Aleksandar Mijatović | Sveučilište u Rijeci, aleksandar.mijatovic@ffri.uniri.hr

Knotting Loops in the European Avant-Garde(s)

The Poetic Image in Ezra Pound's, A. B. Šimić's and André Breton's Anti/Ana-Aesthetics, and its Relation to Painting

Current attempts to revise the avant-garde are indivisible from reconsidering its theory.[1] A premise of understanding the avant-garde is that it is ideologically opposed to the idea of art, although it is disputable whether the theory alone dispels this idea. This paper does not answer such questions directly, but explains the plurality of avant-garde movements and their transnational character. In pursuing this methodology, it delves into diverse poetic and aesthetic conceptions that yield particular distinctive movements. The principal object of avant-garde theory is the diversity of the aesthetic and poetic concepts that have emerged from its various movements.

The avant-garde's radical character is taken as commonplace and, to a certain extent, an unquestioned premise in literary and historical scholarship. Its thesis should therefore be questioned precisely to maintain what makes the avant-garde challenging and provocative, as its

The essay offers a (re)construction of an avant-garde network consisting of imagism, expressionism, and surrealism in literature and art. It proposes a reassessment of Ezra Pound's and André Breton's concepts of the poetic image, and compares them to their counterpart in the writing and poetry of Croatian expressionist writer Antun Branko Šimić. Through this reconstruction of one node in the avant-garde network, the paper proposes a theory of avant-garde as a twofold structure of de-figuration and transfiguration, which performs the role of re-figuring reality. This proposal solves a principal tension in Peter Bürger's argument expounded in *Theorie der Avantgarde*.

radical character is based on how it conceives itself as art, and its relation to reality.

Avant-garde works have a two-tiered structure: first, they question the representation's status and undermine its mimetic rendering of life; second, this anti-mimetic stance is presented as a way to regain life. Avant-garde works break the representational illusion, to show life outside recognisable forms; they disconnect from the common way of representing reality to reconnect with the real, which evades representation. This two-tiered structure is operative both in avant-garde poetics and concomitant theoretical accounts.

The anti-aesthetic should not be taken as merely antagonistic, although the prefix ›anti-‹ indicates opposition. To avoid this, I will insert the prefix ›ana-‹. Ana-aesthetics connotes a switch in perspective that transforms the object. De-figuration, a conflict driver of avant-garde (seen both in abstractionism and cubism), would be impossible without the transfigurative effects of its artistic practices. To oppose, avant-garde primarily transforms. That duality of opposition and transformation solves a principal tension in Peter Bürger's *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974), wherein the avant-garde is defined as a rupture in the notion of art in terms of organic unity. Avant-garde writers propose to break the organic unity and totality of works of art. Bürger's elaboration clarifies how a work of art as an organic unity is *dis*placed, but does not specify with what it is *re*placed. His theory of the avant-garde therefore does not explain how its artistic praxis is reconnected with life.

Since avant-garde works possess a twofold structure of de-figuration and transfiguration, they play a role in re-figuring reality and life. Reality is not given by figures, wherein both remain intact. Instead, the art reassesses reality by reconsidering figuration, or even rejecting it, as the prefix ›re-‹ suggests. This double reassessment simultaneously transforms both representation and reality.

At the threshold of neo-classicism and romanticism, Lessing introduced a demarcation between poetry and art, verbal and visual representation, defining poetry as temporal and painting as spatial. Horace's classic ideal of the interconnection of poetic language and the visual image, famously stated as ›ut pictura poesis‹, resurfaced in Baudelaire's dual role of the artist as poet and art critic. As a poet, the artist crosses the boundaries of verbal and visual representation; as an art critic, he assumes art is a pattern to be followed by writers when creating a verbal representation. Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* can be read as a mongraph of the painter Constantin Guys, and a representation could be constructed that would aptly present modern life: i.e., capture its modernity.

According to Baudelaire, modernity is transitory, fugitive, and contingent; the half of art that is not eternal and immutable. The ephemeral side of modern life cannot be captured without showing its immutability, which is necessarily infused with variation. Contrary to Lessing's division of painting and poetry on the contrasting axes of spatiality and temporality, Baudelaire demonstrates that the two representations are entangled in their attempt to restore the multifarious character of modern life. Guillaume Apollinaire, the precursor of avant-garde movements, develops Baudelaire's idea of the dual role and function of the artist. The dualities of writer/artist and critic, verbal and visual representation, and art and life are inherited by a variety of avant-garde movements that strive to annul the distance between artistic practice and life.

