

Haunted Images, Deadness, and Impossible Mourning

Richard Aldington wrote of his contemporary artists that “[f]or a few people, their philosophy, or rather their views, of art are also their views of life” (Aldington 1914, 35). This intermingling of artistry and reality is particularly evident in Aldington’s own war poetry in which he attempts to calibrate his predominantly Imagist ideology of the aesthetic to represent the terrors and horrors of the Front. Aldington’s comment resonates, too, with characterisation in Wyndham Lewis’ novel *Tarr*, which satirises and interrogates pre-war artistic life in Paris in light of the aesthetic principles of Vorticism. Although it was revised during the war years and after, Lewis’ distinctly pre-WWI work is a tragi-comic rendering of Paris as an urban death house in which forces of sex and art collide to create a ghostly dissonance—a remainder—that is projected onto the novel’s representations of femininity. Indeed, Lewis’ avatar, the eponymous Tarr, fails to reconcile a Vorticist theory of aesthetic deadness with his own personal desire. Tarr, then, struggles to traverse an implied opposition between the vitality of life and the deadness of art, while Aldington’s speakers wrestle with reconciling an aesthetic preference for clean-cut Grecian images with representing the terrible excesses of war. Aldington’s comment further holds for Ford Madox Hueffer’s (later Ford) free-verse war poem *Antwerp* in which those Belgian soldiers massacred at the 1914 siege of the city are compared unfavourably to Nordic warriors who rest as heroes in Valhalla.¹ The speaker of Ford’s poem struggles to unify the intellectual and the emotional cases for mourning the dead of Antwerp. As such, from the limitations

of the poetic Image in Aldington's war poetry, to the spectral womanhood of Lewis' misogynistic *Tarr*, to the impossible mourning of Ford's *Antwerp*, haunting is invoked in these modernisms to signal a series of crises of representation. Following Fredric Jameson's opening treatise in his *The Modernist Papers* (2007, 3) in which he invites scholars to read the failures of modernism, I will pay sustained attention to the ghostly registers that arise when a number of modernism's favoured and considered textual forms—such as the poetic, classical Image—fall short of providing the aesthetics of totality that their various theorisations suggest may be possible.

At this nascent stage of my developing argument, it is most fruitful to read these spectral impassés topologically: that is, as being situated upon a continuum that is contained by two poles. At one side of this continuum is the pole of excess. When the ghostly appears in this guise there is a disruption to aesthetic integrity: a rupturing that recurs in the work of those modernist poets, such as the Imagists and Eliot, who embraced a return to what they understood as classical literary doctrine. These *manifesti* or essayed theorisations of the aesthetic were influenced by T. E. Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism" in which Hulme distinguishes the search for transcendental, infinite experience in Romanticism from the predilection for finitude that should characterise the poetry of his contemporaries. Hulme famously argued that "the romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite"; whereas, in the "classical in verse ... even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man" (Hulme 1965, 119–120). That Hulme seems to allude to Dante's *Purgatorio* in his painting of the classicist as an artist who "remembers always that he is mixed up with earth" and who "may jump, but ... always returns back" coheres with many other modernists' purgatorial representations of late modernity (ibid.). Indeed, T. S. Eliot's citing of Dante in *The Waste Land*'s final lines echoes Hulme's choice of words here. In "What the Thunder Says", Eliot selects Dante's line "*Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina*" ("Then he vanished into the fires that refine them") to emphasise the purgatorial entrapments and repetitions that, as I explore in the next chapter, so characterise the form and content of *The Waste Land* (TWL, line 428). In Dante's original text, this moving back into refining fires describes the fatalistic return to flames of the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel after he beseeches Dante's wanderer to remember his self-immolating act

of penance. Hulme's model implies that a returning back to finitude by the poet refines both the poet's sensibilities and the poetry that they pen. In Aldington's war verse, the ghostly often registers a limit to the "reservation" that may be expressed when the Imagist aesthetic encounters the hellish Front. As I show below, evident in a number of lines in his collection *Images of War* (1919), these horrors are conveyed through an imagery of excess that is furnished with a ghostly register.²

If fleeting encounters with excess and horror mark out one of the poles of these *Haunting Modernisms*, on the other side of the parameters of the readings that follow lies a more measured invocation of haunting: the ghostly as a *topos*, a literary figure or metaphoric field, and a mode of representation that may achieve ethical work. Inevitably, reading the modernist ghostly as a reinterpretation of an established *topos* necessitates intertextual interrogation: a consideration of the literatures past, such as Dante's, which inflect the modernist ghostly or which, following its noted distrust of the supernatural machinery of, say, the Gothic, modernism sought to eschew.³ As such, the two structuring principles of modernism's engagement with haunting—that is, excess and ethics—also mark its limits of representation: they cannot be traversed, only moved *between*. As my analysis of Richard Aldington's poems and Ford Madox Ford's *Antwerp* will demonstrate, in these particular WWI texts there is not necessarily a binary or absolute opposition between ghostly excesses and ghostly ethics. Admired by T. S. Eliot, Ford's ghostly turn in *Antwerp* is part of, as I show in the final section of this chapter, a modernist preoccupation with impossible mourning, melancholy, and spectral urban spaces. Yet, too, haunting's very appearance in British avant-garde textual forms suggests the return of a suppressed textual form: a Romantic excess of emotion that many of those early modernists of the 1910s neglected or more explicitly derided. There are numerous examples of anti-Romantic sentiment in the writings, in particular, of those Imagists and Vorticists who formed part of the "Men of 1914" literary network. Symptomatic of an adherence to the finitude articulated by Hulme, this extends, on a number of occasions, to belittling any sentimentalising of death as a gateway to the infinite. In an essay in *BLAST*, for instance, Lewis ridicules Romantic philosophy before invoking, spectralising, and then exorcising the fiction of Dickens and Keats. In particular, he attacks the "soft stormy flood of Rousseauism, Dickens's sentimental ghoulish gloating over the death of little Nell, the beastly and ridiculous spirit of Keats' lines" (Lewis 1914, 133). In the war

number of *BLAST* and in *Tarr*, it is the lifestyles and art that Lewis associates in particular with German Romanticism that are next attacked as overly sentimental.

DEADNESS AND DESIRE: WYNDHAM LEWIS' *TARR* AND VORTICIST AESTHETICS

Rather than exploring the fluidity of the self, Lewis' masculinised rhetoric in his writings in *BLAST* magazine, and elsewhere, privileges an aesthetics of exteriority that he believed that he rendered in both his fiction and painting. Intentionally demeaning Bergsonian understandings of consciousness, Lewis once suggested that he preferred to trace "the shell of the tortoise" and "the rigid stylistic articulations of the grasshopper" to exploring "the jelly-fish that floats in the centre of the subterranean stream of the 'dark' Unconscious" (Lewis 1969, 129). This metaphoric "firmness" sustains a rhetoric of ontological certainty that Lewis would come to place in juxtaposition with the modernist interrogation of the decentring of the Bergsonian subject that may be found in, for example, Woolf's 1930 essay "Street Haunting", which I cited in the introductory chapter as exemplary of a modernist decentring of the self. In the misogynist world of *Tarr* it is women who haunt the male-centred, often primal, artistic energies of Lewis' Paris. Marianne Dekoven has argued that the "misogyny and triumphal masculinism" of modernist literature—of which Lewis' rhetoric is a prime example—"was almost universally accompanied by its dialectical twin: a fascination and strong identification with the empowered feminine" (Dekoven 1999, 174). Perhaps clearest in his unsympathetic staging of Tarr's betrothed Bertha, Lewis is less fascinated by empowered femininity than he is obsessed by characterising womanhood as a stain upon triumphant, masculine art forms. Take, for example, the derogatory and ghostly description of femininity that Tarr indulges in during his discussions with Hobson early in the novel.⁴ In this figuration women are painted as diseased, vampiric:

consider all the *collages* marriages and affairs that you know, in which some frowsy or foolish or some doll-like or log-like bitch accompanies everywhere the form of an otherwise sensible man: a dumbfounding disgusting and sceptic ghost! Oh Sex! oh Montreal! How foul and wrong this haunting of woman is! – they are everywhere – confusing, blurring, libelling, with their half-baked gushing tawdry presences! (Lewis 2010, 17)

