

Blast

The journal *Blast* was published only twice—on June 20, 1914, though released on July 2, one month before Great Britain entered World War I, and a year later, during the war that would bring its short life to an end. But its initial preface and two-part manifesto, printed in the first pages of the first number, are among the most important documents in the history of Anglo-American modernism. They rhetorically and typographically embody the violent iconoclasm of Vorticism, an avant-garde movement in the literary and visual arts centered in London. Ezra Pound, the movement's principal literary figure, became a Vorticist after abandoning Imagism, because he felt that the *vortex*, “the point of maximum energy,” offered a more dynamic model for poetry than the static image of the Imagists. The English writer and painter Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) founded and edited *Blast*, a word he said “means the blowing away of dead ideas and worn-out notions” (it also suggests *fire*, *explosion*, and *damn!*). He drafted much of the Vorticist manifesto and fashioned its shocking visual design, likening *Blast* to a “battering ram.” The French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915), killed in World War I and memorialized both in the “War Number” of *Blast* and in a book of Pound's named for him, was another key Vorticist leader. In the pages of *Blast* 1 and 2, artwork by Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, and other visual artists appeared alongside the writing of Lewis, Pound, T. S. Eliot (including his “Preludes”), and other avant-garde writers. Two of *Blast*'s illustrations are reproduced here, before and after the manifesto.

The Vorticist manifesto, signed by Lewis, Pound, and Gaudier-Brzeska, among others, reflects the London modernists' competitive anxiety about European avant-gardes such as Cubism and especially Futurism, which, under the charismatic leadership of F. T. Marinetti, celebrated speed, modernization, and the machine. Futurism influenced *Blast*'s experimental layout and rhetoric of negation: Marinetti had called for a destruction of the museums, the libraries, all such bastions of the past; the Vorticists—in lists compiled at group meetings—likewise blast convention, standardization, the middle class, even the “years 1837 to 1900.” And yet despite their cosmopolitan enthusiasms, the Vorticists also assert their independence, repeatedly criticizing the Futurists. For all their antipathy toward England, they also bless it, revaluing, for example, English mobility (via the sea) and inventiveness (as the engine of the Industrial Revolution). Beyond merely stating doctrine, the Vorticists fashion a manifesto that crosses poetry with poster art, creatively manipulating words on the space of the page for maximum effect. In its jagged typography, wild energy, and fire-breathing rhetoric, its radical individualism paradoxically turned to a collective purpose, the Vorticist manifesto exemplifies ingredients of avant-garde poetry through the twentieth century. The text is reprinted from *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex*, No. 1 (1914)



Long Live the Vortex!

Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the centre of this town!¹

We stand for the Reality of the Present—not for the sentimental Future, or the sacripant² Past.

We want to leave Nature and Men alone.

We do not want to make people wear Futurist Patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers.³

We are not their wives or tailors.

The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.

WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY—their stupidity, animalism and dreams.

We believe in no perfectibility except our own.

Intrinsic beauty is in the Interpreter and Seer, not in the object or content.

We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism),⁴ and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.

WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel it's crude energy flowing through us.

It may be said that great artists in England are always revolutionary, just as in France any really great artist had a strong traditional vein.

Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way.

Blast will be popular, essentially. It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, **TO THE INDIVIDUAL**. The moment a man feels or realizes himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time. Blast is created for this timeless, fundamental Artist that exists in everybody.

The Man in the Street and the Gentleman are equally ignored.

Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals.

Education (art education and general education) tends to destroy the creative instinct. Therefore it is in times when education has been non-existent that art chiefly flourished.

But it is nothing to do with “the People.”

1. London.

2. Boastful of valor.

3. The Futurists celebrated the technology, power, and dynamism of the modern age and sought to break with the past and traditional forms.

4. Naturalism, a late nineteenth-century school of realism, claimed all human life was governed by natural laws. Impressionism emphasized the subjectivity of perspective over any inherent quality in a represented object.

It is a mere accident that that is the most favourable time for the individual to appear.