The avant-garde revision of verbal representation is paired with the restoration of the multitudes of life, and this two-layered structure is common to all its movements. To perform this dual role, avant-garde writers alter verbal representations according to paintings and plastic art. This mutual contamination cannot be conceptually grasped with the term intermediality, because such interplay of representational modalities is more than the displacement of verbal and visual in the contrasting representational domains. Moreover, its internal displacement unfetters and restores suppressed verbal, visual, and plastic layers.

1. Pound: A radiant node of images

In *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916), Ezra Pound compiles his essays on vortex theory. To avoid using poetic language as an ornament, he defines the linguistic image as a ›primary pigment‹, and gives a complex definition of it as a word beyond formulated language. Image is a fusion of verbal and visual registers of representation; word metamorphoses into image when language passes from ornamentation to exploration.

Vorticism does not seek to break with the preceding tradition, but with contemporaneous futurism. Pound sees futurism as accelerated impressionism, and vorticism as intensive art juxtaposed with cubism and abstract painting. Consequently, he constructs the poetic image as a constellation of poetry, painting, sculpture, word, color, and shape.

To distinguish image and idea, Pound states that image is a vortex »from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing«.[2] Here, the image-vortex is a passage of defiguration, refiguration, and trans-

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2   Pound: *A Critical Anthology*, p. 57.

figuration.[3] It turns from its preordained object to itself and refigures its relationship to the former,[4] then entices a new way of seeing that is not simply perceiving a familiar object as unfamiliar. Having detached itself from the object the image is then reconnected, but not in the false fidelity of an external relationship; instead, the image returns to itself and transforms the object. To summarize this concept of the image, Pound uses Aquinas' scholastic formula ›Nomina sunt consequentia rerum‹, which simultaneously refers to the principle of the poetic image and vorticism as a literary movement.[5]

The construction of the poetic image is, at the same time, a description of the avant-garde movement; a spiral of simultaneous to-ing and fro-ing, going backward and forward, and revolving around an empty centre. Pound connects vorticism to analytic geometry, which can create forms. Art as »the organization of forms is a much more energetic and creative action« than the »copying or imitating of light on a haystack«.[6] It produces meaning, rather than stemming from the established: »The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.«[7] While forms in analytic geometry are independent of being, art brings forms into being. It does so not simply by bringing forth a transformation of being; the artistic form or image-vortex surpasses the detachment between art and life. Pound sharply distinguishes the image-symbol from the image-vortex: »The symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2 and 7. The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, b, and x in algebra.«[8] The meaning of symbols is pre-given and immutable, while the image-vortex empties itself to create a form that requires content to be assigned. Simultaneously, it renders this newly established attachment of content to form unnecessary.[9]

Yet, Pound introduces an internal divide in the image-vortex's distinction between the algebraic and geometric image: »By the ›image‹ I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about

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3   See Albright: *Quantum Poetics*, p. 175. This triadic structure connects with Cantos, whose triplex recurrence Pound describes as »subject and response and counter-subject in fugue«. The vortex triplet may have an equivalent in the poetic triad of phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia. For this interpretation, see Grey: »*Radiance to the White Wax*« and Pound: *Literary Essays*, p. 25.

4   According to Albright (*Quantum Poetics*, p. 177) the vortex is a »unit of metamorphosis«; »the kind of turning in which something turns into something else«.

5   »[…] and never was that statement of Aquinas more true than in the case of the vorticist movement.« Pound: *A Critical Anthology*, p. 57.

6   Ibid.

7   Ibid.

8   Ibid., p. 49.

9   »What the impressionists dispersed, the Vorticists will gather again, without resolidifying to inert matter. A vortex is simply a wave that redounds back on itself.« Ibid., p. 173.

a, b and c having something to do with form, but about sea, cliffs, night, having something to do with mood.«[10] The geometric image is reconnected with the image-pigment:

> The Image is the poet's pigment! The painter should use his color because he sees it or feels it. I don't much care whether he is representative or non-representative. He should depend, of course, on the creative, not upon the mimetic or representational part in his work. It is the same in writing poems, the author must use his image because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics.[11]

To a certain extent, image-pigment relies upon the geometric image, wherein the distinction between image and idea is revised. Image detaches ideas from their established conceptual field, to entice their emergence anew. The image-vortex bends ideas, spinning them to make an empty point at its centre. This curving movement does not simply depict familiar things in an unfamiliar way, but produces a new way of seeing. Pound differentiates between thinking in preordained ways and seeing and feeling, to which it is not possible to reattach familiar notions and meanings. The image-vortex is therefore a new way of seeing, without a corresponding object.

