

## Hand-Grenade as Conceptual Vorticist Weapon: Cohesion and Fragmentation in *BLAST 1* within *Manifesto—I* and Part I of *Manifesto—II*

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*BLAST 1* consisted of three manifestos: an opening manifesto ('Long Live the Vortext') written by Ezra Pound and two further manifestos edited and written by Wyndham Lewis with Pound: the first ('Manifesto—I') structured around the famous 'blasts' and 'blesses', which were inspired by Apollinaire's 'Futurist Anti-Tradition Manifesto' (published in *Lacerba*), and the second ('Manifesto—II') divided into seven sections, each of which was further sub-divided into terse bullet points.<sup>1</sup> 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II' explode from and within the page itself.<sup>2</sup> Fragmentation begins within the mise-en-page dislocating and relocating logic, meaning and concepts. The manifestos of *BLAST*, like a typical Vorticist design,

[shoot] outwards in iconoclastic shafts, zig-zags or diagonally oriented fragments, and at the same time asserts the need for a solidly implanted, almost sculptural order.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis likens *BLAST* to a 'battering ram'.<sup>4</sup> Yet, it is more appropriate to equate the conceptual Vorticist weapon with the hand-grenade. It is an ancient Byzantine weapon that came into resurgence again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of siege warfare.<sup>5</sup> The 'hand-grenade' defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'an explosive missile, smaller than a bombshell, thrown by hand'.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, on June 28 1914, Nedjelko Cabrinovic threw a hand-grenade into the royal car of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The Archduke deflected the missile with his arm. Yet, it exploded in the street and the resultant fragmentation wounded civilians.<sup>7</sup> Dated June 20 1914, though released on July 2, the Vorticists threw *BLAST* and its manifestos into the

<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Gasiorek, 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: Blast (1914-1915)' in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I*, edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 294. Hereafter cited as 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II', *BLAST 1*, edited by Wyndham Lewis, no. 1 (20 June 1914), pp. 11-29, pp. 30-45. 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II' are written in the same manner as shown in 'Contents', *BLAST 1*, p. 5. Due to the scope of this essay, I will focus only upon Part I of 'Manifesto—II', pp. 30-31. Henceforward, page numbers will appear within parentheses.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Cork, Arts Council of Great Britain, and Haywood Gallery, *Vorticism and its allies: Arts Council of Great Britain, Haywood Gallery, London 27 March 1967-2 June 1974* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Biography* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow, [1950] 1984), p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Robert James Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), p. 107 and *A Dictionary of Military History and The Art of War*, edited by André Corvisier and John Childs, translated by Chris Turner, second edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), p. 330.

<sup>6</sup> 'Hand-grenade', *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50102178?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=hand-grenade&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50102178?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=hand-grenade&first=1&max_to_show=10)>, [accessed on 2 January 2010].

<sup>7</sup> For more information of hand-grenade incident before the Archduke's assassination read V. Dediger, *The Road to Sarajevo* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), pp. 10-12, 408-9.

world.<sup>8</sup> World War I deflected the missile with its arms.<sup>9</sup> Yet, it exploded in contemporary consciousness and the resultant fragmentation wounded art movements (including Vorticism itself). In a sense, the first shots of World War I had been fired within four days of each other. It was fired with a hand-grenade.

The hand-grenade is an appropriate analogy as it collapses the two different interpretations of the Vortex.<sup>10</sup> For Ezra Pound, it can be said that the hand-grenade is in the hand of the poet-soldier as a 'stable, strong source of creative energy' ready for deployment.<sup>11</sup> For Lewis, it is the hand-grenade thrown 'whirling' into the air as an 'arrogant, polished monster of energy' ready for explosion.<sup>12</sup> Pound holds the hand-grenade and Lewis throws the hand-grenade. Both Lewis and Pound create the manifestos' design to *BLAST*, to explode, to fragment.