In this fevered diatribe, Tarr's conceptualisation of ghostly "bitch" women is haunting because they are positioned as representing, however problematically, an excess of "gushing" emotion. That is, Tarr's brief frissons of terror signal a problem of representation. In the above, "haunting" connotes the ephemeral—which masculinism cannot explain away—and represents one instance of a spectral iconography that Lewis patently writes against in the Vorticist manifesto when he challenges Rousseau, Dickens, and Keats. In turn, Tarr projects a liminality—one that we would assume must be exorcised from this art of exteriority—onto this supposed gendered sentimentality that he seeks to delegitimise. As Anne Quéma has noted, in Lewis' writing, "feminine and female" often "connote formlessness, the unconscious, and the flux, by implication the masculine and male connote form, consciousness, and stasis" (1999, 90). In other words, women seem to connote for Lewis the types of conceptual categories that interior or Bergsonian modernisms stage and interrogate. "Confusing" and "blurring" the tenets that underpin his hyper-masculinised worldview, a woman's very presence is unnerving to Tarr, and although manifestly we may read such haunting as pertaining to a supposed lack in womanhood, it may too be understood as a symptom of the symbolic gaps in Tarr's own theories of life and art. In particular, those aesthetic categories that seemingly require the phantasmatic formation of a female other to be sustained are consequently placed in question. At times recalling the pugilistic rhetoric of the Vorticist manifesto of the first edition of *BLAST*, Tarr's diatribe is not only aimed at feminine or queer desire—at one stage, almost maniacally, he confronts Hobson about the "invert-spinsters" of Bloomsbury—but, with less vitriol, at the artistic type that Hobson's lifestyle and ideas suggests. In broader terms, it is feminisation that Tarr proclaims to rally against. Yet, as I hope to show below, haunting paradoxically threatens and sustains Lewis' worldview in this regard.

Such haunting arises from a symbolic absence: a gap or an excess that signals a troublesome space beyond the signifier. As Jacques Derrida contests in his *Specters of Marx*, "The specter is ... what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects—on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see" (2006, 100–101). *Tarr's* haunting women are described in a Gothicised imagery that embellishes this "imaginary screen". This descriptive, macabre spark both indicates the threat posed to masculinism by those emotional indulgences that are excluded from Lewis' worldview and, too, it distracts from and covers-up

the gaps inherent in Tarr's own pugilistic ethics of art. When Tarr visits his lover Bertha, whose staging is exemplary of Lewis' misogyny, she notably resides in a morbid apartment with a sickly atmosphere. Critics tend to read the funereal shades of her room as contributing to the novel's satirising of German Romanticism, yet the spatial phantasms that surround Bertha are, at least ostensibly, considered seriously by Tarr:

It was really more serious than it looked: he must not underestimate it. It was the purest distillation of the commonplace: he had become bewitched by its strangeness. It was the farthest flight of the humdrum unreal: Bertha was like a fairy visited by him, and to whom he "became engaged" in another world, not the real one. So much was it the real ordinary world that for him with his out-of-the-way experience it was a phantasmagoria. (Lewis 2010, 42–43)

The Tarr of the bohemian cafes of Paris makes a public spectacle of his demands for autonomy; yet, in the private realm he is drawn to that which he ostensibly and ideologically opposes. Tarr experiences two worlds: his "real", public, bohemian life as artist, on the one hand, and his strange, private encounters with his betrothed Bertha in her ghostly apartment on the other. Earlier in the novel in the opening debate regarding artistry with Hobson, Tarr is at pains to deny his engagement to Bertha in the public sphere, and yet in truth he finds it inexplicably difficult to break off the marriage. In his private, estranging encounters with Bertha, Tarr cannot account for his own desire. He is compelled by obscure forces and seemingly driven by a desire for self-destruction. That the descriptions of these encounters with Bertha are steeped in the Gothic iconography of the graveyard both signals a satirical attack upon German Romanticism and—at least, in its particular moments of spectralisation—a more sincere anxiety regarding the excess that femininity seems to present.

Two of Lewis' intellectual aversions, then, invite these macabre (and often satirical) shades. Bertha's apartment proves a useful *mise-en-scène* onto which to project, in the first instance, the languor of femininised living and also to caricature the iconography of German Romanticism. From this scene alone, it is clear why critics conventionally read Bertha as "steeped in received middle-class worship of the culture of Goethe and Beethoven" (Klein 2010b, xii):

It was a complete bourgeois-bohemian interior. Green silk cloth and cushions of various vegetable and mineral shades covered everything, in mildewy blight. The cold repulsive shades of Islands of the Dead, gigantic cypresses, grottoes of teutonic nymphs, had installed themselves massively in this french flat ... There was the plaster-cast of Beethoven (some people who have frequented artistic circles get to dislike this face extremely), brass jars from Normandy, a photograph of Mona Lisa (Tarr could not look upon the Mona Lisa without a sinking feeling). (Lewis 2010, 40)

Tarr is repulsed by the pastoral shades of a room that reflects Bertha's taste for sentimental art. She decorates her classical island of the dead with morbid replications. Yet, too, there is a sense of tragedy beneath the melancholic languor of many of the novel's scenes, including Bertha's later rape by another, at first, Romantic figure Kreisler, to whom I return shortly. In this instance, not all of the funereal objects that surround Bertha are mere kitsch. Scott W. Klein notes that, for instance, a "plaster cast of 'the Drowned Girl' decorating Bertha's apartment was one of many replicas of the death mask of the so-called 'L'inconnue de la Seine', an anonymous girl who drowned in Paris in the late nineteenth century and whose enigmatically smiling face was the model of feminine beauty in Europe for decades before the ascendance of Greta Garbo" (Klein 2010a, 55). There is bathos at work, then, in the commoditisation of a tragic drowning, but there is, too, a feeling that death has become synonymous with beauty: it has been irreconcilably romanticised. The porcelain features of "L'inconnue de la Seine"—with her lips perhaps even forming a half-smile—suggest tranquillity and restfulness in death as if one, even as a young girl, may slip off into this abyss and be content. In Lewis' view, the German Romantic imagination both indulges in and welcomes this tranquillity in death.

As Fredric Jameson has argued, the spectralisation of Bertha's room is "a momentary *actant*, a surrogate for the heroine herself" (2008, 44). The apartment's décor at once amplifies and reflects the excessive emotional range that Bertha's character stands in for. As such, space here evokes an unsettling, incongruous spectrum of feelings (from comic, to tragic, to melancholic) that are averse to Tarr's pugilistic rhetoric of triumphal masculinity. Importantly, Jameson goes on to suggest that the discomfort Tarr feels in these haunted encounters forms part of Lewis' fiction's broader interrogation of the dissonances that occur when an

individual's singleness—their sovereignty as a subject—has to be negotiated and traversed in the confines of the quotidian. As Jameson suggests,

Lewis was in some deep Bachelardian fashion haunted his whole life long by rooms and houses, by dwelling space as such. The mystery of these material structures seems to intensify in dialectical proportion to the degree to which the struggle between subjects and subject-poles is emphasized, as though the incomprehensible requirement for people to come together within walled boxes of various sizes and thickness became the occasion for a quasi-existential reflection of the narrative upon its own structural limits. (2008, 42)

In this illuminating account, in which haunting, entombed “walled boxes”, and the “structural limits” of narrative in Lewis’ fiction intertwine, Jameson’s focus on those “subject-poles” that give structure to *Tarr*’s narrative is particularly enlightening. Using a structure that resonates with the embattled, promiscuous couples of Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, which was written after Lewis began work on his novel, *Tarr*’s narrative action is constituted by the dramas and fallouts resultant from a series of tumultuous character pairings. As protagonist, Tarr’s characterisation forms one pole in a number of dualities—with Hobson, Bertha, Kreisler, and even the second central feminine force in the novel, Anastasya, all acting as characters against which he may be measured. He is, then, the central figure who underpins the “material structures” of the book.