A shift occurs from image-pigment to image-geometry: »It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time.«[12] There is no congruity between space and a circle; space alone is not a circle, although it is delineated as one. This atemporal form is then reinserted into the temporal flow, in which space can be outlined in any form whatsoever; it creates a circle without being one. The being therefore appears as the circle, without resembling the circle. Pound rejects symbolism, impressionism, and futurism not for resembling life, but for not being similar enough to it. While image-ideas dissemble, the resemblance that vorticism creates with the image-vortex is not founded on similarities.

2. Šimić: From abstraction as an image to the image as abstraction

Like his European peers, Croatian avant-garde poet Antun Branko Šimić assumes the dual role of writer (poet) and art critic. His writings on painting and poetry contain typical avant-garde distinctions between art and beauty,

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10 Ibid., p. 57.
11 Ibid., p. 51.
12 Ibid., p. 56.

and imitation and creation. As Pound uses the artistic notion of pigment, Šimić, perhaps under Worringer's influence, uses the term abstraction. From 1916 to his premature death in 1925, Šimić as art critic in the mould of Baudelaire and Apollinare, reported from Zagreb's *Spring saloon* (*Proljetni salon*), which exhibited the works of prominent Croatian and other Yugoslav painters.

In Šimić's writings about these works, his theory of the poetic image undergoes various conceptual shifts. As an avant-garde writer and artist, Šimić distinguishes between the forms of nature and art. Man is removed from things in nature, because he encounters them in a way that is reduced by practical use or external knowledge. That conception is akin to Pound's difference between two types of man:

> There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man; firstly, you may think of him as that toward which perception moves, as the toy of circumstance, as the plastic substance receiving impressions; secondly, you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as conceiving instead of merely reflecting and observing. One does not claim that one way is better than the other, one notes a diversity of the temperament. The two camps always exist.[13]

Šimić's passage from perception to conception is an act of abstraction: things are abstract when they are unfettered from practical use and external knowledge:

> Two kinds of form: natural forms and art forms. The forms of natural things are mute, soundless, dead to most people. If the natural things are to evoke those soul-movements in us that they had evoked before we killed their life by the practical use or external knowledge of them, we must free them from that use and knowledge. Make them as abstract as possible. De-objectify. The artist reifies things. The artist removes what had hitherto prevented the perception of their inner voice. The artist makes them abstract, lifts them into a higher world; the resurrection of things. The resurrection of things, their de-objectification, does not mean the external so-called beautification of things. The tree painted on the canvas is liberated, de-objectified, no longer a thing of practical use, but of spiritual use. The word water in a poem no longer evokes drinking water or the water that moves a mill wheel. The tree, the water... are now forms whose inner voice enters our soul with ease.[14]

Šimić calls this liberation »the resurrection of things« (»vaskrsenje stvari«), just as Shklovsky describes the liberation of words from their referential function as a resurrection of words. Similar to Pound, he contrasts this with ornamentation. When a person conceives switches from perceptual to conceptual representation, he grasps things through the subtraction of layers

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13 Ibid., p. 54.
14 Šimić: *Proza II*, p. 99. All English translations from Croatian and French editions in this paper are by A. M.

that all but obscure them. For Šimić, to dereify reality is to restore things to expression, through the coinciding deformation and transformation of lines and colors in painting, and words in poetry. This twofold movement reveals how an individual's spirit reconnects with the immediacy of things.

In his report *Painting and Geometry* (*Slikarstvo i geometrija*) Šimić follows Guillaume Apollinaire's parallel between geometry in painting and grammar in poetry. Neither geometry nor grammar emulates reality; rather, both are the imposition of a new order. Šimić begins with the incommensurability between the painted object, or nature, i.e., the »optical image, which is in front of a painter's eyes«, and painting, »which emerges from under the paintbrush«.[15] Abstraction is inherent to the relationship between an optical and painted image. Since every object undergoes a series of transformations in its transposition to the canvas, resemblance is achieved through abstraction, or by dissimilar means. Like Pound and Breton, Šimić argues that images disclose their dissembling effects, undercutting the similarity between object and painting. He is, however, closer to the former than the latter in pinpointing the comparison between science and painting, for both use abstraction to pursue truth. For Šimić, realism and cubism therefore exercise abstract devices in the creative process.

