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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

LANGUAGE AND REIFICATION IN IMAGIST POETICS 1909-1930

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE

FACULTY OF ARTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

ANDREW JOHN THACKER

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

One has to be downright obstinate not to see the complicity of artistic and social reification, and to ignore the untruth of reification, which is that it fetishizes what is a processual relation between moments. The work of art is both a process and an instant. Its objectification, while a necessary condition of aesthetic autonomy, is also a petrifying tendency. The more the social labour embodied in an art work becomes objectified and organized, the more it sounds empty and alien to the work.

Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, (1970).

I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use them for your closer contact?

T.S.Eliot, "Gerontion".

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

ENGLISH

Doctor of Philosophy

LANGUAGE AND REIFICATION IN IMAGIST POETICS 1909-1930

by Andrew John Thacker

This thesis is an examination of Imagist poetry from 1909 to the date of the last Imagist anthology, 1930. I study the five anthologies of Imagist poetry (1914, 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1930) to show how they produce what I call a reification of language. In Chapter One I present an account of the theory of reification, drawing on the work of Marx, Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin. I distinguish between reification and commodification and show how the Imagist reification of poetic language is a modernist aesthetic reaction to the abstractions engendered by commodification. I argue that conventional accounts of commodification and modernism ignore the question of gender. Chapter Two considers the origins of Imagist theory in the texts of T.E.Hulme, Dora Marsden (editor of the influential periodical The Egoist) and in the prefaces and manifestos of the movement itself. The call to reform language along the lines of a visual epistemology results in poems presenting reified images of women in modernity, which I analyse in detail in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five consider the work of Ezra Pound in Lustra and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. Pound is shown to develop the Imagist method towards a modernist verse in which words do not present images of things but are treated as material things in their own right.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the legacies of post-structuralist criticism is a re-reading of literary history stressing the processes, linguistic and otherwise, from which modernist texts are constructed. Flux is emphasised over fixity of form, and words are seen to drift irrevocably apart from their referents. This thesis will question this re-orientation by a study of Imagist aesthetics from 1909 to 1930. Imagism shows a concern for a fixity of poetic discourse before any notion of flux and the multiplicity of meaning intervenes. Reading this early modernist writing shows that Imagism desired to anchor its words in concrete images of objects. If modernism can be characterised as a fissuring of a strict reference between word and thing, then in Imagism this is a tendency appearing after an initial impetus to tie words to things.

In 1915 Ezra Pound condensed his theory of Imagist poetry into one phrase: "Language is made out of concrete things."¹ Imagism can justly claim to be the first modernist literary movement in Britain. This is a quite different theory of language from that, for example, displayed in Roland Barthes's influential article "From Work to Text". Here the Text is "radically symbolic", refusing the definite reference of words to things: "The Text...practises the infinite deferment of the signified, is dilatory."² Barthesian Texts are thus irreducibly plural entities, opposed to the sense of finished objects implied in Pound's "concrete things." In

Barthes, the Text is "restored to language; like language, it is structured but off-centred, without closure."³ Whereas Imagism, in its first manifesto in 1914, called for a "Direct treatment of the 'thing'", Barthes argues that language is inevitably indirect, always deferring its encounter with the "closure" of the thing.⁴ The 1915 Imagist anthology welcomed a poetry "that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite."⁵ Imagist language thus intends to "close" upon things, to render with visual clarity the objects of artistic perception. This nominalist project, which Pound termed "the welding of word and thing",⁶ seems somewhat at odds with Barthes's blissful pleasure in a textual language which "undoes nomination".⁷ But it seems to be a perspective deriving from someone like Barthes which leads a recent writer upon Pound to argue that he "offers no escape from the intertextuality of reading to a 'thing' or a 'truth' before language and interpretation."⁸ One part of my argument, developed in Chapters Four and Five, is that if Pound does reject "things" for the tissues of "intertextuality", then it only occurs after his use of an Imagist language of "concrete things".

Imagist rhetoric displays what I chose to call a reification of language. Chapter One is a theoretical discussion of reification and its applicability to language and modernist poetry, drawing upon the work of Marx, Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin. A reified language is one in which words are treated as material entities. In Chapter Two I examine the roots of Imagist theory in the light of this idea of linguistic reification. Imagism's treatment of words **as** material things only develops, primarily in the work of Pound, out of an earlier adherence to using a language in which words clearly **presented** things. This development marks Imagism's movement away from a symbolist heritage towards a truly modernist verse practice.

Carol Christ argues that modernist theories of language "identify sensuous perception with the qualities of objects themselves; theories of language which emphasize its transparency as a medium for sensation."⁹ This statement runs together the two theories I am concerned to separate. In Imagism, a discourse transparent to its object is the precursor of a discourse pertaining to the qualities of objects.

Imagist desires to draw words closer to things are reactions to a world in which the experience of language is of something that is dematerialised. Recent Marxist critics have argued that the reification of language in modernism is introduced to compensate for the dominant commodification of early twentieth century capitalist societies. Commodification judges all objects and forms in terms of abstract economic value, paying no attention to the different qualities shown by, for example, a Van Gogh painting and a new pair of shoes if they are of equal financial worth. For Terry Eagleton "Modernism is among other things a strategy whereby the work of art resists commodification, holds out by the skin of its teeth against those social forces which would degrade it to an exchangeable object."¹⁰ This resistance to economic exchange, which treats all objects as abstractly equivalent, produces the linguistic reification seen in Imagist rhetoric:

To fend off such reduction to commodity status, the modernist work brackets off the referent or real historical world, thickens its textures and deranges its forms to forestall instant consumability, and draws its own language protectively around it to become a mysterious autotelic object, free of all contaminating truck with the real.¹¹

Eagleton thus concludes that the modernist work of art utilises the fetishism of the commodity to resist the commodity as exchange. While finding this a very persuasive account of certain later modernist works, I am not convinced that the early modernist poetry of Imagism "brackets off the referent" in quite this way. In Chapter Three I show that Imagist poetry does attempt to present images of the "real historical world" of modernity and modernization. The particularity of these visual images is designed to cut through the object as abstract commodity, revealing what Lukács called the "material substratum" of concrete things in the modern world.¹²

That this recovery of the sensual properties of objects is the goal of Imagism is shown in an early pre-Imagist poem by Pound. "An Object", from Ripostes (1912), shows the effect of commodification upon modern objects:

This thing, that hath a code and not a core,
Hath set acquaintance where might be affections,
And nothing now
Disturbeth his reflections.¹³

This poem enacts the alienation of a subject before a commodified object. The object has a "code", a surface script akin to the "social hieroglyphic" which Marx read upon the skin of the commodity. In this way the "code" appears to disguise the object's true "core" because of the operations of exchange-value. Value, he writes, "does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic."¹⁴ The "core" of the object, its root in social human

labour, is thus hidden by the encoded discourse of the commodity. As Marx, in Poundian mood, comments: "The name of a thing is entirely external to its nature."¹⁵ The nature or "core" of the object is lost once Pound replaces thing with word. This failure, when viewed with Marx's perspective, is not simply due to the inadequacy of language before its object. Rather, Pound's inability to capture the "core" of the object is due to the specific effects of commodification. The object as commodity is drained of all material particularity to become abstractly identical, which is why this poem concerns an anonymous object with no features. It is an object with nothing in its material form to distinguish it from any other object. In its lack of formal and sensual properties this object conforms to the way the "code" of value is stamped upon a commodity: "Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values; in this it is the direct opposite of the coarsely sensuous objectivity of commodities as physical objects."¹⁶ The modernist subject sustains only a relation of "acquaintance", a distanced form of engagement with such an object, rather than the friendly and human relationship of "affections". Acquaintance is also a perfect description of many of the transient visual relations struck up with others in the metropolitan experiences treated by Imagism.

Walter Benjamin's notion of the "aura" of the work of art, which I discuss in Chapter One, argues that looking contains an expectation that something will return our gaze: "Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man."¹⁷ Benjamin finds in Baudelaire's poetry a "disintegration" of this auratic relationship, when the expectation of having one's gaze returned is not

fulfilled.¹⁸ The close of Pound's poem perfectly captures this instant of failure:

And nothing now
Disturbeth his reflections.

Any relationship to this object is finished, since any experience of the aura, a "core" of humanised interconnections, is surpassed by the reified "code" projected by the object. If "reflections" on the one hand refers to the psychological state of the subject before an object, it also suggests the visual trope of a reflective mirror. If "nothing now" interrupts the poet's psychological "affections", then we read the poem as a critique of commodification and the loss of the aura. We cannot form true relations with these objects, they do not stir or "disturb" us to recall and "reflect" upon the social labour which produced them. Alternatively, if we understand "reflections" to refer to a visual image, we read the poem differently. Now the subject is not disturbed, as in worried, but rather will not be disturbed by anything else because this object is so visually captivating. Instead of displaying the disintegration of the auratic gaze, as in Baudelaire, this poem figures the transformation of the gaze into a fetishising look. The subject finds himself entranced by his own alienated status as "code" without a "core". The poem thus demonstrates Marx's point that an object as commodity "**reflects** the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves."¹⁹ Gazing at a reified object merely reflects back to the gazing subject his or her own reified state.

One way to combat this dismal state of affairs, where looking at

objects only confirms one's own reified status, is to transfer one's gaze to objects full of sensual materiality. In Fredric Jameson's powerful reading of modernism, the visual pleasure one takes in colourful and sensual images is designed to "restore at least a symbolic experience of libidinal gratification to a world drained of it".²⁰ The brilliant clarity of "the image" promised to produce a compensatory, but symbolic, "code" for commodified objects. Throughout this thesis I return to Jameson's argument to help illustrate the relation between the visual language of Imagism and the reification of objects. I have one important disagreement with Jameson's argument which informs my analyses. In Imagist poetry "libidinal gratification" is a remarkably gendered phenomenon. Imagism employs an aggressively phallic rhetoric to describe the hardness and solidity of poetic language. In its fetishism of visual power it also produces a further form of reification: that of images of women in modernity.

Attention to issues of gender complicates conventional accounts of modernism and commodification and shows that a language transparently presenting objects reifies female subjects in order to deny abstraction. Imagist poetry occupied a crucial moment in the uneasy relation between modernism and commodification, promising a sensual language beyond abstraction but hampered by the way its words turned women into things. Theodor Adorno glimpsed a utopian moment in what he called the "absolute commodities" of reified modern art, a moment where aesthetics escapes commodification by reification.²¹ This thesis tries to show the need to re-think that potential utopia, paying closer attention to what it means to produce a language of concrete things.

NOTES

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3. Ibid., p.159.
4. "Imagisme", Poetry Mar.1913, rpt. in Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.129.
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6. Pound, Letter to Williams 11 Sept.1920, Letters, p.158.
7. Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.45.
8. Kathryn V. Lindberg, Reading Pound Reading Modernism After Nietzsche, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.55. For a Derridean influenced reading of Pound's "Image" see Joseph N. Riddell, "'Neo-Nietzschean Clatter' - Speculations and/on Pound's Poetic Image" in Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading, ed. Ian F.A. Bell, (London: Vision Press and Barnes and Noble, 1982), esp. pp.215-6.
9. Carol Christ, Victorian and Modern Poetics, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1984), p.3.
10. Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism", New Left Review no.152 (July/Aug. 1985), p.67. For a similar argument about

modernism and reification see Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture", Social Text, no.VI (Winter 1979), esp. pp.134-5.

11. Eagleton, Ibid.

12. Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.126.

13. Ezra Pound, "An Object", Ripostes (1912), rpt. in Collected Shorter Poems, (London: Faber, 1984), p.63.

14. Karl Marx, Capital A Critique of Political Economy vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.167.

15. Ibid., p.195.

16. Ibid., p.138.

17. Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Verso, 1973), p.148.

18. Ibid., p.149.

19. Marx, Capital, p.164-5.

20. Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, (London: Methuen, 1981), p.63.

21. Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, trans. C. Lenhardt, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p.336.

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE AND REIFICATION

Matter smiled at man with poetical sensuous brightness.

Karl Marx, The Holy Family (1845)

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers various theories of reification and its application to language, so as to provide a methodology for studying the complex forms in which modernism, specifically Imagist poetics, reacts to reification and commodification. Firstly, an account is presented of differing theories of reification itself and secondly, it is demonstrated that reification is a meaningful category to apply to language, specifically poetic language. Theories of reification commence with the work of Marx, drawing upon his Hegelian roots in the 1844 Manuscripts and then upon his use of the theory for the economic investigations of Capital. Major post-Marx theorists of reification and commodification - Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin - all first formulate their arguments in the early twentieth century, often in relation to discussions over modernism. Reification itself, it is suggested, particularly in the work of Lukács, can thus be interpreted as both a hermeneutic for the study of modernism and as a historical symptom of those very tendencies to commodification

within the modernist period. However, previous accounts of commodification, reification and modernism have, as I argue, conspicuously ignored the gender implications of desires to produce a sensual language of concrete things.

2. MARX

Fenichel Pitkin, in an article unravelling some of at least twenty senses of the word "reification", refers to the difficulties of "wading through this dismal swamp of reification theory."¹ The N/OED defines the word as, "the mental conversion of a person or abstract concept into a thing", formed upon the Latin **res**, a thing.² As Pitkin succinctly notes, this represents a semantic confusion since it is **prima facie** senseless to talk of a **mental** conversion of a person or concept into a thing.³ For a mental conversion of a concept still remains at a conceptual, and hence non-materialised level. Reification is meaningless if we suppose it to refer to an actual transformation of substances. It is rather a perception of one type of material in terms of some other, more physical, material: a person as an object, a word viewed as matter.

Such a conception of reification is found in Hegel. Marcuse called the initial three sections of the Phenomenology of Mind, "a critique of positivism, and even more of reification."⁴ Hegel analyses the confrontation between subject and object as part of the overall development of self-consciousness. Recognition that the subject creates the world must be preceded by recognition of the self **as** a subject. This, in turn, can only emerge when the subject recognises **another** self as a subject. This

process of mutual recognition takes a violent twist into the famous master/slave (more properly lordship and serfdom) dialectic, where the struggle between the two results in differing conceptions of self-consciousness: a master who merely desires gratification from things, and a slave whose function is to produce things for the master's consumption. The slave has "consciousness in the form of thinghood", a reified consciousness.⁵ Importantly for Marx's reading of Hegel, this slave-consciousness is achieved by labour as objectification. In producing things for the master to consume, the slave imputes human characteristics to the objects upon which he/she labours. Objects are thus recognisable human creative products rather than entities distinct from subjects.⁶

Terminological problems reappear when Marx adapts Hegel to formulate a theory of reification. The German **Verdinglichung** is the term translated into English as "reification." As Arthur notes, we must distinguish adequately between reification and "objectification" (**Vergegenständlichung**).⁷ Marx describes objectification in the following way:

The product of labour is labour embodied and made material in an object, it is the objectification of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. (EW, 324)

Objectification captures Marx's point that to be human is to engage in labouring in some way to form an object. Marx altered this essentially Hegelian concept because he believed Hegel "sees only the positive and not the negative side of labour" (EW, 386). Objects produced by human labour in capitalist societies are used as commodities which are removed from their

original producers. Indeed human labour itself becomes viewed as a object for sale, like the commodity. The worker, therefore, "is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object"(EW, 324). The experience of labour, a distinctive human capacity, in capitalist societies amounts not to objectification, which should assist fulfilling human abilities, but rather to "alienation" (Entausserung), or loss of one's object. To recover this object, and thus confirm the subject's humanity, is the goal of Marxism. In another way, as will be shown, the desire in Imagist aesthetics to produce a language embedded in the concrete represents a similar quest for a lost object.

Hegel, according to Marx, equated objectification with alienation, the loss of one's object when it is possessed by another (EW, 386). Marx wishes to distinguish between positive and negative senses of objectification, between the positive relation a subject has to an Object, and the negative relation a person has to a Thing. Objects produced by free human labour confirm the subject, whereas alienated labour under capitalism only produces Things. (Throughout, when capitalised as Thing and Object reference will be to this division. When uncapitalised the words will refer to their synonymous common usage of an entity of some sort.)

A key passage in Marx's 1844 writings sharply cleaves apart the respective senses of Thing and Object:

The **alienation of self-consciousness** establishes **thingness**. Because man is equivalent to self-consciousness, his alienated objective being or **thingness** (...) is the equivalent of **alienated** self-consciousness, and **thingness** is established by this alienation....a **self-consciousness**, through its alienation, can only establish

thingness, i.e. abstract things, a thing of abstraction and not a **real** thing.(EW, 388-9)

Opposed to this feeble creation of "abstract things" is the notion of a subject labouring objectively to create Objects. Objective being, for Marx, means the "material essential powers" of a subject are occupied with "**real natural objects** for the objects of its being"(EW, 388). In other words, it is not only that the subject labours to form objects, but that in so producing Objects not Things it also forms itself: "It creates and establishes only objects because it is established by objects"(EW, 389). When all objects become objectifications of the subject, socially confirming his/her humanity, then the subject too becomes an object, an object for other subjects (EW, 352-353).