LEWIS AND AESTHETIC DEADNESS

If Tarr is haunted by femininity, then so, too, are the narrative structures of the novel and the artistic ideals that underpin them. While Lewis rallies against the romanticising of death in art and in culture, he is consistently concerned with, and fascinated by, “deadness” as an aesthetic category, a formulation which is of central importance to Vorticism more widely. Tarr’s distinction between the “deadness” of art and the “quick flesh” of life is drawn in some detail. A lengthy, almost philosophic dialogue with Anastasya towards the novel’s end proves particularly illuminating in this regard. In her cold intellectualisation and powerful presence Anastasya seems an antithesis to Bertha; it is believed that Lewis “partly conceived” of her character “as the *objet d’art* of Mallarmé’s aesthetics” (Quéma 1999, 135). She patently challenges Tarr’s assumptions

about the necessity of “deadness” and its centrality to his ideology of the aesthetic; such a clear interrogation, though, allows Tarr to assert his doctrine even more strongly as if Anastasya were a welcome, masculinised “subject-pole”, who incites Tarr to underline his artistic ideals. Her presence and intellect do not, then, unsettle Tarr in the same manner as Bertha’s ghostliness; indeed, Anastasya seems to represent the empowered femininity that Dekoven suggests often accompanies triumphal masculinity in modernism. In this important debate with Anastasya, Tarr begins by articulating his exterior method of art where the soul—not metaphysical—is found in the contours of a perfectly sculpted shape. In so doing, he clearly distinguishes between the aesthetic ideal of “deadness” and the unsettled lived reality of naked, quivering flesh. Allowing only a brief, questioning interjection by Anastasya, this passage begins by presenting Tarr’s side of the conversation:

Consider the content of what we call art. A statue is art. It is a dead thing, a lump of stone or wood. Its lines and proportions are its soul. Anything living, quick and changing is bad art always; naked men and women are the worst art of all, because there are fewer semi-dead things about them. The shell of the tortoise, the plumage of a bird, makes these animals approach nearer to art. Soft, quivering and quick flesh is as far from art as it is possible for an object to be.

Art is merely *the dead*, then?

No, but deadness is the first condition of art. The armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise, feathers and machinery, you may put in one camp; naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life – along with elasticity of movement and consciousness – that goes in the opposite camp. Deadness is the first condition for art: the second is absence of soul, in the human and sentimental sense. With the statue its lines and masses are its soul, no restless inflammable ego is imagined for its interior: it has *no inside*: good art must have no inside: that is capital. (Lewis 2010, 265, original emphases)

Tarr is driven to create art that is objective and without “ego”. The “dead” object that is exemplary of the vortex is devoid of any metaphysical escapism—there is no abstraction of the soul, for instance, in this model as aesthetic “deadness” should not be sentimentalised. “Deadness”, then, connotes solidity and immediacy rather than ephemerality. Anastasya’s question—regarding whether art is “merely *the dead*”—implies that

deadness is unremarkable, perhaps even commonplace, in these early modernisms. Certainly, inciting death as a purifying force was common in the pre-war rhetoric of Vorticism with which Lewis was familiar, recalling, as it did, the Futurist programme lead by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. The Futurists, in their first manifesto of 1909, had gone as far as to invite the destruction and disposal of a culture produced by generations of Italian artists (Marinetti 2013, 259). A derogatory attitude to the dead, then, is not only evident in artistic doctrine, but in a range of exemplars of literary modernism. In the opening lines to the prologue of Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), for example, the narrator confesses that even in the postwar period "nobody much bothered to read the lists" of the dead as "[t]he living must protect themselves from the dead, especially the intrusive dead" (Aldington 2013, 1). Perhaps, too, there is already in pre-war modernism—such as in Lewis' aesthetic doctrines—an "exterior" method being theorised that may be read as a shielding of the subject from any encounter with in-between ghostliness. Tracing the "armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise", as they are invoked here by Tarr, focuses the artist's gaze and protects against the vicissitudes of a more haunted sense of self, the spectralisation of which becomes particularly pronounced in those aesthetics of interiority that interrogate impossible mourning in the postwar context. If, as Lewis believed, "good art must have no inside", then Tarr's ideology of the aesthetic is particularly tested by the inward turns of those haunting modernisms of the 1920s and 30s that I read later in this study.

For Lewis and Pound, the vortex should represent chaos made crystalline. Pound suggested that the artist may render the vortex in "the primary media of his art", exemplified by certain images in poetry, such as those found in H.D.'s "Oread" (1914),⁵ in the Cubism of Picasso, or in the abstract paintings of Wassily Kandinsky (Pound 1914, 154). Evident in Tarr's invocation of the contours of "a statue" to illustrate where the soul may be found in "dead" art, perhaps the clearest representation of the vortex is Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's plaster cast sculpture "Bird Swallowing a Fish" (c.1913–1914, bronzed 1960), in which the whirling chaos of a fish captured in a seabird's beak is cast in rigid lines that arrest, for a moment, this vital struggle between life and death. That Gaudier-Brzeska's Vorticist fish resembles a torpedo or a shell is poignantly fatalistic given his untimely death at Neuville-Saint-Vaast in June 1915. Indeed, his lauding of the purifying forces unleashed by the Great War appeared in the same issue of *BLAST* that announced he had joined

the Fallen. In a short, intense essay that he wrote during the conflict, Gaudier-Brzeska declares that “THIS WAR IS A GREAT REMEDY./ IN THE INDIVIDUAL IT KILLS ARROGANCE, SELF-ESTEEM, PRIDE” (2013, 271). There is a tragic irony to Gaudier-Brzeska’s death note appearing virtually side by side with this essay in the final edition of a magazine that lauded conflict and triumphal masculinity. The Vorticists were severely disrupted by the war and eventually the movement disbanded after only two issues of *BLAST*. Nevertheless, their artistic aversion to spectralising the world—and their correlative preference for the poetic Image—may be traced in modernist poetry well beyond 1915. While the artistic and aesthetic legacy of *BLAST* is felt in postwar modernism, its rhetoric of conflict and destruction quickly seemed more misjudged in light of the horrors of the Front.

Gaudier-Brzeska, for instance, seems to modify his pugilistic attitude in his last war letters; while conflict and triumphalism are eschewed, too, in an important contemporary account of his life by Pound that was published during the war. In *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916), Pound provides a tributary, documentary, and post-mortem account of his subject’s life. In so doing, he includes a series of letters that Gaudier-Brzeska penned to him in the months before his death. In both their drawing from reportage and privileging of self-reflection, the rhetoric put forward in these letters moves away from the pugilistic and triumphal masculinism of *BLAST* and instead draws more consistently from a distinctly purgatorial imagery to describe the war. In a letter dated 18th December 1914, Gaudier-Brzeska describes the Front at Aisne as “a sight worthy of Dante” after invoking the image of his men fighting in “the close vicinity of 800 putrefying German corpses” (Pound 1916, 64).⁶ Resonating closely with the purgatorial modernisms that I read in the coming chapters, Pound feels there to be a ghostly “premonition of death” in this letter’s imagery (1916, 69). Once more, its prose describe the Front in horrific shades—“a gruesome place all strewn with dead”—where conflict is no longer a precursor to purification but “a nasty nightmare” in which soldiers bet on their “mutual chances” of survival. Gaudier-Brzeska further invokes the geographies of a classical underworld by lamenting that “there’s not a day without half a dozen fellows in the company crossing the Styx” (ibid.). Ultimately, then, the rhetoric of war as “PURIFICATION” is noticeably and entirely absent in Gaudier-Brzeska’s final letters and replaced, instead, by descriptions of a haunting, modernist purgatory of the trenches; one in which both

the nationalist and artistic ideals of Vorticism seem transformed. If Vorticism was one of those modernist movements, as Jane Goldman puts it, which sought “creatively to interrupt, abolish, conquer or transcend history and time” (2004, xvi) it reached its limit: this most devastating historical event of the period could not be traversed. The shades of a living-purgatory, then, which are developed in many postwar modernist fictions, become evident in the war writings of even the most vitriolic of Vorticist artists.

In his 1918 preface to *Tarr*’s American edition, Lewis is equivocal about reading his novel as patriotic or as forming part of a pre-war, anti-German ideology that anticipated jingoistic wartime attitudes. In an ambiguous statement that both denies and admits to the serendipity of his satire of the German spirit, Lewis professes of Otto Kreisler—whose name is drawn from a musician of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s stories and who acts as Tarr’s antithesis for much of the novel—that “I have not produced this disagreeable German for the gratification of primitive partisanship aroused by the war. On the other hand, having had him up my sleeve for so long, I let him out at this moment in the undisguised belief that he is very apposite” (Lewis 2010, 285–286). Lewis’ earlier “The God of Blood and Sport”, which was published in the second volume of *BLAST* that included Gaudier-Brzeska’s death note, more explicitly aligns art with ideology and nationalism by recounting the censorship by Kaiser Wilhelm of those artistic movements with which the Vorticists sympathised:

A fact not generally known in England, is that the Kaiser, long before he entered into war with Great Britain, had declared merciless war on Cubism and Expressionism. Museum directors, suspected of Cubist leanings, were removed from their posts. Exhibitions that gave shelter to Pablo Picasso or even Signac, were traitorous institutions. (Lewis 1915a, 9)

In *Tarr* it is not Germany’s body politic that is placed under critique, but, instead, the sentimentality of German Romanticism, which Lewis also attacks in the second issue of *BLAST*. Kreisler and Bertha, as I have suggested, stand in for and represent such sensibilities. Scott W. Klein has pointed out the importance of Kreisler’s name to Lewis’ interrogation: a “*kreisel*”, the German word for “spinning top”, Klein argues, is an apt “Vorticist metaphor for a character who is constantly in furious motion yet gets nowhere, and eventually falls dead” (2010a, 51–52).