The dichotomy of the optical-painted image differentiates the incompatible orders of the natural world from those of art. In rendering nature, the painter uses combination or composition. Here, the former mechanically transposes reality and the latter organically liberates art from imitating natural forms, and releases color and line from the object. Organic composition subordinates the natural order to the artistic one. Deformation disenthralls art from imitation, while transformation is a displacement of natural order by the artistic composition. Šimić's organic does not denote the living, and painting restores life only in a mechanical combination »that gives life to the image«.[16] The task of the image is not to restore life, but to impose an order previously foreign to it: the composition of the image as unbinding colors and lines from that »other order«. Yet, this removal from the object does not aim to bring forth »[an]other world«.[17] Art is not an escape from the world, but its transformation.

In the *New German Poets* (*Novi njemački pjesnici*) survey of German expressionism, Šimić repeats the contention that all paintings are abstract, including impressionist ones, which are often seen as opposed to abstraction.

15   Ibid., p. 464.
16   Ibid., p. 421.
17   Ibid. p. 426.

Although Šimić and Pound differentiate impressionism and cubism from abstract painting, to Šimić abstraction is a set of devices ingrained in every painting. He reflects on the interchangeability between abstract poetry and expressionism, and concludes that every lyric is abstract, as is every word, as »a constitutive part of the poem«.[18] He transfers the dichotomy of the optical-painted image to poetry, which no longer »describes« but »distills« to »synthesize« sensations.[19] Poetry is no longer an expression of reality, but its transformation, which occurs as the recasting of words in »more primary expressions«, similar to cries.[20] As abstract units of language that convey familiar notions, words undergo another abstraction as deformation. Just as colours and lines are removed from the object, words are enfranchised from denotation; delaminated from their denotative content to recover the image as their uncharted origin. This remote origin of words recovers their closeness to things. Despite revisiting this speculation on the birth of language from primal screams, Šimić carefully distinguishes it from the figurative power of speaking, because this stripping of words from their descriptive layers »has nothing to do with [...] licentia poetica«.[21] Šimić delineates expressionism from speculation on language as a gradual evolution of primal screams, with metaphorical content rendered in literal denotation. In his review of Gottfried Benn, he claims that Benn's lyric aims to recover primordial origins and reinstate the non-human in humans, by »mourning for not being forebears of our forebears«.[22] Detaching the word from its »descriptive character« and recovering it as an »associative motive« is language's resurfacing from the »irrevocable past« to its contemporaneity.[23] Šimić underscores Benn's distinctions between description and association, and character and motive. These dichotomies form the complex concepts of word-description-character and word-association-motive, in which the former represents the world, and the latter engages with it. Literature that uses the first complex imitates the world, while the second transforms it, reducing words to distilled expressions of engagement. Šimić describes a non-representational man, without a »brain, thought and prayers«, which are »obstacles to life«.[24] This man – moulded on Nietzsche's Dionysian man who overcomes his humanity – precedes representational man, and adjusts

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18 Šimić: *Proza II*, p. 290.
19 Ibid., p. 291.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 292.
22 Ibid., p. 305.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 304.

expressions to become inert, lifeless vehicles of a figurative apprehension of the world, transmogrified into notions. Words are not expressions: rather, they are deformed into expressions, and this disfiguration entices a transmutation of reality. Šimić, in his brief yet dense critical assessment of German expressionism, develops a variety of images pertaining to this two-tiered process of disfiguration-transfiguration and deformation-transformation. In the phase of disfiguration and deformation, expressions turn a »death mask« into a »live face«, in the process of the »resuscitation of words from everyday speech«.[25] In the concomitant phase of transfiguration and transformation, expressions are an »unmasking, disclosing of the real face of things«.[26]

3. Breton: From the image of nowhere to the unseen reality

In *Surrealism and Painting* (*Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, 1928) Breton introduces the notion of an interior model (›modèle intérieur‹). Although he proceeds with the traditional metaphysical dyad of interiority and model, he does not define painting as an internal creation of an external model. Instead, his interior model is an internalisation of a model created without concepts or representations. The subject does not internalise the representation and concept of the model; it internalises how the model and subject act or could be acted upon, and how the latter could act upon the former. Fusing the vocabulary of *Manifesto of Surrealism* (*Manifeste du surréalisme*, 1924) and *Surrealism and Painting*, the interior model shifts with the man, and is therefore a function of movements.

In Breton's argument in the 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*, he first renounces logic as giving an exhausted image of reality, which it builds on the basis of equivalences. He then praises Reverdy for building an image on the juxtaposition of distant realities, despite contesting his poetic image on the grounds that it rests on »a posteriori aesthetics«[27] that confuses effect for cause.

