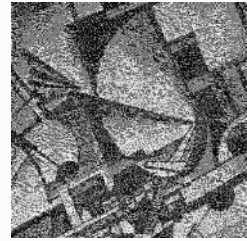




## A “Modern Rendezvous” in London: Painters, Pilots, and Edward Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight* (1914)

Article by **Bernard Vere**



### Abstract

Edward Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight* was first exhibited in June 1914 and reproduced in the Vorticist journal *Blast* later that summer. Vorticism’s leader, Wyndham Lewis, had spent the time leading up to the inaugural publication of *Blast* trying to differentiate the English movement from Italian Futurism, and did so by adopting a more sceptical attitude in the face of Futurism’s technophilia. Accordingly, *A Short Flight* has been read as a painting that portrays the individual as subservient to the mechanized world. Disputing that interpretation, this article resituates *A Short Flight* in the context of aviation in London before the First World War, when 120,000 people attended the meeting at Hendon Aerodrome over the Easter weekend of 1914. Moreover, four pilots flying at Hendon were amongst the names that the Vorticists “Blessed” in *Blast*. Fellow painters and patrons flew from the venue, which quickly assumed the status of a fashionable “modern rendezvous”. Coming in the wake of F. T. Marinetti’s description of his flight over Milan in the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”, but anticipating the response of Futurism’s own painters to the theme of aviation, Hendon made the ideal subject for a painting that contested Futurism’s claims to be the art of the modern metropolis.

### Introduction

Futurism and Vorticism have often been confused. Although the movements are distinct and deserve to be treated as such, they are certainly intertwined. Much of the scholarship on Vorticism has been about distinguishing the movement from Futurism, taking its lead from the critical comments made by Wyndham Lewis towards the Italian movement as he sought to establish Vorticism. But the grounds of distinction can become reified and harden into orthodoxies that are inadequate to describe the complex and at times chaotic gestation of Vorticism in the nine or so months preceding the publication of *Blast* in the summer of 1914. This essay argues that Edward Wadsworth’s painting *A Short Flight* (1914) has been the object of such misreadings and proposes a new interpretation.

When the Italian Futurist leader F. T. Marinetti opened his “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” in 1912 he did so from a distinctly modern situation: “Sitting astride the fuel tank of an airplane,” Marinetti wrote, “my stomach warmed by the aviator’s head, I felt the ridiculous

inanity of the old syntax inherited from Homer.”<sup>1</sup> Mocking what he termed this “Latin period”, he claims that the “swirling propeller” forced him to realize that “the period, naturally, has a prudent head, a stomach, two legs, and two flat feet: but it will never have two wings. Just enough to walk, take a short run, and come up short, panting!”<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, he had already written that “we are not joking when we declare that in human flesh wings lie dormant”, predicting a coming “nonhuman, mechanical species” and “a development of the external protrusion of the sternum, resembling a prow, which will have great significance, given that man, in the future, will become an increasingly better aviator”.<sup>3</sup> Italian Futurist painters responded to these words, but they took some time to do so. It was not until the late 1920s that *aeropittura* would become central to Futurist painting. But even those earlier works of Italian Futurism which made flight a prime concern were not produced in the immediate wake of Marinetti’s manifesto. Gino Severini’s *Flying Over Rheims* dates to 1915. The most significant pre-First World War Futurist work, Carlo Carrà’s *Patriotic Festival*, a dazzling free-word, “pictorial poem” collage/painting based on a whirring propeller, was in all likelihood composed in the last two weeks of June 1914.<sup>4</sup> By this time Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight* (fig. 1) was already on display in London and, shortly afterwards, its painter became a signatory to the manifesto that appeared in the first number of *Blast*, the journal of the Vorticists.<sup>5</sup> *A Short Flight* was reproduced there as one of five works by Wadsworth.

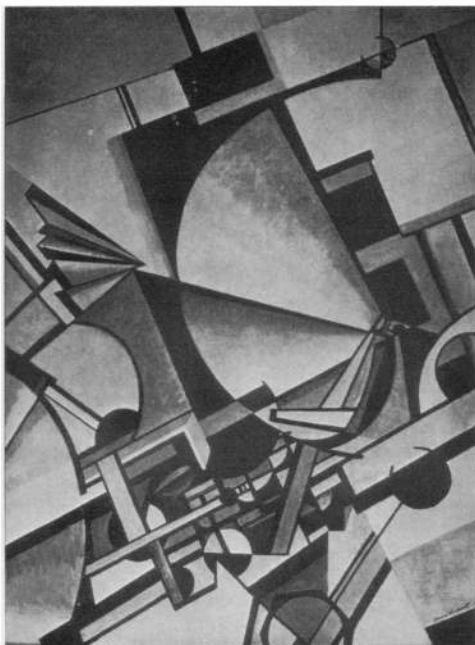


Figure 1

Edward Wadsworth, *A Short Flight*, 1914, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Lost.

That an artist contributing to *Blast* was amongst the first to react to Marinetti’s words might come as a surprise. From around the turn of the year Lewis had been orchestrating attempts to put some distance between Italians and the emergent English movement. Startlingly, an early product of this campaign was a catalogue essay entitled “The Cubist Room”, that contained the claim, “Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird.”<sup>6</sup> Lewis’s essay accompanied an exhibition held in Brighton at the end of 1913, where artists exhibiting alongside Lewis and Wadsworth included Frederick Etchells and Cuthbert Hamilton, both of whom would go on to

become Vorticists, as well as C. R. W. Nevinson, who remained a Futurist. But of these, it is Wadsworth who has since been portrayed as the faithful “lieutenant” to Vorticism’s leader, and the seven works of his reproduced over the two issues of *Blast* are second only to Lewis’s nine.<sup>7</sup> What, then, led him to produce a painting that seems more aligned to the precepts of Marinetti’s writings than those of Lewis?

My argument will situate Wadsworth’s work in the context of Marinetti’s writings and Lewis’s responses to them, but it will also put some distance between *A Short Flight* and both of these figures, Lewis as much as Marinetti. It will do so by putting the work’s reproduction in the context of *Blast*’s inclusion—again surprising if we take Lewis at his word—of four celebrated pilots amongst the list of those it Blessed. The Vorticists proved themselves adept readers of mass culture when compiling the lists of those Blasted and Blessed for *Blast*, and the Blessed included some of the most prominent British-based aviators of the day: B. C. Hucks, Gustav Hamel, Claude Grahame-White, and Henri Salmét. All were associated with London’s celebrated aerodrome at Hendon, which leads me to an examination of the culture and spectacle of flight there before the First World War. This will involve an extended treatment of the place of aviation in English mass culture, including its differentiated appeal to both the upper classes and artists, but I will also concentrate on the aesthetic precedents and theories that might have influenced Wadsworth. I approach Vorticism, in Fredric Jameson’s words, by prioritising “the works themselves”, rather than the “verbal and rhetorical evocations” of Ezra Pound, or the “declarations of intent” of Lewis as to how the movement might be defined.<sup>8</sup> Doing so disrupts a previous reading of the painting, which claims the “absence of the pilot” figures the “Vorticist diagnosis of the reduction of the individual to an industrial helot, functioning—and hence understandable—only within the context of the mechanical world of modernity in which he or she subsists.”<sup>9</sup> Far from being helots, or slaves, pilots were feted well beyond the aerodrome, but, Wadsworth’s work cannot be divorced from Hendon and indeed probably portrays it.

