thing,” but the thing in question was now a fluctuation of the individual artist’s ego, and “[t]he serious artist is scientific in that he presents the image of his desire, of his hate, of his indifference as precisely that, as precisely the image of his own desire, hate or indifference” (“The Serious Artist” 163).

The serious artist, Pound suggested, did not commit the error of presenting false universalities where there were none. Art provided the measure of humanity, but the measure was the individual:

The permanent property, the property given to the race at large is precisely these data of the serious scientist and of the serious artist; of the scientist as touching the relations of abstract numbers, of molecular energy, of the composition of matter, etc.; of the serious artist, as touching the nature of man, of individuals.

(163)⁴

Pound suggested that the antithesis of the serious artist was the theorist, a person who erroneously attempts to draw conclusions about humanity from the work of the artist. The fact that Marsden seems to fit Pound's idea of a theorist surely contributed to her nonplussed response to his essay. He proposed that "[t]he theorist, and we see this constantly illustrated by the English writers on sex, the theorist constantly proceeds as if his own case, his own limits and predilections were the typical case, or even as if it were the universal" (163). Such a theorist was certainly an egoist, but in Feuerbach's sense of mistaking personal limitations for universal ones.

Marsden's eagerness to respond may have caused her to dismiss Pound's equivocations too easily. Pound was suggesting that the finest achievement of the serious artist was the accurate presentation of a sliver of the self. In contrast, Marsden proposed:

all the senses are senses of touch, i.e., contact—the impinging of organised life upon the things foreign to itself; the shiver of difference, and the shrinking where the "I" is touched by the "not I"—suggestions merely, indicative of the things which await the insight of the artists of the future. To delineate these things is the work of art. In music, painting and sculpture to project them afresh in analogues of sound, colour and contortion; in drama in their hurtling against each other; in these arts, presented; in poetry, the highest manifestation of self-consciousness, *re-presented* in terms of self-recognised emotion.

("The Art of the Future" 183)

For his part, Stirner would not have abided the notion that the ego might in any way be "touched" by the non-ego. It was a view much closer to the dialectical egoism of Fichte and Proudhon than Stirner's radical conception of the self

⁴ Pound's use of "property" in what appears to be a twofold sense of characteristic and possession—as well as a lingering preoccupation with "abstract" relations and the individual nature of collective "man"—also invites further comparison to Stirner's thought. Recall that a more accurate translation of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* is: "The Unique Individual and Its Property."

as the source of meaningful reality.⁵ Marsden's desire to demonstrate Pound's philosophical shortcomings led her to make a greater blunder, and slip from Stirnerian egoism into an idealization of the ego. Compare Stirner's defense of artistic creation in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*:

But not only not for your sake, not even for truth's sake either do I speak out what I think. No:

I sing as the bird sings
That on the bough alights;
The song that from me springs
Is pay that well requites.

I sing because—I am a singer. But I *use* you for it because I—need ears.

(263)

Stirner's concept of the egoist only survived his own critique by absorbing all of reality into itself. He only allowed for the meaningful existence of the non-I in so far as it was a product of the ego. After all, the ego was the "creative nothing" which created everything—including the "non-I"—out of an instinctual desire to live itself out. Pound was closer to Stirner's own position regarding the subject of art, and the more convincing, if unconscious, egoist as a result.

The conflict between Marsden and Pound in *The New Freewoman* therefore (perhaps paradoxically) marked yet another juncture in the reception of Stirner's thought in England. Marsden went on to devote decades to the task of reintegrating abstract concepts into the very hierarchies that were shattered by *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Stirner had proposed that God was a creation of the individual ego and governed only as a fixed idea—a spook. In 1913 Marsden was already hinting at a desire to restore God to her throne. Ashford observes that "Marsden can be seen to break with Stirner—and on precisely the issue she had anticipated in 1912 [...] that is to say, her superhuman ego *is* whatever absolute it can define and realize, and not nothing" (70). This was not an advance on Stirner's thought, but a regression born from the idealization of the self. Marsden went on to dedicate the first volume of her philosophical masterwork, *The Definition of the Godhead* (1928), to "Her, Heaven, The Mighty Mother of

⁵ Recall Proudhon's conception of the self, which has already been noted for its influence on Maurice Barrès's *culte du moi*: "Moi, c'était tout ce que je pouvais toucher de la main, atteindre du regard, et qui m'était bon à quelque chose; non-moi était tout ce qui pouvait nuire ou résister à moi" ("I was all I could touch with my hand, reach with my gaze, and that was good for something; not-I was all that could harm or resist me"; my trans.; *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'Église* 209–10).

All.” In the book she suggested that “all that ‘abstraction’ implies is a narrowing of the attention upon a part of a sensorily-apprehended complex in preference to the entire complex whole” (38). Marsden’s egoism had collapsed into a dense mixture of philosophy, theology, and metaphysics. In 1935 she was admitted to Crichton Royal Hospital after a psychological breakdown. Pound was similarly admitted to St Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington D.C. for treatment ten years after her. Unlike him, Marsden would spend the rest of her life in care.

The failure of “The Serious Artist” to satisfy Marsden’s demands in 1913 clearly did not cause Pound to refute egoism entirely. On the contrary, it seems to have pushed him to further develop his conception of the individual artist. In this regard, Ashford makes a stronger case than Moody for connecting the ideas of Pound, Marsden, and Stirner. He suggests that “Pound’s failure to theorize his Modernist practice did not mean an immediate end to the Imagist presence at *The Egoist* (far from it); and there is even evidence to suggest that the two components within the journal, Marsden’s egoism and Pound’s Imagism, began to impact upon each other from this point on” (Ashford 79). In 1844 Stirner had forced Marx to account for the role of individual will in his theory of materialism, and now Marsden had forced Pound to engage with the role of egoism in modernist aesthetics. In both cases the result was a shift toward manifesto writing. From 1913 Pound’s aristocratic individualism diverged further from Marsden’s increasingly metaphysical approach to egoism but seems to have retained something of Stirner’s more absolute egoism. In addition, Pound was now working with Wyndham Lewis, who was also engaging with Stirner’s ideas at that time.