In the early Marx, reification, not yet so named, is primarily a complaint that human objects and, reflexively, human subjects, are epistemologically fallen Things. Alienation through lack of one's object produces a self-consciousness of mere "thingness". In Capital Marx proceeds to analyse how this degradation of Object to Thing, within capitalist societies, has a more widespread hold upon subjects. Here, the creation of "abstract things" is termed the production of commodities, and reification is transformed into an economic as well as psychic structure. The basic structural description Marx will use of the commodity in Capital, that it is a "thing of abstraction", is already in place in the 1844 writings. This counters the arguments of a commentator on Marx such as Israel, for whom the theory of alienation is displaced by a theory of reification as a consequence of Marx's shift from labour to commodity as starting point of analysis.⁸ Marx's dual notion of commodification as both

abstraction and reification is thus already evident in his early account of the alienation of labour.

This is important since it shows that commodification, the phenomenon Capital fulsomely analyses, paradoxically includes within it both reification as a errant form of objectification and abstraction as a description of the Thing so produced.⁹ In Jameson's phrase (although he appears to call reification what should properly be termed commodification), "Reification designates a structure which is at one and the same time a process."¹⁰ Commodification is thus the correct overall term for both the process of reifying human beings and their objects, and the structure of objects as "things of abstraction" resulting from that process. Commodification is itself, in Marxist theory, a dialectical category. Modernism, interpreted as an attempt to face up to commodification, finds its texts uneasily teetering between these twin poles of abstraction and reification.

Marx's first explicit use of the category of reification occurs in the section in Capital upon "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret":

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things....The commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material (**dinglich**) relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relations between men which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things....I call this the

fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities.¹¹

Objectification, intended to confirm objective being, is distorted into the "objective characteristics" of the Thing which a subject produces through labour. Humanly created Objects confront people as alienated Things and the social relations necessary for the production of objects are transformed into a "relation between things", into monetary relations of human labour as bought or sold commodity. Marx, interestingly, distinguishes between "commodity" and "commodity-form", the former referring to the Object one produces through labour and the latter to the form the Object takes as a Thing within the capitalist market.

Commodity-form emerges from the "value-relation" of the products of labour. It is here that the abstractive face of the commodity is detectable. That which forms the value of commodities, argues Marx, is "equal, or abstract, human labour."¹² It displays none of the qualitatively particular forms of labour that go into the formation of objects, none of the specific "essential powers" of each individual sweating over the creation of some material form. Indeed, unlike the substantial reality and use-value of such an object, "Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values; in this it is the direct opposite of the coarsely sensuous nature objectivity of commodities as physical objects."¹³ The commodity-form, as an abstraction from the particular use-value of an object, represses the materiality of the object laboured upon: "Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight."¹⁴ Paradoxically, however, this repression, as Freud argued of all repression, is not in reality lost, but is merely displaced elsewhere. Gross

materiality, stripped away from the object by commodification, returns to alter the composition and form of the human subject. This displaced materiality stamps the social character of human labour as a form of relation between "things." The labour process produces dematerialised Things, but the repressed materiality of objects returns as the "material relations between persons and social relations between things."¹⁵ The human subject thus lives under capitalism as a reified person:

Their own movement within society has for them the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them.¹⁶

This completes Marx's analysis of the operation of reification, one in which the subject is deformed by Things rather than formed by objectification. For Marx, in one phrase, reification is objectification in an alienated mode.

Marx's analysis then shifts to detailed consideration of commodities and their markets, the "movement made by things" in capitalist economies. Although this discussion takes us away from the theory of reification, it is important to note in passing, as it is a feature prominent in Ezra Pound's poetry, the way Marx describes this movement of commodities. This is Marx's famous description of the circulation of commodities as money: "The continuing circular movement of the two antithetical metamorphoses of commodities, or the repeated alternating flow of sale and purchase, is reflected in the unceasing turnover of money, in the function it performs of a **perpetuum mobile** of circulation."¹⁷ It is this ability of the commodity to travel at great velocity, while still retaining a material

form, that makes it a perfect image of Pound's theoretical call for "things in motion; motion in things".¹⁸

Returning to things without motion, we can trace a tripartite schema for Marx's theory of the functioning of reification. Initially, Objects are degraded into Things. Secondly, human beings are also transformed into Things by dint of selling their labour as a commodity. Thirdly, reification erases the processes and signs of labour necessary to produce objects. Instead, human activity is subject to "movement made by things", the signs of commodities thus imprint their forms upon their original producers. Marx summarises this state of affairs in volume three of Capital, where he uses **Verdinglichung** for the first time:

The mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification (Verdinglichung) of social relations...the bewitched, distorted and upside-down world haunted by Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre, who are at the same time social characters and mere things.¹⁹

Here Marx clearly emphasises that the crux of reification is the reversal of relations between people and Things. Indeed the language of "mystification" and "distortion" might indicate that reification is a mere synonym for theories of ideology as false-consciousness, where reification makes us falsely perceive people as Things. To understand a reified language as akin to a totalised false consciousness allows no position from which to articulate critically the processes and forms of linguistic reification. For a study of the convergence between language and reification it is more fruitful to consider the first moment in Marx's analysis: when Objects are transformed into Things. For in this moment, if

we introduce modernist poetic language as our concern, discourses become transformed into hardened matter. The intention, reading Imagist poetics from a Utopian point of view, is to produce linguistic objects which, though resolutely material, are not the "things of abstraction" of the commodity. Transforming words into things is thus, paradoxically, a way to contest the abstractions of exchange-value Marx discovered in the commodity.

3. PHILOLOGY AND REIFICATION

Before considering advances in theories of reification after Marx, it is helpful to consider in more detail the meaning of the term itself, analysing it philologically, in order to draw out the suitability of yoking together language and reification. Philology is not such an alien discourse to Marxism as it might appear. Marx himself described Engels as a "comparative philologist"; Michel Foucault, in his "archeology" of the relations between words and things, Les Mots et les Choses (1966), pithily comments that the first volume of Capital shows Marx utilising the philological technique of exegesis to analyse economic value.²⁰ Georg Lukács, first major theorist of reification in the twentieth century, commented upon Marx's own comments on language in The German Ideology:

Marx goes on to make a number of very fine observations about the effects of reification upon language. A philological study from the standpoint of historical materialism could profitably begin here.²¹

Lukács's wish for a philology informed by historical materialism should be extended from an investigation into how language is altered by reification, to include study of how particular discourses produce effects of reification. Such an enterprise could commence by examining the word "reification" itself, revealing that there is a intimate philological connection linking reification to language.

The New English Dictionary (1910) contains no mention of Marx's use of reification. The first source is from 1846, and a more perspicuous one from 1854:

A process of what may be called reification, or the conscious conversion of what had hitherto been regarded as living beings into impersonal substances.²²

This definition accords, *prima facie*, with Marx's exposition of reification as a process which transforms human subjects. It is not until the Supplement to the OED (1982) that we find a specifically Marxist reference to the term. One citation is from Herbert Marcuse's Reason and Revolution (1941):

Marx's early writings are the first explicit statement of the process of reification (**Verdinglichung**) through which capitalist society makes all personal relations between men take the form of objective relations between things.²³

One "personal relation", as Marcuse puts it, between individuals is that of language. If interpersonal relations in capitalist society are subjected to reification then, **a posteriori**, the words we use will be affected in a similar fashion. An example of this meaning of reification is cited in the OED from Robin Blackburn in 1969: "An alienated society naturally encourages a re-ifying vocabulary."²⁴ To claim that alienation "naturally" enforces reification begs the question of the various ways in which reification is socially constructed, as Blackburn's reference to an "Alienated society" suggests. It is interesting, however, that changes in language are presented as lexicographical examples of a definition of reification.

The OED Supplement cites two other sources which maintain this connection. Zellig Harris's Methods in Structural Linguistics (1951) refers to "the reificatory question of what part of human behaviour constitute language", while C.E.Osgood, in Method and Theory in Experimental Psychology (1953), claims "The second hindrance to objectivity is the ubiquitous tendency to reify the word to assume the word itself somehow carries its own meaning."²⁵ The latter citation interests because it indicates reification operates semantically. This, on the whole, is how theories of linguistic reification, mainly in the field of sociological theory, have been interpreted.²⁶

Taken together, these three citations - Blackburn, Osgood and Harris - illustrate that in order to define reification the dictionary readily refers to linguistic examples. Such an emphasis helps shift elucidation of reification away from that of a confusing "mental conversion" to something most noticed in linguistic forms.

Etymology continues this association of language and reification.

The 1910 N/OED derives "reification" from "real", since it shares the same root, the Latin **res**, but also the Old French, "**reel**". Real is defined initially as "having an objective existence; actually existing as a thing." The seventh sense of "real" is that of "consisting of actual things." A sub-heading to this reads, "Of written characters: Representing things instead of sounds." Two citations are presented for this meaning, now claimed to be obsolete. The first is from Bacon's The Advancement of Learning (1605): "We understand further, that it is the use of China...to write in characters real, which express letters nor words in gross, but things or notions."²⁷ The second example is from another seventeenth century text, Bishop Wilkins' scheme for a universal language, An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language (1668). Wilkins calls for, "A Real Universal Character, that should not signifie words, but things and notions."²⁸ Both examples illustrate the idea of a material alteration in the composition of language; both show a desire for a more thingly language.

Bacon's reference to Chinese ideogrammatic script sheds its obsolescent character in the twentieth century if we consider the publication, engineered by Pound, of Ernest Fenollosa's important essay, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry. Fenollosa's essay, which exerted a strong influence upon Pound and other modernist poets and which has more recently been praised by Derrida for its "irreducibly graphic poetics", proposes ideogrammatic writing as a method which "brings language close to things."²⁹ That is, it not only brings words close to things in terms of referential distance, but it also brings language closer to **being** thingly. Fenollosa's text, impetus to the thickening textures of modernist poetics, helps illustrate once more the intimate connection of

words with reification.

Etymologically then, reification as a term has often been utilised to describe forms of, and alterations in, discourse. From these examples two separate forms of linguistic reification can be discerned. In the case of Bacon, Wilkins and Fenollosa, language is epistemologically changed, becoming more self-consciously a material substance. Alternatively, shown in the citations from Osgood and Blackburn, a reification of language implies a semantic alteration, whereby the meanings of words or phrases are fixed. The OED gives a citation from 1882 illustrating this meaning: "When people make or find a new "abstract noun" they instantly try to put it on a shelf or into a box, as though it were a thing; thus they reify it."³⁰ Aside from the puzzling idea of finding an abstract noun, the clear inference is that a reifying of a word restricts its meaning. I will argue that Imagist poetics, on the whole, reifies language in the first, epistemological, sense. Part of what distinguishes Pound from the other Imagist poets is his advocacy of the second, semantic, form of reification, especially in his prose writings. Pound believes the two forms of reification of language are deeply related, such that a thickening and foregrounding of language as material can entail a fixity of its meaning. Semantic reification, as Pound conceives it, is also a deeply political project: "Towards order in the state: the definition of the word."³¹(61)

4. LUKÁCS

Another writer, in an entirely different context and tradition, brilliantly alert to the politics of reification is Georg Lukács. Lukács's

attention is not explicitly directed towards a reification of language in modernism, but the insights of his essay, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat"(1922), can, and have, been applied to literary language.³² I will consider Lukács's essay for its continuation of the Hegelian tradition in which Marx initially outlined a theory of reification. It will then be useful to discuss two writers in that same Germanic tradition, Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, who are both critical of Lukács's theory of reification. All three view reification as affecting not semantics but epistemology, of producing a change in how the world is understood, and all discuss, in differing ways, reification and commodification as it affects modernity and modernism. Where we earlier traced reification as a term often used about language, we now find reification wielded as a category describing literary texts in the early twentieth century.

Lukács's reification essay, published in the same modernist **annus mirabilis** of 1922 as Joyce's Ulysses and Eliot's The Waste Land, can be read, partially, as a text displaying many of the concerns of modernist aesthetics. Jameson asserts that this essay, along with Lukács's literary criticism, revolves around the conceptual opposition, derived from Hegel, of the concrete and the abstract.³³ For Sanford Schwartz, in his panoramic exploration of the "matrix of modernism", one of the key oppositions in all modernist poetics, and in Western philosophy in the early twentieth century, is precisely that between abstraction and concrete sensation or experience.³⁴ Lukács's use of this modernist opposition derives from Marx upon the commodity-form: the commodity represents the "formal equality of human labour in the abstract" (HCC, 87). But this abstraction is also a structure of concretion: "The formal act of exchange... suppresses use-

value as use-value and establishes a relation of concrete equality between concretely unequal and indeed incomparable objects" (HCC, 104).

Lukács's critique of commodification, and the bourgeois philosophical tradition he sees accompanying it, is a modernist critique in the sense that it focuses, in a way the nineteenth century Marx merely suggests, upon **form**.³⁵ As Jameson comments, for Lukács, "what is false is not so much the **content** of classical middle-class philosophy as its **form**."³⁶

Lukács's first collection of essays, Soul and Form, written between 1908 and 1910 and pre-Marxist in influence, presents an early account of the importance of form. Forms exist ahistorically as **a priori** categories of value. Reification, conceived in a Weberian sense of rationalisation, prevents aesthetic realisation of such forms.³⁷ In the later text commodity-form, though it appears to suggest a world of concrete relations, is an abstraction masquerading as concrete. Or rather it is formally concrete, but lacking in concrete content. Every object, writes Lukács, "exists as an immediate inseparable complex of form and content", but commodification of thought and society produces an "indifference of form towards content" (HCC, 126). Real content, for Lukács, exists as a "material substratum of the object" (HCC, 126), a deep and concrete amalgam of form and content. Again, this can be viewed in terms of Schwartz's "modern tendency to think in terms of 'surfaces' and 'depths' focussing particularly on the opposition between conceptual abstraction and concrete sensation."³⁸ Lukács can thus be placed alongside modern thinkers such as Bergson or Freud who relentlessly search for meaningful depths to meaningless surfaces. Lukács's criticism that reification ignores the "material substratum" of objects also finds an obvious comparison in Imagism's search beyond poetic abstraction for a language replete with a

"Direct treatment of the 'thing.'"³⁹ My reading of Lukács not only utilises his insights into reification to help analyse Imagist texts in future chapters, it also seeks to understand Lukács in terms of modernism, interrogating and preoccupied by the same issues as Imagist aesthetics. This helps develop our understanding of the theory of reification as it emerges from the social and historical conditions of modernity.

Lucien Goldman described History and Class Consciousness as having "effected a decisive change of direction in philosophy in general and Marxist theory in particular."⁴⁰ This fresh direction, certainly not noticeable in Anglo-American philosophy, is found in Lukács's interpretation of the subject-object dialectic of classical German philosophy from Kant onwards. For Lukács this philosophical tradition "springs from the reified structure of consciousness" (HCC, 110-111). Post-Kantian philosophy believed that the world did not exist independently of the knowing subject, but rather existed as a product of the human subject (HCC, 111). The objects of this humanly produced world, however, appear to exist as given, as independent of human activity. Philosophy must therefore find some way of reconciling this dichotomy between knowing subject and known, humanly produced but independent, object (HCC, 116).

Lukács's critique of the solutions philosophy offered, whether in Kant's thing-in-itself or Hegel's Absolute Spirit, is that such presumed answers are only formal and theoretical in nature. The object can only be known in **contemplative** mode, within a system of formal, scientific laws empty of concrete content. As Jameson paraphrases Lukács: "It is as though our primary relationship to the things of the outside world were not that of making or use, but rather that of a motionless gaze."⁴¹ The desire is to comprehend all objects in purely formal terms, without recognition of

their distinctive sensual contents. Objects are severed from subjects and are unable to be grasped, as was initially intended, as products of human history and production. The model for this type of knowledge is what Lukács terms "universal mathematics":

It was an attempt to establish a rational system of relations which comprehends the totality of the formal possibilities, proportions and relations of a rationalised existence with the aid of which every phenomenon - independently of its real and material distinctiveness - could be subjected to an exact calculus.(HCC, 129)

Formal rationality thus ignores the "material distinctiveness" of the object cognised. Equally, the knowing subject, only allowed to grasp its object in a formal contemplative way, itself becomes understood in this reified fashion:

All human relations (viewed as the objects of social activity) assume increasingly the objective forms of the abstract elements of the conceptual systems of natural science.(HCC, 131)

Human subjects are transformed into concrete things to be objectively studied in the same movement that abolishes all possibility of concrete knowledge of the subject.

Reification is negatively identified with **rationalisation**, a tendency in Lukács which has its roots, as Steadman Jones argues, in late nineteenth century German idealist and neo-Kantian thought. For Steadman Jones, History and Class Consciousness represents "the first major irruption of the romantic anti-scientific tradition of bourgeois thought into Marxist

theory."⁴² This is a fair criticism, clearly situating Lukács in his historical context, but it ignores the extent to which Lukács's dislike of science is not, primarily, due to its rationalist character, as in the case of a Weber, but due more to the way scientific rationality typifies a deeper debilitating structure, that of the commodity. Objects are thus studied rationally as Things or, as Lukács puts it, "the individual object which man confronts directly, either as producer or consumer, is distorted in its objectivity by its commodity-character"(HCC, 93). Such a description is apt, not only for scientific cognition, but equally for cognition of an aesthetic object. It is just, as Lukács notes, that the art object cunningly conceals this distorted state of affairs by its "perfected immediacy"(HCC, 158). At first reified aesthetic objects appear richly concrete. It is only later we observe they possess the same empty abstractions more clearly evident in the object of scientific study.