## Wyndham Lewis versus F. T. Marinetti

“Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird” is one of a number of slogans in the months leading up to and including the publication of *Blast* through which Lewis rails against Italian Futurism’s celebration of the machine. In *Blast* he writes “AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism) 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. Motorcars go quickly.”<sup>10</sup> In “The Melodrama of Modernity”, he exhorts: “Cannot Marinetti, sensible and energetic man that he is, be induced to throw over this sentimental rubbish about Automobiles and Aeroplanes?”<sup>11</sup> As part of the Manifesto, he denounces “The Latins” for “their Futuristic gush over machines, aeroplanes, etc.” and repeats the charge in “Automobilism”, a piece not included in *Blast*: “The extraordinary childishness of the Latins over mechanical inventions, aeroplanes, machinery, etc., is familiar to anyone who has lived in France or Italy.”<sup>12</sup>

The catalogue essay “The Cubist Room” suggests that Lewis was working with some knowledge of Marinetti’s “Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine”. The artists exhibiting would certainly have had a chance to hear his ideas first-hand—Lewis and Nevinson had organized a dinner in his honour that November, Wadsworth had attended—and the essay does seem to respond implicitly to Marinetti’s evolutionary claims. Instead of Marinetti’s radical and avowedly Lamarckian reimagining of the body, Lewis offers a continuity: “Beneath the Past and the Future the most sanguine would hardly expect a more different skeleton to exist than that respectively of ape and man.”<sup>13</sup> But, he continues: “All revolutionary painting to-day has in

common the rigid reflections of steel and stone in the spirit of the artist; that desire for stability as though a machine were being built to fly or kill with.”<sup>14</sup> Not only does Lewis reject the radical reimagining of the body, he rejects, too, Futurism’s euphoria of movement, replacing it with rigidity and stability, and he does so by recourse to the aeroplane. Resolutely of the present, Lewis’s proto-Vorticist aesthetics disdain the euphoric flying experience of Marinetti’s epistemological break and privilege cool, rational construction, the machine as a rigid framework rather than a guide.

Such statements have become key planks in formulating the differences between Futurism and Vorticism. Hal Foster, for example, contrasts Marinetti’s work “to explode the old bourgeois idea of a nontechnological subject” with Lewis’s imagining of “a new ego that can withstand the shocks of the military-industrial, the modern-urban, and the mass-political, indeed, that can forge these stimuli into a new protective shield, convert them into a new hardened subject able to *thrive* on such shocks.”<sup>15</sup> Foster then deduces that “a basic difference between the two movements as a whole [is that] in images and forms, futurist art favors the explosive, while vorticist art focuses on the fixed.”<sup>16</sup> David Wragg writes that “Lewis’s most direct negation of Futurist enthusiasm for mass modernity occurs in his ‘history-painting’ *The Crowd*.”<sup>17</sup> Giovanni Cianci uses this work to establish the difference between Vorticism and Futurism: “We know also of the non-emphatic, detached, critical attitude towards the city, as revealed, for instance, in the famous, most un-Marinettian painting *The Crowd*.”<sup>18</sup> But such attitudes hardly seem adequate to account for Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight*.

Here, I want to claim that another view of the aeroplane offers an alternative to the binary oppositions of Futurist intoxication and dreams of the body as metalized flesh versus Vorticist cool detachment and deadening in which the machine figures as a structuring principle rather than a subject. The aeroplane was many things in 1914: an engineering marvel, signifying the conquest of nature, a technology that seemed to render national borders useless, an emergent, rather than a developed, military force, but above all it was a spectacle, “one of the era’s defining forms of spectacle”, according to Jeffrey Schnapp.<sup>19</sup> Most people’s experience of aircraft came not from being in them, but in watching them from the ground, often at meetings and increasingly, as was the case in London, at dedicated aerodromes. Moreover, aviation was one of the major topics for the illustrated press. Pilots enjoyed a level of celebrity as a result.

## **The Spectacle of Flight in London**

The London Aerodrome, Hendon, had been established in 1911 by pioneering British aviator Claude Grahame-White, one of the pilots the Vorticists Blessed. At that point, British aviation was noticeably lagging behind both the United States and parts of continental Europe, especially France. When Lewis dubbed the country an “Industrial Island machine, pyramidal workshop” in *Blast*, it was significant that he did so in a part of the Manifesto devoted to ships and shipping, where Britain was still, or at least perceived itself to be, preeminent.<sup>20</sup> In July 1909 it had been the Frenchman Louis Blériot who had first flown across the Channel, claiming in the process a £1,000 prize from Lord Northcliffe, the proprietor of the *Daily Mail*. In the same month, A. V. Roe had become the first British pilot to fly an all-British plane; its flight lasted for under three hundred metres. It is with a hint of envy that Lewis follows up his comments on the “childishness” of “the Latins” by claiming that: “The French Press gushes sentimentally every day about their ‘*hommes-oiseaux*,’ the ‘*oiseaux de France*.’ ‘*La France a des ailes*!’ you hear in a climax of idiotic sentiment.”<sup>21</sup> “Idiotic sentiment” was a crude way to brush off French superiority, and it is no coincidence that many of the terms we still use to describe parts of an

aircraft, such as fuselage, or ailerons, are French. By 1914, Britain had gone some way to closing this skills gap, largely as a result of activities at Hendon. Six miles from central London, the site was always intended to be an entertainment venue and in addition to the seventeen hangars that were initially built, it opened with grandstands and refreshment rooms to service the paying public.<sup>22</sup> Gate receipts for the first year were £11,000.<sup>23</sup> Grahame-White capitalized on these promising beginnings. In mid-1912 the number of hangars had grown to thirty and by 1913 eight flying schools were based there, training new pilots and providing secure employment for existing ones, albeit that most of the machines they were flying were still French.<sup>24</sup> But Hendon really came alive at the weekends. Over the Easter weekend of 1914, at about the same time that the Vorticists were compiling the lists of people to Blast and Bless, an estimated 120,000 people attended the venue, testifying to its mass appeal.<sup>25</sup> Ticket prices started at a very affordable sixpence for ground admission, but the venture was always associated with the fashionability of a modern sporting venue. That May, *The Play Pictorial* described the London Aerodrome as a “social rendezvous” and compared it to the exclusive Hurlingham polo and croquet club.<sup>26</sup> *Flight* magazine described it as a “veritable ‘Ascot’ in London”, referencing the racecourse that held a royal meeting every summer. It continued:

*A splendid health giving—interesting—pleasurable worry-forgetting rendezvous, with everything that can possibly be thought of for the comfort of visitors. Splendid and comfortable tea pavilions—little red and white garden tents scattered about, each with its wooden floor, and its dainty tea service prettily and invitingly set out. Plenty of walking-space, thousands of comfortable chairs, and plenty of fine flying. Music, fashion, sport, interest, comfort, fresh air, what more can one want? Truly, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, Hendon is a sight for the gods.*<sup>27</sup>

The crowds came to watch races and the latest in trick flying. Of the other pilots Blessed (fig. 2), B. C. Hucks became the first Englishman to fly upside down and to loop the loop, and in April 1914 flew across the Channel with a cameraman recording the progress of the royal yacht below as the king and queen sailed to France to mark the tenth anniversary of the Entente Cordiale. He then returned to Hendon with the film, allowing it to be processed in time to be watched at the London Coliseum music hall that same evening, where Hucks himself took to the stage to the acclaim of the audience.<sup>28</sup>

BLESS			
Bridget	Berrwolf	Bearline	Cranmer Byng
Frieder Graham	The Pope	Maria de Tomaso	
Captain Kemp	Munroe	Gaby Jenkins	
R. B. Cunningham Grahame		Barker	
(not his brother)		(John and Granville)	
Mrs. Wil Finimore	Madame Strindberg	Garson	
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	Sievler	Gertie Millar	
Norman Wallis	Miss Fowler	Sir Joseph Lyons	
Martin Wolff	Watt	Mrs. Hepburn	
Alfred Tommy	Captain Kendell	Young Ahearn	
Wilfred Walter	Kate Lechmere	Henry Newbolt	
Lady Aberconway	Frank Harris	Hamel	
Gilbert Canaan	Sir James Mathew Barry		
Mrs. Belloc Lowndes	W. L. George	Rayner	
George Robey	George Mozart	Harry Weldon	
Challapine	George Hirst	Graham White	
Hucks	Salmes	Shirley Kellogg	Bandsman Rice
Petty Officer Curran	Applegarth	Konody	
Colin Bell	Lewis Hind	LEFRANC	
Hubert		Commercial Process Co.	