The Vortex as Ego

There is evidence to suggest that Lewis may have been aware of Stirner’s thought well before Pound, and perhaps even before the publication of *The Ego and His Own* in 1907. While his approach to egoism is usually understood in the context of the contemporary vogue for Stirner in England in 1914, it is more likely that Lewis’s first encounters with Stirner’s ideas occurred on the Continent between 1904 and 1908. By most accounts the teenaged Lewis was an idle and mildly rebellious student with a remarkable talent for art but little else. After disappointing the schoolmasters at Rugby with his indolence, and being expelled outright from the Slade School in 1901, he spent much of his twenties traveling Europe in pursuit of intellectual and recreational interests.

Paul Edwards describes this period as “seven years of self-indulgent study and travel in Europe as an aspiring painter, supported by his mother and occasional subventions from his father’s family” (9). By 1908 Lewis had become a typical example of the English expatriate bohemian in Europe:

[H]e had the education that European travel provided, and his dormant intellect had been awakened to the current of anti-positivist thinking that flowed through the Paris of his student days. He read Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky in French translations, attended lectures by Henri Bergson and studied his writings. He also knew of George Sorel, syndicalism and the Action Française movement.

(Edwards 9–10)⁶

Such an education was likely to have included some acquaintance with *l’unique et sa propriété*, given Stirner’s perceived connection to many of the movements and individuals Edwards mentions. Although he proposes that “Stirner probably had little lasting influence on Lewis,” Edwards acknowledges that Stirner’s “influence in Paris during Lewis’s student days had been even more important” than his English reception in the following decade (157). When Lewis refers to Stirner’s book in *Blast* there is little reason to conclude that he had only just become acquainted with his ideas. The fact that Lewis described “Der Einige und Sein Eigenkeit” by “Stirnir” lying open in his protagonist’s student lodgings in Germany may even obliquely suggest the conditions in which he first encountered Stirner’s book (“The Enemy of the Stars” 76).⁷

Between returning home from his studies in Europe and the formation of Vorticism, Lewis became a brief but influential champion of Marinetti’s Futurism. In 1910 he was back in England, and Marinetti had begun his efforts to win English artists over to his movement. Paul O’Keeffe observes that “[i]t is not known whether Lewis attended” Marinetti’s first lecture at the Lyceum Club in 1910, “but it was to be another year or so before he had direct dealings with Marinetti beyond their

⁶ In the absence of a definitive account of Lewis’s reading habits, speculation about his studies seems to have produced an impressive list of European intellectuals. Geoffrey Wagner singled out Benda and Paul Bourget—Barrès’s mentor—as influences on Lewis, and most biographers suggest that T. E. Hulme introduced Lewis to the art theorist Wilhelm Worringer.

⁷ Lewis regularly incorporated his experiences abroad in his early writing, most notably in *Tarr* (1916–17). He certainly traveled to Munich as a student in 1906, though the reference to Stirner in “The Enemy of the Stars” takes place in Berlin. It is impossible to be sure if the book’s mangled and ungrammatical title was an intentional act of parody, the product of sloppiness, or something more ambiguous. It is hard to know what to make of Lewis’s use of *Einige* (few) instead of *Der Einzige* (the unique). Perhaps he is indicating the plurality of the author’s self which is discussed later in this chapter. The use of *Eigenkeit* (characteristics) instead of *Eigentum* (property) suggests more may be at play here than mere typographical error.

coincidental proximity in *The Tramp*” (97).⁸ At the same time that Marinetti was laying siege to the English art scene, Lewis was establishing himself as one of its key innovators. By 1912 “Lewis had undergone a remarkable development, from a poet and writer of occasional prose pieces to an artist whose work wrenched critical attention away from acres of other men’s canvas in the Albert Hall or wherever it was shown” (O’Keeffe 121). That March an exhibition of thirty-five Futurist paintings was shown at the Sackville Gallery, but in 1913 Marinetti mounted a far more successful propaganda campaign in England that directly involved Lewis.

In 1913 Harold Monro dedicated a significant portion of the September number of his journal, *Poetry and Drama*, to Futurist writing. Poetry by the Imagist, Flint, appeared alongside Futurist poems by Paolo Buzzi, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Marinetti. More importantly the journal published a translation of one of Marinetti’s manifestos, “Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty: The New Futurist Manifesto.” Monro suggested in the editorial:

It may surprise, it may even shock, some of our readers that we devote the principal space of a whole number of *Poetry and Drama* to the publication of matter in a certain degree representative of a term at present closely, in fact almost exclusively, associated with that group of young Italian rebels led by the famous Marinetti.

(262)

Monro went so far as to propose that “we claim ourselves, also, to be futurists” (262). Crucially, in “The New Futurist Manifesto” Marinetti explicitly connected Futurism to the Stirnerian illegalism of Jules Bonnot. The fourth declaration called for “[d]estruction of the feeling of *the beyond*, and increased value of the individual who, according to Bonnot’s expression, must *vivre sa vie*” (Marinetti, “The New Futurist Manifesto” 320). The quote from Bonnot was in turn drawn from Stirner’s suggestion that the egoist “lives himself out, careless of how well or ill humanity may fare thereby” (*The Ego and Its Own* 323). In seeking English converts to the cause, Marinetti and the other Futurists apparently made no effort to conceal their connections to illegalism and, as a result, the thought of Stirner.

Within months of the Futurist filibuster in *Poetry and Drama*, Marinetti returned to London to harangue English audiences once again. On November 18, a Futurist dinner was held in his honor. O’Keeffe points out that “Christopher

⁸ Marinetti and Lewis both had their work published in the same volume of Douglas Goldring’s journal, *The Tramp*, in 1910. O’Keeffe observes that Lewis’s short story, “A Breton Innkeeper,” shared the pages of the August issue with a translation of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s first Futurist Manifesto” (97).