Synthesising the theories of cohesion and construal of ideational meaning by Ruqaiya Hasan, Michael A. K. Halliday and Chuong Yin Yeun, this essay will explore how the manifestos, like a hand-grenade, were designed to disintegrate into small fragments on explosion, but able to exist as a solid entity.<sup>13</sup> This will readdress a gap in the academic narrative. Arguments by critics such as Andrzej Gasiorek, Paige Reynolds, and Marjorie Perloff for example, do not sufficiently engage with the linguistic elements *as they exist* within *BLAST I*.<sup>14</sup> In *BLAST*, like print advertising, language and typological modes of semiosis work via topologically grounded, semiotic systems. Gasiorek correctly describes

The use of different size fonts, screaming headlines, and unusual page layouts mimic[ing] the techniques of newspapers, poster art, and advertisements, turning each page into a geometrically designed space.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, *BLAST* can be described as 'typography's closest approximation to dynamite'.<sup>16</sup> There is an awareness of this concept, but there is no expansion (other than contextual or observational like Gasiorek) by literary critics yielding discussion of how the linguistic elements within 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II' function within its context. However the critics do, as Perloff proves, reveal how

<sup>8</sup> William Charles Wees, *Vorticism and the English avant-garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972), p. 69-72.

<sup>9</sup> The War meant only one issue was published after 1914, deflecting and dispersing the energies of the Vorticists: 'Gaudier Brzeska was killed, Ford was shell-shocked, Pound left London, and Lewis, despite post-war Vorticist forays, moved away from the specific type of geometric art he had championed in *BLAST*' in Gasiorek, 'The Little Magazine as Weapon', p. 313.

<sup>10</sup> See Wees, *Vorticism and the English avant-garde*, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, adapted from Wees' conclusion.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Works used include: Ruqaiya Hasan, 'What's Going On: A Dynamic View of Context in Language', in *Ways of Saying: Ways of Meaning*, edited by C. Cloran, D. Butt and G. Williams (London: Cassell, 1996), pp. 35-50; M. A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, second edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1994); M. A. K Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Socio-Semiotic Perspective* (Victoria: Deakin University, 1985); and Cheong Yin Yuen, 'The Construal of Ideational Meaning in Print Advertisements', *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic-Functional Perspectives*, edited by Kay L. O'Halloren (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 169-195, citations of these works will comprise of their titles hereafter.

<sup>14</sup> Gasiorek, 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: Blast (1914-1915)', pp 290-313; Paige Reynolds, ' "Chaos Invading Concept": *Blast* as a Native Theory of Promotional Culture', *Twentieth Century Literature* (Summer 2000), pp. 238-68 and Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 180-181. Citations of these works will comprise of their titles hereafter.

<sup>15</sup> Gasiorek, 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: Blast (1914-1915)', p. 297.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 244.

the conflation of art and advertising . . . allowed [the Vorticists] to extol English advertising practices, practices that displayed for the world England's preeminence in industry, economics, politics, and culture.<sup>17</sup>

The use of topological grammar adapted from Hasan, Halliday and Yeun is necessary to understand the manifestos' multi-semiotic design and spatial form. This is because, as Reed Way Dasenbrock argues,

Narrative is replaced in modernist works by spatial form as the source of coherence and it is literary Vorticism that is responsible for the articulation of spatial form in literature in English.<sup>18</sup>

The linguistic elements of 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II' in *BLAST 1* can be understood via Joseph Frank's assertion that

Syntactical sequence is given up for a structure depending on the perception of relationships between disconnected word-groups [ . . . ] these word-groups must be juxtaposed with one another and perceived simultaneously . . . for, while they follow one another in time, their meaning does not depend upon this temporal relationship.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the construal of ideational meaning within the manifestos depends on a spatial relationship. The metafunction of ideational meaning, as expressed by Halliday, is concerned with 'understand[ing] the environment' which enables 'humans to . . . make sense of what goes on around them and inside them'.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, it allows the reader to understand the context which would enable them to access the meaning of linguistic elements within the manifestos of *BLAST 1*. Reverberating Frank's argument, Halliday and Hasan propose that it is 'cohesion [which] expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another' (not temporally, but spatially).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, to comprehend the idea of cohesion and construal of ideational meaning, Hasan's 'Capture^Focus^Justification' will be applied as the generic structure framework for an advertisement to *BLAST 1*.<sup>22</sup> The Capture functions

to attract attention . . . [and] realized in the written mode through the management of the visual layout, the typeface patterns and/or the presence of pictures.<sup>23</sup>