Figure 2

'Manifesto', *Blast* 1, (London: John Lane, 1914), 28, including pilots B. C. Hucks, Henri Salmes, Claude Grahame-White, and Gustav Hamel. Collection of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust. Digital image courtesy of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust.

Looping the loop was all the rage at Hendon in 1914. At the Easter meeting *Flight* magazine described how it was "of course, the principal feature, but whereas at previous looping demonstrations the air was cleared of all aeroplanes whilst looping was in progress, this time the other machines not only went up as usual, but on one occasion four machines looped at one and the same time".<sup>29</sup> Henri Salmes was the Chief Flying Instructor at the Blériot Flying School at Hendon, Blériot having also contributed some of the initial capital for the London Aerodrome. Salmes held the British altitude record (an important one in the early years of flight) and had toured the country under the auspices of the *Daily Mail*. Gustav Hamel was the son of a surgeon and a naturalized Englishman. Described as "the most popular airman after Grahame-White", Hamel held the record for the number of cross-Channel flights.<sup>30</sup> He became the pilot of the first airmail delivery when he carried letters from Hendon to nearby Windsor in 1911, a landmark that was covered by the newsreels, which featured him

prominently (fig. 3). But he owed his real popularity to perfecting the tricks that Hucks had imported. In February 1914 he looped the loop over Windsor Castle at the request of the king. At the Easter meeting he performed twenty-two successive loops. As the *New Zealand Herald* wrote, "A more consummate master of trick-flying never lived. . . . He acquired every trick and performed each with consummate mastery, a sureness and deftness of touch which no other pilot has ever equalled. Scores of them have looped the loop and flown upside down, but not one of them ever had the Hamel touch or his genius."<sup>31</sup> This piece, written by the *Daily Telegraph*'s aeronautical correspondent, served as Hamel's obituary, as he had disappeared on a flight over the Channel on 23 May 1914, his body never recovered. The saga was extensively covered in the press, but in all likelihood it took place too late to influence his inclusion in *Blast*. Nevertheless, as Barbara Wadsworth writes that "juxtaposition was important" in compiling the lists of Blasted and Blessed, it is possible that the placement of the names of the aviators plays on their profession, with Hucks and Salmes side-by-side on the ground on the left, Grahame-White just above them, and Hamel soaring aloft on the right.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 3

Hendon—First Aerial Post. Mr Hamel leaves Hendon with his letter bags, 1911. Film courtesy of British Pathé.

## Hendon's Aristocratic and Painterly Appeal

It seems reasonable to assume, given the inclusion of the famed pilots, that at least some, if not all, of the Vorticists were among the hundreds of thousands who acquired what the venture's publicity referred to as the "Hendon habit". Certainly a number of their associates did. The Countess of Drogheda visited Hendon in January 1914 at the same time that Lewis was completing the décor for the dining room in her London townhouse.<sup>33</sup> A newspaper account of her visit to Hendon makes plain that it had become a destination not only for the masses, but for the highest echelons of contemporary society:

*It has now become the fashion for society ladies to accompany aviators on flights at Hendon each Sunday afternoon. The Arctic conditions which prevailed at the London Aerodrome yesterday did not deter many members of both sexes from paying for the privilege of making flights, and Mr. Grahame White took up in turn, on a Maurice Farman biplane, Lady Drogheda, Lady Eileen Vivian, and Lady Eileen Knox.<sup>34</sup>*

One of the ways in which high society could distinguish itself from those paying sixpence for entrance to Hendon's grounds was to take a flight with a noted pilot, thereby consolidating celebrity, novelty, and a demonstration of financial means. Prices for these flights started at two guineas; "notoriously", as Lawrence Rainey observes, "the guinea was a monetary unit of social nuances, used until 1971 in place of the mundane pound to state professional fees, rents for better premises, and similarly impressive purposes."<sup>35</sup> Two guineas for a flight was eighty-four times as much as the cheapest ticket Hendon had to offer. But those at the very top of the social ladder might find their charges waived altogether. There was considerable merriment in the general press when Grahame-White was duped into giving free flights to the aristocratic-sounding (but non-existent) "Crown Prince of Wurtemberg" and his secretary "Lord Stanton Hope". At least



one newspaper speculated that the prankster was Horace de Vere Cole, who had earlier perpetrated the Dreadnought Hoax with Virginia Woolf.<sup>36</sup>

Going up in a plane could also mean acquiring significant cultural capital, particularly important not just for the wealthy, but also anybody whose artistic relevance depended on their being up to date. The masses stood on the ground and watched, but the elite flew. Pierpaolo Antonello expands on this distinction: “the experience of flight had a divine connotation because it was a new form of aristocratic experience, which was also one of the reasons for its poetic and artistic appeal. It is a symbolic and actual form of elevation. The mechanical vehicle is a motif which re-inserts a form of symbolic hierarchization within the increasing level of social indifferentiation of mass society.”<sup>37</sup> Marinetti had first flown at a meeting in Brescia in 1909, but his brief experience had been rather eclipsed by Gabriele D’Annunzio’s eight-minute flight with the famous American pilot Glenn Curtiss.<sup>38</sup> Part of the purpose of the opening of “The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” was to document the flight “two hundred meters above the mighty chimney stacks of Milan” that Marinetti had taken the following year with Giovanni Bielovucic, which firmly established him as part of this aristocracy of flight.<sup>39</sup>

One painter who certainly took a flight was the Camden Town Group’s Spencer Gore. He visited Hendon in the weeks immediately following the opening of the nightclub The Cave of the Golden Calf, for which he and Lewis, amongst others, had collaborated to produce the interiors. The pair were old friends, having been contemporaries at the Slade School of Fine Art at the turn of the century, after which they travelled to Spain together. Gore was also the guiding spirit behind the exhibition at Brighton for which Lewis wrote the “The Cubist Room” essay. As his son, Frederick Gore, and art historian Richard Shone recount:

*Gore and a number of other painters attended the Hendon Flying Meeting of probably 6th July 1912. The Gores made up a party with Albert Rutherston and a lady friend and, since they had to meet together at dawn for the trip, they dined and stayed the night at L’Etoile, the restaurant in Charlotte Street. They all went up in a Bleriot monoplane. Mrs Gore related that [Harold] Gilman, who was also there, had been driving his friends mad with his obsession that they should emigrate to the South Seas (financed by Arthur Clifton). When he went up in a German pilot’s plane and came down with a frightful bump, they all cheered.*<sup>40</sup>

It would be fascinating to learn if there were other painters there in addition to Gore, Rutherston and Gilman, but Gore did leave a tangible record of the day, his *Flying at Hendon* of 1912 (fig. 4). In the peculiarly static picture two figures engage in conversation before a monoplane, which is the object of some curiosity on the part of a few onlookers. Further down the slope is the judges’ tower at the airfield, while a biplane arcs away from the landing area at the top right. As Simon Watney has written of this work, Gore, unlike the Vorticists, “showed no interest in an ideology of modernity for its own sake. . . . His airmen are wealthy amateurs at their chosen pastime, and as such may be related to the conventional genre of Sporting Art rather than to a fiery intoxication with machine technology per se.”<sup>41</sup>