To make the rich of the community shed their education skin, to destroy politeness, standardization and academic, that is civilized, vision, is the task we have set ourselves.

We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals, wherever found.

We will convert the King⁵ if possible.

A VORTICIST KING! WHY NOT?

DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE⁶ HAS THE VORTEX IN HIM?

MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND?⁷

We are against the glorification of "the People," as we are against snobbery. It is not necessary to be an outcast bohemian, to be unkempt or poor, any more than it is necessary to be rich or handsome, to be an artist. Art is nothing to do with the coat you wear. A top-hat can well hold the Sixtine. A cheap cap could hide the image of Kephren.⁸

AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism)⁹ bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes.

Elephants are VERY BIG. Motor cars go quickly.

Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing,¹ in his romantic delight with modern lodging houses was futurist in this sense.

The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870.

The "Poor" are detestable animals! They are only picturesque and amusing for the sentimentalist or the romantic! The "Rich" are bores without a single exception, *en tant que riches!*²

We want those simple and great people found everywhere.

Blast presents an art of Individuals.

5. George V ascended the throne in 1910 and remained the British king until 1936.

6. David Lloyd George (1863–1945), career British politician, prime minister 1916–22.

7. Wife of wealthy industrialist Sir Robert Mond, and a prominent member of fashionable London society.

8. Ancient Egyptian pharaoh buried in one of the great pyramids in Giza. *The Sixtine*: the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican.

9. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), Italian writer and founder of Futurism, he glorified war and technology, and invented a "drama of objects"

in which human actors play no parts.

1. George Gissing (1857–1903), naturalist English novelist. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), Irish writer and critic; in his 1891 essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism," he writes: "All unintellectual labour, all monotonous, dull labour, all labour that deals with dreadful things, and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. . . . *At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man.*"

2. Insofar as they are rich (French).

MANIFESTO.

1

BLAST First (from politeness) ENGLAND

CURSE ITS CLIMATE FOR ITS SINS AND INFECTIONS

**DISMAL SYMBOL, SET round our bodies,
of effeminate lout within.**

**VICTORIAN VAMPIRE, the LONDON cloud sucks
the TOWN'S heart.**

A 1000 MILE LONG, 2 KILOMETER Deep

**BODY OF WATER even, is pushed against us
from the Floridas, TO MAKE US MILD.**

OFFICIOUS MOUNTAINS keep back DRASTIC WINDS

SO MUCH VAST MACHINERY TO PRODUCE

**THE CURATE of "Eltham"³
BRITANNIC ÆSTHETE
WILD NATURE CRANK
DOMESTICATED
POLICEMAN
LONDON COLISEUM
SOCIALIST-PLAYWRIGHT
DALY'S MUSICAL COMEDY
GAIETY⁴ CHORUS GIRL
TONKS⁵**

3. A character from a dirty limerick ("There was a young curate of Eltham") that appeared in the August 1879 issue of *The Pearl: Journal of Facetiae and Voluptuous Reading*.

4. The Gaiety Theatre and Daly's Theatre were both in London; the London Coliseum is the city's

largest theater.

5. Henry Tonks (1862–1937), an instructor at London's Slade School of Art—where Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) and several other Vorticists studied—who rejected the increasingly abstract innovations of Cubist and Postimpressionist artists.

CURSE

the flabby sky that can manufacture no snow, but can only drop the sea on us in a drizzle like a poem by Mr. Robert Bridges.⁶

CURSE

the lazy air that cannot stiffen the back of the **SERPENTINE**,
or put Aquatic steel half way down the **MANCHESTER CANAL.**⁷

But ten years ago we saw distinctly both snow and ice here.