An example of the Capture in 'Manifesto—I' can be seen in fourth blast (p. 16). The number four is centred at the top of the page surrounded by a box. The word 'BLAST' is centred below the numbered list with a list of five tropes of the worker aligned on the left of the page. The tropes are sized at two-thirds of the word 'BLAST'. Below this, the word 'BLAST' is repeated with the addition of the word 'the' (half the size of 'BLAST') which is also aligned centrally. Then aligned to the right of the page are six tropes of the worker. The unusual mise-en-page 'attracts attention' through both 'visual layout' and 'typeface patterns'.

As a consequence, the Focus 'single[s] out that which is being advertised'.<sup>24</sup> However, while stating that the Focus can be visually realised, Hasan does not clarify

<sup>17</sup> ' "Chaos Invading Concept" ', p. 245.

<sup>18</sup> Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers, [1945] 1963), p. 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. xiii, 106.

<sup>21</sup> *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Socio-Semiotic Perspective*, p. 299.

<sup>22</sup> 'What's Going On: A Dynamic View of Context in Language', pp. 41-42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41

whether the Focus has a linguistic realisation as well. This will be remedied in this analysis as the linguistic elements in the manifestos *are* visually realised. Therefore, the Focus of the fourth blast is the juxtaposition of one set of tropes against another.



Figure 1: 'Fourth blast' in *BLAST I*, (p.16).

Hasan also established the presence of a visual aspect to the Justification acting to reinforce the Focus. In *BLAST*, the visual elements are the linguistic elements. As Martin Puchner states: the ‘staccato style of enumerating apodictic demands, hostility toward the audience, aggressively enlarged letters, and hypertrophic speech acts’ can be seen in Figure I above.<sup>25</sup> For example, the first of the five phrases listed (aligned to the left) is ‘THE SPECIALIST’ and the first of the six phrases listed (aligned to the right) is ‘AMATEUR’ (p. 16). The list of worker tropes blasted on the left reflect professionalism (‘“PROFESSIONAL”’), good work-ethic (‘“GOOD WORKMAN”’ ) and trade (‘“GROVE-MAN”’ ) (p. 16). The list of worker tropes blasted on the right reflect a person who makes a superficial show of learning (‘SCIOLAST’, that is: sciolist), journalism (‘JOURNALIST’) and self-interest (‘SELF MAN’) (p.16).

Applying a term used by Yuen, the Focus and the Justification both form the Locus of Attention (LoA) which embeds the central idea of the text.<sup>26</sup> The LoA of the fourth blast is *the fact it is the fourth blast* (signified by the numbered box) which is juxtaposing and blasting both ‘THE SPECIALIST’ and the ‘AMATEUR’ as well as the ‘ONE ORGAN

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Puchner, 'The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism' in *Bad Modernisms*, edited by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> 'The Construal of Ideational Meaning in Print Advertisements', p. 165.

MAN' with the 'NO-ORGAN MAN'. The embedded meaning of the LoA shows no affinity to either side presented or to its own side. The fourth blast can be seen to perfectly exemplify Frank's assertion of how spatial form functions in modern literature.

To counter Hasan's limitations (concerning Focus and Justification realised as specifically visual elements) Yeun's taxonomy of ideational meaning in print advertisements will be utilised. This will analyse and evaluate the relationship between Capture, Focus and Justification elements in *BLAST 1*. Yuen propose three terms: Contextualization Propensity (CP), Interpretative Space (IS) and Semantic Effervescence (SE).<sup>27</sup> These can be seen as topological and can be used to ascertain nuances and gradients of meaning in *BLAST*.