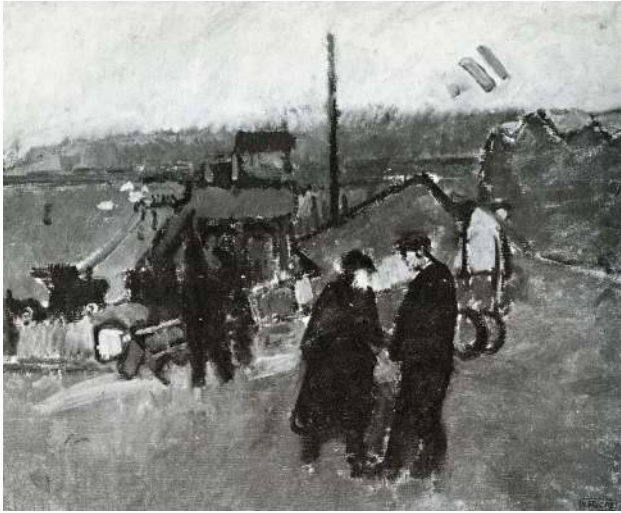


Figure 4

Spencer Gore, *Flying at Hendon*, 1912, oil on canvas, 50 × 60 cm. Location unknown.

### ***A Short Flight* Reconsidered**

These many links to Hendon amongst the Vorticists and their extended milieu invite a rereading of *A Short Flight*. Possibly painted as a riposte to Gore's work, the most powerful analysis of the work, one to which I have previously subscribed, has been produced by David Peters Corbett.<sup>42</sup> In Corbett's reading, *A Short Flight* depicted the individual reduced to a slave, making the painting an exemplary product of a technologically sceptical Vorticism defining itself in opposition to Futurism's technophilia, a distinction sanctioned by Lewis's writing in *Blast* and echoed in much of the secondary literature, as discussed above. Although I will challenge some of his conclusions, Corbett's account of attempting to read the painting is so useful that I reproduce his argument in full:

*In the surviving photograph, at least, the surface of the painting seems divided into an irregular pattern, describing smoothly inhuman shapes with little sense of either mimesis or figure on ground. Clearly visible are simplified versions of mechanical forms reminiscent of compass, T-Square, and ruler, as well as, more faintly, industrial forms and objects. But there seems nothing precise enough to identify with any certainty.*

*When we look more closely at the image, however, we begin to see that it is not without representational elements and that, like many Vorticist works, *A Short Flight* adopts a bird's-eye perspective, straight down onto the object beneath, so that the subject matter of the image becomes a schematic plan or map of itself. In this case, the view is down from the airborne plane onto the angular shapes of fields most clearly visible at top and top right. In the center of the painting, the flight, described by both mechanical forms and by the arrowhead shape of the prow, forces its way across the landscape below. There is no sign of a pilot unless we read the T-square shape as a sitting figure. That absence points toward a central plank of Vorticism's understanding of modern experience. *A Short Flight* presents a summary of the Vorticists' preoccupations with the industrialization of the 'island' and of the place of the individual subject within it. The absence of the pilot figures the Vorticist diagnosis of the reduction of the individual to an industrial helot, functioning—and hence*

*understandable—only within the context of the mechanical world of modernity in which he or she subsists.*<sup>43</sup>

There is no doubt that *A Short Flight* is a recalcitrant painting, resistant to attempts to reconcile its many elements. In his review of the work when it was shown at the Allied Artists', fellow Vorticist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska thought it "a composition of cool tones marvellously embodied in revolving surfaces and masses", perhaps indicating that Wadsworth's use of colour helped those who saw the painting exhibited to decipher it, although Gaudier's brief comment hardly establishes this with any certainty.<sup>44</sup>

Corbett's closing thought—that the individual is reduced to a helot within the mechanical world of modernity—recalls the lines immediately following "Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird" in Lewis's "The Cubist Room": "But a man who passes his days within the rigid lines of houses, a plague of cheap ornamentation, noisy street locomotion, the Bedlam of the press, will evidently possess a different habit of vision to a man living amongst the lines of a landscape."<sup>45</sup> This is a rather more neutral, matter-of-fact statement than a claim that the individual is reduced to a serf governed by the mechanical as a result; indeed Lewis is using it as a justification for the semi-abstract paintings he and his confrères (Wadsworth included) were producing, where there is a "realisation of the value of colour and form as such independently of what recognisable form it covers or encloses".<sup>46</sup> The placement of the photograph of *A Short Flight* only a few pages from the Blessing of Hucks, Salmét, Grahame-White, and Hamel, along with *Blast*'s claim that "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", should makes us question the diagnosis of the individual as impoverished by mechanization.<sup>47</sup> *Blast* goes on to claim that "Machinery is the greatest Earth-medium: incidentally it sweeps away the doctrines of a narrow and pedantic Realism at one stroke."<sup>48</sup> Modern, urban life and machinery provides subjects for the artists, removing the need for accurate representational painting and opening up the vistas of the abstract, an invitation, as Lewis put it in "The Cubist Room", to people "to change entirely their idea of the painter's mission, and penetrate, deferentially, with him into a transposed universe as abstract as, though different from, the musicians [*sic*]."<sup>49</sup>

This is not to say that all that has been written about Vorticist scepticism over the beneficial effects of modernity is wrong, that Lewis's *The Crowd* is not opposed to Marinetti's ideas, but it is to suggest that *A Short Flight* is more celebratory than Corbett allows, which is in line with Wadsworth in particular. Jonathan Black describes his works at this point as "less robust than those of Lewis yet more elegantly decorative, lighter in colour and more multi-layered, with a greater variety of perspectival viewpoints and spatial levels suggested by the designs. . . . Lewis's designs are somehow predicated on the sapping of energy and destruction while Wadsworth's vision is rather more benign and optimistic."<sup>50</sup> For Black, "The metallic flanks of Lewis's designs were impressive but also rather repellent and sinister whereas Wadsworth conjured a future machine whose sides one wanted to stroke while listening to the reassuring constant hum of energy within."<sup>51</sup> Nowhere would that hum be more reassuring than whilst suspended in the air, exposed to the elements in the centre of a wooden and canvas framework.

## **Flight as a Theme for Robert Delaunay**

There were precedents for Wadsworth's treatment of this subject matter: although formally different to Vorticist work, Robert Delaunay had produced several notable paintings featuring

aeroplanes. His submission to the 1914 Salon des Indépendants was unambiguously laudatory, titled as it was *L'Hommage à Blériot* (fig. 5). Robert Wohl records that the Delaunays had paid close attention to Blériot's pioneering cross-Channel flight in 1909, and had been on the streets to welcome him home, Robert also writing him a letter of congratulation.<sup>52</sup> Here too, the pilot himself is not represented, but Delaunay wrote a dedication across the bottom of the painting "to the great builder Blériot", a factor Wohl believes invites the viewer to celebrate Blériot as "the inventive industrialist, symbol of collective human effort, who through his ingenuity made it possible for other men to fly" (in addition to his flying schools mentioned above, Blériot was a successful manufacturer of aeroplanes, as I discuss below).<sup>53</sup>



Figure 5  
Robert Delaunay, *Homage to Blériot*, 1914, tempera on canvas, 250 x 251 cm. Collection of Kunstmuseum, Basel. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images.



Figure 6  
Robert Delaunay, *The Cardiff Team (Third Representation)*, 1912-13, oil on canvas, 32.6 x 20.8 cm. Collection of Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images.