Nevinson organised the dinner, aided and abetted by Lewis” (139). At this stage Lewis clearly identified with the Futurist movement, and “there may even have been some rivalry between the two Englishmen when it came to greeting their celebrated guest” (O’Keeffe 139). Marinetti’s visit culminated in an extravagant ball held at the Albert Hall, where the Private Secretary to Winston Churchill, Edward Marsh, paraded in a Futurist costume designed by Lewis himself.

Lewis’s recent split with Roger Fry’s Omega Workshop may have contributed to his willingness to be associated with Marinetti’s Futurists at the end of 1913. Indeed, the grouping of artists that evolved into the Vorticist movement seems to have begun as a retributive attempt by Lewis to organize against Fry, after falling out with him over a commission offered by the *Daily Mail* in October 1913.⁹ At the outset, philosophical concerns seem to have been secondary to the formation of a group of talented artists affiliated with the newly formed Rebel Art Centre at 38 Great Ormond Street. The studio space was paid for by Kate Lechmere, and by this time Lewis had begun collaborating with Pound. Together, the two men conceived a more revolutionary union of artists. Pound was in the midst of his debate with Marsden about the future of art and was becoming increasingly disenchanted with the possibilities afforded by Imagism. O’Keeffe suggests that “Lewis and Pound had first encountered one another at the Vienna Café near the British Museum, probably in late 1908 and in the company of their respective mentors: Sturge Moore and Laurence Binyon” (143). It was Pound who supplied the defining concept of the vortex, and with it an opportunity to take control of the direction of English art through a simultaneous insurrection against the Omega Workshop, Imagism, Futurism, and even the British Academy.

Lewis’s now necessary break with Futurism precipitated when Nevinson and Marinetti attached the names of Atkinson, Bomberg, Epstein, Etchells, Hamilton, Wadsworth, and Lewis as signatories to the Futurist manifesto, “Vital English Art.” O’Keeffe suggests that there was already “a growing realisation that if the English movement, based at 38 Great Ormond Street and led by Lewis, was to gain any credibility at all, it would not be under Marinetti’s welcoming banner” (153). Nevinson’s apparently unilateral attempt to characterize the Rebel Art Centre as

⁹ In July an agent of the *Daily Mail* specifically invited Spencer Gore, Lewis, and Fry to provide decorations for an upcoming Ideal Home Exhibition. The invitation did not reach Lewis before Fry had reduced Lewis’s role to the carving of a mantelpiece. He responded by storming out and penning a scathing letter, signed by Etchells, Hamilton, and Wadsworth, in which he wrote of Omega: “As to its tendencies in Art, they alone would be sufficient to make it very difficult for any vigorous art-instinct to long remain under that roof. 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” (*Letters of Wyndham Lewis* 49).

the English branch of Marinetti's movement was a typical example of the egotistical power plays and shifting allegiances that dominated this union of egoists. Stirner's thought provided a means to rally against Marinetti's attempt to claim them as Futurists, but petty conflicts frequently boiled over into threats of violence. Lewis recalled some of these conflicts in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937):

Gaudier [Brzeska] was spoiling for a fight. He threatened at Ford's to sock Bomberg on the jaw, and when I asked him why, he explained that he had an imperfect control over his temper, and he must not be found with Bomberg, for the manner adopted by that gentleman was of a sort that put him beside himself [...] On the other hand I seized Hulme by the throat; but he transfixed me upon the railings of Soho Square.

(35–6)

In another incident David Bomberg and his brother—a professional boxer—threatened Lewis after finding that a “coveted position he had claimed for his picture the day before was now occupied by Lewis's *Christopher Columbus*” (O'Keeffe 149). The break with Marinetti did not come to blows, but when Marinetti and Nevinson delivered a lecture together at the Doré Gallery it descended into spectacle. O'Keeffe suggests that “[w]hile Gaudier stayed resolutely on his feet in the middle of the audience, hissing ‘Vorti-ccc-iste’ at the speaker, Lewis and the rest of his party ‘maintained a confused uproar’” (154). It was in a similar climate of egoistic struggle that the first volume of *Blast*, edited by Lewis and published by John Lane appeared in July 1914.

Egoism in “The Enemy of the Stars”

Lewis's only surviving reference to Stirner's name and book appeared in the experimental play “The Enemy of the Stars,” which is the longest single work in—and centerpiece of—the first volume of *Blast*.¹⁰ O'Keeffe describes the piece as “a strange hybrid of play and novella, replete with dark metaphor” (156). Despite its

¹⁰ Indirect references to Stirner's thought in “The Enemy of the Stars” are too numerous to count. Arghol is described as a “gladiator who has come to fight a ghost, Humanity” (Lewis, “The Enemy of the Stars” 61). He tells Hanp that the self is “the one piece of property all communities have agreed it is illegal to possess” (66). Arghol's “criminal instinct” is put to use by “unknown Humanity, our King, to express its violent aversion to Protagonist, statue mirage of Liberty in the great desert” (59). More obliquely, Ashford has written at length about the similarities between Stirner's and Lewis's use of the concept of shamanism. Even the fact that Arghol has abandoned Berlin to work in a wheelwright's yard recalls the English translation of Stirner's idiomatic insult: “Man, your head is haunted; you have wheels in your head!” (43).

impenetrable style, Edwards suggests that the story “is simple to reconstruct” (146). Arghol is a former student from Berlin who has abandoned his studies because “he felt that his social relationships and his studies were obscuring his true, original self with a layer of falsity” (Edwards 146). At the beginning of the play he is laboring in a wheelwright’s yard two hundred miles south of the Arctic Circle, where his uncle subjects him to daily beatings. After a philosophical discussion about the nature of the self ends with him assaulting his co-worker Hanp, Arghol collapses and dreams of his earlier life as a student in Berlin. At the end of the play Hanp returns to murder Arghol in his sleep before throwing himself off a bridge. It is a strange but simple plot, which is obscured by an almost total rejection of exposition in favor of abstract, visual descriptions of the scenes and events as they take place.