May some vulgarly inventive, but useful person, arise, and restore us to the necessary **BLIZZARDS.**

**LET US ONCE MORE WEAR THE ERMINE
OF THE NORTH.**

**WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF
THIS USEFUL LITTLE CHEMIST
IN OUR MIDST!**

2

OH BLAST FRANCE

**pig plagiarism
BELLY
SLIPPERS
POODLE TEMPER
BAD MUSIC**

6. England's poet laureate from 1913 to 1930.

7. Artificial canal opened in 1894. *Serpentine*: a large artificial lake in London.

SENTIMENTAL GALLIC GUSH SENSATIONALISM FUSSINESS.

PARISIAN PAROCHIALISM. Complacent young man,
so much respect for Papa
and his son !—Oh !—Papa
is wonderful: but all papas
are !

BLAST

APERITIFS (Pernots, Amers picon)⁸

Bad change

**Naively seductive Houri salon-
picture Cocottes**

**Slouching blue porters (can
carry a pantehnicon)⁹**

**Stupidity rapacious people at
every step**

Economy maniacs

**Bouillon Kub¹ (for being a bad
pun)**

PARIS. Clap-trap Heaven of amative German
professor.

Ubiquitous lines of silly little trees.

Arcs de Triomphe.

Imperturbable, endless prettiness.

Large empty cliques, higher up.

Bad air for the individual.

BLAST

MECCA OF THE AMERICAN

**because it is not other side of Suez Canal,² instead of an
afternoon's ride from London.**

8. French appetizer liqueurs.

9. Place where all sorts of manufactured articles are collected for sale. *Houris*: one of the beautiful virgins of the Koranic paradise. *Cocottes*: prostitutes.

1. A brand of bouillon cube, widely advertised in France around 1912.

2. Canal linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

CURSE

3

WITH EXPLETIVE OF WHIRLWIND
THE BRITANNIC ÆSTHETE
 CREAM OF THE SNOBBISH EARTH
 ROSE OF SHARON³ OF GOD-PRIG
 OF SIMIAN VANITY
 SNEAK AND SWOT⁴ OF THE SCHOOL-
 ROOM
IMBERB (or Berbed when in Belsize⁵)-**PEDANT**

| **PRACTICAL JOKER**
DANDY
CURATE

BLAST all products of phlegmatic cold
 Life of **LOOKER-ON**.

CURSE

SNOBBERY
 (disease of femininity)
FEAR OF RIDICULE
 (arch vice of inactive, sleepy)
PLAY
STYLISM
SINS AND PLAGUES
 of this **LYMPHATIC** finished
 (we admit in every sense
 finished)
VEGETABLE HUMANITY.

3. One of the biblical names of Jesus (Isaiah 35.1), the Sharon Rose is supposed to be the most admired in the field. The rose is also a traditional symbol of England.

4. Nerd.

5. In London. *Imberb*: beardless. *Berbed*: bearded, with pun on *suburb*.

4

BLAST

**THE SPECIALIST
“PROFESSIONAL”
“GOOD WORKMAN”
“GROVE-MAN”
ONE ORGAN MAN**

BLAST THE

**AMATEUR
SCIOLAST⁶
ART-PIMP
JOURNALIST
SELF MAN
NO-ORGAN MAN**

5

BLAST HUMOUR

Quack ENGLISH drug for stupidity and sleepiness.

Arch enemy of REAL, conventionalizing like

**gunshot, freezing supple
REAL in ferocious chemistry
of laughter.**

BLAST SPORT

HUMOUR’S FIRST COUSIN AND ACCOMPLICE.

**Impossibility for Englishman to be
grave and keep his end up,
psychologically.**

6. That is, *sciolist*, a person who makes a superficial show of learning.

Impossible for him to use Humour
as well and be persistently
grave.

Alas! necessity for big doll's show
in front of mouth.

Visitation of Heaven on
English Miss

gums, canines of **FIXED GRIN**

Death's Head symbol of Anti-Life.

CURSE those who will hang over this
Manifesto with **SILLY CANINES** exposed.

6

BLAST

years **1837** to **1900**⁷

Curse abysmal inexcusable middle-class
(also Aristocracy and Proletariat).

BLAST

pasty shadow cast by gigantic **Boehm**⁸

(Imagined at introduction of **BOURGEOIS VICTORIAN VISTAS**).