Lukács advances upon Marx's analysis of this distortion of the object in his consideration of the effect of reification upon the human subject. Lukács concentrates upon how "the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man"(HCC, 93). This turn to a scrutiny of consciousness as determined by social being has been explained in differing ways by historians of Marxist theory. Perry Anderson views it as part of a shift within Marxism in the 1920s to study cultural and aesthetic superstructures, a defensive reaction by intellectuals to the failure of revolutionary movements after World War One. Retreating from harsh political realities, Marxism pondered the role of consciousness in capitalist societies.⁴³ This interpretation is challenged by Pauline Johnson, who perceives the shift as stemming not only from the failure of

workers' revolutions, but, additionally, from a response to the inadequacy of the theoretical model of the Second International. This claimed that the scientific inner laws of capitalism would eventually and inexorably explode capitalist societies and catapult them into socialism. The reification of consciousness, as Lukács explicated it, was part of various attempts to progress beyond crude forms of deterministic Marxist historicism.⁴⁴

Marxism had failed, argued Lukács, to take account of commodification as the "specific problem of our age" (HCC, 84). Society is required to "satisfy all its needs in terms of commodity exchange" (HCC, 91). Objectively, a world of Things and relations between Things arises, the world of commodities. Subjectively, these relations between Things appear to consciousness to be the real nature of human relations (HCC, 87). The commodity thus operates as a kind of monstrous artist, able to "penetrate society in all its aspects and to remould it in its own image" (HCC, 85). Reification thus aesthetically remoulds the subject as well as society:

It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are not longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can "own" or "dispose" of like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic "qualities" into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process. (HCC, 100)

For Lukács no practical division between subjective and objective poles of reification is possible. Subjective consciousness itself bears the weighty "imprint" of the objective world of commodities.

Reification is thus "the universal structuring principle" of modern society(HCC, 85). It forms a totality, that category of thought which Lukács, according to Martin Jay, introduced to the centre of Marxist theory.⁴⁵ This totality is, however, a false one. What appears as an all-engrossing totality is purely formal, made from an atomised and fragmented set of things. For this totality consists of abstract atoms of equivalent labour (HCC, 91-92). A true totality, one in which particularity stretches freely into particularity within an image of the whole, can only appear if based upon a concrete "material substratum" (HCC,109). And that requires more than the contemplative grasp of the object that bourgeois philosophy offers. For Lukács it is the proletariat who are able to disturb contemplative thought with what might be called a physical mode of thought. They will thus reconcile, finally, subject and object by becoming "the identical subject-object of history" (HCC, xxiii). Lukács has, however, to produce an argument to justify how, in a reified world in which "reality is...the same for both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat" (HCC, 164), only one class can forge past this false totality. Lukács claims that what assists the proletariat in concretely breaking through reification is its position as the most reified class in society: "in his social existence the worker is immediately placed wholly on the side of the object: he appears to himself immediately as an object" (HCC, 167). Because the worker must "objectify himself as a commodity" it entails "his consciousness is the self-consciousness of the commodity" (HCC, 168). Once embedded within the commodity the worker is able to understand, in a practical not contemplative fashion (HCC, 169), the nature of the commodity as an object produced, ultimately, by the social division and oppression of classes (HCC, 171). This is a concrete vision of the whole, derived from the grasp

of the proletariat upon the real conditions of production of the commodity. They possess this insight because of their privileged position, dwelling within the "material substratum" of the commodity itself.

This argument, though sophisticated, has proved historically, not only to the chagrin of Lukács, to be erroneous.⁴⁶ It seems disingenuous to claim that the class most subject to the brutalising effects of reification is the one destined to lead the way beyond reification, this privilege stemming from the very reified nature of the class. Lukács explains this contradiction by an argument that smacks of his earlier Romantic anti-capitalism: granted that the worker is crippled by reification "it remains true that precisely his humanity and his soul are not changed into commodities" (HCC, 172). This survival of the soul and humanity buffers the worker against further commodification and serves as origin of the rebellion against reification. How these qualities escape the totalising influence of reification is not explained. Ultimately, as Andrew Arato has argued, Lukács requires more than the chance survival of the proletariat's soul to push past reification: he requires "the Party" to foster an unreified consciousness.⁴⁷ This introduces the obvious problem with the use by Lukács of the concept of totality: how can the Party, as a collective of non-reified individuals (and, by and large, bourgeois thinkers to boot) escape the all-pervasive strictures of reification?⁴⁸

Lukács sees the proletariat as harbinger of a concrete perspective upon a world both reified and formally abstract. In this teleological function they echo Lukács's description of the work of art in "past golden ages" (HCC, 137). Specifically, he refers to the late eighteenth century, when the principle of art was of "a concrete totality that springs from a conception of form orientated towards the concrete content of its material

substratum" (HCC, 137). This aesthetic object possesses a deep and coherent concretised form, an ideal sought by many modernist writers, avoiding the surface play of reified particulars that the commodity represents. Paradoxically Lukács finds this ideal, described in modernist terminology, in the realist novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Modernism in the novel is criticised by Lukács, in terms recalling his analysis of the commodity, for presenting characters in terms of "abstract potentiality" rather than "concrete potentiality".⁴⁹ This eventually obliterates the crucial distinction between abstract and concrete, producing a disintegration of personality and a presentation of the outer world as static.⁵⁰ The modernist novel is all form, lacking the impulse to display the hidden "concrete totality" of the realist text.

Jameson's interpretation of this rather sweeping dismissal takes Lukács's main dislike to be the use of symbolism in modernist texts. The presence of symbolism in a text, argues Jameson, "always stands as an indication that the immediate meaning of objects has disappeared: the process would not arise in the first place if objects had not already become problematical in their very nature."⁵¹ This argument originates in Marx's analysis of the transformation, under commodification, of the human Object of labour into the reified Thing of the market. In their origin, writes Jameson, "all objects have a human meaning" but in modern industrial societies this link with meaningful human labour and production is obscured: "objects appear to lead an independent life of their own, and it is precisely this illusion which is the source of the symbolic."⁵² Recourse to symbolism in the novel is always an admission that the original meaning of objects is lost. For Lukács, argues Jameson, this "second best" approach to the object-world is merely part of the "purely static

contemplative way of looking at life and experience which is the equivalent in literature to the attitude of bourgeois objectivity in philosophical thought."⁵³ In this vein Lukács, paradoxically, stands very close to the aims of Anglo-American theories of modernist poetry. Imagism set itself resolutely against symbolism, both as an outdated form for English poetry in the early twentieth century and as an aesthetic that did not directly reach out to capture in concrete language the essence of its object. As Pound noted, for Imagism too symbolism was always a second-best since "the natural object is always the adequate symbol."⁵⁴

Eagleton argues that Lukács's realist aesthetics are a "left mirror-image" of the bourgeois society and its commodity-form analysed so clearly in History and Class Consciousness. This important failing in Lukács is traced to his neglect of the "progressive dimensions of capitalism", in particular "the need for an aesthetics which has learnt from the commodity form rather than lapsed back into some nostalgic totality before it ever was."⁵⁵ This is an odd failing in Lukács, given that he believes the proletariat explode reification by dwelling so close to the commodity that they become a form of super-commodity, able to deconstruct the commodity alone. Imagism's search for a "language of concrete things" seems, **prima facie**, to contain just such a learning from commodification, displaying that impulse of form directed to deeper concrete content which is the principle of aesthetics. What such a poetry lacks, in a Lukácsian sense, is the law of totality ruling over and through it. Imagism thus represents the fragmented particular of the commodity, a poetics of small, gritty moments unconcerned to produce anything larger in form. More than this, as I shall argue, learning from the commodity-form, as a principle of modernist aesthetics, is no sure method for combating a reified language.

5. BENJAMIN AND ADORNO

Two contemporaries of Lukács in the 1920s and 1930s who might be described as writers trying to base an aesthetic criticism in the lessons of the commodity are Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Both criticise Lukács's conception of reification but still use the concept in their various cultural critiques of modernism. As the debates over modernism in Adorno and Benjamin constitute a vast and diverse body of texts I will necessarily be selective in my discussion. I will consider both writers for their critiques of Lukács and for their discussion of reification as an epistemological category in modernism as it is applicable to language.⁵⁶

Benjamin first read History and Class Consciousness in 1924, while by 1928 Adorno had begun to incorporate Lukácsian ideas into his writings.⁵⁷ Gillian Rose argues that Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin all construct different theories of reification, perhaps due to conflicting versions of the theory in Marx himself. Lukács, argues Rose, discusses the effects of reification upon subjective experience under capitalism. Benjamin is interested in the way commodities appear to take on a life of their own, a "phantasmagoric" existence. Adorno was concerned with "the way a relation between men appears in the form of a natural **property** of a thing."⁵⁸ This account renders Lukács considerably less complex a theorist, but it does serve as a useful starting point for discussion of Adorno and Benjamin.

For Adorno, in Rose's view, reification is a process whereby value only appears as the property of a commodity.⁵⁹ Capitalism obscures and replaces the distinctive use-values of objects with equivalent economic exchange-values. As Rose paraphrases Adorno: "It is the way unlike things appear to be identical or equal, and the mode of thinking which can

consider them as equal, which is reification."⁶⁰ Reification is not a feature of consciousness as such, as in Lukács, but is a theory of how a social category determines consciousness: "The fetish character of the commodity is not a fact of consciousness; rather, it is dialectical, in the eminent sense that it produces consciousness."⁶¹

In early texts such as Dialectic of Enlightenment Adorno, as Martin Jay notes, associates reification with the effects of "instrumental reason", that is, scientific domination over nature.⁶² Reification produces a "forgetting", a movement whereby the sensual particularity of objects is ignored: "objects become thinglike at the moment when they are seized without all their elements being contemporaneous, where something of them is forgotten."⁶³ This echoes Lukács's dislike of symbolism for its deliberate neglect of the original humanised object, an object richly rounded in its possession of contemporaneous elements.

In later works by Adorno reification used as a hermeneutic, in the manner of Lukács, is regarded more suspiciously. In Negative Dialectics Adorno criticises the easy employment of the term, in an attack directed towards Lukács:

The thinker may easily comfort himself by imagining that in the dissolution of reification...he possesses the philosopher's stone. But reification itself is the reflexive form of a false objectivity; centering theory around reification, a term of consciousness, makes the critical theory idealistically acceptable to the reigning consciousness and to the collective unconsciousness....We can no more reduce dialectics to reification that we can reduce it to any other isolated category.⁶⁴

As Jay notes, this statement contradicts Rose's interpretation of Adorno, in which reification was not a fact of consciousness.⁶⁵ However, the main focus of Adorno's critique here and elsewhere is not concerned with questions of consciousness as with the Lukácsian notion of totality. If reification is a falsely totalised structure, then its demise consists simply in substituting, as Lukács suggests, a true totality, such as that offered by the realist novel. For Adorno, however, "the whole is the false" and thus "A liberated mankind would by no means be a totality."⁶⁶ Substituting one totality for another does not rid one of the false thought that underlies all totalities.

The problem with Adorno's case is that frequently it too pessimistically lapses into totality-thinking. At times, as Rose notes, society for Adorno is "completely reified."⁶⁷ His account of the language of the "culture industry" in Dialectic of Enlightenment clearly displays this tendency. The language of Hollywood film, advertising and publicity is "purified" in order to communicate transparently that which the industry wants it to mean:

But the result is that the word...becomes so fixed to the thing that it is just a petrified formula. This affects language and object alike. Instead of making the object experiential, the purified word treats it as an abstract instance, and everything else (...) fades away in reality. A left-half at football, a black-shirt, a member of the Hitler Youth, and so on, are no more than names.⁶⁸

Advertising slogans effect a total degradation of language. With the rise of Fascism "this kind of language is already universal, totalitarian. All the violence done to words is so vile that one can hardly bear to hear them

any longer."⁶⁹ The reifications of Hollywood language pave the way for an acception of Fascism.

Adorno thus reaches a theoretical and political impasse. His criticism of Lukácsian totality, as Jay comments, turned into, "a fear of anything collective, communitarian or intersubjective."⁷⁰ Language as both collective and intersubjective proves troublesome to Adorno. If we apply his concept of reification to language, as typified in the culture industry critique, we find, as Peter Dews notes, reification appearing as a problem of language rather than a problem **within** language, a symptom pointing to specific linguistic practices.⁷¹ The leap above from advertising to Fascism as equivalent discourses shows this error. Adorno steps out of the totality of language in order to call all discourses reified, rather than pointing to specific discourses **within** language which exhibit and reinforce, in different ways, instances of reification.

One discourse which Adorno maintained did reinforce reification was that of the modernist work of art in its autonomous form. Autonomous art is an art whose social function is to have no function; it is an art matching Oscar Wilde's dictum that "All art is quite useless."⁷² In reinforcing reification, however, modernist art strives to prefigure the dissolution of reification. Indeed, in a move echoing Lukács's idea of the proletariat powerfully and positively commodifying itself, Adorno sees autonomous modernist texts as "absolute commodities; they are social products which have discarded the illusion of being-for-society, an illusion tenaciously retained by all other commodities."⁷³ As Osborne elucidates this idea, "while (like money) the autonomous art commodity has no use-value which is distinct from its exchange-value by virtue of corresponding to some direct, quantifiable social utility or need, it does

(unlike money) nonetheless possess some kind of use-value distinct from exchange value: namely, its capacity to produce artistic or 'aesthetic' experience."⁷⁴

However Adorno sees that the autonomy of the modernist art-object, in its tortured escape from commodification, only runs uneasily into a further reification. If art's uselessness prevents it from being swallowed up by exchange-value, it also renders it useless in any actual, rather than imagined, emancipatory role. Its only mode of being useless is by sealing itself off from any concrete application other than as symbol of an unalienated object. And, as Lukács's point about symbolism makes clear, the art-work as symbol of ^{an} unreified object can never reach beyond a merely symbolic function. In this it promises what it can never fully realise: an unreified object-world. As Eagleton puts it, for Adorno, "Art's autonomy is a form of reification, reproducing what it resists."⁷⁵ Or, as Adorno says in his late text, Aesthetic Theory:

One has to be downright obstinate not to see the complicity of artistic reification and social reification, and to ignore the untruth of reification, which is that it fetishizes what is a processual relation between moments. The work of art is both a process and an instant. Its objectification, while a necessary condition of aesthetic autonomy, is also a petrifying tendency. The more the social labour embodied in an artwork becomes objectified and organised, the more it sounds empty and alien to the work.⁷⁶

An Imagist language of concrete things might represent the Lukácsian impulse of form directed to a non-commodified concrete content.

Simultaneously, in an Adornian reading, it is also a petrification of form

taking us, like symbolism, further from the social labour inherent in a unreified object. Its very autonomy cuts it off from the commodity; but it only maintains that stance by adopting the formal strategies of the commodity.

The contradictions of Adorno's position derive, in part, from his inability, determined by his own theory, to distinguish objectification from reification. Unlike Lukács, who sees the reified Thing as a fallen version of the objectified Object, Adorno can make no such clear-cut distinction. For him, "humanity includes reification as well as its opposite...positively, as the form in which, however, brittle and inadequate it may be, subjective impulses are realized but only by being objectified."⁷⁷ Reification, for Adorno, cannot be seen as that which negates "humanity", and objectification as that which confirms it. Such a pleasing division is too optimistic and also grossly undialectical. Adorno's inability to offer a path beyond the binary terms he opposes occurs, in this instance, because he cannot, or will not, distinguish objectification from reification.⁷⁸ He will not, as in the case of Lukács, hold out a hope that art-works might recapture the "material substratum" of the reified object; or, more to the point, that the proletariat could engage in a similar strategy of recovery in the political world. In this way the form of Adorno's own argument, able only to see another reification as the way past reification and unable to find a redeeming concrete content beneath the commodity, resembles the modernist art-work he ambiguously so admired. This is a structure best described in the words of the early Lukács: "form is paradox incarnate...the veritable life of the impossible....For form is not reconciliation, but war...of struggling principles."⁷⁹

Adorno's reading of modernism as an unreconciled war between two forms of reification is suggestive, as I shall argue, for considering Imagism's concrete language. Imagism can only, it seems, contest commodification in a paradoxical form, for it is a struggle which only operates by a reification of women. This gendered form of reification revolves around the visual basis of Imagist poetics, the ability of the human gaze to arrest and suspend the moving subject into a static object. Walter Benjamin, in his work on the poet Baudelaire and the nineteenth century Paris Arcades (*Passagenarbeit*), provides an account of modernism and commodification that opens up the question of gender. As Benjamin's texts range over a dazzling array of material I will only discuss those parts that are relevant for my discussion of Imagism.⁸⁰ Benjamin is important for a discussion of modernist poetry because his work, suffused with study of the commodity, situates this analysis in a metropolitan context, a context important for any consideration of certain Imagist motifs. It is this metropolitan setting which forms the basis of his insights into visual perception in modernity.