In “The Enemy of the Stars” Stirner is treated with such a degree of ambivalence that it is impossible to assess Lewis’s genuine opinion of his thought. Arghol expresses hatred for Stirner’s book, but he struggles to free himself from it. When Stirner appears he is described in admiring terms, but Arghol immediately evicts the visitor. These direct references to Stirner appear in Arghol’s dream, which Lewis identifies as a kind of psychological primer for the earlier conflict with Hanp. As Arghol collapses into sleep Lewis suggests that “[n]ow a dream began valuing, with it’s [*sic*] tentative symbols, preceding events” (“The Enemy of the Stars” 76). Recalling his days as a student in Berlin, Arghol finds himself in “[h]is room in the city, nine feet by six, grave big enough for the six corpses that is each living man” (76). The room is strewn with books, bric-a-brac and assorted refuse. The bed is perpetually unmade. In disgust, Arghol sets about putting the room straight. Amidst the detritus of this “[a]ppalling tabernacle of Self and Unbelief” (76), only one book is named:

The third book, staley open, which he took up to shut, was the “Einige und Sein Eigenkeit.”

Stirnir.

One of seven arrows in his martyr mind.¹¹

Poof! he flung it out of the window.

(76–7)

Within minutes, however, the book comes back. A young man has found it out in the street, and knocks on Arghol’s door to return it.

¹¹ “The Enemy of the Stars” is laden with inscrutable symbols that are never fully explained, but the seven arrows could be a reference to the Eastern Orthodox icon of the Mother of God being pierced by seven arrows. Whether Lewis is trying to suggest that Stirner’s book represents one of the seven virtues or seven deadly sins—most obviously pride—is a matter of conjecture.

Arghol's attempt to rid himself of Stirner's influence begins a comedy of misunderstandings, in which repeated acts of repudiation seem to further confirm Arghol's allegiance with Stirner's insurrectionary egoism. Ashford suggests that "in attempting to effect a catharsis, to purify ego of a philosophy which has been recognised as parasitic, Lewis's puppet is reiterating the very conditions that render such a renunciation necessary—and this is reflected in the way that Stirner's book *comes back*—to be rejected over and over again" (90–1). By rejecting Stirner's book as an imposition on his self Arghol is effectively taking the course of action dictated by Stirner, beginning a never-ending cycle of repudiation. In the dream, the young man bearing Stirner's book undergoes a series of transformations: he first becomes Hanp; then "obliquely" becomes Stirner; and finally becomes "[a] middle aged man, red cropped head and dark eyes, self = possessed, loose, free, student—sailor, fingering the book: coming to a decision. Stirner as he had imagined him" (Lewis, "The Enemy of the Stars" 77).¹² There is something of the romantic hero in this depiction of an imagined Stirner, and it is certainly a generous portrayal by Lewis's standards. With each transformation Arghol renews injunctions for his visitor to leave, culminating in an attempt to bribe him to go. Confusing the money to be for the purchase of the book, the guest hurls Stirner's book at Arghol's head in disgust. The ensuing fight is also a repetition of Arghol's earlier scuffle with Hanp, and once again Arghol is seemingly victorious and the visitor is evicted. Once alone, Arghol tears up his books and walks out into the street. Nevertheless, the repetition of these fights and Arghol's increasing psychological disturbance suggests it has been a contingent victory at best.

Much of the existing commentary about Stirner's role in "The Enemy of the Stars" proceeds from Paul Edwards's reading of the play, but his interpretation depends on a particular understanding of Stirner's thought. Edwards suggests that it "can be seen as implying a critique of the Stirnerian ego, which can only exist untrammelled as a 'creative nothing'; so when it is most itself its activity will be saturated with this 'nothing'" (157). He sees the creative nothing as a "nihilism at the base of his philosophy," which Stirner imagines "can be constantly deferred simply by having the ego act" (Edwards 157). There are,

¹² There is an interesting level of detail in Lewis's physical description of Stirner. It seems to indicate that he had read Mackay's biography, which suggested that Stirner's "blond, reddish, lightly curled and short-cut, soft hair left completely free his massive, domed, quite strikingly high and conspicuous forehead" (86).

however, fundamental problems with this approach to Stirner's ideas. First, it has already been seen that logic forced Stirner to deny the independent existence of external influences. Values that appear to originate outside the self are, by necessity, alienated properties of the individual which have been mistaken for external influences.¹³ To accept ideals as anything other than creations of the individual mind causes Stirnerian egoism to collapse, as the individual is no longer the creator of all values—the “creative nothing” which Stirner described. There is no possibility of cutting away external influence, only of recognizing—and thus realizing—the personal ownership of ideals. Second, Stirner actively rejected the idea of transcendental self-realization or, as Edwards phrases it, “the Romantic urge to realise the authentic self” (146). Self-realization was, for Stirner, merely a conscious recognition that all external values were actually the creations and properties of the unique individual.¹⁴ Last, Stirner's creative nothing is less an expression of anarchistic nihilism—though it continues to be interpreted as such—than a suggestion that language is incapable of delimiting the individual who creates and owns language through use.¹⁵

Like Arghol, Lewis struggled against but maintained an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship with Stirnerian egoism. Through his dealings with others, Arghol is constantly creating the world he occupies, but he vainly attempts to cordon himself off from his creation in order to realize a transcendental selfhood. He parrots Stirner's aphoristic language, but refuses to accept his philosophical conclusions. Arghol tells Hanp that he is “an unclean little beast, crept gloomily out of my ego” and that “[y]ou are the world, brother, with its family objections to me” (Lewis, “The Enemy of the Stars” 73), but he cannot reconcile these two contradictory truths. For Arghol, the world he has created remains a parasitic reality that both erodes his pure self and serves as a barrier between himself and others. Meeting a friend in his dream, Arghol expresses his frustration by thinking that “[t]his man would never see anyone but Arghol he

¹³ The idea that Stirner advocated rebellion against external influences is one of the most persistent misapprehensions about his thought. It is an interpretation that Stirner repeatedly contradicted: “[a]s I find myself behind things, and that as mind, so I must later find *myself* also behind *thoughts*, namely, as their creator and owner” (*The Ego and Its Own* 17). Lewis may have held this misapprehension, but there is certainly evidence to suggest he did not.