It is uncertain how aware the proto-Vorticists were of this latest work by Delaunay. One of their number, Frederick Etchells, was in Paris over the spring and so almost certainly would have seen the work in person and, at two-and-a-half metres square, the painting was difficult to miss. But there was no doubt that they were familiar with another of Delaunay's works. The upper right portion of *L'Hommage à Blériot* shows an aeroplane flying over the Eiffel Tower. As Wohl identifies this as a Voisin biplane, it has little to do with Blériot, who flew and manufactured monoplanes, and everything to do with Delaunay's entry to the Indépendants of the previous year, *The Cardiff Team (Third Representation)*, a painting praised by Guillaume Apollinaire as "the most modern picture in the Salon" (fig. 6).<sup>54</sup> Above the heads of the rugby players, a biplane flies next to a schematic representation of the Eiffel Tower. The work contains a further reference to aircraft, as the bright yellow poster advertises Astra, the company which held the French licence to manufacture Wright flyers.<sup>55</sup>



Even if the English artists had not seen the version of *The Cardiff Team* at the Indépendants, or in reproduction, Delaunay had produced a sketchier “first representation” of the work (fig. 7) that already has all of these compositional elements and was shown at his one-man show in Berlin at the start of 1913. In October that year, Frank Rutter selected it for his *Post-Impressionist and Futurist* exhibition at the Doré Galleries. Although smaller than the Indépendants version, this painting was still nearly two metres tall and captured the attention of the London critics. *The Daily Sketch* called it “a cheery monstrosity, suggesting that a colour-blind bill sticker who was sent out on a half-acre job with posters advertising Blackpool for health, an assorted selection of brands of cocoa, and a flying race at Hendon, had got the sections mixed up in his bag and then put them on in the dark. A nice picture, but you probably couldn’t get a single housemaid who would be left alone in the house with it.”<sup>56</sup> Lewis and Wadsworth would definitely have seen this work, as both were also exhibiting alongside Delaunay. Had they asked for Marinetti’s opinion of it they would no doubt have received short shrift, for Delaunay was involved in a fierce argument with the Futurists over primacy, and the exhibition of the definitive version at the Indépendants had so angered Umberto Boccioni that he wrote an essay in response titled “The Futurists Plagiarized in France”.<sup>57</sup> If Delaunay’s work had antagonized the Italians to such an extent that they felt plagiarized, then a further painting, one that offered a visual equivalent to the experience of flight, was bound to antagonize them still further, especially given the absence of Futurist artistic work that explicitly depicted the aeroplane.



Figure 7

Robert Delaunay, *The Cardiff Team (First Representation)*, 1912–13, oil on canvas, 195 × 130 cm. Collection of Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images.

If anything, Futurism seemed to be moving further away from technological themes. In April 1914, the same month that well over 100,000 people attended Hendon, the Futurists returned to London with a group exhibition at the Doré Galleries. Even at this stage there were no works dealing with aviation and precious few that had explicitly mechanical titles. Giacomo Balla showed *Dynamic Decomposition of a Motor in Rapid Movement* and Luigi Russolo his *Dynamism of an Automobile*. But these were far outweighed by the number of pictures by Gino Severini on dance, Carlo Carrà’s works on the female body and the still lifes of more recent recruit Ardengo Soffici. Lewis saw this as an acknowledgement that machinic fascinations were a dead end. After their abandonment, most of the Futurists “seem to have become quite conventional and dull Cubists, with nothing left of their still duller Automobilism but letters and bits of newspaper stuck all over the place”.<sup>58</sup> Wadsworth, on the other hand, seems to have taken a different view. The Futurist exhibition almost certainly coincided with the period when

*A Short Flight* was produced, and he perhaps sensed an opportunity now that the Futurists had apparently given up technological themes. In other words, where Lewis claimed to be bored by Marinetti’s technological enthusiasms and saw in the painters’ desertion of mechanical subjects a

confirmation that their novelty had worn off, Wadsworth instead saw the gap between Marinetti's rhetoric and the production of the painters as an opportunity to trump the Italians in the field of representations of machinery. For Paige Reynolds, "The Vorticists had mastered the art publicity tactics of Marinetti and used them to distinguish themselves from Futurism and assert that a new English brand of the avant-garde had replaced the original, imported product."<sup>59</sup> *A Short Flight* might well have been produced as part of that campaign. Moreover, in terms of spectacle—if not technology—Hendon was in a position to rival, if not displace, anything in mainland Europe as a centre for aviation. In contrast to Reynolds, Lawrence Rainey, referring to the "imitative gesture of *Blast*", concludes that this attempt simultaneously to distinguish themselves from the Futurists and to fight them on their own terms was doomed to failure, but *A Short Flight* belongs to the period when this seemed to be the most urgent task of the proto-Vorticists.<sup>60</sup>

### **Hendon as the Subject of *A Short Flight***

Taken together, *Blast*'s blessing of pilots, its comments on machinery as an inspiration for the painter, Wadsworth's "benign and optimistic" designs, and the precedent of a major continental, non-Futurist artist producing a stream of works featuring aviation as a subject, means that *A Short Flight* can be viewed as hailing the modern, urban, and commercial spectacle of flight as entertainment, rather than dealing with the deleterious consequences of mechanization. But I want to go further than this and suggest that the painting is actually a depiction of Hendon. Corbett's description of the painting does a lot of work in identifying its objects. The wings of the plane run from lower left to centre right of the work, with the fuselage running perpendicular to this towards the bottom right of the canvas. It is indeed a bird's-eye perspective, and I agree with his reading of many of the geometric forms towards the top of the work as fields. There are, however, other forms that are more difficult to be certain about. It is unlikely that Wadsworth worked from aerial photographs "regularly illustrated in specialist journals like *Flight*", as Richard Cork suggests.<sup>61</sup> There were, in fact, few such photographs in *Flight* during the first half of 1914 and the only contemporary aerial photograph of part of the aerodrome I have found comes in Hamel's posthumously published book, *Flying* (fig. 8). But an aerial photograph of the site from 1919 (fig. 9) shows features that are possibly recognizable in Wadsworth's painting. For example, three large, dark buildings roughly correspond to three dark masses that arrange themselves around the semi-circular form in the painting's centre, with two grouped together and the third a short distance away. If Wadsworth was sketching at ground level, then some discrepancies in placement become easily explicable. The concertinaed form at centre left (which itself resembles a paper aeroplane) could represent in short perspective the serried rows of workshops and hangars that make up the majority of the buildings in both photographs. Certainly this mixture of fields and buildings seems more likely to describe the suburban jumble of the airfield than a location in the country. The grandstands and refreshment rooms are all missing in the later photograph of course, victims of the site's co-option for military purposes during the First World War. The races at Hendon before that had involved the pilots negotiating a series of pylons on the ground (fig. 10). Viewed from above these might account for some more of the clutter, possibly including the small incomplete circle at top right.

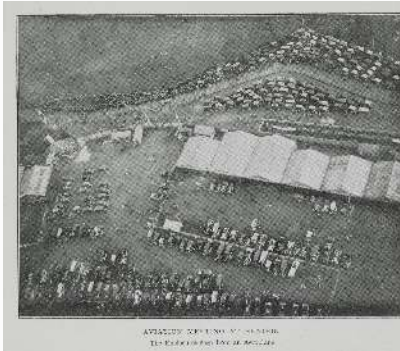


Figure 8  
Gustav Hamel and Charles,  
*Aviation Meeting at Hendon*, circa  
1914, photograph in *Flying* by  
Gustav Hamel and Charles C.  
Turner (London: Longmans,  
1914).