In his discussion of Baudelaire and the "crisis in perception" in the late nineteenth century, Benjamin argues that "looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze."⁸¹ When this semi-Hegelian mutual visual recognition occurs, we experience a feeling of the "aura". The aura in Benjamin constitutes, as Jameson comments, his "theory of the modern object": it is an experience in which the "mysterious wholeness of objects becomes visible."⁸² It is when cognition glimpses the rich physical constitution of an object, that which is normally obscured by the formal abstractions of the commodity. In other words, it is a brief experience of insight into the Lukácsian "material

substratum" of an object. This aura, Benjamin continues, is missing from perceptions of "natural objects" unless we are able to transfer the "response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man."⁸³ The project of aesthetics is to perceive the aura of an object by infusing it "with the ability to look at us in return."⁸⁴ This skill, as Benjamin notes, is "a well-spring of poetry....Words, too, can have an aura of their own."⁸⁵ It is this ability that Baudelaire's poetry, caught in the increasing industrialisation and commodification of modern life, is unable to achieve: "the disintegration of the aura makes itself felt in his lyrical poetry."⁸⁶ The aura is lost because commodified objects no longer contain the trace of social labour upon them, bereft of humanity they thus cannot return our gaze.

Benjamin's own analysis of modernity, his discussions of the objects of the bourgeois home or the commodities on display in Parisian shopping arcades, is a project designed to inject this lost "aura", in a new form, into reified objects. He attempts to "read" commodities, deciphering what Marx called the "social hieroglyphic" that appears upon such Things.⁸⁷ Endowing these objects with meaning by this translation transforms them from meaningless Things to meaningful Objects capable of returning the human gaze.⁸⁸ The problem with this approach, as Adorno acutely pointed out, was that it required everything to be treated as a commodity. Although, for Adorno, Benjamin sought to "awaken congealed life in petrified objects", his method also entailed an ossifying of "living things."⁸⁹ Benjamin's scrutiny,

appropriates the fetishization of commodities for itself: everything must metamorphose into a thing in order to break the catastrophic

spell of things. Benjamin's thought...swears loyalty to reification instead of flatly rejecting it.⁹⁰

This description of Benjamin resembles the one Adorno gives of the modernist art-work, resisting reification by reproducing itself as a Thing. Any sense of the art-work as consisting not only of matter but also of process, is denied by a method that can only study reified objects.

Adorno himself, as we have seen, did not "flatly" reject reification. Adorno's critique is useful, however, for indicating the problems this strategy encounters. These are difficulties inherent, but untheorised, in Benjamin's own focus upon the auratic gaze. Many of Benjamin's important ideas, such as those in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", consist of discussions of the consequences of changes in modes of visual perception.⁹¹ Benjamin's link between the gaze and reification can be traced to Lukács's notion of the "contemplative stance" introduced by reification: we only passively gaze at the system of reified objects, unable to actively engage with them (HCC, 89). Benjamin detects this passive gaze in poems by Baudelaire depicting a look that is not returned by some object: "the expectation roused by the look of the human eye is not fulfilled. Baudelaire describes eyes of which one is inclined to say that they have lost their ability to look."⁹² This lost ability is a further consequence of the way commodification, as Marx argues in the 1844 Manuscripts, transforms human beings and their senses away from their original capacities: "**all** the physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple estrangement of **all** these senses - the sense of **having**."⁹³ Estrangement of the visual sense in Baudelaire, as Benjamin notes, occurs in a sexualised way: "It was under the spell of these eyes

that **sexus** in Baudelaire detached itself from **eros**."⁹⁴ The desiring glance for the auratic object thus becomes the male gaze, erotically eyeing up prostitutes in the streets of Paris.⁹⁵ Prostitutes, in Baudelaire's poems, are reified into objects for the male gaze. However, no experience of the aura occurs since these women are precisely objects as commodities, selling **sexus**. The sense of looking is displaced by the sense of having.

6. MODERNISM AND THE LOOK

Benjamin's account of Baudelaire introduces a new dimension to accounts of reification and commodification and their effect upon the language of modernist poetry. Reification has now to be thought in fresh epistemological terms, those of changes in visual perception and the gendered nature of the look in the modernist city. Recent accounts of commodification in modernism, drawing upon the pioneering texts of Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin, have seemingly ignored the work of feminist critics upon the way the modernist look is often a structure reifying women.⁹⁶ I will argue that modernist reification, if read as a sensual defence against the abstractions of the commodity, must be understood as producing a further, gender-specific, reification.

Fredric Jameson's influential reading of modernism stresses how isolation of the sense of looking dialectically prompts a new formation, a structure designed to make amends for the initial, miserably fragmented experience vision undergoes when reified. Jameson argues that sight gains a "certain autonomy" in modernity,

a semi-autonomous coherence which, not merely a reflex of capitalist reification and rationalization, also in some measure serves to compensate for the dehumanization of experience reification brings with it.⁹⁷

The further movement this "compensation" takes is that sight acquires "new objects" for cognition, objects which are constituted by a further "abstraction and rationalization which strips the experience of the concrete of such attributes as color, spatial depth, texture...which in their turn undergo reification."⁹⁸ Colours are split from their objects and take on the qualities of the objects from which they are separated. As H.D.'s "The Garden" puts it: "I could scrape the colour/from the petal,/like spilt dye from a rock".⁹⁹ Perception then centres upon reified colour rather than upon some colourful object.

Jameson detects a moment of salvation in this seemingly negative experience, asserting a "Utopian vocation" for this reified sense:

the mission of this heightened and autonomous language of colour <is> to restore at least a symbolic experience of libidinal gratification to a world drained of it, a world of extension, gray and merely quantifiable.¹⁰⁰

It is reasonably easy to find Imagist texts that illustrate Jameson's point, linguistic pictures that offer visual pleasure in a world of "five murdered senses", as Richard Aldington put it in his poem, "Leave-Taking".¹⁰¹ A text by William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All"(1923) is full of vibrant imagistic encounters: "so much depends/upon/a red wheel/barrow", being the most famous example of colour restoring perceptual

importance to an object ripe for commodification.¹⁰²

The difficulties with reading this colourful liaison with the concrete, and many similar Imagist texts, as "libidinal gratification" for the abstraction of the senses by reification, are twofold. First, as Jameson notes, it is only a **symbolic** compensation. The "complete emancipation of all human senses and attributes" that, in Marx's words, comes with the collapse of commodification, is only grotesquely parodied by this partial and fetishistic freedom of the visual sense.¹⁰³ As Adorno mournfully argues, "Our organs grasp nothing sensuous in isolation....Only when purified of appropriation would things be colourful and useful at once."¹⁰⁴ The appropriations of the capitalist commodity, Marx's complaint that we only possess the sense of "having", block Imagist verse from presenting anything but isolated colourful objects, substances of symbolic rather than real use-value.

Jameson's problem perhaps stems from a contradiction within Marx's own account of the relation between labour, objectification and the emancipation of the senses. Seyla Benhabib's reading of Marx's "defetishizing critique" points to two, quite different, models of human emancipation. The first is a "philosophy of the subject", derived from Hegel, where human emancipation is rooted in fulfilment of the notion of objectification: it calls for "the labour paradigm of activity" to be unalienated, seeing this in a subject who works upon an Object rather than a reified Thing.¹⁰⁵ The second perspective is, in Marx's words, that of "sensuous finitude", where emancipation is a transfiguration of existing society from the standpoint of "radically new needs". Such sensualised needs, "the total emancipation of human senses", do not rely upon a subject labouring alone upon some object, but instead upon a social and sensual

relation to other subjects.¹⁰⁶ Very little can actually be said of this second realm, but Marx's valorisation of objectification (the first perspective) means human emancipation is circumscribed by this notion of turning Things back to Objects. Seeing objects as images of this emancipated realm of "sensual finitude", as Jameson does in his reading of modernism, thus confuses the two perspectives: true sensual emancipation would no longer talk of subject-object relations but of subject-subject relations. It would not have humanised objects, whether aesthetic or otherwise, as its goal, but rather humanised humans. Stressing a retranslation of Thing to Object, as Jameson (along with Lukács, Benjamin and perhaps Adorno) only steers one away from "sensual finitude."¹⁰⁷

This point, important since it problematises most accounts of reification as fallen objectification, can be seen in the second difficulty with Jameson's argument about visual pleasure as "libidinal gratification". This eroticised pleasure in colour, and more especially sight, produces in many Imagist texts a further reification. We can see "libidinal gratification" in Imagist verse as a markedly gendered experience. The visual sense, free to roam the streets of modernity, fetishises and commodifies those female forms its male eyeballs settle upon. This, of course, is not a radically new realm of sensual and mutual pleasure, but a decidedly old, one-sided and oppressive act of the senses. It only takes men into a realm of "sensual finitude" at the expense of women remaining as passive, senseless objects.

Libidinal pleasure in looking can enforce a violent set of gendered power relations. Luce Irigaray observes:

Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains the distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, hearing, has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations.¹⁰⁸

Visual reification, of the sort practised in Imagist poetics, is finally no real "compensation" for a commodified society; indeed it only results in a further degradation of the body and its senses.

Adorno once characterised Benjamin's approach to modernity in a phrase that captures the gendered way reification as a visual process operates: "The glance of his philosophy is Medusan."¹⁰⁹ To understand how this description is equally apt for Imagist aesthetics we should consider Freud's account of the legend of the Medusa and the way it relates to the libidinal pleasure of looking.

In 1915 Freud, in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes", argued that scopophilia, the general term for a sexualised exploration by the eyes, takes two interconnected forms - active and passive. Active looking (voyeurism) always precedes being passively looked at (exhibitionism). The initial active look at another is, however, preceded by a narcissistic gazing at oneself, where one's own body is taken as the object of the scopic glance. True active scopophilia develops from this instinct and leaves narcissism behind. However, the emergence of the passive desire to be looked at is a form of regression to the narcissistic state: "The passive scopophilic instinct...holds fast to the narcissistic object."¹¹⁰ The instinct which has previously been directed away from the subject to other objects thus turns around "upon the subject's own ego". This shift from active to passive is "dependent on the narcissistic organization of

the ego".¹¹¹ This instinctual vicissitude, named exhibitionism, is a defence of the ego, which at higher stages of its development is effected by other means (the super-ego). As Freud comments elsewhere, "The compulsion to exhibit...is also closely dependent on the castration complex: it is a means of constantly insisting upon the integrity of the subject's own (male) genitals and it reiterates his infantile satisfaction at the absence of a penis in those of women".¹¹² The castration complex itself, as Jane Gallop argues, is articulated around visuality: it is the sight of either phallic presence (boy) or phallic absence (girl and mother) that introduces sexual difference to the infant.¹¹³

In many Imagist texts, and in more complex form in the early poems of Pound, we find these structures of voyeurism and exhibitionism. Images of women as inert objects jostle alongside male fantasies of being scrutinised by a female gaze. This fetishism of sight can, at one level, be read as a "reaction-formation" to capitalist commodification.¹¹⁴ A further explanation for these linguistic visions, and one which helps mark out Imagism socio-historically from the attention to looking in someone like Baudelaire, has to look at the relation between gender and modernism in early twentieth century Britain. According to Gilbert and Gubar, modernism and the linguistic experiments of its avant-garde (for example, the linguistic reforms prescribed in Imagist manifestos) can be interpreted as part of a struggle between the sexes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.¹¹⁵ Hierarchising things over words to produce a reified discourse is a defence by male modernists to female advances in literature and society. Producing a visual form of that reification, if we follow Freud's account, is another anxious reaction to feminine progress: prevention of symbolic castration (as in the blinded Oedipus) of male linguistic power

thus utilises the reification of the gaze, itself a product of social, rather than psychic, commodification.

If Baudelaire could gaze in relative ease at prostitutes in mid-nineteenth century Paris, such an option came to be more difficult for Imagist poets in England in the early years of the century. This is for two reasons connected with the new public visibility of women in modernity.

First, between 1906 and 1913 suffragette organisations mounted marches and spectacular demonstrations in London. For example, the 1908 Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) march attracted between a quarter and a half a million people. The Times described the crowd that waited for the procession to arrive in Hyde Park in familiar terms: the crowd waited like "an innumerable swarm of humanity"; the crowd was "a flood with its slow but steady currents, setting hither and thither."¹¹⁶ Such displays were, as Lisa Tickner argues, "a new kind of political spectacle...which...dramatised the cause by means of costume, narrative, embroidery, performance, and all the developing skills of public entertainment."¹¹⁷ Imagism thus found the urban streets it wished to represent packed with political spectacles where the predominant sight was not the "street-walker", for example, of Baudelaire, but the suffragette crowd demanding political reform and visibly contesting the power of the male gaze.

Secondly, the role women played in war-work in Britain from 1914 onwards was another sign of public feminine spectacle that contested the male gaze. By 1918 700,000 of women employed in war-work were replacements for men fighting, injured or killed in the war. As Sandra M. Gilbert comments:

As nurses, as munitions workers, bus drivers, or soldiers in the "land army", even as wives and mothers, these formerly subservient creatures began to loom malevolently larger, until it was possible for a visitor to London to observe in 1918 that "England was a world of women - women in uniforms."¹¹⁸

One of the specific points important for Imagist poetry in this remark is the reference to women in the context of transport. Male Imagist, mainly visual, encounters with women on the trains, tubes and buses of London take on a fresh significance. Women drivers are an example of the displacement of male power and Imagist texts violently react to this by trying to deny female activity in reified images of women travellers. D.H. Lawrence, contributor to the first Imagist anthology, in a short story written in 1918 "Tickets Please", shows a prose version of this process. Women tram conductors gain their revenge upon a male worker who conducts a series of affairs with these women and then discards them. They conspire to publicly humiliate him, capturing him and then, in a group, beating him to the ground. He is not only humiliated and unable to fight back, but also cannot look at them: he lies "face averted." Then he looks up: "Annie and Nora and Laura remained the same, tense, watchful, with gleaming eyes. He winced away from these eyes."¹¹⁹ This is a wince symbolic of the threat of castration by the eyes of women in public roles.

This narrative resembles the analysis of the Medusa myth given by Freud. Freud suggests that the locks of the Medusa's head represents the vagina and that the myth narrates male anxiety over the fear of castration represented by visual absence of the phallus: "To decapitate=to castrate. The terror of the Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something."¹²⁰ Looking at the Medusa turns the gazer to

stone. Perseus overcomes this threat by turning a mirror to the Medusa, which turns her to stone. This solidifying of the Medusa indicates male castration anxiety prompted by the female, and resolved by an affirmative solidifying erection. Re-written in terms of reification and modernism, the Medusa represents the threat of being reified, a state which can only be overcome by forming oneself into a solid structure. In terms of gender and modernism, the myth is a narrative of how male modernism has to reify signs of the feminine in order to combat both the increased public power of women and the threat of commodification.

A modernist poem displaying just this sort of structure is T.S.Eliot's "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock", published in 1917.¹²¹ Prufrock's fear of "The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase" not only links perception to a reified and formulated language, it also demonstrates the gendered nature of looking in the city. Though pinned down "sprawling" by the feminine eyes earlier in the poem, the initial act of looking has been that of Prufrock: "And I have known the eyes already, known them all-". Like the Medusa's head whose gaze turns the looker to the fixity of stone (perhaps the statue by Michaelangelo talked about by the women or the etherised patient at the poem's start), the original impetus for this act of reification lies in the transgressive gaze of Prufrock at women. Prufrock's final "pinned and wriggling" position shows him castrated and restricted, punished for his initial voyeuristic gaze at the fixing eyes. The Medusa myth also seems appropriate because of the importance it grants to hair: the fullness of the female Medusa's hair connotes an abundance which the balding Prufrock sadly lacks. Prufrock dreads the voices, the formulated phrases that will say "How his hair is growing thin." In other words he lacks the hirsute head that the Medusa

wields so powerfully. But if the Medusa's hairy head represents the vagina, Prufrock's worry over his balding pate is a concern that his head might turn into a visual image of the vagina: "with a bald spot in the middle of my hair." Prufrock has gazed at the women that "come and go", but the women's gaze appears more powerful, symbolically emasculating him by stealing his hair and replacing it with a "bald spot", a feminised lack.

7. CONCLUSION

Faced with the historical appearance of women in public metropolitan spaces, often doing work that was thought to be a prerogative of male bodies, Imagist misogynies could only respond with a gaze. It was a look designed to reify those women who were symbolically and actually reclaiming a public subjectivity, women who represented a threat to modernist masculinities.

In this chapter I have shown how theories of reification and commodification were developed out of Marx's original concept into powerful hermeneutics for the analysis of modernism. It was also shown that there exist crucial difficulties with many of these accounts, problems around questions of gender which, upon analysing an area of modernism such as Imagist poetry, can be seen to complicate the idea, summed up by Jameson, that modernism "was an experience of nascent commodification which fought reification by means of reification, in terms of reification."¹²² The next chapter considers in more detail the theoretical origins of Imagism, providing further understanding of this "fight" with reification.