WRING THE NECK OF all sick inventions born in
that progressive white wake.

BLAST their weeping whiskers—hirsute⁹
RHETORIC of EUNUCH and STYLIST—
SENTIMENTAL HYGIENICS

7. Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901.

8. Joseph Edgar Boehm (1834–1890), one of the

queen's sculptors.

9. Hairy.

**ROUSSEAUISMS¹ (wild Nature cranks)
FRATERNIZING WITH MONKEYS
DIABOLICS—raptures and roses
of the erotic bookshelves
culminating in
PURGATORY OF
PUTNEY.²**

CHAOS OF ENOCH ARDENS

laughing Jennys
Ladies with Pains
good-for-nothing Guineveres.³

**SNOBBISH BORROVIAN running after
GIPSY KINGS and ESPADAS⁴**

bowing the knee to
wild Mother Nature,
her feminine contours,
Unimaginative insult to
MAN.

DAMN

all those to-day who have taken on that Rotten Menagerie,
and still crack their whips and tumble in Piccadilly Circus,
as though London were a provincial town.

**WE WHISPER IN YOUR EAR A GREAT
SECRET.**

**LONDON IS NOT A PROVINCIAL
TOWN.**

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), French philosopher who argued that humans are good and noble in their natural state, before society and civilization corrupt them.

2. A middle-class London suburb.

3. In late medieval romance, King Arthur's queen in Camelot; also, the title character in two narrative poems by English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892). "Enoch Arden" (1864) is another

narrative poem by Tennyson, rejected here for its sentimentalism. Jenny is the title character of another sentimental poem (1870), by English poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882).

4. Swords (Spanish). *Borrovia*: from George Henry Borrow (1803–1881), English writer of popular gypsy romances, such as *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (1843).

We will allow Wonder Zoos. But we do not want the
GLOOMY VICTORIAN CIRCUS⁵ in
 Piccadilly Circus.

IT IS PICCADILLY'S CIRCUS!

NOT MEANT FOR MENAGERIES trundling

out of Sixties **DICKENSIAN GLOWNS,
 CORELLI LADY RIDERS,**⁶
**TROUPS OF PERFORMING
 GIPSIES** (who complain
 besides that 1/6 a night
 does not pay fare back to
 Clapham).⁷

BLAST

⁸

The Post Office

Frank Brangwyn

Robertson Nicol

Rev. Pennyfeather
 (Bells)

Galloway Kyle
 (Cluster of Grapes)

Bishop of London and all his posterity

Galsworthy

Dean Inge

Croce

Matthews

5. *Circus*: here, traveling entertainment act with animals and acrobats; also, British traffic circle. *Wonder Zoos*: traveling exhibition of exotic animals.
 6. Marie Corelli, pseudonym of Mary Mackay (1855–1924), best-selling (and royal favorite) English writer of romances and religious novels in which she aimed to reform social ills. *Dickensian clowns*: from the novels of English writer Charles Dickens (1812–1870).

7. Suburban district of London. 1/6: 18d, or a shilling and sixpence, then equivalent to about thirty-five cents.

8. Those blasted here range from individuals, such as Charles Burgess Fry, England's star cricket player and a tireless self-promoter, to things blasted seemingly for the thrill of doing so, such as cod-liver oil. Blasted, too, are institutions or members of the national, literary, or cultural establishment (e.g., the post office, a much-lauded model of Victorian efficiency, and the British Academy, established in 1902 by Royal Charter as the national academy for humanities and social sciences), including various clergy and public leaders (e.g., Bishop of London; William Ralph Inge, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral; the Reverends Pennyfeather and Meyer; R. J. Campbell, English Congregationalist minister in the City Temple of London, and a Pan-