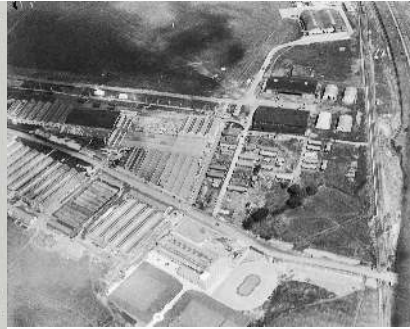


Figure 9  
*Aerodrome and Works, Hendon*,  
26 July 1919. Digital image  
courtesy of Historic England.



Figure 10  
Clive R. Smith, *A race at Hendon*  
showing a pylon surmounted by a  
ball, indicating that the race is in  
progress, circa 1912, photograph  
in *Flying at Hendon: A Pictorial  
Record* by Clive R. Smith  
(London: Routledge & Kegan  
Paul, 1974).

Returning to the aircraft itself, it is evidently a monoplane. Corbett refers to its prow, by which I assume he means the triangular shapes that jut out from the forms of the wings. No planes at this time had a pointed front, but monoplanes, including the Blériot and Morane-Saulnier machines that Hamel flew (fig. 11), had a metal superstructure known as a *cabane* above the pilot's head that held tensed wires that radiated out to the wings to brace them. Allowing for the multiple perspectival views mentioned by Black, this is the most plausible explanation for this form, since a viewpoint above and behind the plane made the *cabane* appear to project out in front of the aircraft. Hamel's plane for his royal performance also had discs painted on its wings (fig. 12) and this could account for some of the proliferation of circular forms, as could the appearance of these forms in Delaunay's *L'Hommage à Blériot*. Multiple perspectives could also explain the large, pale semi-circle that dominates the centre of the work. This is evidently shaded and suggests the whirring form of the propeller. Andrew Wilson has written of *A Short Flight's* "external/ internal viewpoint" and this raises the possibility that the pilot is not absent, but that the viewer is asked to assume that role, seeing the ground through the blurred form of the propeller, or seeing the first plane through the propeller of a second from which it is painted.<sup>62</sup> Either reading would not reject Futurism so much as fulfil one of its most celebrated statements, to "make the spectator live in the centre of the picture", putting them in the position of pilot or passenger.<sup>63</sup> A further possibility, not incompatible if we accept multiple viewpoints, is suggested by the two near circles appearing near the fuselage, the lower one cut off by the bottom of the canvas and the other just to the right of the fuselage and touching the wing. Joined by a line, this resembles nothing so much as the undercarriage of the plane, raising the possibility that the absence of the pilot reflects not so much the individual's reduction to an industrial helot, but rather the popularity of upside-down flying at Hendon, and that what we are looking at is actually the bottom of the plane.

The implied presence of a second aircraft from which this view is painted was also a commonplace in commercial illustrations of flight at this point, both in London and in Europe. Cyrus Cuneo produced a poster for London Transport that used this device (fig. 13). Cuneo's picture, captioned "A Monoplane Passenger Flight at the London Aerodrome Hendon: An artist's impression as seen from a thousand feet high", sums up Hendon as a "modern rendezvous". The

pilot is hunched over the controls of his Blériot beneath the *cabane* with its network of tensed wires. On the ground below figures cluster around one of the racing pylons, more planes wait on the airfield, behind which are the crowds and a row of buildings with pitched roofs, and beyond them open fields. A female passenger, perhaps one of the society ladies who frequented Hendon, raises her handkerchief in acknowledgement of the artist. It might even be Miss Trehawke Davies, who had accompanied Hamel on one of his cross-Channel voyages and who, on 2 January 1914, became the first woman to loop the loop when she was Hamel's passenger at Hendon, earning a full-page photograph in *Flight*, which was accordingly compelled to reduce its usual heading "Men of Moment in the World of Flight" by dropping the first word.<sup>64</sup>



Figure 11

*Gustav Hamel at Radnorshire, Knighton, with a monoplane showing the cabane holding tensed wires above the cockpit, 29 August 1913. Digital image courtesy of oldukphotos.com.*

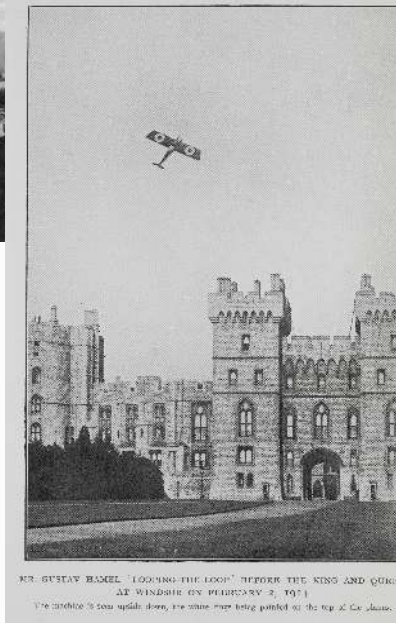


Figure 12

*Gustav Hamel Looping the Loop at Windsor, 2 February 1914, with white rings painted on the tops of the wings, photograph in *Flying* by Gustav Hamel and Charles C. Turner (London: Longmans, 1914).*



Figure 13

*Cyrus Cuneo, *Flying at Hendon*, Poster for London Transport, 1914, colour lithograph, 102 × 64 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images.*

As Trehawke Davies's experience demonstrates, flying at Hendon was spectacular, up to date, and daring, but it was actually, by the standards of the day, reasonably safe. It had to be in order to take up fee-paying members of the public, let alone loop the loop with them, especially in an era without parachutes. An article in *Flight* at the end of January 1914 records the death of pilot George Lee Temple, but points out that this was the first fatality at the weekend meetings and only the third since the airfield had opened, remarkable considering the number of novice pilots being trained at the flying schools.<sup>65</sup> There was no doubt that the possibility of a crash added a frisson to watching aeroplanes. Five of the six colour illustrations Cuneo produced for Grahame-White's book *With the Airmen* dealt with non-fatal crashes and their aftermath, with captions such as "A portion of the wall broke away, and all the lower part of the monoplane was crumpled up."<sup>66</sup> But the overwhelming proportion of deaths amongst airmen came not at venues like Hendon, where flights were short, the weather could be assessed from the ground, and there were



ample suitable places to land if a pilot got into difficulties. Rather, as in the case of Hamel's disappearance, they came on longer flights when the weather could close in, affecting either the machines, or the pilot's ability to see the ground and navigate. Although hardly a neutral view, Grahame-White's opinion was that "If a thoroughly competent man flies in suitable weather conditions, and on a perfectly reliable machine, he is certainly in no more danger than if he were steering a motor-car along a road."<sup>67</sup> Catastrophic machine failure or pilot error could not be ruled out, but the reasonably good safety record at Hendon means that if it is the setting for Wadsworth's *A Short Flight*, we should resist the temptation to connect the work either to the high number of fatalities amongst aviation's earliest pioneers a decade or so beforehand, or to the still greater numbers of pilots killed in the First World War. Flying at Hendon was, for the most part, thrilling rather than dangerous.