¹⁴ Stirner distinguished between unconscious and conscious egoism, and suggested that “what I do unconsciously I half-do, and therefore after every victory over a faith I become again the *prisoner* (possessed) of a faith which then takes my whole self anew into its *service*” (*The Ego and Its Own* 316).

¹⁵ The unique individual is only nothing insofar as it is not an idea, and Stirner suggested that “they say of God, ‘Names name thee not.’ That holds good of me: no *concept* expresses me, nothing that is designated as my essence exhausts me; they are only names” (*The Ego and Its Own* 324).

knew.—Yet he on his side saw a man, directly beneath his friend, imprisoned, with intolerable need of recognition” (78). The irony, of course, is that Arghol is not a unique self but Lewis’s creation, and Lewis goes to significant lengths to emphasize the artificiality of Arghol’s reality.¹⁶ Arghol despises the unreality of a world that emerges out of and parasitizes his own sense of self, but Lewis as artist seems to take pleasure in the performances of his creations. In contrast to Arghol, who attempts to cut himself off from the inferior selves he produces in the world around him, Lewis has assembled a gallery of them—puppets and masks—and he sets them to work for his own artistic satisfaction.¹⁷

Another way to understand Stirner’s role in Lewis’s Vorticist philosophy is to consider that in “The Enemy of the Stars” Lewis, as the artist existing outside of the work, has created a reality occupied by his creations and properties. His will directs these creations to perform in ways that satisfy his own ego. The ever-present but indiscernible author is the sole egoist and creator of a reality which his characters occupy. As Ashford suggests, “[t]he universe Arghol inhabits is truly the creation of a demiurge—a minor and malicious god—that is to say, Lewis himself” (100). Although Lewis’s characters are his property, they nevertheless share properties with their owner. Lewis has created Arghol, but because of this Arghol also resembles Lewis. Arghol is a “[g]reat mask” for Lewis to wear, while his “CHARACTERS AND PROPERTIES BOTH EMERGE FROM GANGWAY INTO GROUND AT ONE SIDE” (Lewis, “The Enemy of the Stars” 59).¹⁸ Stirner’s philosophy becomes the basis for a fracturing of the self into innumerable selves, which all suggest the existence of, but never restrict the qualities of, a shared and illimitable wellspring of personality.

¹⁶ The structuring of “The Enemy of the Stars” as an un-performable play, replete with staging and dress instructions, reinforces the notion that these characters possess no will of their own and that the world they occupy is of Lewis’s creation, not theirs.

¹⁷ Stirner took similar pleasure in constantly creating and dissolving constructed selves, and suggested that “I on my part start from a presupposition in presupposing *myself*; but my presupposition does not struggle for its perfection like ‘man struggling for his perfection,’ but only serves me to enjoy it and consume it” (135). Arghol certainly struggles for perfection, but Lewis both creates Arghol and destroys him for his own artistic satisfaction.

¹⁸ On a related note, Geoffrey Wagner suggests that “‘The Code of a Herdsman,’ originally published in *The Little Review* for July 1917, is mainly a set of instructions to the Herdsman, or inspired artist, not to come down from his mountain to the herd without some mask or disguise” (21). Wagner then outlines a number of such masks adopted by Lewis, including Canteleman, William Bland Burn (a pseudonym used to engage in correspondence with Pound’s own alter ego, Walter Villerant) and The Enemy. “The Code of a Herdsman” itself satirizes *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, particularly when read in the context of Lewis’s later observations about Nietzsche in *The Art of Being Ruled*.

The *Blast* Manifestos

Once it has been acknowledged that Lewis's personal philosophy during his Vorticist period was influenced by Stirner's ideas, it is easy to recognize the traces of egoism that run throughout *Blast's* many manifestos, vortices, and notes. Stirnerian virtues of individuality, instinct, and contradiction were all praised in the manifestos, and Lewis suggested in the journal's introduction that *Blast* "will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL" (Lewis "Long Live the Vortex" 7). The first formal manifesto in the volume is the famous series of "blasts" and "blesses" in which frequently contradictory positions were taken in relation to England, France, humor, the Victorian era, and even hairdressers.¹⁹ "Manifesto I" also included lists of individuals who were either blasted or blessed for unspecified reasons. O'Keeffe suggests that "[t]he Blast and Bless lists, compiled by Lewis and Pound, [...] was a catalogue of despised establishment figures and personal *bêtes noires* on the one hand, and friends, rebels, suffragettes, music hall performers, and prizefighters, on the other" (156). Henri Bergson was singled out for blasting—presumably for his philosophy's preoccupation with the concept of time—but Stirner and Nietzsche are curiously absent from either list. Given the extent of Vorticism's reliance on a distinctly Stirnerian interpretation of the ego, silence on the subject of Stirner may indicate an effort to free the movement from a debt to preceding forms of egoism.

The Stirnerian aspect of "Manifesto I" is more conceptual than in the other polemics found in *Blast* and is suggested by Lewis's commitment to mutually exclusive positions. Like Stirner and Marsden before him, Lewis refused to be bound by ideological consistency. His defense against dogmatism involved satirically assuming simultaneous but contradictory positions such as in *The Diabolical Principle* (1931), where he suggested that his politics was "partly communist and partly fascist, with a distinct streak of monarchism in my Marxism, but at bottom anarchist with a healthy passion for order" (126).²⁰ Addressing similar contradictions in *Blast*, Lewis recalled in *Blasting and*

¹⁹ O'Keeffe suggests that hairdressers are blessed for bringing "order to overgrown chaotic nature" (156).