theist; Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, archbishop of Westminster and superior of the Catholic Missionary Society; Norman Angell, pacifist British economist; Arthur Christopher Benson, schoolmaster at Eton College, author of Edward VII's coronation ode). Critics unfriendly to the avant-garde are also included (e.g., William Archer, drama critic for the *Nation*; Sir William Robertson Nicoll, biblical editor and sometime literary critic; Lionel Cust, director of the National Portrait Gallery and contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, etc.). Also blasted are artists and writers whom the Vorticists believed were meager talents in spite of their popularity (e.g., painter Frank Brangwyn, poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox, actors George Grossmith and Seymour Hicks, composers Joseph Holbrooke and Edward Elgar, etc.), as well as those associated with fads (e.g., Sir Abdul Baha Bahai, leader of the Bahai faith) or idealistic social reform (e.g., author Marie Corelli; Sidney Webb, a leader of the Fabian Socialist organization; Annie Besant, theosophist and suffragist). Some names (e.g., Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore) are misspelled. For a detailed discussion of the cursing and blessing in *Blast*, see William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (1972).

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Rev Meyer | Seymour Hicks | |
| Lionel Cust | C. B. Fry | Bergson | Abdul Bahai |
| Hawtrey | Edward Elgar | Sardlea | |
| | Filson Young | Marie Corelli | Geddes |
| Codliver Oil | St. Loe Strachey | Lyceum Club | |
| Rhabindraneth Tagore | | Lord Glenconner of Glen | |
| Weiniger | Norman Angel | Ad. Mahon | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Dearmer | Beecham | | Ella |
| A. C. Benson | (Pills, Opera, Thomas) | Sydney Webb | |
| British Academy | | Messrs. Chapell | |
| Countess of Warwick | | George Edwards | |
| Willie Ferraro | Captain Cook | R. J. Campbell | |
| Clan Thesiger | Martin Harvey | William Archer | |
| | George Grossmith | R. H. Benson | |
| Annie Besant | Chenil | Clan Meynell | |
| Father Vaughan | Joseph Holbrooke | Clan Strachey | |

1

BLESS ENGLAND!

BLESS ENGLAND

FOR ITS SHIPS

which switchback on **Blue, Green and**
Red SEAS all around the **PINK**
EARTH-BALL,

BIG BETS ON EACH.

BLESS ALL SEAFARERS.

THEY exchange not one **LAND** for another, but one **ELEMENT** for **ANOTHER**. The **MORE** against the **LESS ABSTRACT**.

BLESS the vast planetary abstraction of the **OCEAN**.

BLESS THE ARABS OF THE **ATLANTIC**.

THIS ISLAND MUST BE CONTRASTED WITH THE BLEAK WAVES.

BLESS ALL PORTS.

PORTS, RESTLESS MACHINES of | scooped out basins
heavy insect dredgers
monotonous cranes
stations
lighthouses, blazing
through the frosty
starlight, cutting the
storm like a cake
beaks of infant boats,
side by side,
heavy chaos of
wharves,
steep walls of
factories
womanly town

BLESS these **MACHINES** that work the little boats across clean liquid space, in beelines.

BLESS the great **PORTS** | **HULL**
LIVERPOOL
LONDON
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE
BRISTOL
GLASGOW

BLESS ENGLAND,

Industrial Island machine, pyramidal
workshop, its apex at Shetland, discharging itself on the sea.

BLESS

cold
magananimous
delicate
gauche
fanciful
stupid

ENGLISHMEN.

| |
|---|
| 2 |
|---|

BLESS the **HAIRDRESSER.**

He attacks Mother Nature for a small fee.

Hourly he ploughs heads for sixpence,

Scours chins and lips for threepence.

He makes systematic mercenary war on this

WILDNESS.

He trims aimless and retrograde growths

into **CLEAN ARCHED SHAPES** and

ANGULAR PLOTS.

BLESS this **HESSIAN** (or **SILESIA**)⁹ **EXPERT**

correcting the grotesque anachronisms
of our physique.

9. From German industrial areas Hesse and Silesia.

3

BLESS ENGLISH HUMOUR

It is the great barbarous weapon of
the genius among races.