There are a number of foreshadowings of Kreisler's death throughout *Tarr* that are rendered in the iconography of the Gothic, which, as with those descriptions of Bertha's apartment that I have read, is abundant in the spaces that he inhabits.⁷ The funereal atmosphere of Kreisler's living quarters is foregrounded from the reader's very first encounters with him. Kreisler is painted as a devotee of an atavistic death-cult. There is something obscene about the series of pictures that hang upon the room's walls:

[His] room resembled a funeral chamber. Shallow ill-lighted and extensive, it was placarded with nude archaic images. These were painted on strips of canvas fastened to the wall with drawing-pins. Imagining yourself in some primitive necropolis, the portraits of the deceased covering the holes in which they had respectively been thrust, you would, pursuing your fancy, have seen in Kreisler a devout recluse who had taken up his quarters in this rock-hewn death-house. (Lewis 2010, 64)

It may be convincing to read Kreisler's "death-house" as merely satirising the supposedly indulgent nature of Gothic imagery or even a macabre lifestyle; in Gothic studies there has long been an acknowledgment that, from its textual production in the form of supposedly found manuscripts to its obsessions with fake familial lineages, the Gothic aesthetic is concerned consistently with the counterfeit. The Gothic's inherent fakery could be said to contaminate here the supposedly terrifying decoration of Kreisler's room so as to render bathos rather than sincere menace. Lewis' modernist critique of commoditised, macabre artefacts suggests that these deathly surroundings reflect a counterfeit or overly-sentimental emotional register that infects, too, Kreisler's character. Subject to Lewis' polar narrative structures, Kreisler is trapped within these spaces, in an economy of attraction to, and repulsion at, the entombed or "reclusive" life; one that coheres both with the purgatorial structuring of the text and the modernist predilection for finitude. In a moment of intrusive narration, which places into question the absolute opposition between Lewis' methods of exteriority and a novelistic registering of thought as interiority, there is an admission that "[s]uch a dead hole of a place must have some effect; to shut out innovation, scare away anything unpleasant. Impossible to break this spell of monotony upon his life" (Lewis 2010, 67). Relayed in a hesitant syntax, Kreisler's reflection upon the funereal atmosphere that pervades his "death-house"

is monotonous and engenders a misanthropic indifference to life; one which arises most frequently when Kreisler is subject to Lewis' satirical gaze. Such a bathetic economy of spectrality may be juxtaposed with the more sincere ghostly impulses that appear when, for instance, Tarr fails to account for his sexual desire for Bertha. Both satirical and more estranging ghostly impassés, then, come to constitute the spectrum of spectrality that is put to work in *Tarr*.

There is, too, something more deeply disturbing and menacing underpinning Kreisler's life in a "primitive necropolis". Indeed, such a morbid fixation—this "spell" that is "impossible to break"—prefigures the sexual violence that Kreisler ultimately enacts against Bertha. In Lewis' extended metaphorical rendering of space, the reader is invited to "imagine" that Kreisler's drawings are portraits of the dead that adorn "the holes in which they had respectively been thrust". That these painted figures are naked implies, at least symbolically, that Kreisler's desire—be it artistic in nature, sexual, or both—is piqued by the necrophilic. As such, by paying close attention to Lewis' symbolism we may read the later sexual violence that Otto carries out against Bertha as being a troubling attack of the dead upon the dead. In his reading of polarities of character in the novel, Peter Nicholls notes that Kreisler's envy and, ultimately, his usurpation of Tarr's place in his pairing with Bertha ends in a double loss for him, where "envy springs from imitation rather than from competition for an object" so that Kreisler "will strive to usurp Tarr's place only to discover that in the process he has lost his own" (Nicholls 2008, 181). That Nicholls refers to Bertha here as an "object" to be owned is telling of the misogyny of Lewis' text and the way in which critics have overlooked the important dissonances that the "living-flesh" of Bertha causes Tarr to experience. Furthermore, in Kreisler's rape of Bertha, Lewis' representation of the ghostly sentimentality of German Romanticism ultimately shifts in register to becoming a disturbing and "explicitly mechanical" (Stockton 2006, 74) signifier of abuse. Thus, for Lewis, the German (Romantic) attitude disguises in its very sentimentality a tyrannical masculinism to which not even the Vorticists would wish to subscribe: that is, the decay of the Romantic soul is mirrored in the absolute moral degradation of Kreisler himself.

After Kreisler's suicide, Tarr visits Bertha once more to discover that the atmosphere of death in her apartment has only intensified: "The abject little room seemed to be thrust forward to awaken his memories and ask for pity. An intense atmosphere of teutonic suicide permeated

everything” (Lewis 2010, 274). That Bertha may evoke “pity” from Tarr subjectivises her plight and he seems to reconcile some part of himself with those German images that he once tried so fervently to reject; he notes, for instance, that Bertha’s bust of Beethoven “scowled back at him like a reflection in a mirror” before regretfully asserting that “it was the fate of *both* of them to haunt this room” (Lewis 2010, 274, original emphasis). There is, then, a quiet realisation by Tarr that his public and private personae are not entirely antithetical. The Vorticist who takes to bohemian streets with fervour and vitality to assert his artistic doctrine cannot explain away his own private, paradoxical desire. Bertha’s sexuality is at times ghostly, at others comic, but Kreisler’s attack upon it is much more obscene. In the end, of all of these registers, the ghostly’s strange, liminal position in the text fails to be absolutely exorcised and Bertha, particularly, remains emblematic to Tarr of the unsettling dissonances of femininity and “living-flesh” that lay beyond the limits of Vorticist representation. It is this side to modernism’s ghostly impasses, where spectralisation signals a crisis of representation, which I now investigate in the war writings of one of the first Imagists and a signatory of Vorticism’s 1914 manifesto: Richard Aldington.

RICHARD ALDINGTON’S HAUNTED POETICS OF WAR

Aldington was certainly resistant to the rhetoric of embattlement that proliferated in pre-war modernisms. His poetry, too, deviates from some of those tenets argued for in the guides to Imagism that were penned by Pound and F. S. Flint in the early-to-mid 1910s. He was, then, not averse to asserting his artistic independence from the (often self-appointed) leaders of the group. As his biographer Vivien Whelpton has discovered, soon after the first number of *BLAST* appeared in 1914, Aldington, then a young man aged 22, wrote a critique of the growing egoism of Pound’s writing. In it Aldington ironically argues that given Pound’s normally “modest, bashful” nature, the “enormous arrogance and petulance and fierceness” that seeps through his writings must surely be a “pose” that is becoming “wearisome” (cited in Whelpton 2014, 82). Aldington’s more serious pre-war and war writings featured regularly in both *Poetry* magazine and *The Egoist*. Suggesting his popularity, Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry*, wrote in her review of Aldington’s *Reverie: A Little Book of Poems for H.D.* (1917) that she once received a soldier’s letter from the Front that praised Aldington’s

rendering of the figure of Death in his long poem “Choricos” (1912). According to Monroe, after admiring the beauty of “Choricos”, the soldier provided her with an account of a traumatic event during which “in the drab of light of a cloudy dawning” he saw “near the edge of the road a *poilu* quietly lying”. The soldier concludes that, “I should have fainted, I think, from the sheer tragedy of the incident, had I not heard singing in my head, Aldington’s invocation to death” (cited in Whelpton 2014, 92). This is a powerful testimony to the terrible beauty of a poetry that may work to shield the soldier from the full trauma of seeing a French soldier—or *poilu* as they were known colloquially by the British troops—dead by the roadside. Yet, it is clear from Aldington’s war poetry that he took little consolation from his own poems.⁸ Often eschewing a poetics of impersonality favoured by Pound, the “I” invoked by Aldington in his war verse is recognisably lyrical and seemingly reflective of the poet’s own troubling experiences. The spectral emerges in these writings often when affect—terror and horror most prominently—overflows the clean-cut, Grecian ideal of objectivism that typifies Imagism and to which Aldington’s verse seems to strive towards producing.