²⁰ That is to say Lewis had no consistent political position beyond whichever one he decided to take at any given time. It probably would have been more accurate—though far less infuriating for his readers—for Lewis to suggest that his politics was founded on contrarianism and self-interest, rather than a consistent ideological perspective.

Bombardiering (1937) that “[a]gainst the tyranny of the ‘sense of humour,’ I, in true anglo-saxon fashion, humorously rebelled” (38). To add a further layer of contradiction, he added that “since there are two sides to every argument, you find me *blessing* what I had a moment before *blasted*” (Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* 38). To prevent Vorticist positions from calcifying into fixed ideas, Lewis persistently subjected the tenets of his manifestos to parody and critique.²¹ Stirner advised a similar approach to values:

I want only to be careful to secure my property to myself; and, in order to secure it, I continually take it back into myself, annihilate in it every movement toward independence, and swallow it before it can fix itself and become a “fixed idea” or a “mania.”

(*The Ego and Its Own* 128)²²

English humor is blessed for being “the great barbarous weapon of the genius among races” (26), but also blasted for being a “[q]uack ENGLISH drug for stupidity and sleepiness” (Lewis, “Manifesto I” 17). The layers of contradiction serve to destabilize humor as an objective ideal and counter the risk of the Vorticist approach to humor becoming dogmatic.

Stirner’s thought had a more direct influence on “Manifesto II,” where egoism can be seen to inform several tenets of the Vorticist program. This second, more serious, attempt at the formulation of a Vorticist manifesto makes numerous allusions to the thought of Stirner and Nietzsche. The manifesto consists of sixty-three numbered declarations and begins with the distinctly Nietzschean proposition that “[b]eyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves” (Lewis, “Manifesto II” 30). This opening statement also suggests that the Vorticists sought to establish their individual selves outside a cycle of action and reaction to external circumstances. Vorticism was certainly aligned with notions of contradiction and self-will, and Lewis proposed in another statement that “[w]e fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours” (30). Stirner had already suggested that “I have no need to take up each thing that wants to throw its cause on us and show that it is occupied only with itself, not with us, only with its good, not with

²¹ Parisian Dada took a similar approach to entertaining contradiction, and there too it marked a connection with Stirner’s ideas.

²² It is worth noting that the dissolution of ideals was not a prerequisite for maintaining the uniqueness of the self, but a means of remaining conscious of the dependence of ideals on the self. Stirner suggested that “if criticism says: You are man only when you are restlessly criticizing and dissolving! Then we say: Man I am without that, and I am I likewise” (127).

ours" (*The Ego and Its Own* 6), and now Lewis concurred: "Our Cause Is NO-MAN'S" ("Manifesto II" 31). With its apparent allusion to Stirner's opprobrium of "mankind's cause" (*The Ego and Its Own* 6), it is tempting to see a relationship between Stirner's use of *Unmensch* and Lewis's use of NO-MAN. At any rate, Lewis was not suggesting that Vorticism had no cause, but that its cause was either that of no man or the NO-MAN. Either interpretation owes a debt to Stirner's insurrectionary egoism.

Later statements in "Manifesto II" suggest that Vorticism's approach to humor also borrowed from Stirner's analysis of comedy. In the fifth sequence of declarations, Lewis variously described humor as "Chaos invading Concept and bursting it like nitrogen," and as "the Individual masquerading as Humanity like a child in clothes too big for him" ("Manifesto II" 38). He went on to propose that "[a]ny great Northern Art will partake of this insidious and volcanic chaos" (38). In satire the individual assumed the role of society more broadly, and destabilized concepts with savage mockery. Humor blew apart accepted ideals by putting them under unnatural and intolerable stress. Humor was the artist's weapon against convention. It has already been seen that Stirner, too, suggested that humor played the role of demolishing ideals. In "Kunst und Religion" he had proposed that comedy "displays the emptiness, or better, the deflation of the Object," and by doing so "frees men from the old belief" ("Art and Religion" 333). In *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* laughter is used to express Stirner's ridicule of ideals, such as when Stirner looks forward to a time when "mankind is buried, and I am my own, I am the laughing heir!" (*The Ego and Its Own* 193).²³ Lewis was intimately familiar with Stirner's book, so it is only reasonable to suggest that his similarly insurrectionary approach to humor owed a debt to Stirner's praise of derisive laughter.

In a series of "Vortices and Notes" attacking Impressionism, Futurism, and other forms of art that he considered to be inferior, Lewis once more demonstrated his reliance on aspects of Stirner's thought. In the first of these manifestos and short polemical essays, "Life is the Important Thing!," Lewis used Stirner's criticism of ideals as the basis for an assault on Impressionism's obsession with nature:

In the revolt against Formula, revolutionaries in art sell themselves to Nature. Without Nature's aid the "coup" could not be accomplished. They, of course,

²³ Earlier in the book, Stirner pauses during his account of the spirits haunting individual minds to tell his reader that we will "go along a bit of road together, till perhaps you too turn your back on me because I laugh in your face" (31).

become quite satisfied slaves of Nature, as their fathers were of Formula. It never occurs to them that Nature is just as sterile a Tyrant.

(129)

Lewis substituted Stirner's preoccupation with God and man for the artistic ideals of formula and nature, but his argument otherwise remained unchanged. Stirner suggested that "[t]he Christian may reform and revolt an infinite deal, may demolish the ruling concepts of centuries," but that "he will always aspire to a new 'principle' or new master again, always set up a higher or 'deeper' truth again, always call forth a cult again, always proclaim a spirit called to dominion, lay down a law for all" (*The Ego and Its Own* 307). Lewis did not merely borrow Stirner's logic; however, he also borrowed his language. No one familiar with *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* could miss the implicit reference to Stirner when Lewis suggested that the Impressionist obsession with nature was "[a]n idea which haunts the head" ("Life is the Important Thing!" 129). Nature was, however, not the only fixed idea that Lewis singled out for contempt.