NOTES

1. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Rethinking Reification", Theory and Society Renewal and Critique in Social Theory, 16 no.2 (1987), pp.286-7.
2. See N/OED entry for "reification".
3. Pitkin, "Rethinking Reification", p.277.
4. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory, 2nd.Ed. (1941; rpt. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p.112.
5. G.W.F.Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V.Miller, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), Section 189, p.112.
6. Ibid., Section 195, p.118. For Marx on Hegel see "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"(1844), Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Pelican Marx Library, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975). Further references to this will be given in the main text as EW and page number.
7. Chris Arthur, "Objectification and Alienation in Marx and Hegel", Radical Philosophy no.30, (Spring 1982), pp.22-3.
8. Joachim Israel, "Alienation and Reification", Social Praxis 3 no.1-2 (1975), p.30.
9. For this point see Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.208-9.
10. Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979), p.133.

11. Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Pelican Marx Library, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.164-5.
12. Ibid., p.137.
13. Ibid., p.138.
14. Ibid., p.128. Translation modified to that given in Karl Marx Selected Writings, ed. David McLellan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.423.
15. Marx, Capital vol.1, p.166.
16. Ibid., p.167-8.
17. Ibid., p.227.
18. The phrase is that of Fenollosa edited by Pound. See Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, ed. Ezra Pound, (London: Stanley Nott, 1936), p.14.
19. Karl Marx, Capital vol.3, trans. David Fernbach, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p.969.
20. Marx's comment on Engels is cited in Giulio Lepschy, "Linguistics", Developing Contemporary Marxism, eds. Zygmunt G. Baranski and John R. Short, (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), p.203. For Foucault's analysis of Marx in terms of a change in which language is demoted to the status of an object see Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, trans. anon., (London: Tavistock, 1970), p.298.
21. Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.209. Further references to this will be given in the main text as HCC and page number.

22. See N/OED entry for "reification".
23. Ibid. and Marcuse, Reason, p.279.
24. See Supplement to the OED, entry for "reification".
25. Ibid.
26. See, for example, Thompson's use of reification as one form of ideological practice in language. Ideology is "the study of the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination." Reification is thus a "modality" of the operation of ideology which represents "a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time." That is, meaning becomes semantically fixed not historically variable. See John B.Thompson, "Language and Ideology: a Framework for Analysis", The Sociological Review 35 no.3 (Aug.1987), p.521 and Studies in the Theory of Ideology, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984). For related accounts of the reification of language as restriction of meanings or concepts see Norbert Elias, What is Sociology? trans. Stephen Mennell and Grace Morrissey, (London: Hutchinson, 1978), pp.112-113 and Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p.180. From a different tradition the work of Mikhail Bakhtin offers a critique of the reifications of linguistic theory, particularly that of Saussure, in V.N.Vološinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R.Titunik, (1929; London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986).
27. See N/OED for "real".
28. John Wilkins, An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language, (1668, London; rpt. Menston: The Scholar Press, 1968), p.139. For discussion of the importance of this text see, **inter alia**, Murray Cohen, Sensible Words Linguistic Practice in England 1640-1785, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); M.M.Slaughter, Universal Languages and

Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

29. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.92.

Fenollosa, Chinese Written Character, p.17.

30. See N/OED entry for "reification".

31. Ezra Pound, "A Visiting Card", Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber, 1973), p.303.

32. Uses of Lukács on reification for literary criticism include: Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, (London: Methuen University Paperback, 1983), esp. ch.5, "Romance and Reification: Plot Construction and Ideological Closure in Joseph Conrad"; Carolyn Porter, Seeing and Being: the Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams and Faulkner, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); and Gregory S. Jay, "America the Scrivener: Economy and Literary History", Diacritics 14 no.1 (Spring 1984) and "Values and Deconstructions: Derrida, Saussure, Marx", Cultural Critique, 7 (Winter 1987-88). I have not discussed these texts at length because, aside from Jameson, they concentrate upon reification as a phenomenon in the novel not modernist poetry. For a brief treatment of reification in Russian modernist poetry see M.M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel", The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays, Slavic Series no.1, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp.278, 286-288. Bakhtin argues that poetry represents a reified language, "a directly intentional language, unitary and singular" (p.287). His sense of linguistic reification concerns the position of the writer in relation to the meaning of their texts. Poets attempt to control the meaning of their texts, allowing only one "monologic" interpretation: "only a single and unitary language, one that does not acknowledge other languages alongside itself, can be subject to reification" (p.336). This is an interesting argument but not directly relevant to my discussion of Imagism.

33. Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.163.
34. Sanford Schwartz, The Matrix of Modernism Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.6.
35. But see Eagleton's analysis of form in Marx's economic and political writings, Ideology of the Aesthetic, pp.209-10.
36. Jameson, Marxism and Form, p.183.
37. Georg Lukács, Soul and Form, trans. Anna Bostock, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), pp.8-9. For a useful discussion of text see Paul Browne, "Philosophy as Exile from Life: Lukács' Soul and Form", Radical Philosophy 53, (Autumn 1989).
38. Schwartz, Matrix of Modernism, p.209.
39. "Imagisme" (1913), rpt. Peter Jones ed., Imagist Poetry, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.129.
40. Lucien Goldman, "Reflections on History and Class Consciousness", in Istvan Mészáros ed., Aspects of History and Class Consciousness, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p.65.
41. Jameson, Marxism and Form, p.185.
42. Gareth Steadman Jones, "The Marxism of the Early Lukács", in New Left Review eds., Western Marxism: A Critical Reader, (London: Verso, 1977), p.33. For another account of Lukács and science, comparing him to Husserl, see Mihály Vajda, "Lukács and Husserl", in Agnes Heller ed., Lukács Revalued, ((Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

43. Perry Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism, (London: New Left Books, 1976), pp.52ff, 76ff.
44. Pauline Johnson, Marxist Aesthetics: The Foundations Within Everyday Life for an Emancipated Consciousness, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p.3.
45. Martin Jay, Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukacs to Habermas, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p.84.
46. See the 1967 Preface to History and Class Consciousness for Lukács's own self-critique of the text, mainly for relying too heavily upon Hegel.
47. Andrew Arato, "Lukács' Theory of Reification", Telos 11, (1972), pp.57.
48. A point made by Edward Said, "Travelling Theory", The World, the Text, and the Critic, (London: Faber, 1984), p.240.
49. Georg Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle, trans. John and Necke Mander, (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1971), p.21.
50. Ibid.
51. Jameson, Marxism and Form, p.169.
52. Ibid., p.197.
53. Ibid., p.200.
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CHAPTER TWO

HULME, MARSDEN AND THE ORIGINS OF IMAGIST THEORY

1. INTRODUCTION

In an essay upon modern art from 1914, the Imagist theorist T.E.Hulme presents a methodology I will follow in this chapter:

there is another way of dealing with an art from a general point of view which follows the contours of the thing itself a little more closely. It may be justified in that it attempts to deal, not so much with the art itself, as with the language in which the artist or critic attempts to explain that art.¹

In tracing the "contours" of Imagist poetics from 1909 to 1930, finding in them a complicated set of responses to reification and commodification, it is important to give due attention to the explanatory language and ideas held by the Imagists. Only then, in the following chapters, will it be possible to analyse Imagist texts in the light of this discussion.

One central component of Imagist theory is that of a reification of language: things are to be valued over words, and poetic language must thus be made more concrete. As I have argued, such a strategy, discernible in other discourses in modernity, has to be viewed in relation to the various commodifications of everyday life in modern European

societies. In English writing in the early years of the century, a sensual poetic language attentive, in Hulme's words, to the "contours of the thing itself", was perceived as the basis of a recognisably modernist aesthetic. The theoretical aim informing this modernist language was, as I will show, that it should resist tendencies to abstraction, tendencies effected by commodification.

This chapter considers three theoretical discourses for their recommendation of a reification of language as a counter to abstraction: the fragmentary essays of T.E.Hulme; various articles of Dora Marsden, editor of The Egoist, the periodical in which Imagism first found a sympathetic platform; and the manifestos, prefaces and critical articles of the Imagists themselves. The model for this grouping is, again, that of Sanford Schwartz's "matrix of modernism", which allows one to bring together individuals "who have no direct ties to one another but exhibit similar patterns of thought."² This is indeed true of my analysis of, say, Dora Marsden and T.E.Hulme. I depart from Schwartz's approach, however, not only in the treatment of a different set of writers, but also in the sense that the "matrix" I apply to Imagism presents reification and commodification as key, constitutive features of the opposition between sensual immediacy and conceptual abstraction. Reification and commodification are formal features which help explain, in a way Schwartz fails to do, why abstraction was contrasted with concretion. Schwartz attempts to use a method free from "the limitations of a study confined to individual influences or affinities," but which is able to understand a matrix "that **overlies** a complex array of historical phenomena that defy exhaustive codification."³ Schwartz is, however, unable finally to explain the powerful appeal of the model of sensual experience versus

conceptual abstraction except through reference to the influence of ideas upon individuals. In other words, Schwartz's categories of abstraction and concretion are only situated as already existing **forms** within modernism; he is unable to grasp them as **formations**, as both institutional structures within modernist texts and processes impelling the production of such texts.⁴ The commodity, as analysed by Marx, Lukács et al, produces both abstraction and concretion: reading Imagism under the sign of the commodity enables a far richer understanding of why a concrete language was opposed to abstract ideas. Reification, as both structure and process in modernity and modernism, offers, as I will show, a much clearer grasp of theories opposing concretion to abstraction. This account commences with a consideration of T.E.Hulme. First, however, it is helpful to sketch in the skeleton of the Imagist "matrix" into which Hulme slots.

2. THIS HULME BUSINESS

There were five Imagist anthologies. The first, edited by Ezra Pound, Des Imagistes, An Anthology, appeared in the February 1914 edition of the Glebe, being issued as a book in March of that year in America, and in London in April.⁵ The poets included were Richard Aldington, H.D., F.S.Flint, Skipworth Cannell, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Pound, Ford Madox Ford, Allen Upward and John Cournos. Aside from T.S.Eliot, whom Pound did not meet until September of that year, it is a good representative survey of early Anglo-American modernist poetry. The next three Imagist volumes, respectively Some Imagist Poets An Anthology

of 1915, 1916, and 1917, were published under arrangements negotiated by Amy Lowell, and contained nothing by Pound. John Gould Fletcher and D.H. Lawrence were added for the 1915 volume onwards. Lowell, Aldington, Flint and H.D. were retained, but Cannell, Pound, Ford, Upward, Joyce, Carlos Williams and Cournos were dropped. In 1930, Aldington, together with Ford and H.D., produced the Imagist Anthology 1930. This contained all of the original contributors except, in Aldington's words, "poor Amy who was dead, Skipwith <sic> Cannell whom we couldn't trace, and Ezra who was sulky."⁶

The grounds for Pound's sulky attitude to Imagist publications go back to his initial absence from the 1915 volume. By September 1914 Lowell and Pound had quarrelled, mainly over Pound's autocratic style of editorship. Lowell, made suspicious of Pound by John Gould Fletcher, suggested to Pound that Des Imagistes "was too monotonous and too undemocratic in that certain poets were allowed more space than others" and that in planned future volumes poets themselves should be allowed to choose their contributions.⁷ Pound's response, wrote Lowell, was blackmail:

he would only join us on condition that I would obligate myself to give \$200 a year to some indigent poet...I absolutely refused to be intimidated into buying anything, or to buy his poems at the expense of my self-respect.⁸

Pound's belief was that Lowell had hijacked his poetic movement and, more importantly, had distorted the meaning of the word "Imagisme". Pound wrote tetchily to Lowell in August:

I should like the name 'Imagisme' to retain some sort of a meaning. It stands, or I should like it to stand for hard light, clear edges. I can not trust any democratized committee to maintain that standard. Some will be splay-footed and some sentimental.⁹

Pound continues to gripe about Lowell in letters until the end of the year. Early in January 1915 he writes to Harriet Monroe, founder of the important magazine Poetry in 1912, that he broke with Lowell and her forthcoming Some Imagist Poets, because she sought "to turn 'Imagism' into a democratic beer-garden."¹⁰ The next letter by Pound, again to Monroe, contains his important statement of linguistic principles: "Language is made out of concrete things."¹¹

It is as if the Pound/Lowell dispute, containing the archetypal Poundian configuration of economics, aesthetics and politics, is the impetus behind Pound's statement, with its grossly materialist view of language. Lowell, as a modernist woman, threatens the semantics of "Imagisme", clouding the "hard light" and "clear edges" of Pound's sense of the term. Likewise, the "clear edges" of Pound's own individual choice of material would be compromised by the introduction of more democratic methods of editorship. It is Pound's aesthetic ego that is challenged by Lowell, an ego that was to find a home as literary editor of The Egoist, a magazine directed to upholding the "individualist principle" in all sectors of life.¹²

One individual not included in any of the Imagist anthologies, either by Pound or Lowell, is that of T.E.Hulme. It is, *prima facie*, strange that Hulme should, in literary history, be so insistently associated with Imagism. Although he wrote less than thirty short poems

and two posthumously published books, Hulme is consistently viewed as central to accounts of early English modernism. Levenson calls him, "the name of an intellectual site, a place where intellectual currents converged."¹³ Quinones refers to "the usefulness of T.E.Hulme's thought as a general paradigm" for modernism.¹⁴ Schwartz's claim for Hulme is still grander: "Hulme lays out the essential shape of Modernist poetics."¹⁵ Finally, for Robinson, it is for providing the content of the "shape" of Imagism that Hulme is to be valued: he "introduced the notion of the 'image' and provided the theoretical lead" for the Imagists.¹⁶ Hulme is thus read not as an original modernist thinker, but as someone typifying modernist positions.

My account of Hulme, by and large, accepts this evaluation, but understands him as providing the sort of theoretical vocabulary Pound uses in his dispute with Lowell, countering a democratisation of aesthetics with a "concrete language". Hulme's importance, then, lies in his politics of language. A visual, concrete poetry is more than a formal response to commodity-abstraction; it is also a tool, as the Pound/Lowell encounter shows, for the sort of reactionary politics so familiar in modernism. To illustrate this argument, a general outline of Hulme (following his successive periods of Bergsonism, "classicism", and "mechanism") will be presented by means of close analysis of three of his most important essays: "Bergson's Theory of Art," "Romanticism and Classicism" and "Modern Art and Its Philosophy."

Pound, looking back from 1938, wrote wistfully of Hulme: "the bleak and smeary twenties wretchedly needed his guidance, and the pity is that he was not there in person to keep down vermin."¹⁷ The "vermin" were not only writers such as Lowell who, in their lack of attention to "clear

edges", produced a "smeary" language, but also speakers of a non-literary language, the "public" so despised by the Imagist avant-garde. The language of the public, for Hulme, was reliant for its life and continuation upon poetry: "Poetry is always the advance guard of language" since "plain speech is essentially inaccurate. It is only by new metaphors...that it can be made precise."¹⁸ When metaphors are no longer new they become a discourse, not merely "plain ", but also abstract: "abstract words are merely codified dead metaphors" (FS, 11).¹⁹ Poetry epitomises a language of concrete things, infusing "accuracy" and "clear edges" through its role of metaphor creation. Hulme stresses that it is the visual dimension of metaphor which assists this task: "every word in the language originates as a live metaphor, but gradually of course all visual meaning goes out of them and they become a kind of counters" (S, 152). A "counter" language is Hulme's terms for prose and other types of abstract discourse. As a metaphor connoting money or mathematical rationality it is extremely suggestive, recalling Lukács's point that modern rationality takes the form of an "exact calculus."²⁰ Poetry is not a "counter" language but is rooted in the "visual meanings" of metaphors; for the poet, "Each word must be an image seen, not a counter"(FS, 79). Images in themselves are meaningful since "Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images"(FS, 84). Poets can thus legitimately "keep down vermin" because their discourses closely track the origins of all thought and meaning. In this role, however, even poetic discourse fights a losing battle since, compared to the presentation to the mind of images, "Language is only a more or less feeble way of doing this"(FS, 84). The result, notes Hulme starkly, is that "We replace meaning (i.e. vision)

with words"(FS, 77).

This theory of visual meaning as being at the root of all thought, important for the development of Imagism, derives from Hulme's readings in nineteenth century French philosophers such as Theodule Ribot and Hyppolite Taine.²¹ However, Hulme's most formative early reading as a "philosophic amateur"(S, xvi) came from study of Henri Bergson. Hulme met Bergson in 1907 and translated his Introduction a la metaphysique (1913). In this text Bergson asserts "the Image has at least this advantage, that it keeps us in the concrete."²² This linking of visual images and concretion provided a philosophical impetus to Imagism's attack upon abstraction. It convinced Hulme, as A.R.Jones notes, that Bergson "was basically an Imagist poet."²³

In his article "Bergson's Theory of Art", Hulme claims the French philosopher demonstrates reality to be "a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect"(S, 146). The intellect is an analytic faculty capable only of understanding the world in terms of conceptual abstractions. Reality can only be grasped by intuition, a faculty of concrete experience that bursts through the everchanging surface appearances of objects to capture their "real duration" (*durée réelle*).²⁴ Bergson's model, which rejects surface for depth, and in which formal intellect is ousted by sensual intuition, approaches Lukács's search for the "material substratum" of objects.