The recurring concerns of Aldington’s war poetry, then, evidently reflect a poet’s struggle to come to terms with aesthetic failure on the Front. Anticipating Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, which I read, at length, in the next chapter, the rats’ alley of the trench provides Aldington’s speaker with perhaps his most striking ghostly impasse; one that tellingly arises amidst a poet’s meditation upon representation. The unsettling “scurrying” of rats in “Living Sepulchres”—a short, two-verse poem that was first published in Aldington’s *Images of War* (1919)—becomes an auditory excess that cannot be easily framed within a patently Imagist aesthetic. Although not neatly fitting the tenets of the Poundian school of Imagism, “Living Sepulchres” resonates with Aldington’s own pre-war Imagist poetry in its invocation to a Haiku form that imagines “the moon and flowers and ... snow”. Yet, the realities of the Front and, in particular, the trenches in which “the ghostly scurrying of huge rats/Swollen with feeding upon men’s flesh” fill Aldington’s speaker with “shrinking dread”, arrest poetic production (Jones 1972, 57–58). Invoking, but failing to attain, the Imagist ideal, the verses of “Living Sepulchres” do not provide the free-flowing, rhythmic collages of images that we may expect. Instead, the poem reads as a lament for the loss of a pristine, poetic moment of creation that has been thwarted by horror. The pastoral dreamscape of the opening stanza—that unrealised collage

of “moon”, “flowers”, and “snow”—represents an imagery of denial and detachment. Exemplary of a struggle that resurfaces throughout Aldington’s war poetry, the objective method through which, in the words of Ezra Pound, the reader may gain a “sense of freedom from time limits and space limits” (Pound 1972, 130) cannot be obtained. Yet, that Aldington feels compelled to turn to Imagism in spite of his war context is undeniable. As Jane Goldman has noted, even after Pound and other Imagists had disinvested from the movement during the Great War, “Aldington ... continues to bring out more Imagism.” Most notable of this work are the aforementioned *Images of War* and the contemporaneous collection *Images of Desire* (1919), “whose titles,” Goldman notes, “appending ‘war’ and ‘desire’, suggest that pure, unadorned Imagism can no longer do poetic service to the times” (Goldman 2004, 133).⁹ The names of these collections suggest not only a move away from “unadorned Imagism” by Aldington but a more direct testing of, at least in the Poundian model, two of its central principles: the austere and reserved rendering of images (impossible in war) and the emotional objectivity that is required of the poet (a challenging ideal when desire takes precedence). Exemplary of the former challenge, the coherence of the imagery of “Living Sepulchres” is disrupted by the speaker’s terror-ridden angst—namely, his “shrinking dread”—at life amongst the hellish trenches. In turn, the speaker’s longing for this ultimately unrealised *hokku*, a medium which was once Imagism’s quintessential form, signals a failure of representation.¹⁰ More acute than the dissonance experienced when Pound’s speaker encounters a crowd in his “In a Station of the Metro”, Aldington’s attempt to render Haiku is blasted, exploded, by the lived-experience of the Front. If we take Pound’s injunction to his potential acolytes in “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” (1913) to “go in fear of abstractions” as doctrine (Pound 1972, 131), then the spectral encounter should be eschewed by the Imagist poem even if Pound’s own “apparition” of the crowd may itself infer a ghostly encounter. Used by Aldington’s speaker of “Living Sepulchres” in its adjectival form, “ghostly” here serves to gesture towards an auditory threat that cannot be symbolised concretely: that is, a surplus that is located beyond the signifier.¹¹ Aligned by their consumption of flesh more with hungry ghouls than ghosts, these “ghostly” rats are not part of any supernatural machinery but a metaphor for anxiety, the dissolution of the self and the claustrophobia of live burial.¹²

The hesitations over form that so concern the speaker of “Living Sepulchres” may be observed more broadly in a selection of other verses of *Images of War*, particularly those which implicitly interrogate the ethics of Imagism’s mantras. The re-evaluation of artistic form is on Aldington’s speaker’s mind from almost the beginning of the collection, evident, for instance, in the second and final verse of the opening piece “Proem” in which its speaker laments:

Each day I grow more restless,
See the austere shape elude me,
Gaze impotently upon a thousand miseries
And still am dumb.

(Aldington 1919, 5, lines 8–11)

In these lines the central themes of *Images of War* are clearly foregrounded, including the misery of war, the artistic impotence trials of endurance engender, and the resulting artistic struggle to articulate the inhumanity of war through the “austere shape[s]” or poetic figures of Imagist verse. For Pound, the poetic and “natural object” should always be “the *adequate* symbol” (Pound 1972, 131, original emphasis) with which to articulate feeling. As well as being an allusion to Pound’s theory of the aesthetic, the “austere” method cited in “Proem” recalls the language of F. S. Flint’s famous short manifesto “Imagisme” (1913), which was drafted by Pound, and which recounts the “rules” of the Imagist group; its first and second guidelines, respectively, instruct prospective Imagist poets to render a “direct treatment of the ‘thing’” and “[t]o use absolutely no word” that does not “contribute to the presentation” of the object(s) under study (Flint 1972, 129). Aldington is compelled to test these doctrines when the “austere shape” rendered by the objective method seems to “elude” him on the Front. Judith Wilt has noted that “ghosts offer a challenge to established law” and we often think of such challenges—particularly in light of Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*—in terms of justice: the spectre returns to set right an act that may be deemed unethical. The “ghostly” scurrying of “Living Sepulchres” deviates significantly from what we may imagine to be Imagism’s aesthetic laws. Yet, too, the austere method that Aldington’s speakers seek seems an impossible ideal. Noticeably mirroring the subject matter of the first stanza of “Living Sepulchres”, in Aldington’s “Insouciance” the poet speaker turns away from the traumas of the Front.¹³ Connoting languor

and melancholy in its title, the images of “Insouciance” present a number of paradoxes, as the speaker wearily pens a poem of peace that in the “dreary trenches” seems destined to be entirely ineffectual:

I make for myself little poems
Delicate as a flock of doves.
They fly away like white-winged doves.
(Jones 1972, 57)

As with the abrupt conclusion to “Proem”, which resolves with the paradox of its speaker becoming “dumb”, the delicate poems that fly away as doves of peace have left behind an urgent scene of war. Read side-by-side, these poems thus present a spectrum of emotional—that is non-objective—responses to the war that range from melancholic disengagement to horror.

The pronounced alienation that Aldington’s speakers often convey on the Front is not only the result of present trauma; it is also symptomatic of an unsettling, spectral economy of recognition in which the apocalyptic visions that a selection of his earlier poems anticipate of the home Front are encountered in the fields of France. For instance, in the home Front poem “London” (1915) Aldington’s speaker is deeply troubled by a vision of urban apocalypse: “I am tormented,/Obsessed,/Among all this beauty,/With a vision of ruins,/Of walls crumbling into clay” (Blaisdell 1999, 13–14, lines 14–18). In an unsettling relocation of this prophetic vision, encounters with ruin and decay are realised in a number of Aldington’s later Front poems, perhaps most noticeably in “A Ruined House” (1919), in which the quotidian, rather than urbanity, is decayed and displaced through war. Anxieties once expressed regarding the fall of London are realised in a familial tragedy located in the barren landscape of Flanders where “trampled, dirtied clothes” can be seen scattered in a ruin around “dusty bricks” and where there is a

... marriage bed, rusty and bent,
Thrown down aside as useless;
And a broken toy left by their child ...
(Aldington 1919, 18, lines 5–9)

The distinctly anti-elegiac verse presents a grimly rendered *mise en scène* in which grief has long departed and an ethical remembering

of the dead seems impossible. “Nothing remains” of the family (line 1). They are strangers—others distant to the speaker—whose lives are conveyed through an assemblage of trampled possessions. The description of the family’s objects as “dirtied” reveals the objective attitude demanded by Imagist mantra to be misanthropic: a method that seeks to resist sentimentalisation even when taking an elegiac form. Penned in a period of trauma, the horrors of which should surely resist such objectification, Aldington’s failed Imagist cuts tell an unsettling tale and invoke an iconography of the haunted house that at once connotes ghostliness and, paradoxically, resists the potential sentimentality of spectrality. Such a sentiment is eschewed as it could be transformative, even elegiac, and would signal the commencement of mourning: recuperation is impossible as the speaker still moves amongst the hellish scenes of the Front. Recalling Martin Harries’ reading of Beckett, which I cite in my introductory chapter, the word “ghost” and its corollaries may not appear in this verse but Aldington’s ruined house is haunted in a way: not by the ghostly remainder of departed selves but, instead, by the impossibility of accessing the personalities of those others who must once have imbued these objects with a sense of subjectivity.