In "Futurism, Magic and Life" Lewis connected Impressionism with the thought of Bergson and Futurism with the thought of Nietzsche, and he proposed that in both cases the result was a romantic devotion to life at the expense of art. Lewis argued that "for the last half century, the intellectual world has developed savagely in one direction—that of Life," and that "[e]verywhere LIFE is said instead of ART" ("Futurism, Magic and Life" 132). In the case of Marinetti, an obsession with life was the product of Nietzsche's influence, and his "war = talk, sententious elevation and much besides, Marinetti picked up from Nietzsche" (132). On the other hand, Lewis observed that "Bergson, the philosopher of Impressionism, stands for this new prescience in France" (132). Vorticism was distinct from these European movements because it was not obsessed with either art or life, but turned these impulses to the service of the individual artist. Lewis proposed that art "is all a matter of the most delicate adjustment between voracity of Art and digestive quality of Life" but that in order to achieve this balance "a course of egotistic hardening, if anything, is required" (134). The reality that the artist sought to depict was the self, but the artist's engagement with nature could operate as a mirror for the ego. Recalling Pound's description of the image as psychological complex, Lewis suggested that "Reality is in the artist, the image only in life, and he should only approach so near as is necessary for a good view" (135). Bergson may have been the theorist of Impressionism and Nietzsche of Futurism, but both men, as well as Stirner, contributed to the theoretical positions of Vorticism.

There are further hints at Stirner's influence throughout the rest of Lewis's manifestos in the first volume of *Blast*, but "Our Vortex" suggests the complexity of pinning down Lewis's engagement with egoism.²⁴ It is also an important example of Vorticist manifesto writing that brings together many of the movement's—and Lewis's—chief concerns. In it, Lewis asserts that "[o]ur vortex regards the Future as as sentimental as the Past" because "[t]he Future is distant, like the Past, and therefore sentimental" ("Our Vortex" 147). The argument that sentimentality indicated a kind of false consciousness was a mainstay of British and American interpretations of egoism. In the first volume of *The New Freewoman* Marsden similarly suggested that "[a]n intellectual concept is not, strictly speaking, a concept at all" but rather "a verbal trick, put through from many different and mainly sub-conscious motives, and its immediate outcome is sentimentality—an intellectual 'fake' touched up with associated emotion" (Marsden, "The Lean Kind" 4). Lewis seems to agree with this reading of sentimentality when he suggests that "[t]he Past and Future are the prostitutes Nature has provided," while "Art is periodic escapes from this Brothel" ("Our Vortex" 148). Past and future are mere concepts masquerading as nature's truths, while art provides a temporary escape from the false reality of sentimentalism because it originates in the unique self of the individual artist rather than nature.

More tellingly, however, Lewis suggested in "Our Vortex" that Vorticism—like egoism—recognized no truth beyond the individual. He declared that "[w]e have no Verboten" and that "[t]here is one Truth, ourselves, and everything is permitted" (148). The notion that "everything is permitted" was borrowed from either *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, or *The Brothers Karamazov*, but Lewis rejected an important aspect of Nietzsche's version of this maxim. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's shadow suggests that "[n]othing is true, everything is permitted" (Nietzsche 285). In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) Nietzsche attributed the maxim "Nothing is true, everything is allowed" to the Nizari Isma'ili assassins (109). Dostoevsky attributed variations

²⁴ For instance, Lewis suggested in "The New Egos" that "the modern town = dweller of our civilization" lives in a society that is "sufficiently organised for his ego to walk abroad" (141). In these conditions, "the old form of egotism is no longer fit for such conditions as now prevail, so the isolated human figure of most Ancient art is an anachronism" (Lewis, "The New Egos" 141). Modern egos "burrow into each other," and this new form of selfhood necessitated a new form of art (141). It is also worth remembering that many of Vorticism's strongest allies—including Pound and Lewis themselves—were associated with, or submitting to, *The Egoist*, the most important mouthpiece of egoism to be published in England at that time.

of a similar conclusion to Ivan Karamazov.²⁵ In one instance Ivan's belief that, in the absence of God, "crime must not only be permitted but recognised as the inevitable and the most rational outcome" was also associated with the word egoism in the English translation (Dostoevsky 33).²⁶ Rather than concurring with Nietzsche that "nothing is true," however, Lewis proposed that the selfhood of the artist was the only truth. He rejected the implied nihilism in Nietzsche's maxim in favor of egoistic affirmation. Nevertheless, he added that "[i]n a Vorticist Universe, we don't get excited at what we have invented" (Lewis, "Our Vortex" 148). Like Ivan Karamazov, Lewis was suggesting that egoism was a rational and even inevitable outcome, but in this case of a genuinely radical approach to art.

In their manifestos for *Blast*, Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska more obliquely suggested the importance of egoism to Vorticism. In his "Vortex," Pound's attitude to egoism remained ambiguous. He suggested that "man" could be considered as either "the TOY of circumstance, as the plastic substance RECEIVING impressions," or "as DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, as CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting" (Pound, "Vortex. Pound" 153). If Pound's Vorticism was associated with this second interpretation of the individual—as suggested by the use of "merely"—it was at least compatible with Lewis's more overtly egoistic approach to the movement. By comparison Gaudier-Brzeska was less equivocal about the importance of the artist's ego in Vorticism. In "Vortex. Gaudier Brzeska" he described a historical Hamite Vortex in the artwork of the ancient Egyptians. According to him, the Egyptian's "gods were self made," and "he built them in his image" (155). The individual Egyptian artist is the subject here, and Gaudier-Brzeska is suggesting that he made gods out of his self and in his own image. If there was any doubt that this same egoistic impulse was crucial to English Vorticism, Gaudier-Brzeska clarified his position in the final lines of the work:

We have been influenced by what we liked most, each according to
his own individuality, we have crystallized the sphere into the cube, we have

²⁵ The similarity of these passages in *The Brothers Karamazov* is such that it led Sartre to suggest in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946) that "Dostoevsky once wrote 'If God did not exist, everything would be permitted'; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point" (294).