The CP 'refers to the degree to which linguistic items in a print advertisement contextualize the meaning of the visual images'.<sup>28</sup> The IS is the 'space [in which readers] create, invent and author meaning'.<sup>29</sup> SE exists if there is a wider IS and diminishes if there is higher CP.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the manifestos of *BLAST 1* have a high CP which narrows the IS, thus the LoA will have a lower SE. Yuen highlights that the 'CP, therefore, has ideological implications'.<sup>31</sup> With a higher Propensity for Contextualization, it implies that Lewis with Pound introduce specific shards of meaning through the linguistic items placed on the page. Alternate meanings other than those asserted in the LoA within manifestos are dislocated because of the low SE which exists because of the limited IS. Obviously, alternate meanings can exist when the text is exposed to alternate readers. However, the manifestos' function as a manifesto is controlled by Lewis' design to limit alternate readings.

The shards of meaning exist within the pages of each individual 'BLAST' and 'BLESS'. However, they are also interconnected and spread between 'Manifesto—I' and 'Manifesto—II' 'exposing non-linear relationships and dynamical emergence' of the Capture, Focus and Justification in each 'BLAST' and 'BLESS'.<sup>32</sup> Gasiorek asserts that 'each manifesto was sub-divided either into short paragraphs or into numbered bullet points, thereby instantiating a phrasal strategy'.<sup>33</sup> This strategy reveals how the function of fragmentation can co-exist with cohesion in both manifestos. For example, the fourth blast (p. 16) signified by the numbered box at the top of page in 'Manifesto—I' uses the same typography and reduces the size for numbered bullet points in 'Manifesto—II' (p. 30-1). Therefore, the juxtaposition and blasting of two tropes can be comprehended via the context provided by the fourth bullet point in Part I of 'Manifesto—II':

**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 (p. 30).

This is one example of the hand-grenade design (behaving as both cohesive and fragmentary) that is expressed via BLAST's typography within the manifestos. The LoA for each 'BLAST' and 'BLESS' in 'Manifesto—I' can be seen within the numbered boxes themselves. These numbered boxes appear not only to signify different blasts and blesses, but correspond to the numbered bullet points in 'Manifesto—II'. The bullet points, therefore, become Loci of Attention. This can be understood via Table I in Appendix I. It juxtaposes the six blasts and the four blesses in 'Manifesto—I' with the ten bullet points of Part I in 'Manifesto—II'.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>32</sup> J. L. Lemke, 'Multiplying Meaning: Visual and Verbal Semiotics in Scientific Text', *Reading Science: Critical and Functional Perspectives on Discourses of Science*, edited by J. R. Martin and R. Veel (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: Blast (1914-1915)', p. 297.

It can be seen that 'BLAST FIRST (from politeness) ENGLAND' (pp. 11-12); 'OH BLAST FRANCE' (pp. 13-14); 'CURSE WITH EXPLETIVE OF WHIRLWIND THE BRITANNIC ÆSTHETE' (p. 15); and 'BLAST THE SPECIALIST' (p. 16) (the first four blasts from 'Manifesto—I') relate to the methodology expounded in the first four bullet points within Part I of 'Manifesto—II'. Thus, England is established as the first blast: 'Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish / ourselves' (p. 30). Then France is established as the second blast to 'start from opposite statements of a chosen / world. [Then to] Set up violent structure of adolescent / clearness between two extremes' (p. 30). As a result, the third blast leads the Vorticists to 'discharge ourselves on both sides' (p. 30). Finally, the Vorticist positioning can be understood when understanding the fourth blast in relation to the fourth bullet point as explained above.

'BLAST HUMOUR' (p. 17) is the fifth blast which relates to the deadpan and quite vicious fifth bullet point: 'Mercenaries were always the best troops' (p. 30). As a result, the use of 'Mercenaries' carries the sense of 'fighting first on one side, then on the other, / but always for the SAME cause', yet the cause relates to 'neither side, or both sides, and [their own]' (p. 30). It feedbacks to the methodology espoused in the fourth blast (p. 17). The sixth blast, in which Lewis with Pound 'BLAST years 1837 to 1900' (pp. 18-20), and the sixth bullet point, 'We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern / World' (p. 30), reinforce the Foci of Attention displayed in Part I of *Manifesto—II* so far. Lewis 'Set[s] up [another] violent structure of adolescent / clearness between two extremes' between the 'Primitive' and the 'Modern' (p. 30).