It is moving between the poles of rejecting and paying heed to the tenets of Imagism that allows the speakers of Aldington’s *Images of War* to traverse and delay their (impossible) mourning in response to the manufactured death of the Front. The middle poems of *Images of War* include two “Soliloquies” that foreground, respectively, these different attitudes that Aldington’s speakers tend to take towards Imagist forms. In “Soliloquy I” Aldington invokes an image of a corpse beyond classical beautification. In a particularly bathetic passage, the lexical choice of “wobble” sits uncomfortably with the sombre topic under scrutiny:

... the way they wobble! –
 God! that makes one sick.
 Dead men should be so still, austere,
 And beautiful.
 Not wobbling carrion roped upon a cart.
 (1919, 35, lines 9–13)

The cadaver produces an unsettling movement that challenges the “austere” contours of a death-like Vorticist sculpture: the firm lines of Lewis’ externalised soul seem an impossible ideal on the Front. As such, atrocity becomes a site of meditation upon representation where, however

briefly, intellectual aversions take precedence over pathos. This surprising aesthetic dilemma—which suggests an unsentimental attitude to loss—is addressed in “Soliloquy II” in even starker terms. Reflecting upon the argument of its predecessor, “Soliloquy II” opens with a blunt admission by the speaker: “I/WAS WRONG, quite wrong;/The dead men are not always carrion” (1919, 35, lines 1–3). It may seem, initially, that Aldington is withdrawing his ethically problematic aestheticising of the dead in “Soliloquy I”. It is soon revealed, however, that this admission pertains still to questions of aesthetics: the speaker argues, in fact, merely that not all the dead of the Front spoil the Imagist’s objectivising gaze as common “carrion” may. Indeed, there are “austere” and beautiful dead bodies that lay beyond rats’ alley. Among the “shattered trenches ... a dead/English soldier” rests who is to the speaker’s gaze,

More beautiful than one can tell.
More subtly coloured than a perfect Goya,
And ... austere and lovely in repose.
(1919, 36, lines 4–6; 10–12)

From the horror of the writhing corpse in “Soliloquy I” to the sublime cadaver of “Soliloquy II”—whose artistry exceeds even the works of Goya or Michelangelo—the change in attitude between the first and second soliloquies is pronounced. The dead are now aestheticised in classical terms that recall Aldington’s admiration of Grecian sculpture. Paradoxically, though, his speaker invokes, too, the visceral paintings of Goya. If the speaker’s encounter with the dead in “Soliloquy II” is a reassertion of the Imagist mode of representation, then it is a disconcerting one that is, at the very least, undermined by the crises of representation that are staged in a number of the other war poems.

If as a whole the poems of *Images of War* suggest an ambiguous relationship between Aldington’s speakers, the tenets of Imagism, and the horrors of the Front, then we may turn to a ghostly prose piece, which was first published in *The Egoist* in 1918, to gain a clearer sense of the war as an absolute interruption to the aesthetic pursuits of Aldington the classicist. “The Road” presents notable divergences from Imagism in its essay form and elliptical narrative style. In this short piece so concerned with death and burial, the war dead parade along a haunted route known as “The Place of Skulls” (Aldington 1918, 97). As the brief narrative reaches its climax, dead men on stretchers are brought down the road, day turns to night, and then,

just before dawn when the last limber rattles away and the last stretcher has gone back to the line, then the ghosts of the dead armies march down, heroic in their silence, battalion after battalion, brigade after brigade, division after division; the immeasurable forces of the dead youth of Europe march down the road past the silent sentry by the ruined house.... (Aldington 1918, 98)

These lines mark the climax and end to “The Road”. Recalling *Images of War*, the ghostly dead pass by a “ruined house” but, ultimately, they seem to be returning home as spirits, even if their bodies may not be given the same honour. The prose is extraordinary not merely through its invocation of an anti-modernist mode of the supernatural that is recognisably elegiac; it consciously, too, navigates its aesthetic concerns away from the classical ideals of Imagism and resists adopting Lewis’ scepticism towards the ethereal, sentimental, and possibly even recuperative connotations of ghostliness. Underlining Aldington’s self-fashioning as a neo-Grecian, the opening lines of “The Road” allude both to Plato’s *Symposium* and to the early sixteenth-century, neo-Classical Venetian New Academy, whose members, including the Italian scholar Pietro Bembo, spoke only in Greek:

To have watched all night at the feast where Socrates spoke of love, letting fall from tranquil fingers white violets in the cold black wine; or to have listened while some friend of Bembo talked of the groves of Academe and made golden flesh for us the ghosts of dead Greece – who would shrink from so exquisite a vigil? Then indeed not to sleep would be divine, and dawn – the first birds among the trees in the misty park, the first gold flush – would fill us perhaps with regret, certainly with exultation.

But there is no exultation for those who watch beside the Road ... (Aldington 1918, 97)

As with the beautiful, austere soldier of his “Soliloquy II”, the dead are aestheticised in this passage, specifically by that Venetian friend of Bembo—perhaps the influential publisher of Greek writing Aldus Manutius—who “made golden flesh for us the ghosts of dead Greece”. This conscious placing of the modern writer among the dead would famously be revisited in the September 1919 edition of *The Egoist*—some fourteen months later—in the first instalment of T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919). For the Imagist Aldington, recently

home from the Front, these invocations represent indulgent dreams of art and love. For one to be sleepless in such high Grecian company would be an “exultation” for Aldington’s narrator as well as—we may infer—for the select readership of *The Egoist*.

In its transition from exulted Grecian artistry to an encounter with *Thanatos* and death, “The Road” in some senses mirrors the struggles of the speakers of Aldington’s *Images of War*.¹⁴ Yet, ultimately, its apparitional imagery sublimates the problems of mourning more recognisably than its Imagist counterparts through its elegiac ghostly invocation of the march of the “dead youth of Europe”. In turn, Aldington’s writing of this time allows us to conceptualise clearly two poles of the continuum across which modernism’s invocation of spectrality moves. On the one hand, the “ghostly scurrying” of flesh-eating rats in “Living Sepulchres” represents an expression of an excess that connotes a troubling space beyond the signifier. On the other, there is a patently non-modernist recourse to the established trope of the ghostly troop of the Fallen. Such a recuperative encounter suggests Aldington’s need to leave behind, however briefly, the doctrines of Imagism so as to render a rejuvenating, redemptive and more patently sentimental piece; one in which corporeality and the purgatorial imagery of the Front as a “Place of Skulls” are traversed. This conscious spectralising of the war dead suggests a loosening of the control of pre-war Imagist and Vorticist doctrine. Yet, while Aldington’s ghostly dead may be a fitting tribute to many lost lives, their appearance eschews rather than confronts the aesthetic questions raised by the poems of *Images of War*. It is in turning to read the poetry of Ford Madox Ford, however, that we begin to recognise a more characteristically modernist invocation of the dead and the ghostly in *vers libre* form. Ford’s *Antwerp*, in particular, renders a purgatorial space of impossible mourning. In so doing, Ford draws from the poetic figures of recursion and repetition that would come to typify the haunting modernisms, too, of the postwar period.