Breton contests Reverdy's thesis that images are the creation of the mind, and argues that juxtapositions are made involuntarily, not intentionally evoked. The conjunction of distant realities is not seized consciously. Despite Reverdy's rejection of comparison, he asserts that images are not the creation of subjectivity existing in advance, but that subjectivity is the

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25   Ibid.
26   Ibid., p. 301.
27   Breton: *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, p. 21.

effect of inadvertent juxtapositions, born from the spark that arises when two distant realities are connected. Juxtapositions are unpremeditated and fortuitous, and the mind is born from the light of images as a »luminous phenomenon«.[28] In this reading, the mind and images are spawned simultaneously, but the former is dazed and illuminated by the latter. Exposed to images, the mind temporarily immerses in the night, and is elucidated by its obscurity. Breton describes this switching between day and night as a coincidence of deformation and transformation. The mind is first dazzled by the luminous power of images that both enthrall and steer it; it is subordinated to images, and accepts their »supreme reality«.[29] This reality of images then expands the limits of the mind, which is enlightened by being enfolded in obscurity, leaving it briefly blindfolded until the spark that occurs when remote realities connect ignites subjectivity.

This paper reframes Breton's revision of the philosophical and artistic complex in Blanchot's discussion on the window, which appears in the latter's theoretical and fictional writings. The metaphor of the window was developed during the Renaissance by Alberti and Filarete in art, and by Descartes in philosophy, as a privileged space that contains the constitution of the subject and its relation to objects. The window was conceived as a place of distance, isolation, and transparency, and refers to the dematerialisation of representation, which immediately reveals what is represented.

Conversely, Blanchot engages the window metaphor to define the image as an indefinite space of proximity and distance. This paradoxical topology is important for understanding the notion of space in literature. Blanchot rejects the notion of vision that is modelled on that of mind, and that grasps objects like the frame of the window cuts a scene from the flux of being. Instead, he insists upon the impossible experience of fascination and attraction. Blanchot's elaboration can be seen as a series of steps: 1. Blanchot's notion of the image as a cadaver is insufficient to explain how the imaginary disintegrates the visual experience of fascination and attraction. 2. Blanchot's notion of the image as a window differs from Alberti's perspectival and geometric space. 3. Blanchot's notion of the image must be distinguished from romantic and surrealist notions of the image as a passage to another world.

Blanchot's window transforms the classical metaphor of the pane as a transparent medium into the imaginary as a condition of seeing. Following his attempt to liberate seeing and speaking from metaphysics and the

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28   Ibid., p. 37.
29   Ibid.

epistemology of concealment and revelation (*The Infinite Conversation / L'Entretien infini*, 1969), the visual and linguistic order is established as disparate series.

The image of the cadaver is not a reductive way of understanding Blanchot's notion of the imaginary; his discussion with Hegel, Kojève, and Mallarmé in *Literature and the Right to Death* (*La Littérature et le droit à la mort*, 1949) declares that the act of naming is considered one of killing. Further, Blanchot's notion of the imaginary stands in contrast to Sartre's, which insists upon dematerialising annihilation as fundamental to the imaginary. Conversely, Blanchot's window is related to the notion of image-as-cadaver, which he elaborates in *Two Versions of the Imaginary* (*Les deux versions de l'imaginaire*, 1951), the addendum to *The Space of Literature* (*L'Espace littéraire*, 1955). The scene, like the cadaver, is simultaneously absent and present, both visible and invisible through the window pane. In this way, the cadaver and the pane create an interstitial space between here and nowhere, a nothingness that, contrary to Sartre's notion of the imaginary, possesses material properties – a ›no-thing‹. The cadaver and the window are »neutral doubles«, which do not resurrect absent objects through re-presentation; rather, they place the spectator-reader into the relation of »absence as a presence«.[30] The dispossession of the object in the cadaver and window metaphors is related to that of the subject who does not see the represented object (a once-living man, or a scene through a window pane), but only the impossibility of seeing. The subject is simultaneously seeing and blinded, experiencing the obscurity of the »other night«, or »where dissimulation becomes appearance« (»où la dissimulation se fait apparence«).[31] That nowhere, incessantly present yet inapproachable, is found in the literature: »it is not beyond the world, but it is not the world either« (»elle n'est pas au-delà du monde, mais elle n'est pas non plus le monde«).[32]

In an essay on surrealism, Blanchot states that in the indefinite space of the literature of proximity and distance, the value of nothing (›rien‹) is discovered, as »the proper object of poetry and freedom both« (»objet propre de la poésie et de la liberté«).[33] Blanchot wrote two important essays on surrealism, and his admiration of the movement is rooted in Breton's attempt to define the poetic image (*Manifesto of Surrealism*) and ›modèle intérieur‹ (*Surrealism and Painting*) outside the reconciliatory model of

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30   Blanchot: *L'Espace littéraire*, p. 275.

