

**U DHU**

**Papers of Thomas Ernest Hulme**

**1907-1974**

**Biographical background:**

'Oh, God, make small  
The old star-eaten blanket of the sky  
That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie'  
*The Embankment*, T E Hulme, 1909

T E Hulme was born in Staffordshire in 1883. He attended Newcastle School for boys, and read Mathematics at St John's College, Cambridge. He was unable to work in any disciplined manner and he failed to take a degree. He had the unusual distinction of being sent-down twice from Cambridge, after going-up again in 1914 to read Psychology and Mathematics

He travelled in Canada between 1906 and 1907 and began writing philosophical and critical pieces which were posthumously published by Herbert Read as 'Speculations: essays on humanism and the philosophy of art' published in 1924. Hulme went on to become one of the first English critics to write about modern art (Csengeri, *The collected writings of T E Hulme*, Introduction).

In 1907 Hulme taught English for a year in Belgium, but quickly gave up such prosaic activity. In 1909 he was a member of the Poets' Club that met at the Cafe Tour d'Eiffel in Fitzrovia where he met Ezra Pound. He was instrumental in introducing Pound to English literary society. Hulme regularly published in A R Orage's journal the *New Age*. Tom Steele, referring to Hulme's reputation as a pugilist, writes that 'his pronouncements on art and poetry were like so many hard jabs in an ageing culture's kidneys'. He was also almost solely responsible for introducing the philosophical works of Henri Bergson and Georges Sorel to the English-speaking literary societies of England and America through his translations from the French.

Back in England, between 1910 and 1914, Hulme held literary evenings on a Tuesday night at 67 Frith Street, which were hosted by Mrs Ethel Kibblewhite. Jacob Epstein later said that he thought Hulme must have been a man of 'great urbanity' to attract such a large number of people to Frith Street. From 1912 Hulme became interested in the work of Wilhelm Worringer which led him to an enthusiasm for the avant garde art emerging in England in the painters and sculptors of the London Group. He immediately began writing enthusiastically about the work of Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and David Bomberg (Csengeri, *The collected writings of T E Hulme*, Introduction; Epstein, *Epstein: an autobiography*, p.60).

It is clear from Epstein's autobiography that between 1912 and 1914 a close-knit group existed consisting of Hulme, Pound, Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska. The two sculptors attended the Tuesday literary evenings and the two philosopher-poets attended exhibitions of the London Group. When Gaudier-Brzeska left for war service, Epstein and Hulme saw him off at Charing Cross. When Hulme left for war service, he took with him a manuscript of a book he had written on Epstein's work. According to Epstein this 'disappeared from his effects and never turned up'. Corroboration for the existence of this manuscript may exist in the form of the album of photographs of Epstein's work (including one photograph of the sculptor at work) to be found at DHU/12. The book

manuscript may originally have been with this album. The album, itself, was 'disinterred' from the basement of Bertram Rota, a London bookseller, who offered it to A R Jones in 1955. In addition to the photograph of Epstein, it contains four photographs of a bust of Hulme and two studio photographs of the tomb of Oscar Wilde (Epstein, Epstein: an autobiography, pp.46, 59-68).

T E Hulme had an enormous influence on his contemporaries without gaining an enduring reputation of his own. His espousal of a new simplicity of form was later echoed by Epstein when he explained his abstract experimentation as being not end in itself but a step on the return journey to 'the discipline of simplification of forms'. Perhaps his most important impact on the plastic arts was the role he played as an ideologue for the Vorticists, an avant-garde art movement in London including Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, William Roberts and Edward Wadsworth, to which Epstein was associated. In poetry he was a founder of Imagism, a group including Pound, F S Flint and Hilda Doolittle, which eventually came to be dominated by Amy Lowell. Peter Ackroyd's biography of T S Eliot attributes to Hulme Eliot's 'new classicism', his ideas on simplicity and order, and his ideas on original sin. Karen Csengeri, the editor of Hulme's collected works, has also noted Hulme's considerable influence on Eliot, and has said they had more in common intellectually than any other modernists. Hulme was an anti-humanist (in the same way as Evelyn Waugh) and an anti-pacifist (which led him to argue with Bertrand Russell). His obscurity may be explained by lack of publication in his lifetime (Epstein, Epstein: an autobiography, p.56; Ackroyd, T. S. Eliot, pp.57, 76, 107, 143, 157; Csengeri, The collected writings of T E Hulme, Introduction; Paige [ed], The letters of Ezra Pound, pp.288, 292, 295).

In 1914 Hulme went to France on war service, as a private in the Honorable Artillery Company, and from there sent letters home about his experiences in the trenches. These letters were published in 1955 by Sam Hynes as 'Further speculations: by T E Hulme'. In these Hulme provided in descriptive detail a picture of life in the trenches. A recurring theme was the unnatural nature of only moving around at night and never seeing the landscape of death all around. 'This is a curious thing' he wrote home 'one of our snipers walking about in the daylight discovered that one of these paths that we walk over [going always in the same direction] led right over the chest of a dead peasant' (Csengeri, The collected writings of T E Hulme, p.330).