FROM THE DEAD TO IMPOSSIBLE MOURNING: FORD’S *ANTWERP*

Ford Madox Ford had—at various times—close working relationships with Aldington and Lewis, with the former acting even as his secretary.¹⁵ Referring to the early-to-mid 1910s, Aldington recounts that his colleague Ford “was a great worker” who “did a long literary article every week and at the same time was engaged in a novel,

The Good Soldier.... During the months I worked with him I believe he turned out 6000 to 8000 words a week” (cited in Saunders 1996, 472–473). Ford also worked on and shared his poetry during this time, which was inspired broadly by the Imagists and more particularly by the verse of H.D.,¹⁶ with Aldington expressing deep admiration for Ford’s *On Heaven* (1914) and recalling, too, that *Antwerp* was read aloud to him.¹⁷ On publication, *Antwerp* was explicitly associated with the Vorticist movement as a portion of Lewis’ famous sketch for the war number of *BLAST*—“Before Antwerp” (1915)—appears as the cover image to the poem’s first pamphlet edition. Lewis had initially hoped to serialise the whole of Ford’s *The Saddest Story*, the original title of *The Good Soldier*, in sequential editions of *BLAST*. However, delays in the publication of the magazine’s second issue—the war number that would be its last—meant that “Because of the year’s lapse since the last number of *BLAST* appeared, and seeing also that for some months now it has been out in book form, Mr. Hueffer’s novel ‘The Saddest Story’ will not be continued.” While this omission is mentioned with deep “regret”, it is also noted that the novel “in its later portions is, if anything, finer than in that early part we printed” (Lewis 1915b, 7). The collegial tone that Lewis’ publication affords Ford’s work is of a distinctly different register to the prickly, pugilistic encounters between the pair that Max Saunders recounts in his seminal biography of Ford. According to Saunders, Lewis and Ford “respected each other but they were not close,” and they even clashed publically when,

Lewis denounced Ford’s art to him, while force-marching him down Holland Street, telling him he was “Finished! Exploded! Done for! Blasted in fact! Your generation has gone. What is the sense of you and Conrad and Impressionism? ... This is the day of Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism. What people want is me, not you. They want to see me. A Vortex. To liven them up. You and Conrad had the idea of concealing yourself when you wrote. I display myself all over the page. In every word. I ... I ... I ...” (Saunders 1996, 462)

Lewis’ insistence upon this solid “I” that displays itself throughout his writings—a supposed marker of machismo, dominance and artistic revolution—is symptomatic of a fantasy of ontological and aesthetic certainty that underpins much of his world view. Yet, as I argue above, *Tarr* is haunted both by feminine sexuality and representational excesses. While,

in Aldington's impactful and short poems there is little opportunity to interrogate a complex ethics of mourning. Moving away from brevity, after Imagism's heyday, modernist poetry would turn more frequently towards *vers libre* or epic forms, evident in a range of writers' works, including those of Eliot, Pound, Amy Lowell, and Ford.

There are a number of rationales for this turn. In the "Preface" to her 1916 collection *Men, Women and Ghosts*, Lowell, for instance, cites the particular musicality of free verse as one justification for its employment: "it was the piano pieces of [Claude] Debussy," Lowell writes, "with their strange likeness to short *vers libre* poems, which first showed me the close kinship of music and poetry" (Lowell 1916, vi). The musicality of this modern verse—where its innovative rhythms may suggest atonality as much as melody—is not its only virtue; free verse's often longer, polyphonic forms encouraged complex, ethical interrogations of a range of themes, including those interconnected with mourning and living after loss that so often become represented by ghostliness. The next chapter, at length, reads the ghostly impasses of Eliot's handling of this epic mode in *The Waste Land* and "Little Gidding". Admired by Eliot, Ford's *Antwerp* was reviewed briefly, by Alice C. Henderson, in the same edition of *Poetry* that first published Eliot's "Prufrock". The work was regarded by Henderson as a "poem of great beauty" that had given her "more lasting enjoyment" than "any that I have seen on the war" (Henderson 1915, 154). Eliot's sentiments over *Antwerp* are uncannily similar to those professed by *Poetry*'s reviewer. He is reported as enthusiastically describing Ford's verse as "the only good poem I have met with on the subject of the war" (cited in Lewis 2010, para 2). In turn, *Antwerp* provides an intriguing lens through which to view Eliot and Aldington's responses to the Great War. It explicitly engages with both the horrors of the Front and, in its spectralising of Charing Cross, with those ghostly implications that the Great War had for London that Eliot, too, takes up in *The Waste Land*. The *vers libre* form allows Ford's speaker to explore the ethical complexity of the war through an intellectualised interrogation of heroism that resists sentimentalising conflict and, in turn, pays at least some heed to the objective methods of Imagism and Vorticism. These objectifying tendencies—most prominent in the speaker's description of the Front itself—lead to an almost inhumane expression of the many losses at Antwerp for the Belgian army. As can be surmised from the close analysis that follows, the speaker's sentiment towards the dead is ambiguous, anti-consolatory, and perhaps even damning.

The drudgery of the Front that Aldington's poems express—palpable, for example, in the “dreary trenches” of “Insouciance”—is mirrored in *Antwerp*. A ghostly register, however, is significantly more pronounced in Ford's free verse through its rendering of a recursive temporal dimension. In an obscure atmosphere of “gloom”, civilised time is left behind and chronology becomes both structureless and, in turn, meaningless. Like the combatants whom Ford critiques, the calendar and clock have fallen victim to the purgatorial time registers of the Front. *Antwerp* opens ominously and quickly foregrounds its recursive temporality:

GLOOM!

An October like November;
 August a hundred thousand hours,
 And all September,
 A hundred thousand, dragging sunlit days,
 And half October like a thousand years ...
 And doom!
 That then was Antwerp ...
 (A, lines 1–8)

If Aldington's *Images of War* consciously explores the representational crisis that the Great War presents for Imagism, then Ford, like T. S. Eliot, draws from montage techniques to explore a wider panorama; that is, the realm of ethics as well as aesthetics. One of the speaker's central concerns in *Antwerp* is to explore a question that pertains to bravery: was the Belgian forces' last stand valiant or foolish in this modern battlefield of manufactured death? The answer remains unclear by the poem's end and this indeterminacy coheres with Eliot's poetry of the period in which, for instance, Prufrock poses the unresolved, “Do I dare/Disturb the universe?” (“Prufrock”, lines 45–46). Eliot's Prufrock is both Hamlet and Polonius: a character who is ontologically uncertain but who resists our sympathy as he is “Full of high sentence ... obtuse” and “at times, the Fool” (“Prufrock”, line 117; line 119). Ford's speaker in *Antwerp* is less hesitant but their moralising tone sits uneasily with the poem's wider context of production: that of annihilation and the continued march of the German army towards France. It is the ghostly that registers these troubling contradictions.

Certainly, there are parallels between Ford's use of bathos and Eliot's juxtaposing of high with supposedly low culture in *The Waste Land*.

As I will show shortly by reading its “L’Envoi”, at times *Antwerp*’s tone works to undermine its moments of sincerity, that is, those in which the speaker is exposed to the “so much pain” of loss after a massacre (*A*, line 130). Yet, more consistently, the Belgian soldiers are looked upon by the speaker with an anti-elegiac objectification and they are situated time and again as unbecoming of the term “hero”. Take, for instance,

... this Belgian man in his ugly tunic,
His ugly round cap, shooting on, in a sort of obsession,
Overspreading his miserable land,
Standing with his wet gun in his hand.
(*A*, lines 43–46)

The speaker’s description of this soldier is not merely unflattering and non-heroic but also fatalistic. “Doom!” resounds in the next line, signalling, as it does, “a sudden scrimmage” that leaves a soldier dead: “an unsightly lump on the sodden grass ... /An image that shall take long to pass!” (*A*, lines 47–49). Such scepticism towards heroism and consolation in the afterlife is manifest in many anti-elegiac modernist responses to the Great War (as I begin to explore in the next chapter on Eliot) but it is *Antwerp*’s formal techniques that resonate most closely with postwar modernist verse. While the objectifying tendencies of its speaker are troublesome given the poem’s subject matter, the pre-war lauding of conflict displayed by the Vorticists is absent from Ford’s rendering of the Front.

The portentous “doom” that echoes throughout *Antwerp*—never exorcised entirely from the text—is evident not only on the battlefield, but, too, in the atmosphere of apocalypse that visits London when refugee families of the Belgian dead seek asylum at Charing Cross. Resonating closely with Eliot’s post-WWI wasteland, in *Antwerp*’s sixth section mourners themselves are rendered as corpse-like and part of an ominous “crowd” who are lost in a city that seems more closely related to a purgatorial underworld. The vision of these families left behind by the dead is rendered in a more melancholy tone than the earlier objectification of the “uncomely” soldier of the Front. A Belgian mother, for instance, is staged by Ford’s speaker as an apparition who startles and terrifies as much as she evokes sympathy or pity from the reader:

Surely, that is a dead woman – a dead mother!
She has a dead face;

She is dressed all in black;
 She wanders to the book-stall and back,
 At the back of the crowd;
 And back again and again back,
 She sways and wanders.
 (A, lines 103–109)

Deadness as a positive artistic quality, which so fascinated Lewis and the Vorticists, is eschewed in Ford's invocation of a living dead; even as Lewis' artwork adorns the poem's cover, Ford's speaker undergoes briefly a sympathetic identification with the dead mother that imbues deadness with emotion rather than objectivity. If this figure of a solitary Belgian mother produces pathos in the reader, then her disappearance back into a crowd of living-dead mourners frustrates the lasting power of such an identification, and the terror that accompanies this encounter merely escalates towards horror as "immense shafts of shadows" envelop "the black ground" and the speaker cries,

And now! ... That is another dead mother,
 And there is another and another and another ...
 And little children, all in black,
 All with dead faces ...
 (A, line 113; lines 115–118)

The section ends by privileging emotion over intellectualisation in a simple line that testifies to the excess that has preceded it: "There is so much pain" (A, line 130). Yet, pathos for these mourners does not wholly circumscribe their othering in *Antwerp*. The dead faces at Charing Cross seem excessively melancholic (even inhumanly so) and, indeed, this troop of the urban living-dead is more terrifying than Eliot's wanderers of *The Waste Land*. If we revisit Lewis' morbid insistence upon the deadness of art in light of this reading, then a darker connotation of his Vorticist method is emphasised as perhaps influencing Ford here. That is, the exterior method is cold, lifeless, and drawn to recording life that suffers from atrophy.