The wild **MOUNTAIN RAILWAY** from **IDEA**
to **IDEA**, in the ancient Fair of **LIFE**.

BLESS SWIFT¹ for his solemn bleak
wisdom of laughter.

SHAKESPEARE for his bitter Northern
Rhetoric of humour

BLESS ALL ENGLISH EYES
that grow crows-feet with their
FANCY and **ENERGY**.

BLESS this hysterical **WALL** built round
the **EGO**.

BLESS the solitude of **LAUGHTER**.

BLESS the separating, ungregarious
BRITISH GRIN.

4

BLESS FRANCE

1. Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Anglo-Irish poet and satirist.

for its **BUSHEL**s of **VITALITY**

to the square inch.

HOME OF MANNERS (the Best, the **WORST** and interesting mixtures).

MASTERLY PORNOGRAPHY (great enemy of progress).

COMBATIVENESS

GREAT HUMAN SCEPTICS

DEPTHS OF ELEGANCE

FEMALE QUALITIES

FEMALES

BALLADS of its **PREHISTORIC APACHE**

Superb hardness and hardiesse of its

Voyou² type, rebellious adolescent.

Modesty and humanity of many there.

GREAT FLOOD OF LIFE pouring out of wound of 1797.

Also bitterer stream from 1870.³

STAYING POWER, like a cat.

BLESS⁴

Bridget **Berrwolf** **Bearline** **Cranmer Byng**
Frieder Graham **The Pope** **Maria de Tomaso**

2. Hooligan.

3. Beginning of the Franco-Prussian War and end of the Second Empire, led by Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew Napoleon III. 1797: Napoleon Bonaparte returns victorious to France from military campaigns abroad, begins his rise to power.

4. Like the blasted, the blessed generally fall into a few main groups, ranging from the same kind of seemingly arbitrary things (e.g., castor oil) to friends and sponsors of the Vorticists (e.g., sympathetic art critics Frank Rutter and P. G. Konody; Kate Lechmere, a financial backer of the magazine) and fellow avant-garde artists and supporters (e.g., James Joyce; Madame Strindberg, head of the Futurist Cabaret Club; Launcelot Cranmer-Byng, who published English translations of classical Chinese

poets). Also celebrated are popular figures among typically working-class audiences (e.g., racing crook Robert Siever; boxer Jake "Young" Ahearn; actors Granville Barker and Lydia Yavorska and singer-actress Shirley Kellogg) and authors of popular fiction and poetry (e.g., Adelaide Belloc Lowndes—the misspelling in *Blast* may or may not have been intentional—author of popular thriller *The Lodger*; Sir James Matthew Barry, the Scottish playwright who created the character Peter Pan; and patriotic English poet Henry Newbolt). The blesses also include figures from various revolutionary eras, such as Charlotte Corday, an aristocrat who assassinated French Revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat in 1793, and Oliver Cromwell, lord protector of England from 1653 to 1658.

Captain Kemp Munroe Gaby Jenkins
R. B. Cunningham Grahame Barker
(not his brother) (John and Granville)
Mrs. Wil Finnimore Madame Strindberg Carson
Salvation Army Lord Howard de Walden
Capt. Craig Charlotte Corday Cromwell
Mrs. Duval Mary Robertson Lillie Lenton
Frank Rutter Castor Oil James Joyce
Leveridge Lydia Yavorska Preb. Carlyle Jenny
Mon. le compte de Gabulis Smithers Dick Burge
33 Church Street Sievier Gertie Millar
Norman Wallis Miss Fowler Sir Joseph Lyons
Martin Wolff Watt Mrs. Hepburn
Alfree Tommy Captain Kendell Young Ahearn
Wilfred Walter Kate Lechmere Henry Newbolt
Lady Aberconway Frank Harris Hamel
Gilbert Canaan Sir James Mathew Barry
Mrs. Belloc Lowdnes W. L. George Rayner
George Robey George Mozart Harry Weldon
Chaliapine George Hirst Graham White
Hucks Salmet Shirley Kellogg Bandsman Rice
Petty Officer Curran Applegarth Konody
Colin Bell Lewis Hind LEFRANC
Hubert Commercial Process Co.