²⁶ Ivan suggests that for those who do not believe in God or the immortality of the soul "the moral law of nature must immediately be changed into the exact contrary of the former religious law, and that egoism, even to crime, must become not only lawful but even recognised as the inevitable, the most rational, even honourable outcome of his position" (Dostoevsky 33).

made a combination of all the possible shaped masses—concentrating them to express our abstract thoughts of conscious superiority.

Will and consciousness are our
VORTEX.

(158)

Simply put, Vorticism was the will and consciousness of the individual artist. It was artistic egoism. Gaudier-Brzeska's manifesto was the final piece to appear in the first volume of *Blast*, and it was immediately followed by advertisements for *Poetry* and the foremost organ of English egoism, *The Egoist*.

Vorticism certainly owed a theoretical debt to Stirner's egoism, but Lewis and Pound also took an egoistic approach to manifesto writing, as well as the management of the movement more broadly. A desire for personal ownership and control of artistic ideals dominated their involvement with Vorticism and its programs. In *Blasting and Bombardiering* Lewis claimed to have been the sole author of the six manifestos he reproduced in the memoir, suggesting that they were "written (by myself) immediately before the war" (37). He also described himself as the leader and voice of the movement, suggesting:

I concluded that as a matter of course some romantic figure must always emerge, to captain the "group." Like myself! How otherwise could a "group" get about and above all *talk*. For it had to have a mouthpiece didn't it? I was so little of a communist that it never occurred to me that left to itself a group might express itself *in chorus*. The "leadership" principle, you will observe, was in my bones.

(Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* 32)

The same principle had underpinned Marx's approach to *The Communist Manifesto*, and other Vorticists were not ignorant of the "leadership" principle exhibited by Pound and Lewis. Marx had the benefit of using the manifesto to advance the cause of collective solidarity under the auspices of communism, but Lewis had proposed something altogether different. Vorticism was to be a movement of self-possessed individual artists, and such individuals were far less willing to be bound by his manifestos.

In *Cometism and Vorticism: A Tate Gallery Catalogue Revised* (1956), William Roberts rejected Lewis's egoistic claim that Vorticism simply referred to his own approach to art. Roberts recognized the political egoism inherent in Lewis's manifestos when he observed that "'accepted' ideas of the 'Leader' crystallise into a 'teaching' which the master afterwards 'repudiates' just as later the 'Colleagues' are repudiated in the famous phrase ... 'Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally,

did and said at a certain period” (Roberts np). More importantly, Roberts called into question any notion of collective solidarity in the *Blast* manifestos:

If anyone were to imagine we signed this Manifesto, pen in hand, in solemn assembly, they would be making a big mistake. I, in fact, personally signed nothing. The first knowledge I had of a Vorticist Manifesto’s existence was when Lewis, one fine Sunday morning in the summer of 1914, knocked at my door and placed in my hands this chubby, rosy, problem-child Blast, the fruits of his own, Ezra Pound’s and Nevinson’s combined labours.

(np)

Despite his best efforts, Lewis did not succeed in taking ownership of a broader Vorticist movement, but he did take personal ownership of the abstract concept of Vorticism—in his own mind at least—by writing its manifestos. The Vorticist manifestos claimed to encapsulate the shared ideals of a movement but represented attempts to take control of that movement and the abstract ideals associated with it. As in the case of *The Communist Manifesto*, “Le Symbolisme,” and “Fondation et manifeste du Futurisme,” the *Blast* manifestos were largely produced by a single individual working to commandeer the power of a movement. The collective “we” of Lewis’s *Blast* was little different from the editorial we of Marsden’s *The Egoist*. In each case the manifesto enshrined the egoism of its writer and subjected a movement’s ideals to the will of a self-appointed leader.

War was declared in the same month that the first issue of *Blast* was published, and it marked a turning point for Stirner’s reputation. In an article for the *English Review* in September 1914, Austin Harrison proposed that “[b]ased on a misreading of Nietzsche, Max Stirner, and egocentric theories of life, the general attitude of the Germans has been moulded on the copybook of the drill sergeant” (“Psychology and Motives” 242).²⁷ The idea of Stirner as the most extreme theorist of anarchism was replaced by the notion that he was a philosopher of autocratic militarism. This was perhaps the cruelest perversion of Stirner’s thought to date—twisting his strident criticism of all

²⁷ A month later—in another article that referenced Stirner—Harrison argued that “[a]ll this ‘new’ psychology, new drama, new art impertinence is German. Whether the thing be called Secessionist, Futuristic, or Vorticist, its German brand is unmistakable; it comes straight from Bavaria, kibbled from the vats of Munich” (“The Kaiser’s World War: World-Power or Downfall” 315). The connections between Vorticism, Futurism, Stirner, and German militarism seemed obvious to him, but it is worth noting that he considered this to result from a misreading of Stirner rather than an inherent aspect of his thought.

forms of authority to serve the cause of the state. By the mid-twentieth century those casually familiar with Stirner's thought were more likely to associate it with fascism or German National Socialism than anarchism. In either case he had become a *bête noire* of mainstream philosophy. Stirner's reputation was permanently tarnished, but his influence on the manifesto persisted. Manifestos continued to be used as a means of codifying and owning the abstract ideals that underpinned radical movements in artistic, literary, and political spheres. In some instances, such as in the case of Paris Dada and Russian Futurism, his influence was obvious. Where writers remained unaware of Stirner's historical importance to the development of the manifesto the weight of his influence was nonetheless felt in appeals to individual liberty and rejections of traditional notions of moral and artistic value. He had provided the justification for Marx to take ownership of communism in *The Communist Manifesto*, and Stirner's demand for personal ownership of abstract ideals reverberated through every instance of the manifesto that followed.