Hulme was wounded in 1915 and sent to a hospital to recover. In the same year Ezra Pound published 'Ripostes' and appended Hulme's complete poems to his own. The lighthearted preface to Hulme's poems begins: 'in publishing his Complete Poetical Works at thirty, Mr Hulme has set an enviable example to many of his contemporaries'. Hulme added a footnote: 'Mr Pound has grossly exaggerated my age'. However, Hulme was already 33 and there were only five poems. He told Epstein that he thought he had lots of time; he projected lots of work and a large family. However, on 28 September 1917 he was killed by a German shell. News of his death 'caused widespread pain and loss', Epstein said later. Epstein viewed his death as being 'a loss to England', his influence had been so great in just a few years. Hulme's collected works were finally published in 1994. They contain only eight poems, three of which Eliot claimed were amongst the best short poems ever written in the English language (Epstein, Epstein: an autobiography, pp.61-2).

### **Custodial History:**

Donated by AR Jones, Department of English, University of Hull, 1966

**Description:**

The papers of Thomas Hulme were collected by AR Jones in connection with his book on Hulme, *The Life and Opinions of T E Hulme*, published in 1960 by Gollancz.

The collection includes a few letters and postcards from Hulme to various correspondents, particularly E Marsh, as well his poem on Sunset endorsed on the back of an account from the Grosvenor Hotel in London to Mademoiselle Meylan (U DHU/7). A German leaflet called 'Hunger' calling for an end to the first world war is at U DHU/8 and is endorsed by Hulme as having dropped in France on 28 August 1916. There is a pencil drawing of Hulme at U DHU/10 and some photographs at U DHU/11. Of the latter, the most interesting are original photographs of Hulme with Ethel Kibblewhite and her children and a later one of him in HAC uniform at army camp. U DHU/12 is a collection of his photographs of the work of Jacob Epstein, which dates from shortly before Hulme's death. Some of the letters in the collection are addressed to A R Jones and include letters of reminiscence by Ashley Dukes and Sir Herbert Read.

**Extent:** 0.5 linear metres

**Related Material:**

See also Ezra Pound's letters at U DX/41/1, U DPB/1/1 and U DSG/1/4/13

Other repositories:

Keele University Library

**Access Conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DHU/1	Photostats of letters and cards from T E Hulme to E. Marsh Including: a) Card. Paper to be given by Ezra Pound in Cambridge, 23 April 1912 b) Card. Arranging a visit. Pound has been to Cambridge and left for the south of France, May 1912 c) Letter. Jacob Epstein exempted (from the Army) for 3 months, [1916] d) Letter. Finding some nominal work for Epstein which would gain him further exemption on his next appearance before a tribunal, [1916] e) Letter. Conversations in Berlin with Rupert Brooke in 1912. Drawings and a statuette by Gaudier-Brzeska and Brzeska's estate. Would not mind joining the Marine Artillery or Naval Air Service but wants to avoid the infantry again. "I have had my share of the trenches, I think", [1916] 5 items	1912
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Hull History Centre: Papers of Thomas Ernest Hulme

U DHU/2	Letter. T E Hulme to Alice Pattison, his aunt Has been too busy to write. Hopes his allowance has been sent. Copy of his poem 'A City Sunset'. Also two sheets bearing his notes, in French, on literature and some philosophy 1 item	[Dec 1909]
U DHU/3	Copy. Letter. Ramiro de Maeztu to Kate Lechmere Reminiscences of T E Hulme and his religious beliefs. Copied in the same hand as U DHU/9 1 item	28 Apr 1918
U DHU/4	Letters from Michael Roberts to Kate Lechmere Concerning his book on T E Hulme. With some notes by Lechmere 5 items	18 Feb-2 Apr 1938
U DHU/5	Letters to A R Jones Reminiscences of T E Hulme. Also mentioned are Jacob Epstein, Ashley Dukes, Edwin Evans and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska  From: a) J M Todd, Headmaster, High School, Newcastle, Staffs b) Ashley Dukes, Mercury Theatre c) Sir Hebert Read, Wadham College d) Richard Curle, 57 Queensborough Terrace, London . e) D L Murray, 32 Eton Avenue, Hampstead f) G E Moore, 86 Chesterton Road, Cambridge g) Kate Lechmere, 29 Oakley Gardens, London 12 items	18 Apr 1955- 7 Feb 1961
U DHU/6	'Reflections on Violence' by Georges Sorel. Translated with a preface by T E Hulme Possibly a proof copy with annotations by Hulme 1 item	1916
U DHU/7	Poem on Sunset by T E Hulme Endorsed on an account from the Grosvenor Hotel, London, to Mme. Meylan, [25 - 27 May 1908] 1 item	1908
U DHU/8	Leaflet. 'Hunger', calling for an end to the Great War and describing the hunger being suffered by the German population Endorsed by T E Hulme 'Dropped by German aeroplane between Bagenton-le-Petit and High Wood. August 28, 1916' 1 item	c.1916