Such a subterranean search is hampered, argues Bergson, by language, which works to deceive our sensual experiences.²⁵ Hulme's essay stresses this feature at some length. For Hulme, "We not only express ourselves in words, but for the most part think also in them"(S, 166). Our ordinary perceptions of the world are mediated by language, a "communal

apparatus"(S, 162) that "only expresses the lowest common denominator"(S, 166) of a sensual emotion. Language is thus falsely democratic, just as Pound had found Lowell's plans for Imagism to be. The sole person who can combat this levelling tendency is the artist:

The average person as distinct from the artist does not even **perceive** the individuality of their own emotions....Most of us, then, never see things as they are, but see only the stock types which are embodied in language.(S, 166)

In another essay Hulme describes these "stock types" as forms of near-Kantian abstractions: "We are all of us under the influence of a number of abstract ideas...we do not see them, but see other things **through** them"(S, 37). The only way to break through such abstractions is by egoistic intuition, detected only in the language of the artist "who is able to emancipate himself from the moulds which language and ordinary perception force upon him"(S, 166). Once emancipated from linguistic abstractions, the artist is able to communicate an "actual contact with reality"(S, 167) and therefore present "an intimate realisation of an object"(S, 168).

Hulme's account of this "realisation of an object" might be mistaken for Lukács's account of an object recovering the concrete materiality smothered by its abstract existence as a commodity. But whereas Lukács only glimpses this possibility in the past, in the realist novel, Hulme believes it to be a project contemporary poetry can, and does, achieve. What is also missing from Hulme's account is any sense of a Lukácsian concern for totality, either politically or aesthetically. For Hulme, "It is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things"(S, 131).

The small, sensuous instances of the Imagist poem cannot be worked into anything larger at the risk of creating another set of abstract "moulds" for thought. Likewise, if Lukács sees aesthetic totality as pre-figuring a political realisation of the object by the proletariat, for Hulme an abstraction such as class is abhorrent. In Hulme there is no need for a complete emancipation of all humanity since the individual artist can lead the way through his intuitive and visual "linguistic emancipations" (S, 76). Hulme's opinion is that "the ordinary man does not perceive things at all **vividly** and can only be made to do so by the artist" (S, 169).

Lukács's response to such an argument, indebted as it is to Romantic theories of the superiority of the artist, might take the form of his reply to Schiller's aestheticisation of social life. If people can only realise their humanity from following the point of view of the artist, then "in the aesthetic mode...they may be salvaged from the deadening effects of the mechanism of reification."²⁶ But such salvation only occurs if the content of all human life is itself aesthetic, rather than the mere formal fragments artists are able to offer for contemplation. Two paths for this aesthetic redemption from reification are possible:

either the world must be aestheticised, which is an evasion of the real problem and is just another way in which to make the subject purely contemplative....Or else, the aesthetic principle must be elevated into the principle by which objective reality is shaped: but that would be to mythologise the discovery of intuitive understanding.²⁷

If the latter point stands as a perfect description of Hulme's view of Bergsonian intuition, then the former is an equally apt description of Hulme's position when he rejects Bergson for a "classicism" closer to the contemplative gaze of Imagism. Being possessed of an ability to penetrate surface reality by intuition, seizing a concrete hold on "real duration", remains a myth soon to lose its appeal. For, just as with the Kantian thing-in-itself, one is never really able to judge whether or not one had successfully encountered hidden "real duration".

Hulme's aesthetics and theory of language alter considerably from his early Bergsonism and we can only judge his importance for Imagism if we are clear of the nature of these changes. As Levenson puts it, "Hulme moved far from his early beliefs" and soon came to be "deeply (and not just implicitly) opposed to Bergson."²⁸ Realisation of objects via visuality and a concrete language remain important principles for Hulme, but they are now underpinned by an aesthetic politics of "classicism". Hulme's essay "Romanticism and Classicism", dated as late 1911/early 1912 by Levenson,²⁹ contains the fullest statement of this position, summarised in another essay, "A Tory Philosophy" (1912): "It is my aim to explain in this article why I believe in original sin, why I can't stand romanticism, and why I am a certain kind of Tory."³⁰

As Alan Robinson demonstrates, Hulme's aesthetic preference for Tory classicism should be situated within wider social and political changes in this period.³¹ Continued suffragette action, the first Labour members of Parliament in 1906, waves of industrial strikes throughout 1911-2 and the prospect of mass enfranchisement threatened by the Liberal party under Asquith, posed a threat to the aristocratic *ancien régime* still persisting, according to Perry Anderson's analysis, in its political

power.³² In response to these assaults on aristocratic privilege, writers such as Hulme began to advocate an aesthetics rooted in classical, conservative values. Anderson sees this adoption of a "partially aristocratic colouration" of modernist culture as a purely formal manoeuvre, part of the reaction to commodification: "the old order...afforded a set of available codes and resources from which the ravages of the market as an organizing principle of culture and society - uniformly detested by every species of modernism - could be resisted."³³ Hulme represents a moment just prior to, in Pound's phrase, an "aristocracy of the arts".³⁴ Hulme is thus a writer whose aristocratic ideals were worked through, like the perfect art-work, in both form and content.

Hulme commences "Romanticism and Classicism" with the claim that after a hundred years of Romanticism, classical values are ripe for revival. The terms themselves, he argues, are used in a "precise and limited sense" (S, 114), much as Pound had wished for the term "Imagisme". That sense has a directly political content, drawn from the French group **L'Action Française** who negatively associate Romanticism with the French revolution (S, 115). The root of Romanticism is traced to Rousseau, to a belief "that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities" (S, 116) which can only be realised by reorganising society. Romanticism is thus a "spilt religion" in which concepts such as heaven and hell are mixed up, a confusion which will "falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience" (S, 118). If Romantic thought lacks Imagist "clear edges", Romantic verse is organised around "metaphors of flight", again ignoring clearly marked borders. Romantic verse contains "The word infinite in every other line" (S, 120). Classicism, in contrast, is

bound, both aesthetically and politically, by a sense of man as "an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal" (S, 116). Classical verse displays a "dry hardness" (S, 126) and beauty, **per se**, consists of "small, dry things" (S, 131). Hulme's arguments interestingly integrate both political content and aesthetic form completely: aristocratic fixity of social positions goes hand in hand with a clarifying language of concrete things.

Hulme continues by repeating his theory that language as a "communal thing" prevents clarity of expression (S, 132). He suggests that the exactitude one struggles to express in language is not available to Romantic verse since its nature as "infinity" robs it of the chance to express clarity and precision; this is the prerogative of "dry, hard, classical verse" with its profound sense of the finite (S, 133). In its finite materiality classical verse matches the very essence of poetic, as opposed to prose, language. Hulme then draws the poetic/prose distinction once again:

In prose as in algebra concrete things are embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules, without being visualised at all in the process. There are in prose certain type situations and arrangements of words, which move as automatically into certain other arrangements as do functions in algebra. One only changes the X's and the Y's back into physical things at the end of the process. (S, 134)

Prose is rationalised abstraction which, because it lacks visual form, is a language in which "concrete things" are dematerialised. Communication in prose is an "automatic" procedure, conforming to fixed mathematical

processes. It is a good parody, respectively, of Marx upon the commodity, which as exchange-value ignores the "coarsely sensuous" material of the object for its abstract value as "congealed labour-time", and of Lukács upon the "fixed magnitude" of modern capitalism, mathematically calculating all forms of social behaviour.³⁵

For Hulme, however, help is at hand and formal abstraction can be countered by poetic language:

Poetry...may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. (S, 134)

Schwartz comments that this passage shows Hulme's distance from Bergson: "Associating abstraction with movement and sensation with fixity...Hulme seems far more attracted to stasis rather than motion, form rather than flux."³⁶ Poetic language is able to "arrest" the abstract communicational processes of prose. Once arrested, a more accurate picture of "physical things" is obtainable. Hulme is still indebted to Bergson here for his notion of a "language of intuition", but departs from Bergsonian thinking in his usage of the concept. Poetry is a "compromise" for this language, whose function is to present bodily sensations. A visual poetic language is a substitute for a more bodily discourse, reducing the various sensuous capacities of bodies to the mere faculty of sight. Curiously, the argument matches Jameson's analysis of the libidinal compensation sight and colour offer in a modernist world of denuded senses. But the

compensation Hulme offers is of stasis, of an arresting look that prevents one being subject to an "abstract process." However, helping the reader escape abstract processes only occurs through a reifying gaze.

Hulme proceeds to give an example of how visual pleasure escapes from prose abstraction:

If you are walking behind a woman in the street, you notice the curious way in which the skirt rebounds from her heels. If that peculiar kind of motion becomes of such interest to you that you will search about until you can get the exact epithet which hits it off, there you have a properly aesthetic emotion. But it is the zest with which you look at the thing which decides you to make the effort. (S, 136)

Hulme's choice of example is illuminating. The "motion" of the woman has to be arrested in order to produce a visual concrete poem. Poetic language, as Hulme has defined it, is a compromise for another discourse, one which enacts bodily sensations. Here the sexualised nature of looking - Freud's voyeuristic gaze - is clearly evident: it is the "zest" of the gaze which prompts the poem, the bodily sensations that must be diverted into visual pleasures that prompt the "aesthetic emotion." Hulme's scopophillic example also intrigues because the man is behind the woman in the street, safe from being gazed at in a threatening manner.

Poetry offers a haven from the prose abstraction and rationality which we have read as codes for the experience of commodification. Escape only occurs by stressing one pole of the commodity, that of reification. But it is impossible to read this simply as "libidinal gratification" when the pleasure is so clearly gendered, resulting in active male looking and

arrested female movement. In his fragmentary "Notes on Language and Style" Hulme presents a similar, but more sinister example. Discussing how he can avoid the repressions of prose he calls for "Words seen as physical things...Want to make them **stand up**....Words seen as physical things like a piece of string, e.g. walking on dark boulevard. Girl hidden in trees passes on other side. How to get this"(FS, 86). Again the aim is to capture an experience of looking at a woman, but the setting of this example contains a air of the violence of such a desire. This time Hulme requires a language able, slightly comically, to "stand up." In another moment of tumescence linked to looking he writes, "A man cannot write without seeing at the same time a visual signification before his eyes. It is this image which precedes the writing and makes it firm"(FS, 79). "Solidity," he goes on to say, is "a pleasure"(FS, 80).

Hulme's criterion for poetry is thus: "Is there any zest in it? Did the poet have an actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted?"(S, 137). Realising an object, as a metaphor for recovering its commodified "material substratum ", reifys the female form as object for male contemplative "zest ". Additionally, the stasis Hulme desires in a "realised visual object" matches the political restrictions of classicism that he articulated at the start of the essay. One further reading of his aesthetic example would involve seeing the "woman in the street" as code for a suffragette on the streets of London, precisely challenging the aristocratic order Hulme avows. His reifying gaze, reducing her movement to an object, is thus a metaphoric halting of her challenge to classical political values. Masculine political anxiety is thus alleviated, appearing in the same poetic language which critiques the commodity.

Hulme concludes his essay by referring to Bergson, whose ideas he has seemingly jettisoned. The intellect, he writes, "can only represent complexities of the mechanical kind"(S, 139). True complexities can only be represented by using the faculty of intuition. In the essay "Modern Art and Its Philosophy ", delivered on January 22, 1914, Hulme concludes that modern art is moving towards "lines which are clean, clear-cut and mechanical"(S, 97). Now mechanism is seemingly available to intellectual cognition and is found in geometric art. Mechanism also displaces classicism. Geometric art is the real alternative to romanticism, an alternative "which has quite mistakenly sought refuge in the conception of a classical revival."³⁷ Levenson argues that Hulme abandons classicism as "insufficiently radical."³⁸ Hulme spent nine months from November 1912 in Germany, where he met the German art critic Wilhelm Worringer and became acquainted with the work of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl.³⁹ Under these influences, writes Levenson, Hulme purges any last vestiges of his classical concern for subjectivity and "insisted instead on the independence and objectivity of form, value and meaning."⁴⁰ Levenson, however, overstates the extent of Hulme's rejection of classicism. Hulme appears to reject the earlier linkage of classical aesthetic form with classical political values. Now, in the manner in which Perry Anderson described modernism's relation to aristocratic values, Hulme projects his Tory classicism directly into his theories of aesthetic language and form. This indeed gives his theories an objective hue, divorcing them from personal statements of his political beliefs. But the result is that political content is now deeply embedded in his theory of form. It thus brings him to the point at which the modernism of Imagist poetry appears, the point at which Pound can utilise a Hulmean vocabulary for a political

attack, couched in aesthetic terms, upon a figure such as Amy Lowell.

"Modern and Its Philosophy" commences with a long statement of why Hulme believes a "new geometrical art is emerging"(S, 91) which opposes "vital" or "organic" art. Such an art will rescue us, much as classicism had promised, from "the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live"(S, 80). Geometric art seems, at first sight, to have much in common with Hulme's earlier macho modernism: it displays "hard and geometrical curves" and presents the human body in "stiff lines"(S, 82). However geometric art, typified by Byzantine art, contains another impulse which Hulme borrows from Worringer, the "tendency to abstraction."(S, 85). The feeling governing this tendency is one which recalls Lukács's notion of the contemplative attitude of subject to reified object: "a feeling of separation in the face of outside nature"(S, 85). This feeling of separation produces an art which seeks objects that are "durable and permanent....fixed and necessary"(S, 86). These categories, familiar from Hulme's description of a political classical view of man, are now transferred to art-objects possessing "rigid lines and dead crystalline forms"(S, 87). Formal stasis is very much the watchword of geometric abstraction, producing an art of atomistic objects, dwelling in "an absolutely enclosed material individuality"(S, 89). Again Hulme's description closely echoes Marx and Lukács upon the commodity, something both abstract and material, a "dead crystalline form" of a living Object.

Hulme's final conception of geometric art unconsciously develops this analogy with the commodity. In this "new and modern art" we find "something which was to culminate in a use of structural organisation akin to machinery"(S, 98). This is not, as Hulme notes, an admiration of the beauty of machinery as in the case of the Italian Futurists.(S, 94)

Rather, it is "the creation of a new art having an organisation, and governed by principles, which are at present exemplified unintentionally, as it were, in machinery"(S, 104). It is a question of the formal principles governing machinery being used as the organising structure of modern art. Hulme's example of this is Cézanne. Cézanne reacted against the "fluidity" of contemporary impressionism and sought to create something "solid and durable"(S, 100).

Hulme thus calls for an art governed by the principles of machinery; in other words he calls for art-objects to take on the mass produced character of the industrial commodity. "All art of this character ", writes Hulme, "turns the organic into something not organic"(S, 106). In this transformation of art into dead matter Hulme recalls Benjamin's description of the way the commodity offers itself for contemplation to the ~~flâneur~~ as "empathy with inorganic matter."⁴¹ Lukács views the replacement of the "organic" by the mechanic or industrial mode of production as characteristic of the structure of reified consciousness in bourgeois society. Here too abstraction is combined with "solid and durable" objects, the "abstract laws of the mechanism" of capitalist production go hand in hand with the "isolated abstract atoms" of worker and object.⁴² Whereas Lukács and Benjamin view such changes in the status of objects as crippling, Hulme believes them to be part of the new modern era of art.

Hulme's "Modern Art" essay seems to have had little impact upon Imagism itself, but can be seen to predate the Vorticism of Pound and Lewis signalled in the June 1914 publication of Blast.⁴³ Perhaps this lack of influence upon Imagism was due to the essay's focus upon the visual arts and the fact that by 1912 Hulme himself had finished writing

poetry. The text is interesting, however, in its projection of the laws of commodity production - abstract, atomistic, yet solid and mechanistic - into the very texture of the art-object. It also shows Hulme's classicism, with its concern for arrested stasis and solidity, transforming its political content into a notion of aesthetic form.

Hulme's overall importance for Imagism is difficult to ascertain. F.S. Flint, in an early history of Imagism in 1915, said, "In all this Hulme was ringleader. He insisted too on absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage."⁴⁴ Initially, Hulme was similarly praised by Pound, although he later played down Hulme in favour of Ford Madox Ford. The word "Imagist", insisted Pound in 1917, was invented "on a Hulme basis."⁴⁵ Pound, recently arrived in London, had first met Hulme in April 1909 at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in Soho, where Hulme had instigated a discussion circle of poets. Pound attended lectures given by Hulme on Bergson in winter 1911, including the lecture that became "Bergson's Theory of Art ", with its notion of "realising" objects. By 1914 Pound, angered by the democratic principles of Lowell, was advocating a language of concrete things for poetry. Whether or not this claim derived directly from Hulme's notion that poetic language cuts through abstract processes is almost irrelevant to the way in which we should read Hulme. Hulme's discourse was to be valued for its clear theorisation of the benefits and superiority of a poetic language of concrete visual objects. What is also of importance in Hulme is the way his notion of a poetry of "realised visual objects" is underwritten by a complicity between reification as linguistic strategy and reification as a way of visually and politically containing women.