My final reason for believing that *A Short Flight* is a painting of Hendon is based on its title, which I suspect is connected to the passenger flights at Hendon. Grahame-White presented these as altruistic learning opportunities, although "Seeing that the airman risks a very valuable machine every time he makes an ascent, it is natural that fairly high prices should be charged for these passenger flights. . . . People who are keen to find out by practical experience exactly what flying is like, do not make any demur about paying these prices. They recognize the heavy expenses to which the aviator is put."<sup>68</sup> An ultra-modern administrative system governed the booking of tickets:

*At Hendon, for example, we have a telephone on the flying ground which is connected directly with the offices of some well-known booking agents in the West-end of London. When anyone wants to enjoy the thrill of an aerial voyage, they ring up on the telephone, and book a flight for any specified hour on any given day. Then, when the day comes round, they make a telephone inquiry to find out if the weather is favourable and—if it is—come down, without any waiting about, to enjoy their flight.*<sup>69</sup>

"When the weather is fine, indeed", Grahame-White concluded, "we are often busy at Hendon carrying passengers all day long. When the conditions have been particularly good, we have taken up as many as two hundred people in one week."<sup>70</sup>

In fact, as this sophisticated system indicates, passenger flights were lucrative business. A complicated pricing structure developed, in which two guineas bought a couple of circuits of the aerodrome, and three guineas bought two higher and wider circuits. A double flight was four standard circuits and cost four guineas and a "Special Flight", "Outside the aerodrome, in the direction of Edgware, returning towards the Welsh Harp [a local reservoir]", was five guineas. Flying in a monoplane, rather than a biplane, started at three guineas. As, according to Grahame-White himself, the cost of buying a new monoplane was less than the cost of buying a new biplane, the attempt that he makes to link this pricing structure to the replacement value of an aeroplane is spurious.<sup>71</sup> Cross-country flights, starting at ten guineas for the sixteen miles to Elstree and back and rising to £26 5s. for a thirty-eight-mile return trip to the motor-racing circuit and occasional flying venue of Brooklands, could also be booked, along with a fifteen-shilling-per-mile charge for bespoke trips, rising to twenty shillings per mile if the passenger did not want to return to Hendon.

What is being sold here, on a sliding scale, is the experience of flight. As discussed above, this was expensive, even if only a short flight was purchased. In an earlier book Grahame-White had described how the first passengers in aeroplanes had been unable to conjure up anything verbally adequate to summarize their experience, having been reduced to uttering "it was great", "it's absolutely ripping", and, most reductively, "You just fly."<sup>72</sup> It would be naive to believe that this

experience equated to pure affect, and, by the same token, it would also be naive not to recognize that such an experience could be exploited in commercial terms, with the consequence that such an experience was also subject to a law of diminishing returns as flight became, if only fractionally, more ordinary. The multiple price points and differing lengths of flight reflect a commodification of flight, of affect, that was bound to end even without the War.<sup>73</sup> Although leaving the ground was still the crucial moment in the social hierarchy, there were obviously ways in which it was not enough for some, who wanted to pay more to fly for longer or further. Marinetti himself falls into this category, with his initial short flight at Brescia in 1909 all but superseded by his flight over Milan with Bielovucic the following year.

There is a perception that Wadsworth was affluent by this point. Brigid Peppin, for example, writes that “Unlike many of the Vorticists, Wadsworth was financially well off.”<sup>74</sup> This certainly was the case later on, when Wadsworth received a very substantial inheritance that allowed him to indulge a taste for the most expensive and luxurious marques of car, but in 1914 he and his wife were still reliant on his parents’ allowance, which often, according to Barbara Wadsworth, required household economies in order to make it stretch to the end of the quarter.<sup>75</sup> Under such circumstances, if Wadsworth did purchase a flight, it was almost guaranteed to be a short one.<sup>76</sup> A two-guinea couple of laps of the aerodrome ride was priced as a “Passenger Flight”, but as all the options were passenger flights, this certainly gives a lot of scope for the word “passenger” to be replaced by the word “short”. It is clear that anyone picking up the telephone at Hendon and speaking to a booking agency and asking for a “passenger flight” would quickly have to find a way to differentiate what duration of flight they wanted. The phrase “a short flight” occurs only intermittently in *Flight*’s accounts of Hendon, which for the most part did not concern itself with the financial aspect of the venture, but it is easy to see how “a short flight” in more general usage might have taken on the connotation of any flight that confined itself to the aerodrome and was relatively brief.

## Conclusion

Hendon was at the centre of British aviation in the first half of 1914, and any painting displayed by a British artist in London at the end of that period would be bound to evoke the location in the mind of the viewer. It might be that Wadsworth himself had flown, although only circumstantial evidence suggests this. Other than the painting itself, there is Wadsworth’s later enthusiasm for top-of-the-range automobiles, and the inclusion of the names of four prominent aviators among the list of those Blessed in *Blast*. Whether or not Wadsworth or any of the other Vorticists had flown, these names would have been at least as familiar to readers of *Blast* as those drawn from music halls or sport. As Andrew Horrall has demonstrated, flight was very much part of the continuum of popular culture in London.<sup>77</sup>

An artistic fascination with flight was also associated with Italian Futurism, thanks mainly to Marinetti’s “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”. In order to do the necessary work of differentiating Futurism and Vorticism, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the English artists took time to produce a position from which to comment critically on the Italian movement. As Lisa Tickner has written, “local modernisms are different, despite their debts, because there are local inflections to the web of relations that makes up the cultural field.”<sup>78</sup>

There was a growing sense amongst the English artists that they were doing something different, although it is worth remembering that *A Short Flight* was not produced as an avowedly Vorticist work, for the simple reason that the term was only used for the first time on the very day that the painting went on display, when the Vorticists disrupted a lecture by Marinetti. But this route to

Vorticism was not a straight path and individual Vorticists did not march in union towards a common viewpoint.

Vorticism's particular web of relations included the example of Marinetti and the concomitant dual necessities of following his lead as an avant-garde impresario while differentiating Vorticism from the Italian movement. Partly this could be done by an insistence on British precedence and primacy in industrialization and technology. But such an argument miscarried when it came to aviation. Faced with this, Lewis dismissed the aeronautical fascination of Marinetti (and, at least by implication, Delaunay) as "childish", "sentimental rubbish", and "gush". This sits uneasily, however, with the Blessing of the four pilots, one of whom is French, and another German-born, flying mainly French machines at Hendon. To read *A Short Flight* in terms that deny its mass cultural and spectacular aspects is to impute Lewis's views to Wadsworth, when there is scant evidence that he shared them. Rather, a second way of countering Marinetti was to insist on the rapid development of aviation as a spectacle in Britain. This opens up a reading of *A Short Flight* as marking a form of peculiarly modern, fashionable, spectacular, and commodified entertainment taking place in London, as less about the technology of flight and more about its consumption, whether that took place by going up with a pilot, watching from the ground, or simply following the exploits of the aviators in the press. All of these ways of following flight made celebrities of its leading performers, rather than figuring them as slaves to the machine. Wadsworth's paean to flight in London might also be a calculated response to Futurism, an affirmation of London generally and Hendon in particular, as a site of cosmopolitan, technologically fixated spectacle on a grand scale."

## About the author

Bernard Vere is Programme Director of the MA in Fine and Decorative Art and Design at Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, where he teaches modern art. His book, *Sport and Modernism in the Visual Arts in Europe, c. 1909–1939*, will be published by Manchester University Press in 2018.

## Footnotes

1. F. T. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature", in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 119. An earlier version of this essay was presented as a paper at the *Historical Modernisms Symposium*, organized by Angeliki Spiropoulou at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, in December 2016. My thanks to those who listened and commented then.
2. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto", 119. The manifesto is brilliantly analysed by Jeffrey T. Schnapp in "Propeller Talk", *Modernism/modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 153–78.
3. F. T. Marinetti, "Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine", in F. T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 86 (perhaps still better known by the title of its earlier translation, "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine").
4. See Flavio Fergonzi and Lewis Kachur's entry for *Patriotic Festival* in *The Mattioli Collection: Masterpieces of the Italian Avant-Garde, A Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Fergonzi (Milan: Skira, 2003), 205–15 for the work; 208 for the date of its composition.