U DHU/9	Mss. 'Abbreviated from the conversation of Mr. T.E.H[ulme]' Including a poem 'Trenches St. Eloi', and 'Obscene not the Perfect Body'. Not written by Hulme, possibly transcribed by Ezra Pound or copied by Kate Lechmere 3 items	c.1915
U DHU/10	Pencil drawing of T E Hulme By Ethel Kibblewhite 1 item	c.1912
<b>U DHU/11</b>	<b>Photographs 11 items</b>	<b>[1911-1914]</b>
U DHU/11/1	T E Hulme with Honorable Artillery Squad Black and white photograph with enlargement 2 photographs	[1914]
U DHU/11/2	Ethel Kibblewhite with her children, Peter and Diana Black and white photograph presumably taken at Walnut Tree House. With enlargements 3 photographs	[1911]
U DHU/11/3	T E Hulme at Walnut Tree House Black and white photograph. Reverse is endorsed 'Walnut Tree House, Rustington'. With enlargement 2 photographs	[1911]
U DHU/11/4	Peter and Diana Kibblewhite climbing on T E Hulme Black and white photograph taken at Walnut Tree House 1 photograph	[1911]
U DHU/11/5	Domestic interior Black and white photograph, probably Walnut Tree House 2 photographs	[1911]
U DHU/11/6	Domestic interior Black and white photograph, probably Walnut Tree House 1 photograph	[1911]
<b>U DHU/12</b>	<b>Album containing photographs of works of sculpture by Jacob Epstein, owned by T E Hulme With ms. lists of photographs, and notes for his book on Epstein, by Hulme. Photographs possibly taken by Hulme 1 volume</b>	<b>1907-1974</b>
U DHU/12/1	Typed lists of the contents 2 items	20th cent.

Hull History Centre: Papers of Thomas Ernest Hulme

U DHU/12/2	Extract relating to Hulme from 'A Survey of Modernist Poetry' by Laura Riding and Robert Graves 1 item	1927
U DHU/12/3	Prospectus. Edition of drawings by Epstein to be published by J. Saville & Co 1 item	1928
U DHU/12/4	Newspaper cuttings relating to Epstein's 'Night' 4 items	1928
U DHU/12/5	Letters and invoice from Bertram Rota, Bookseller, Vigo Street, London, W.1. to A.R. Jones, concerning the album 4 items	20 Sep-15 Nov 1955
U DHU/12/6	Two photographs received from the Tate Gallery 'Doves' and 'Female Figure in Flenite' 2 photographs	Feb 1974
U DHU/12/7	Head of Romilly John (Augustus John's son) 1 photograph	1907
U DHU/12/8	Small Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Female Figure in Flenite' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/9	Small Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Female Figure in Flenite' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/10	Small Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Female Figure in Flenite' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/11	Large Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Figure in Flenite' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/12	Large Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Figure in Flenite'. Part of 'Garden Carving' (U DHU/12/14) can also be seen in the background of this photograph 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/13	Small Carving in Flenite Now known as 'Female Figure in Flenite' 1 photograph	1911
U DHU/12/14	'Cursed be the day wherein I was born' (Job) 1 photograph	1913

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U DHU/12/15	Mother and Child (Marble) 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/16	Mother and Child (Marble) 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/17	Pigeons Now known as 'Doves (3rd marble)' 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/18	Head of Iris Tree 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/19	Large Female Figure Now known as 'Maternity' 1 photograph	1909
U DHU/12/20	Garden Carving This piece is described by Hulme as 'Garden Head' and is now known as 'Sunflower' 1 photograph	1911
U DHU/12/21	Head of Romilly John Augustus John's son 1 photograph	1907
U DHU/12/22	Euphemia Lamb 1 photograph	1911
U DHU/12/23	Large Female Figure Now known as 'Maternity' 1 photograph	1909
U DHU/12/24	Large Female Figure Now known as 'Maternity' 1 photograph	1909
U DHU/12/25	Large Female Figure with sculptor Now known as 'Maternity' 1 photograph	1909
U DHU/12/26	Pigeons Now known as 'Doves (2rd marble)' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/27	Pigeons Now known as 'Doves (2rd marble)' 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/28	The Sun God 1 photograph	1910

Hull History Centre: Papers of Thomas Ernest Hulme

U DHU/12/29	Wilde Memorial (Head) 1 photograph	1912
U DHU/12/30	Wilde Memorial (Whole figure) 1 photograph	1912
U DHU/12/31	Rock Drill Shows the 'Torso from Rock-Drill', as exhibited in 1916 1 photograph	1913
U DHU/12/32	Venus 1 photograph	1917
U DHU/12/33	Head of T E Hulme 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/34	Head of T E Hulme 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/35	Head of T E Hulme 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/36	Head of T E Hulme 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/37	Head of T E Hulme 1 photograph	1915
U DHU/12/38	Large Female Figure (Rear view) Now known as 'Maternity' 1 photograph	1909
U DHU/12/39	'Rock Drilling' (drawing) 1 item	1913
U DHU/12/40	'Birth' (drawing) 1 item	1913
U DHU/12/41	'Birth' (drawing) Also known as 'Vorticist Composition' 1 item	1915
U DHU/12/42	Pencil note Refers to a Chinchilla coat, Albert Hall Charity Dance, diamond tiara etc 1 item	early 20th cent.