MANIFESTO.

I.

- 1** Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves.
- 2** We start from opposite statements of a chosen

world. Set up violent structure of adolescent clearness between two extremes.

- 3 We discharge ourselves on both sides.**
- 4 We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours.**
- 5 Mercenaries were always the best troops.**
- 6 We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World.**
- 7 Our Cause Is NO-MAN'S.**
- 8 We set Humour at Humour's throat. Stir up Civil War among peaceful apes.**
- 9 We only want Humour if it has fought like Tragedy.**
- 10 We only want Tragedy if it can clench its side-muscles like hands on it's belly, and bring to the surface a laugh like a bomb.**

II.

- 1 We hear from America and the Continent all sorts of disagreeable things about England: "the unmusical, anti-artistic, unphilosophic country."**
- 2 We quite agree.**
- 3 Luxury, sport, the famous English "Humour," the thrilling ascendancy and idée fixe of Class, producing the most intense snobbery in the**

World; heavy stagnant pools of Saxon blood, incapable of anything but the song of a frog, in home-countries:—these phenomena give England a peculiar distinction in the wrong sense, among the nations.

- 4** This is why England produces such good artists from time to time.
- 5** This is also the reason why a movement towards art and imagination could burst up here, from this lump of compressed life, with more force than anywhere else.
- 6** To believe that it is necessary for or conducive to art, to “improve” life, for instance—make architecture, dress, ornament, in “better taste,” is absurd.
- 7** The Art-instinct is permanently primitive.
- 8** In a chaos of imperfection, discord, etc., it finds the same stimulus as in Nature.
- 9** The artist of the modern movement is a savage (in no sense an “advanced,” perfected, democratic, Futurist individual of Mr. Marinetti’s limited imagination): this enormous, jangling, journalistic, fairy desert of modern life serves him as Nature did more technically primitive man.
- 10** As the steppes and the rigours of the Russian winter, when the peasant has to lie for weeks in his hut, produces that extraordinary acuity of feeling and intelligence we associate with the Slav; so England is just now the most

favourable country for the appearance of a great art.

III.

- 1** We have made it quite clear that there is nothing Chauvinistic or picturesquely patriotic about our contentions.
- 2** But there is violent boredom with that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable "intellectual" before anything coming from Paris, Cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many quarters.
- 3** Just as we believe that an Art must be organic with its Time,
So we insist that what is actual and vital for the South, is ineffectual and unactual in the North.
- 4** Fairies have disappeared from Ireland (despite foolish attempts to revive them)⁵ and the bull-ring languishes in Spain.
- 5** But mysticism on the one hand, gladiatorial instincts, blood and asceticism on the other, will be always actual, and springs of Creation for these two peoples.
- 6** The English Character is based on the Sea.
- 7** The particular qualities and characteristics that the sea always engenders in men are

5. The Celtic Revival in Irish arts and letters, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the 1920s, emphasized the mysticism and supernatural elements in Irish legend and poetry.

those that are, among the many diagnostics of our race, the most fundamentally English.

- 8** That unexpected universality as well, found in the completest English artists, is due to this.

IV.

- 1** We assert that the art for these climates, then, must be a northern flower.

- 2** And we have implied what we believe should be the specific nature of the art destined to grow up in this country, and models of whose flue⁶ decorate the pages of this magazine.

- 3** It is not a question of the characterless material climate around us.

Were that so the complication of the Jungle, dramatic Tropic growth, the vastness of American trees, would not be for us.

- 4** But our industries, and the Will that determined, face to face with its needs, the direction of the modern world, has reared up steel trees where the green ones were lacking; has exploded in useful growths, and found wilder intricacies than those of Nature.

V.

- 1** We bring clearly forward the following points, before further defining the character of this necessary native art.