31   Ibid., p. 208.

32   Blanchot: *La Part du feu*, p. 317.

33   Ibid., p. 101.

Hegel's dialectics. Breton and his followers insisted upon maintaining the difference between the most distant realities. The surrealist image is not a representation but a conductor between potentials, which brings distance to proximity without abolishing it. The surreal is therefore not ›somewhere else‹; rather it is present, more real than the real itself, as the prefix ›sur-‹ (lat. ›super-‹) suggests. In the late 1930s, Breton adopted Bachelard's notion of superrationalism as complementary to that of surrealism.

Both Blanchot and the surrealists reject the reduction of the image to language. Breton sharply and explicitly distinguishes the poetic image from metaphor, while Blanchot attempts to liberate speaking and seeing from intentionality, imitation, and representation. This attempt is stated most explicitly in »To speak is not to see« (»Parler, ce n'est pas voir«).[34]

For Reverdy, even if the image is a creation of the mind, it still represents reality. In surrealist activity, the mind is the effect of images, and no longer ›draws‹ shapes, but ›traces‹ vague outlines: »I would plunge into it, convinced that I would find my way again, in a maze of lines which at first glance would seem to be going nowhere. And, upon opening my eyes, I would get the very strong impression of something ›never seen‹«.[35] The image is not a familiar shape, but a maze of lines that leads nowhere, lacking a recognisable form. It is an abstract line, liberated from representing familiar and known objects. The whole world is present as unknown, and as never seen. Breton's dichotomy of drawing and tracing is elaborated in Šimić's art critiques as an abstraction. For the latter, abstraction is not seeing otherwise, but otherwise than seeing. To reiterate Blanchot's notion of the image in surrealist and expressionist contexts, blindness as an ›intimate alien‹ is within sight: »This is the most beautiful night of all, the lightning-filled night: day, compared to it, is night.«[36]

As a preordained result of the mind, Reverdy's poetic image suppresses differences and distances between realities. Breton moves away from this notion in search of the image that will crack itself to break through to the other side of reality. Yet, this beyond is within reality, simultaneously intimate and alien to it, and should be released as an exteriority concealed inside the real. The surrealist image combines the various aspects of reality, and simultaneously maintains the distance between them. The poetic image captures the irreducibility of these sides, decomposing reality to compose its

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34   Blanchot: *L'Entretien infini*, p. 43.
35   Breton: *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, p. 21.
36   Ibid., p. 38.

new image. Breton depicts the destruction of representation, and his image of destruction and destruction of the image reconstructs reality.

Breton defines the image as a flash or spark,[37] Pound as a vortex, and Šimić as an abstraction. Only an abstract image that no longer represents can dereify reality. If the image is a flash, the new reality may be grasped in an instant, against the background of the reality it surpasses. The reality that is yet to be surmounted is, at the same time, a mean to go beyond it. This reality is conditional upon the instantaneousness of the image as a spark (in which something appears in the transitory flash) to maintain its newness.[38] By introducing the temporality of the instantaneous image, Breton attempts to desynchronise the simultaneity of destructive and constructive movements of representation. Similarly, Pound and Šimić create the image as a disconnection from everyday reality and a reconnection with its multifaceted character, which resists submission under a unifying principle. The radical character of the avant-garde is retained in the limited space of decomposition and recomposition, and destruction and construction.

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37   »The particles, usually suspended in a liquid, were illuminated with a strong light. The particles scatter this light, and their movements are seen only as flashes against a dark background. The ›constituent substance of poetry‹, Pound wrote of in his ›Wisdom of Poetry‹ essay, the ›dynamic particles, si licet, this radium‹ (BLL 73), bears more than just a passing resemblance to these illuminated particles.« Puhak: *Image, Vortex, Radiant Node*, p. 90.

38   »Pound's radiant node is a dynamic image, constantly in flux and produced by the rapid exchange of energy. Like the lens of the ultramicroscope, the radiant node creates an abstraction out of light at the very moment it brings order to it.« Ibid., p. 90.

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