Fredric Jameson notes in his reading of Lewis that "representations of death will always prove, under close inspection, to be complex displacements of an indirect, symbolic meditation about *something else*" (2008, 160, original emphasis). In Aldington's wartime verse it is perhaps ghostliness rather than the dead themselves that represents

Jameson's "*something else*": an Imagist poetics facing a crisis engendered by its attempts to represent the terrible beauty of the Front. As such, Aldington's very proximity to the fighting lends his images an expressionistic excess that is patently at odds with his preference for an objectively rendered, classical poetics of finitude. Exceptionally, the dead infantry of "The Road" present a narcissistic recognition for Aldington's narrator that works to mediate impossible loss through an investment into the consolatory fantasy of an afterlife. The representations of deadness in Vorticist art and of the grieving mothers and children of *Antwerp* can be considered as two "symbolic meditations" that function as phantasmatic screens onto which distinct anxieties are projected. They draw from iconographies of death that resist specific narcissistic recognitions between, for Lewis, the artist and their art in pre-war Paris and, for Ford, the modernist poetic speaker and refugees of war. On first inspection, the perfect aesthetic deadness that Tarr seeks in Lewis' novel is an intellectual concept—an artistic ideal—that, as Lewis admits, positions any lived experience (including sex) as its antithesis. Yet, one "something else" that the dead vortex stands in for is the masculinised desire for mastery. Thus, deadness—as a Vorticist concept—represents masculinised control whereas ghostliness registers those dissonances, impasses, and failures of an attempted aesthetics of totality. The "dead faces" of refugees at Charing Cross in *Antwerp* resist individualisation and inaugurate, in many senses, the problems of representing mourning that so concern literary, haunting modernism in the years following the war. Paying heed to the established literary invocation of death and ruin in the city—evident both in Ford's rendering of a haunted London as well as in the apocalyptic imaginings of Aldington's speaker in "London"—the next chapter investigates these purgatorial, haunting modernisms further by turning to the poetry of T. S. Eliot.

NOTES

1. The siege itself lasted from late September to October of 1914. The Belgians—who opted to fight German forces rather than let them pass through unchallenged to France—were making a final but ultimately doomed last stand.
2. More practically, the Great War broke apart significant literary connections in both the Imagist and Vorticist networks. As T. S. Eliot notes in a letter to Conrad Aiken in August 1916, "Nearly everyone has

faded away from London, or is there very rarely. The vorticists are non-existent. Lewis is a gunner in the R.G.A. [Royal Garrison Artillery] ... F. M. Hueffer is settled to an army career in the Welsh Guards and is in France, T. E. Hulme has been in France for ages" (Eliot 2011, 158).

3. As the introductory chapter made clear, this book's invocation of the Gothic uncanny, if invoked at all, is a tentative one: a number of central modes of modernist representation actively resist staging, as Freud termed it, the return of the repressed in narratological terms. These aesthetics include the objective, classical brevity of the Imagist poem, as well as the patently robust "external" methods of D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis, which, given these writers' mutual scepticism towards interiority and the Freudian unconscious, tended to challenge the psychologising of the aesthetic.
4. The quotation that follows is from the novel's opening, and close-to-philosophic, dialogue between the two; Hobson's characterisation as a Cambridge-educated, Bloomsbury intellectual may be said both to satirise and invoke many of those artistic theories associated with Roger Fry.
5. As Rachel Connor points out, Pound's selection of "Oread" as exemplary of Vorticist principles "reveals a great deal about the ways in which modernist discourse is gendered" where "the speaker's invitation to the 'pointed pines' to 'point up' and 'hurl your green over us' is ... heavily suggestive of discourses of male sexuality" (Connor 2004, 45).
6. Pound notes of the final of the collected letters that, while it is dated "3/5/1915", it was actually sent in June and written closer to Gaudier-Brzeska's death than may be assumed on first inspection.
7. The narrator's seemingly discriminatory views include, for instance, that given Kreisler's recurrent misfortunes, "by all rights and according to the rules of the national temperament he should have committed suicide some weeks earlier" (Lewis 2010, 91).
8. Recent scholarly work on Aldington has tended to focus upon his war poetry itself, a critical move which was encouraged by the publication of Michael Copp's edited collection *An Imagist at War: The Complete War Poems of Richard Aldington* (2002).
9. Until today, the status of Aldington's war verse has been fairly minor in the modernist canon; this is unsurprising given that *Images of War* was published when Imagism was in decline rather than the collection being one of its (pre-war) paradigmatic high points. Nevertheless, a small selection of the poems appear in Peter Jones' seminal Penguin collection of the movement (1972).
10. That the rats that surround the speaker of "Living Sepulchres" are known to feed on human corpses is not the source of the ghostly here in the first instance. Aligning the feral rat with Julia Kristeva's theorisation of

the abject, Maud Ellmann has noted that its “recurrence ... in modernist texts intimates that writing is riddled with erasure, and that literature is a self-gnawing artefact” (2010, 14).

11. In this case, the disconcerting “scurrying” resonates without the acoustic source being visible, relying partly for its effect upon the pronounced acoustic dimension of poetic onomatopoeia itself. As Isabella van Elferen notes, disembodied sound is “at once the most eerie and the most certain indicator of ghostly presence” in more traditionally Gothicised tales of haunting (van Elferen 2012, 21).
12. The horrific language that renders the excesses of “Living Sepulchres” is closer to producing those affects associated with an expressionist mode of representation—for instance, Otto Dix’s wartime portfolio of sketches *Der Krieg* (1924)—than it is to creating the clean-cut aesthetic of the Imagist haiku.
13. The poem was first published in the 1919 “After-the-War Number” of Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry* magazine alongside a number of other short poems—that appear under the title “In France 1916–18”—including some that Aldington would select to be published in *Images of War*.
14. In making reference to *Thanatos*, here, I allude to the term as it appears in the post-WWI articulation of the death drive by Sigmund Freud. Freud introduces the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) but its fullest elaboration is given in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) (Freud 1984, vol. 11, 380–388).
15. By 1908 Ford Madox Hueffer (who changed his surname to Ford after the Great War) was already established as the elder statesman of the disparate collective of writers who published in little magazines. He founded the influential *English Review* (1908) and his close connections included the (to him) avant-garde Imagists, and later the Vorticists, such as Pound, Lewis, H.D., and Aldington. If the Imagist literary circle may be regarded as a varied grouping of writers who shared an interest in brevity, concision, and classical literatures, then, in spite of Ford’s experiments with poetic form, he was ultimately more important as a literary networker than a central purveyor of the group’s principles. With his close associate Joseph Conrad, Ford had already established himself as a writer of literary impressionism: a highly stylised, predominantly novelistic mode, which both anticipated and informed many of the concerns of the high modernisms of the 1920s and 30s, particularly the preferences for unreliable narrative point of view and the “modern” subjectivising of temporality and ethics that so distinguished the impressionists’ work.
16. For a fascinating account of H.D.’s mysticism and its resonances with theology, see Elizabeth Anderson’s *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

17. In the 1920s Ford's other most influential magazine—*The Transatlantic Review* (1924)—published works by James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway and many notable others but the period of interest here is the 1910s and, in particular, the work that he was producing when publishing and collaborating with those poets who had once been known as the Imagists and who would, under Pound and Lewis' direction, form the short-lived Vorticist movement.

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