6. Pipe for conveying heat; chimney duct.

- 2** At the freest and most vigorous period of ENGLAND's history, her literature, then chief Art, was in many ways identical with that of France.
- 3** Chaucer was very much cousin of Villon⁷ as an artist.
- 4** Shakespeare and Montaigne⁸ formed one literature.
- 5** But Shakespeare reflected in his imagination a mysticism, madness and delicacy peculiar to the North, and brought equal quantities of Comic and Tragic together.
- 6** Humour is a phenomenon caused by sudden pouring of culture into Barbary.⁹
- 7** It is intelligence electrified by flood of Naivety.
- 8** It is Chaos invading Concept and bursting it like nitrogen.
- 9** It is the individual masquerading as Humanity like a child in clothes too big for him.
- 10** Tragic Humour is the birthright of the North.
- 11** Any great Northern Art will partake of this insidious and volcanic chaos.
- 12** No great ENGLISH Art need be ashamed to share some glory with France, to-morrow it may be with Germany, where the Elizabethans did before it.

7. François Villon (1431–1463?): French poet (some of whose work was translated into English by Ezra Pound). Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400): English poet.

8. Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist.

9. Former name for the western part of North Africa, associated with barbarity.

- 13** But it will never be French, any more than Shakespeare was, the most catholic and subtle Englishman.

VI.

- 1** The Modern World is due almost entirely to Anglo-Saxon genius,—its appearance and its spirit.
- 2** Machinery, trains, steam-ships, all that distinguishes externally our time, came far more from here than anywhere else.
- 3** In dress, manners, mechanical inventions, LIFE, that is, ENGLAND, has influenced Europe in the same way that France has in Art.
- 4** But busy with this LIFE-EFFORT, she has been the last to become conscious of the Art that is an organism of this new Order and Will of Man.
- 5** Machinery is the greatest Earth-medium: incidentally it sweeps away the doctrines of a narrow and pedantic Realism at one stroke.
- 6** By mechanical inventiveness, too, just as Englishmen have spread themselves all over the Earth, they have brought all the hemispheres about them in their original island.
- 7** It cannot be said that the complication of the Jungle, dramatic tropic growths, the vastness of American trees, is not for us.

- 8** For, in the forms of machinery, Factories, new and vaster buildings, bridges and works, we have all that, naturally, around us.

VII.

- 1** Once this consciousness towards the new possibilities of expression in present life has come, however, it will be more the legitimate property of Englishmen than of any other people in Europe.
- 2** It should also, as it is by origin theirs, inspire them more forcibly and directly.
- 3** They are the inventors of this bareness and hardness, and should be the great enemies of Romance.
- 4** The Romance peoples will always be, at bottom, its defenders.
- 5** The Latins are at present, for instance, in their "discovery" of sport, their Futuristic gush over machines, aeroplanes, etc., the most romantic and sentimental "moderns" to be found.
- 6** It is only the second-rate people in France or Italy who are thorough revolutionaries.
- 7** In England, on the other hand, there is no vulgarity in revolt.
- 8** Or, rather, there is no revolt, it is the normal state.

- 9** So often rebels of the North and the South are diametrically opposed species.
- 10** The nearest thing in England to a great traditional French artist, is a great revolutionary English one.

Signatures for Manifesto¹

R. Aldington
Arbuthnot
L. Atkinson
Gaudier Brzeska
J. Dismorr
C. Hamilton
E. Pound
W. Roberts
H. Sanders
E. Wadsworth
Wyndham Lewis

1914

1. The signatories are Richard Aldington, writer; Malcolm Arbuthnot, photographer and artist; Lawrence Atkinson, Vorticist artist; Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Vorticist sculptor (whose obituary was printed in *Blast* 2, after he was killed in the trenches); Jessica Dismorr, artist and *Blast* illustrator;

Cuthbert Hamilton, avant-garde artist; Ezra Pound, poet; William Roberts, painter; Helen Saunders, Vorticist designer; Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist painter; and Wyndham Lewis, avant-garde artist, playwright, and novelist.