However, the reverberation between the two manifestos dissipates when the first 'BLESS' (pp. 22-24) is read in co-ordination with the seventh bullet point: 'Our Cause is NO-MAN'S' (p. 31). The reader can understand that the Vorticists fight 'always for the SAME cause' (p. 30) which is 'NO-MAN'S' (p. 31). It invites a feedback of logic to exist with the boxed number 1 centred over 'BLESS ENGLAND!' (p. 22) in 'Manifesto—I' which relates again to first bullet point of Part I of 'Manifesto—II' (p. 30). Moreover, the second, third and fourth blesses (pp. 25-27) can be linked to the first four bullet points of Part I of 'Manifesto—II' (p. 30) as well as bullet points seven through ten (p. 31).<sup>34</sup>

Lewis creates an internal instability with paradoxes and inversions of Vorticist beliefs and assertions. Like an exploded hand-grenade, the numbered boxes act as pieces of shrapnel dispersed throughout the manifestos. Each piece of shrapnel and shard of meaning relates back to cohesive form of the hand-grenade and simultaneously expressing its fragmentary nature. However, some pieces are blasted and warped incongruously to the original cohesive design. This suggests the internal mechanics of the 'hand-grenade' are in a state of energetic flux. Therefore, as Gasiorek suggests, 'the dialogic and dyadic structure' of the manifestos functions as a constant feedback: in a 'dynamic of destruction=creation, by the way of which various viewpoints are renegotiated, if not necessarily reconciled'.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, the hand-grenade as conceptual Vorticist weapon can be realised by understanding its cohesive and fragmentary nature in relation to the design of 'Manifesto—I' and Part I of 'Manifesto—II' in *BLAST I*. This analogy resonates within its context. It is able to balance Pound and Lewis' views of the Vortex. It balances Vorticism's insistence to be able to move with sharpness and rapidity whilst having the form of an ordered, sculptural object. Moreover, the synthesis and application of the theories of cohesion and construal of ideational meaning to the manifestos of *BLAST* have garnered significant results. This methodology proves that Lewis designed the manifestos with a dynamic relationship between cohesion and fragmentation. The result is a kinetic reading experience which is complex and

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>35</sup> 'The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: Blast (1914-1915)', p. 297.

esoteric. *BLAST*, as Edward Bishop declares, ‘does not just espouse Vorticism, it becomes a Vortex’ whirling through the air.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Bishop, ‘Re:covering Modernism—Format and Function in the Little Magazines, *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*, edited by in Ian Willison, Warick Goult, and Warren Chernaik (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 317.

**APPENDIX I: Table I – listing the titles of ‘Manifesto I’ and the statements of Part I of ‘Manifesto II’.**

"Manifesto I": Pages 11-28		
NUMBERED BOX	TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
1	BLAST first ENGLAND	11 to 12
2	OH BLAST FRANCE	13 to 14
3	CURSE WITH EXPLEATIVE OF WHIRLWIND THE BRITANNIC AETHETE	15
4	BLAST THE SPECIALIST	16
5	BLAST HUMOUR	17
6	BLAST years 1837 to 1900	18 to 20
1	BLESS ENGLAND!	22 to 24
2	BLESS THE HAIRDRESSER.	25
3	BLESS ENGLISH HUMOUR	26
4	BLESS FRANCE	27
"Manifesto II": Pages 30-43		
[Part] I.		
BULLET POINTS	STATEMENT	PAGE NUMBER
1	Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish / ourselves.	30
2	We start from opposite statements of a chosen / world. Set up violent structure of adolescent / clearness between two extremes.	30
3	We discharge ourselves on both sides.	30
4	We fight first on one side, then on the other, / but always from the SAME cause, which is / neither side or both sides and ours.	30
5	Mercenaries were always the best troops.	30
6	We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern / World.	30
7	Our Cause is NO-MAN'S.	31
8	We set Humour at Humour's throat. / Stir up Civil War among peaceful apes.	31
9	We only want Humour if it has fought like / Tragedy.	31
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.	31

Source: ‘Manifesto—I’ and ‘Manifesto—II’ in *BLAST I*, edited by Wyndham Lewis, no. 1 (20 June 1914), pp. 11-31.

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