5. The work was included in the Allied Artists' Association exhibition, which opened on 12 June 1914. Wadsworth appended his name to the "Manifesto" in *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 43. The issue is dated 20 June, but appeared on 2 July 1914. See Mark S. Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 117.
6. Wyndham Lewis, "The Cubist Room", *The Egoist* 1 (1 Jan. 1914): 9.
7. Barbara Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth: A Painter's Life* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1989), 42.
8. Fredric Jameson, "Wyndham Lewis's *Timon*: The War of Forms", in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 15.
9. David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 237.
10. Wyndham Lewis, "Long Live the Vortex!", *Blast* 1, 8.
11. Wyndham Lewis, "The Melodrama of Modernity", *Blast* 1, 144.
12. Wyndham Lewis, "Manifesto", *Blast* 1, 41, and Wyndham Lewis, "Automobilism", reprinted in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914–1956*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), 33.
13. Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
14. Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
15. Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 115.
16. Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 131.
17. David Wragg, "Wyndham Lewis and the Visions of Modernity", in *The Great London Vortex: Modernist Literature and Art*, ed. Paul Edwards (Bath: Sulis Press, 2003), 159, note 90.
18. Giovanni Cianci, "The Centrality of the City", in *The Great London Vortex*, ed. Edwards, 18.
19. Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 157.
20. Wyndham Lewis, ed., *Blast* 1, 23–24.
21. Lewis, "Automobilism", 33.
22. Andrew Horrall, *Popular Culture in London, c. 1890–1918: The Transformation of Entertainment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 84.
23. Clive R. Smith, *Flying at Hendon: A Pictorial Record* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 5. Converting historic values into present-day equivalents is always difficult, but the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator makes £11,000 in 1914 worth £1,164,765.31 in 2016. See <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx>.
24. David Oliver, *Hendon Aerodrome: A History* (Shrewsbury: Airline, 1994), 18, 20.
25. "Easter Aviation at Hendon: Some Fine Flying", *Western Daily Press*, Tuesday 14 April 1914, 8. As I argue in my forthcoming "'BLAST SPORT'? Vorticism, Sport, and William Roberts's *Boxers*", *Modernism/modernity* 24, no. 2 (April 2017), based on the careers of the boxers who are Blessed, the meeting to determine which names to include in *Blast*'s lists is highly unlikely to have predated April 1914.
26. *The Play Pictorial*, May 1914, quoted in Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 2.
27. *Flight*, May 1914, quoted in Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 2.
28. Horrall, *Popular Culture in London*, 97.
29. "Flying at Hendon: The Seventh London Aviation Meeting", *Flight*, 18 April 1914, 411.
30. Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 10.

31. "Gustav Hamel's Career: A Wonderful Air Record, A Brilliant Pilot", *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1914, Supplement, 2.
32. Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 51.
33. For Lewis's work on the project, see Richard Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery in Early 20th Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 177–90, where he also speculates that Lewis might have had an affair with the Countess.
34. "Society Ladies and Aviation", *Birmingham Mail*, Monday 12 January 1914, 7.
35. Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 16.
36. "His Simple System: The Young Man Who Fools Society", *Western Mail*, 11 March 1914, 6.
37. Pierpaolo Antonello, "On an Airfield in Montichiari, near Brescia. Staging Rivalry Through Technology: Marinetti and d'Annunzio", *Stanford Humanities Review* 7, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 93.
38. Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 156.
39. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto", 107. See also Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 158.
40. Frederick Gore and Richard Shone, *Spencer Frederick Gore, 1878–1914*, exh. cat. (London: Anthony d'Offay, 1983), n.p. Rutherston, who at that time would have been known as Rothenstein, was a close friend of Wadsworth and also involved with The Cave of the Golden Calf. It is likely that the pilot referred to is Hamel, who was born in Germany.
41. Simon Watney, *English Post-Impressionism* (London: Studio Vista, 1980), 140.
42. For my use of Corbett's argument, see Bernard Vere, "Oversights in Overseeing Modernism: A Symptomatic Reading of Alfred H. Barr Jr's 'Cubism and Abstract Art' Chart", *Textual Practice* 24, no. 2 (2010): 273–74.
43. Corbett, *World in Paint*, 236–37.
44. Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, "Allied Artists' Association Ltd.", *The Egoist* 1 (15 June 1914): 228.
45. Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
46. Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
47. Lewis, "Manifesto", 33.
48. Lewis, "Manifesto", 39.
49. Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
50. Jonathan Black, *Edward Wadsworth: Form, Feeling and Calculation: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (London: Philip Wilson, 2005), 23.
51. Black, *Edward Wadsworth*, 23.
52. Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908–1918* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 193–94.
53. Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 194.
54. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Through the Salon des Independants", in *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902–1918*, ed. LeRoy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2001), 291.
55. Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 188.
56. "The Confetti School of Painting", *Daily Sketch*, 17 October 1913, 6, quoted in Anna Gruetzner Robins, *Modern Art in Britain, 1910–1914* (London: Merrell Holberton and Barbican Centre, 1997), 129.
57. Umberto Boccioni, "I futuristi plagiati in Francia", in *Archivi Del Futurismo*, ed. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, vol. 1 (Rome: Da Luca, 1958), 147–51.
58. Lewis, "Melodrama of Modernity", 144.

59. Paige Reynolds, “‘Chaos Invading Concept’: *Blast* as a Native Theory of Promotional Culture”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 244.
60. Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, 39.
61. Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery*, 196.
62. Andrew Wilson, “Rebels and Vorticists: ‘Our Little Gang’”, in *Blast: Vorticism, 1914–1918*, ed. Paul Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 37.
63. Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, “The Exhibitors to the Public”, in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 47. The essay was originally published in the catalogue that accompanied the Futurist exhibition in London of 1912.
64. “Of Moment in the World of Flight”, *Flight*, 10 January 1914, 29.
65. “Flying at Hendon”, *Flight*, 31 January 1914, 119.
66. Claude Grahame-White in collaboration with Harry Harper, *With the Airmen* (London: Henry Frowde Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 118.
67. Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 147.
68. Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225.
69. Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225.
70. Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225–26.
71. Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 226.
72. Claude Grahame-White, *The Story of the Aeroplane* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1911), quoted in Antonello, “On an Airfield”, 93.
73. To update this to the present day, no one apart from the airline’s customer relations department would think to ask about your experience of flying and even they would be wrong-footed if the passenger’s response was an awestruck “you just fly”, rather than indifference or quibbles about the range of in-flight snacks.
74. Brigid Peppin, “The Thyssen ‘Vorticist Composition’: A New Attribution”, *Burlington Magazine* 152, no. 1290 (September 2010): 591.
75. Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 45–46.
76. Richard Cork suggests that Wadsworth had flown. Barbara Wadsworth is more sceptical about this claim, but concedes “there can be no certain answer to this.” Her argument that Wadsworth based his paintings with aerial viewpoints on “air-photographs” he had access to “during his service on the Paddington gun site” is easily dispelled in the case of *A Short Flight*, since Wadsworth only served there after war broke out in August 1914 (Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 71).
77. Horrall, *Popular Culture in London*, 78–105.
78. Lisa Tickner, “English Modernism in the Cultural Field”, in *English Art: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 30.

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## Imprint

<b>Author</b>	Bernard Vere
<b>Date</b>	10 April 2017
<b>Category</b>	<a href="#">Article</a>
<b>Review status</b>	Peer Reviewed (Double Blind)
<b>License</b>	<a href="#">Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)</a>
<b>Downloads</b>	PDF format
<b>Article DOI</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-05/bvere">https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-05/bvere</a>
<b>Cite as</b>	Vere, Bernard. "A 'Modern Rendezvous' in London: Painters, Pilots, and Edward Wadsworth's <i>A Short Flight</i> (1914)." In <i>British Art Studies</i> . London and New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, 2017. <a href="https://britishartstudies-02.netlify.app/vorticism-aesthetics/">https://britishartstudies-02.netlify.app/vorticism-aesthetics/</a> .