3. WAR, WOMEN AND WORDS: MARSDEN AND "THE EGOIST"

We leave Hulme in 1914, three years before his death in the war, and turn to another component of the origins of Imagism, the writings of Dora Marsden in The Egoist, first published in 1914. Marsden is, in many ways, the political opposite of Hulme: a feminist writer and organiser over many years. In terms of her linguistic theories, however, she closely resembles Hulme. Her uniqueness consists in the fact that her feminism roots itself in Imagist theories of words and things. If Hulme projects a classicist political content into modernism's linguistic form, Marsden's approach introduces an Imagist form into a feminist politics. For her, feminist discourse cannot advance without breaking away from abstraction into a world of concrete things. The impasse she reaches with such a theory prefigures the difficulties encountered by Imagism's adoption of the same method.

The Egoist was perhaps the foremost site for the dissemination of the "discontinuous practices" of modernism, and particularly Imagism, in Britain.⁴⁶ Its major rival, The New Age, edited by Orage, devoted more attention to economic and political affairs than to cultural debate.⁴⁷ Reviewing literary periodicals in 1934, Pound said The Egoist printed much material Orage refused.⁴⁸ Although The Egoist's circulation never exceeded 400, and survived on sales of circa 200 from 1916 till its close in 1919, it contained contributions from the entire range of modernist writers. Wyndham Lewis' Tarr and Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist found publication there, while Eliot cut his critical teeth as Assistant Editor, publishing "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in its pages. In May 1915 the magazine published an "Imagist issue".

It is appropriate that Imagism's individualist aesthetic, following the lead of Hulme, should achieve prominence in a paper sub-titled An Individualist Review. Beginning life under the editorship of Dora Marsden (along with Mary Gawthorpe) in November 1911 as The Freewoman: A Weekly Feminist Review, the paper continued successfully until the distributors, W.H. Smiths, boycotted it in 1912 due to "the nature of certain articles which...render the paper unsuitable to be exposed on the bookstalls for general sale."⁴⁹ This complaint was directed at the frank discussions of topics such as sexuality, chastity, contraception, prostitution and "uranians" (homosexuals). In 1913 the paper revived as The New Freewoman: An Individualist Review, mainly as a consequence of financial support from women such as Harriet Shaw Weaver and Amy Lowell. The course of the paper, changed from New Freewoman to The Egoist, shifted during the war from offering a space for radical feminist discussion to become a clearing-house for modernism.

Appointed as Literary Editor in August 1913 it is Pound who galvanised this swerve from politics to aesthetics. By the end of the year Pound had engineered an important linguistic reform: The New Freewoman became The Egoist. A letter to the paper explained the purpose of this re-christening:

We, the undersigned men of letters...venture to suggest to you that the present title of the paper causes it to be confounded with organs devoted solely to the advocacy of an unimportant reform in an obsolete political institution....We therefore ask...that you should consider the advisability of adopting another title which will mark the character of your paper as an organ of individuals of both sexes and of the individualist principle in every department of life.⁵⁰

The letter was signed by Pound, Richard Aldington, Reginald W. Kauffmann, Allen Upward and Huntley Carter. The latter authored an article, "The Evil that Words Do ", in which he argued that there was a "pressing need of the rescue of the word Art from the multitude of terms which encumber it, so that it may have a single and simple use and meaning."⁵¹ The modernist takeover of the New Freewoman thus represented a rescue of aesthetics, by self-conscious "men of letters ", from the "evil words" of feminism. The titular alteration also reveals the Imagists's aesthetics of concision, the twelve letters of New Freewoman being halved into The Egoist, in a similar manoeuvre to Pound's linguistic castration of Hilda Doolittle to H.D. in 1912. Alan Durant comments that, in Pound's case, the change of title demonstrates how "the challenge of political liberation for women is replaced by the assurance of the ego's self-possession."⁵² Upholding male modernist egos and their letters is now secured because their words will henceforth be exhibited in an "organ" with a non-threatening title.

Dora Marsden's support for this androcentric coup shows some of the complexities of analysing gender structures within Imagism. I will give an outline of her thought, concentrating on the moment from 1913 to 1914 when the New Freewoman became The Egoist. Her arguments can be placed in the same matrix as Hulme and Imagism, resisting commodification by emphasising the power of concrete things. At a time when Hulme was producing a critique of linguistic abstraction which would profoundly influence Imagist thought, Marsden introduced a critique of suffragette arguments for their concern with words rather than things. Imagist texts, imbued with Hulme's theories, would thus find a welcome home in a journal whose editor perceived the poets to be engaged in a similar campaign to her own. In terms of form, then, Imagism matches Marsden's feminism; in

terms of content, their difference is quite marked. Marsden's eventual drift away from feminist theory towards metaphysical speculation can thus be read as an indication of how a concrete formalism, of the Imagist kind, ultimately disables her feminism from any kind of concrete content.

Marsden, after studying philosophy at Manchester University, joined the Pankhurst-led Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1909 in Southport. By 1911 she had resigned from the organisation and the setting up of the Freewoman was intended as a feminist forum for a critique of suffrage in the WSPU mode.⁵³ Les Garner has argued that Marsden's disillusion with the WSPU was partly due to the autocratic leadership exercised by Christabel Pankhurst and her mother.⁵⁴ However, the emphasis of the Freewoman and its successor was upon a critique of suffragism's concentration upon the vote: "feminism is the whole issue, political enfranchisement a branch issue and the methods, militant or otherwise, are merely accidentals."⁵⁵ Marsden's mode of critique was upon the language and arguments employed by suffragism, which showed "an unthought out and nebulous feminism."⁵⁶ Marsden thus sees the same error, a "nebulous" lack of clear and restrained ideas, that Hulme detected in Romanticism.

The first issue of The New Freewoman in June 1913 shows Marsden keen to distinguish her position from that of the suffrage "cause." The method of analysis she employs in her editorial article is typical of her 600 or so contributions to the magazine from 1913 to 1919. "Views and Comments" commences with a close reading of the rhetoric of Mrs. Pankhurst's message, "The Cause is the 'Vote'".⁵⁷ For Marsden this phrase is inaccurate and should be translated into its proper form: "I want the vote given to myself."⁵⁸ Pankhurst, argues Marsden, has neglected individual desires and has therefore abandoned her politics to discursive generalisation:

She has pinioned herself with words - words - words, and these, not her own. She ventured into the maze of the symbolists, whose vulturous progeny - the empty concepts - got her! She began to "lead a Cause," and imperceptibly the Cause became Leader - leading where all causes tend - to self-annihilation. Mrs. Pankhurst may die and great is the Cause. What cause? the Cause of the empty concept - the fount of all insincerity: the Cause of the Symbol - the Nothing worked upon by the Dithyramb.⁵⁹

For Marsden, "empty concepts", offspring of a too boisterous symbolist aesthetic, are represented by any form of abstract word - freedom, cause, or woman itself: "Accurately speaking there is no 'Woman Movement.' 'Woman' is doing nothing - she has, indeed, no existence." Words produce "empty concepts" and these then capture the individual, driving her away from egoistic impulses. Marsden subjects another suffragette call for "woman's freedom" to similar analysis and discovers it consists of three elements: "two notions and an atmosphere." One notion is of force, one of a barrier through which the force pushes, and the atmosphere is "half swoon, half thrill. It is the essence of sensation." Freedom is thus a "vague symbolic indefinable thing" which is distinct from the individual affair of the force of "getting free." Anyone espousing the "Cause of Freedom" is actually calling for "one long course of banalities and mis-statements."

Marsden's dislike of anything resembling linguistic abstraction is thus a curious predecessor of much later Anglo-American "ordinary language" philosophy, which likewise fulminated against supposed verbal confusions. At the back of Marsden's critique of political rhetoric is a dislike seen in Hulme's account of Bergson. Marsden presents a long list

of more "empty concepts" which have "gangrened all culture" - Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Truth, Unity, Humanity et al - and then provides her definition of a full concept:

A true concept is the framework which the intellect puts round something **felt**: feeling experienced either directly in the Soul, or indirectly through the perceptions of sense. An intellectual concept is not, strictly speaking, a concept at all: it represents the giving of a "local habitation and a name" to a Nothing.⁶⁰

Marsden's political critique thus depends very much on the familiar opposition of sense versus concept, Bergsonian intuition over intellect. Suffragette thought erred precisely in being thought rather than sense-perception. Suffragette politics would undoubtedly fail because its "intellectual concepts" formed "a poison diet" for its believers. "A virile people turns to thought ", notes Marsden, lapsing into the language of the "stiff" and "firm" Hulme, and "creates a culture which promptly turns upon it to encompass its destruction."

Marsden's analysis thus identifies two related errors of suffragette thought. Firstly, they believe in language which is inherently on the side of intellectual and "empty concepts." Secondly, they foolishly produce a collective political discourse which, in its espousal of concepts, inevitably smothers individual particularity within it. The rhetorical use of the term "woman ", for example, is a thoroughly empty notion: "Woman, spelt with a capital, woman-as-type, has no existence...it is an empty concept and should be banished from language."⁶¹ Its exile from discourse is because it glosses over the individualist basis of life and language: "Accurately, every sentence begins with 'I.'"⁶² Neglect of

this egoistic doctrine results in that most abhorrent of Imagist sins, abstraction from the particular. The particular sensuous desires of the individual are thus the true basis for a feminist politics, not the conceptual abstractions of the suffragettes. Marsden ends her critique with a statement that individuals cannot be "lumped together into a class, a sex, or a 'movement.'"⁶³ Individual satisfactions are the basis of action since "The centre of the Universe lies in the desire of the individual, and the Universe for the individual has no meaning apart from their individual satisfactions." Women who follow this line are thus to be known as "Egoists ", for whom "intensive satisfaction of Self is...the one goal in life."⁶⁴

Dislike of abstraction and generality, both in linguistic and political realms, shows Marsden to be a thinker in the same vein as Hulme. Looked at through the hermeneutic of reification her critique is another response to commodification, with its denigration of the senses and its ability to cast thought and behaviour in a mould of abstraction. Marsden's critique of suffragism for its collective nature, however, takes her a step away from the conservative Hulme, whose aristocratic formalism allowed a certain class of person (nominally artists) to break through stifling abstraction. Marsden will have no truck with such generalised concepts as "class ", resorting to a rabid political particularism, infused by the anarchist ideas of Max Stirner. Stirner's The Ego and His Own (1884) was translated into English by a regular Egoist contributor, Steven Bynington, and appeared in some forty-nine editions between 1900 and 1929. Marsden called the book "The most powerful work that has ever emerged from a single human mind."⁶⁵ Levenson analyses the appeal of Stirner's work to stem from the collapse of liberal ideology in the years up to the war:

"liberalism decomposed into egoism" and it was to intellectuals and artists, among whom Levenson counts Pound and other Imagists, that such sceptical beliefs most appealed.⁶⁶ The important connection Marsden's work makes is between political particularism and what we might call linguistic atomism, of a sort we find in much of Pound's prose, and which was faintly noticeable in Hulme's poetry of "small, dry things."

Marsden's assault on abstraction in suffragism leads her to a similar attachment to concrete "things". The "Verbal Age" we presently inhabit, she writes, would be routed if "we recognise that there exists nothing save things and the relations between things."⁶⁷ Whereas Marx, in Capital, viewed such a state of social relations as distorted and damaging, Marsden sees it as the truth that words obscure. Words obscure the material basis of our life because they abstract from the particularism of the "thing":

It is the tidiness of the sign which misleads...And so with abstract terms and ideas. Consider liberty...A name and a confused description of certain activities and nothing more: no objective liberty.⁶⁸

No material object means no referent. Lack of a thingly referent to associate with the name "liberty" results in no "objective" form of liberty other than an abstract conceptual one. Signs mysteriously resemble those other tidy objects, commodities which, as bundles of abstract value, merely describe certain "activities" such as labour.

As Marsden's magazine became home to Imagist writers in 1914, so her texts restate the case against suffragette discourse in terms increasingly

akin to Imagist and Hulmean thought. Marsden's quarrel came to be more with words and "empty concepts" than with patriarchal society. Her October 1914 Egoist article, "Women's Rights ", signals the end of the political content of The Freewoman with a gesture to the coming of war: "The War...has brought the wordy context about Women's Rights to an abrupt finish, and only a few sympathetic words remain to be spoken over the feminist corpse."⁶⁹ "Rights" is another bogus term and feminist struggle for them was misdirected: "The confusion has arisen out of an assumption that ultimate authority lies in words." In comparison to the "exercise of force" displayed in the war, feminist demands were feeble: their "words have the value - and no more - of the detonation of the combatants' guns: they have effects which impress the timid and the simple."⁷⁰ Women's position would only improve by "an effectual assertion of physical force," an assertion that could make "Englishwomen...as good a fighting force as the Japanese."⁷¹ In other words, feminism is a mere set of signifiers, lacking the solid meanings of signifieds necessary to effect real change.

At this point it is instructive to consider how far Marsden's support for the violent force of "things" over the ineffectual abstractions of words compromises her feminist politics. At times she reads as uncanny anticipator of Julia Kristeva in "Women's Time". Kristeva, too, is troubled by the "tidiness" of the sign "woman":

I think that the apparent coherence which the term "woman" assumes in contemporary ideology, apart from its "mass" or "shock" effect for activist purposes, essentially has the negative effect of effacing the differences among the diverse functions or structures which operate beneath this word.⁷²

Kristeva's position differs from Marsden's in that the former is prepared to grant "woman" a possible role, however limited, within language. Marsden believed "woman" to be an "empty concept" especially for "activist purposes". Both writers view the structure of language as inadequate for expression of the individual and for representation of sexual difference. For Kristeva, this implies the projection of a new "signifying space" which would allow the "singularity of each person" and "the multiplicity of every person's possible identifications" to be spoken within the symbolic order.⁷³ To Marsden, only the abandonment of the equalising phenomenon of language in total and a plaintive embracing of "things" is feasible. Marsden appears closer to the female writers Kristeva scorns for "being devoted to phantasmic attacks against language and sign as the ultimate supports of phallogentric power."⁷⁴ Advocating a war against words per se, and a feminism of brute physical force, Marsden slots into place as a demonstration of Kristeva's theory that women, more than other social groups, will "invest" in the machine of terrorism and violence. This is because the socio-symbolic order, from which a woman gains only "dubious benefit ", makes a woman "more vulnerable within the symbolic order, more fragile when she suffers within it, more virulent when she protects herself from it."⁷⁵

Marsden's "virulent" anti-linguistics from 1914 onwards thus draws its energies from a dual source: the historically contemporary trope of "war" and a logic of violence towards discourse, as a reaction to the wounding frustrations offered to women by the symbolic order in the early twentieth century. Killing words, though, only resurrects a more dubious supportive structure - that of "things ", associated all too clearly in the discourses of Imagism with a masculine symbolic order of solidity.⁷⁶

By January 1915 Marsden's references to the suffragettes or feminist questions have all but disappeared. The Egoist now has Richard Aldington as Assistant Editor, is publishing Joyce's Portrait and is running Pound's series of articles upon Renaissance drama. Marsden now finds her attack upon linguistic abstraction matched in the rhetoric of Imagism. Early in 1914 she had written that abstract terms were "choking the frail tentacles of perception."⁷⁷ Imagism's promise to restore a sensual experience of the concrete leads Marsden to argue that literary discourses rely upon the production of images. In the course of a critique of H.G.Wells, pet hate of many a modernist, Marsden notes:

The growth of literature is the increasingly precise outlining in words of images felt clearly enough to make their features definite for the one who feels them. A poor writer is one who writes before his images are clear - before he knows in fact.⁷⁸

Images are thus not ideas, but emotions one feels in a sensual way. Hulme too had argued "All emotion depends on real solid vision...it is physical" (FS, 78). In the Imagist issue of The Egoist in May 1915 Marsden echoes this view: "Things are feelings."⁷⁹ It was to become an important component of Imagist theory that images were akin to emotions not ideas, thus making feelings into solid phenomena. Marsden, of course, had been insisting since 1913 that ideas were to be distrusted: "A thought i.e. an idea, is not a real thing, its existence is verbal like that of a dragon or snark...to think is to hesitate; awaiting the verification of a fact."⁸⁰ Imagism, with its claim to ^{truer} directly "things", presented to Marsden a discourse that did not wait around thinking, but aspired to the

concrete realm to which she thought feminism should aspire. Pound in 1919 merely repeated Marsden when he stated that an "idea is only an imperfect induction from fact."⁸¹ Although she admitted to Weaver in November 1913 that she had not read Pound's poetry, Marsden was perhaps drawn to Pound for his resilience to ideas in poetry.⁸² As Marsden noted in 1913, "A poet concerning himself with ideas is a sad spectacle."⁸³

Marsden's first piece in 1915, "I AM", clearly represents her development out of the critique of feminism into a consort with Imagism and points the way to her later work. The Egoist, she notes, has "unique work" as its task: an attempt "to blast the stupefactions of - The Word. Our war is with words and in their every aspect: grammar, accidence, syntax: body, blood, and bone."⁸⁴ Marsden then produces the almost ritual denunciation of the "dangerous fungus" of language and proposes using psychology to reduce the verbal basis of philosophical problems. In Logical Positivist mood she notes, "grammatical form reduced to maniable limits by psychology will entail as a first consequence the scrapping of the verbal conundrums which constitute existing philosophy."⁸⁵ Once this small task is accomplished and language and thought clarified, then work will be able to turn to the "definite images" which form the true basis of thought. The human brain "is at home only in that aura of images which is thrown off from the living 'I.'"⁸⁶ Egoism is thus connected with the Hulmean theory of the imagistic basis of thought; particularity and the senses are thus associated together. Marsden notes the contemporary "wide-spread dissatisfaction with the grammatical structure in this form or that," and notes the Futurist Marinetti and the Imagists as examples.⁸⁷ The Imagist attack upon adjectives merely recommends a surface, but important, reform of language; the real answer is to recognise the

imagistic and individualist basis of the world: "Our worlds? We each grow our own!"⁸⁸

This idealist mixture of psychology, linguistic critique, egoism and pseudo-imagism sets the tone for most of the remaining articles by Marsden in The Egoist. A series, "Lingual Psychology", ran from July 1916 until the magazine closed in 1919. Feminism becomes a thing of the past and Marsden continues building grand philosophical systems that avow egoistic particularism. She published three large and unwieldy works upon metaphysics and the philosophy of religion after The Egoist closed: The Definition of the Godhead (1928); The Mysteries of Christianity (1930); and the posthumous The Philosophy of Time (1955). Apart from proclaiming that the most important lesson of the previous 300 years of philosophy is a "need for precision of speech", these works bear little resemblance to her earlier work.⁸⁹

Marsden's importance lies in her resemblance to Hulme and "Our friends, the 'Imagists'", writers who found a welcome formational space in her magazine.⁹⁰ All attacked abstraction as it was found in contemporary discourses. The preface to Some Imagist Poets of 1916 shows Marsden's anarchic individualism to have marked Imagist theory. Quoting Remy de Gourmont, who compares Imagism to French **Symbolisme**, the preface notes, "the Imagists are descendants of the **Symbolistes**; they are Individualists."⁹¹ Since so much other Imagist rhetoric is designed to distinguish the movement from any form of symbolism, it seems correct to credit Marsden for such aesthetic egoism.

Marsden's development from feminist critique to "Lingual Psychology" shows how the form of the Imagist analysis of language gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, displaced her initial feminist content. Her

disillusion with suffragism was already evident in 1913, but contact with Imagism from 1914 to 1919 diverted the content of her arguments away from any engagement with feminist issues. Her content was now directed to Imagist form, rather than her form being directed to a feminist content. Her critique of the abstractions of contemporary feminist discourse contains, as noted, important links with more recent feminist analysis of language and "woman."⁹² Marsden, however, did not see how calls for visual solidity engendered a discourse deeply at odds with feminist concerns. Reification, in other words, is a deeply ambiguous response to commodification. This is seen more clearly if we turn to analyse the prefaces and manifestos of Imagism.

4. IMAGIST THEORY PRE-1914

The following sections consider the emergence of Imagism and its theoretical claims, before turning in the next chapter to detailed textual analysis of the poetry.

The appearance of Des Imagistes and The Egoist in 1914 marked the formal establishment and public visibility of a group whose origins return us to Pound's meeting with Hulme in 1909. Literary history has generally taken this date as significant for the formation of Imagism. When Pound published "The Complete Poetical Works of T.E.Hulme" at the end of his volume Ripostes (1912) he included a prefatory note. This referred to a "School of Images" that the poems are alleged to recall. Pound disdains knowledge of such a group but does situate Hulme's texts within an earlier Imagist history: "As for the future, **Les Imagistes**, the descendants of the

forgotten school of 1909, have that in their keeping."⁹³ Pound had first used the term "Imagiste" in the Spring of 1912, baptizing Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington as "**les imagistes**."⁹⁴ Flint's "The History of Imagism"(1915) followed Pound in pronouncing Hulme's group as the origin of Imagism.⁹⁵ Many years later T.S.Eliot commented that this group was responsible for the birth of modernist poetry: "The **point de repère** usually and conveniently taken as the starting point of modern poetry is the group denominated "imagists" in London about 1910."⁹⁶ Eliot's judgement is upheld in C.K.Stead's study, The New Poetic (1964) and has since become critical orthodoxy.⁹⁷

For Stead, 1909, when Eliot's earliest verses were written and Pound's Personae published, is the crucial date: "These events mark the beginning of a movement in English poetry which by 1930 had succeeded in establishing that it was the poet's task first to write good poems, and only his second task to please an audience."⁹⁸ This rejection of the audience as irrelevant to the production of poetry centred around language. Hulme had argued, via Bergson and political classicism, that poets had a privileged relation to language. Imagism developed this idea, opposing the "communal apparatus" of language as abstractive from concrete experience. The ground upon which this policy was fought was the prefaces and articles expressing Imagist theory. John T.Gage argues that Imagism was caught in double linguistic bind in relation to its audience: if the public, with its unhealthy language, understood Imagism, then the poets had not separated themselves sufficiently from the public as Hulme advised.⁹⁹ But in order to be known as a linguistic avant-garde the public were required to read and be impressed by Imagist discourses. The public had to be educated to understand the new poetry, but explicit

explanation in an unclarified discourse was forbidden by Imagist theory. Imagist prefaces strived to alleviate this problem. As Gage notes, the Imagist manifestos tried "to alter the way people see reality by changing their attitude toward language."¹⁰⁰ The best place to begin to understand Imagism's attempt to produce a concrete language is in the manifestos and prefaces, perhaps the most important documents on poetic language since Wordsworth's prefaces to the Lyrical Ballads.

Imagist propaganda stemmed, almost inevitably, from Pound. He arranged for F.S. Flint to interview him about "imagisme", and the results were published in March 1913 along with Pound's "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste."¹⁰¹ Flint's "Imagisme" begins by saying that the Imagists were writers in the "best tradition" of Sappho, Catullus and Villon who merely had a few rules drawn up for their own usage. The rules were:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regards rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.¹⁰²

Flint adds that there was also a "Doctrine of the Image" which was unwritten since if seen by the public it would only provoke "useless discussion." Considering the group were called the Imagistes, it is typically disingenuous of Pound to refuse to disclose what the "Image" meant. Reading "A Few Don'ts" renders the doctrine no less perplexing.

What is interesting about the first clause is the fact Imagism felt it necessary to say it at all. It seems stylistic advice applicable to any sort of writing, at whatever time. The need for it to be stressed in

1913 can be read in the way literary history has conventionally done, seeing it as an attack upon Victorian poetry or upon symbolism. Graham Hough, for example, calls the Imagist "revolution" a "sort of spring-cleaning...that got rid of a great deal of the fusty, obstructive and dust-gathering matter" of nineteenth century verse.¹⁰³ This is correct on one level, but does not really explain the desire to self-consciously call for a "direct treatment of the 'thing.'" It is, after all, a precept to which many nineteenth century writers must also have adhered. Calling for directness must be understood as a response to a world where such a contact with things was lacking, a world of abstraction created by the all-pervasive commodification of modern social life.¹⁰⁴ The first Imagist principle is thus a search to discover Lukács's "material substratum of the object."¹⁰⁵ Just as Lukács saw commodification operative in both objective and subjective spheres, so Imagism sought to redeem things "whether subjective or objective." Imagism wishes to recover the smothered concrete content of a material Object. Simultaneously it wants to capture the sensuous experiences of subjects before objects. The latter, it seems, follows inevitably from the former.

Pound was later to call the second Imagist principle the "test" of the whole movement.¹⁰⁶ Ostensibly a call for a sparser poetic diction, the use of "presentation" rather than the expected representation takes us back to the directness of the first principle.¹⁰⁷ Representation of an object in language, as Lukács argued of symbolism, only removes one from close contact with that object. Such indirectness was found in the symbolist aesthetic dominant in English verse in the *fin-de-siècle*.¹⁰⁸ Pound's "A Few Don'ts" contains the kernel of Imagism's hostility to the lack of presentation in symbolism. "Don't be descriptive," proclaims

Pound, quoting a line of Shakespeare which contains "nothing that one can call description; he presents."¹⁰⁹ Dante is likewise said to display a "definiteness of...presentation, as compared with Milton's rhetoric."¹¹⁰ In the section of "A Few Don'ts" headed "Language" Pound's critique of the symbol for its abstraction is explicit:

Don't use such an expression as "dim land **of peace.**" It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the **adequate** symbol.¹¹¹

The phrase Pound presents uses the concrete image of a "dim land" to symbolise the abstract idea of "peace." The "natural object" of the land would, Pound suggests, have been "adequate" to present peace without explicit reference to it. It seems doubtful whether readers could always grasp the reference to abstract concepts such as peace in a "natural object" without further information. The real problem with Pound's argument revolves around the notion of a "natural object". In a world where objects can only be understood through the abstract form of the commodity, "natural objects" seem mythic pre-lapsarian entities exemplifying a richly concrete nature.

Richard Godden makes the point that "natural objects are generally converted into 'symbols' through social labour," but finds it difficult to understand Pound's dictum in relation to his call for a direct treatment of things.¹¹² The problem is resolved if we understand Pound's "natural object" as designed precisely to shortcircuit the alienating labour that converts a primary Object to a symbolic yet abstract Thing. Dreaming of a

non-commodified "natural object" thus takes us into a sensual realm of direct contact with concrete objects, a world Hulme argued was only made accessible by poetic language. Pound's real difficulty lies in rejecting the "social labour" which converts objects to symbols. For it means images of "natural objects" presented by the poet can only offer themselves to the reader for passive contemplation. The labour which grants all linguistic objects meaning is thus missing. In avoiding the necessary abstraction of symbolism, Pound can only produce a reified poetic object which is even less meaningful to the reader. It is merely that the Imagist "natural object", as a work of art, displays a "perfected immediacy", in Lukács's phrase, a spurious show of solidity for visual cognition, masking its true complicity with the reified commodity.¹¹³ As Lukács argues of all contemplative instances of directness, "it never ceases to be confronted by a whole series of ready-made objects that cannot be dissolved into processes."¹¹⁴ Poetic "natural objects" seem to exist apart from the processes, social and historical, through which the poems appeared. It is the traces of these processes which make an object meaningful.

Desiring an immediate presentation of objects takes Imagism a step beyond symbolism. This point is expressed by May Sinclair in the Imagist issue of The Egoist (1915). Sinclair notes, "Presentation and not Representation is the watchword of the school," and then explains the theory of the image:

It (the Image) may be either the form of a thing - you will get Imagist poems which are as near as possible to the naked presentation of a thing...or the Image may be the form of a passion, an emotion or a mood....The point is that the passion, the emotion

or the mood is never given as an abstraction. And in no case is the Image a symbol of reality (the object); it is reality (the object) itself. You cannot distinguish between the thing and its image.

What the Imagists are "out for" is direct contact with reality....There must be nothing between you and your object...The Victorian poets are protestant. For them the bread and wine are symbols of Reality....The Imagists are Catholic; they believe in Trans-Substantiation. For them the bread and wine are the body and the blood.¹¹⁵

Images are not symbols, abstractions from actual objects, they simply are the presented things. In poetically presenting in such a way that "the thing and its image" are happily reconciled, the Image offers a sensual experience of "direct contact" between subject and object. In a way, it recalls Lukács's notion of the identical subject-object. Hulme's desire for a language that physically handed over sensations, what he called "body poetry",¹¹⁶ seems to find its realisation here, along with an "intimate realisation" of the object dwelling tactilely next to the body. Sinclair's emphasis upon the Image as passion, mood or emotion also resembles Marsden's injunctions that only through feeling could one avoid the inevitable abstraction of ideas.

Immediacy of the Image as counter to symbolist abstraction is, as has been noted, no real guarantee of defeating commodification. Immediacy is, in a sense, doubly abstractive. Symbolism, in the Lukácsian reading Jameson offers, shows we lack a real contact with objects instinct with the meaningfulness of human labour.¹¹⁷ Imagism appears to grasp objects in a non-symbolic fashion, providing a "direct contact" with some concrete entity that obliterates its commodified nature. But the "perfected immediacy" of image and thing combined merely produces an illusory belief

that we have a concrete grasp upon objects. Imagism abstracts more deeply because it appears to be concrete. In seeming to be a poetry of reality it obscures the fact that the objects it displays are actually reified in the texts themselves and thus abstracted from sensuous meaningful objects. This is clearly the case when the immediate "natural objects" presented in the text are human forms. "Go in fear of abstractions" warned Pound in "A Few Don'ts", failing to advise the reader to also go in fear of that which seemed concrete.

One fearful aspect of the concrete is the visual reification of women in Imagism. Indeed the very technique of presenting images, as opposed to symbolising, is gendered. Pound comments that "one does not want to be called a symbolist, because symbolism has usually been associated with mushy technique."¹¹⁸ Following Hulme's pleasure in "solidity" symbolism lacks the masculine way with words of Imagism. Richard Aldington, discussing how to write about a beautiful woman, notes: "we do not say 'O how I admire that exquisite, that beautiful, that - 25 more adjectives woman, you are cosmic, let us spoon forever,'" but we present that woman, we make an 'Image' of her."¹¹⁹ Poetic images were, for Hulme, a compensation for a more "bodily" language. For Aldington, a condensed diction assists in concentrating attention upon such sublimated libidinal images. As a concrete image of the woman the poem offers itself to the reader for a pleasurable immediacy, for as much "direct contact" with the object as perception allows. We might comment upon this tactic, as Lukács comments upon bourgeois philosophy, that "Every contemplative, purely cognitive stance leads to a divided relationship to its object...For every purely cognitive stance bears the stigma of immediacy."¹²⁰ Immediacy of touch is promised, but one is restricted to

only looking at the object. Here the division between subject and object is along gender not class lines. Women are offered in Imagism for immediate visual pleasure. They are reified images who produce a male contemplative joy which (as a different form of symbolism) is only second-best to more bodily sensations.

5. THE IMAGIST PREFACES

Pound's "A Few Don'ts" was followed by publication a year later of the first anthology. Des Imagistes (1914) contained no preface. Pound obviously felt he had done enough prose proselytising and would let the poetry stand alone. The reaction to the volume was generally poor, some buyers in London sending their copies back.¹²¹ The 1915 anthology, post-Pound and engineered by Lowell, decided that a preface might help the standing of the movement. The preface explicitly notes:

As it has been suggested that much of the misunderstanding of the former volume was due to the fact that we did not explain ourselves in a preface, we have thought it wise to tell the public what our aims are, and why we are banded together between one set of covers.¹²²

This apology contradicts the "present don't describe" rhetoric of 1913. The preface refers to "Differences of taste and judgement" that have appeared amongst the contributors to Des Imagistes, but apart from actually publishing a preface very little distinguishes the linguistic principles of the 1915 volume. New rhythms are called for, not

necessarily a poetry of "free-verse." The poet should "present an image" that "renders particulars exactly." Poems should be concentrated, "hard and clear, never blurred not indefinite." There is a token gesture of linguistic democracy, in Wordsworthian mood, that was lacking in the earlier work. Poets should "use the language of common speech", though this is undercut by the next clause: "but to employ always the **exact** word."¹²³ Poets, Hulme had taught, were the only people properly able to use language exactly. Flint upheld this principle of the superior "common speech" of the poet when he argued: "One of the chief functions of a poet is to create and recreate his native language....But time is ungrateful to him, because his new speech becomes common speech."¹²⁴

One important difference in the 1915 preface is contained in principle three:

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write well about aeroplanes and automobiles; not is it necessarily bad art to write about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.¹²⁵

This is a statement of the modernity of Imagism as a movement. Poetry should treat that which is contemporary, but not be chastised if it discusses older subjects. Hulme had pointed to a new art that organised its formal structure along mechanical principles. Imagism, though believing that "modern life" could be treated aesthetically, had not quite grasped this idea. It is a point about the form and content of a modernist verse. The 1915 preface seems to advocate that the content of

Imagist verse should, if it wished, present images of modernity such as those of systems of transport. But it is not stressed, as it was in Hulme, that the form of presentation must also match modern life. In Lukácsian terms, Imagist portrayals of contemporary trains and planes showed form directed to a concretely modern content. Imagism tips over into true modernist verse when its content draws upon the concrete forms of modernity. When the contents of modern life, the epitome of which is the commodity, are utilised as formal mechanisms for the production of poetry, then Imagism becomes a modernist verse movement.

This transition seems to be suggested in the preface to Some Imagist Poets of 1916. Again the preface starts by explaining the need to state Imagist tenets once more. The 1915 volume presented Imagist theory too briefly: "the very brevity we employed has lead to a great deal of misunderstanding. We have decided, therefore, to explain the laws which govern us a little more clearly."¹²⁶ Concentration, as a principle, is discarded. The first law of government indicates a shift toward modernist form: "In the first place 'Imagism' does not mean merely the presentation of pictures. 'Imagism' refers to the manner of presentation, not to the subject." Concrete presentation of "things" is not the content but the form of Imagist practice. It is part of "a changed idiom in literature" in the twentieth century. Imagism must be "judged by different standards from those employed in Nineteenth-Century art." The difficulty people encounter with Imagism is due to their being "caught in the throes of a new birth. The exterior world is changing, and with it men's feelings, and every age must express its feelings in its own individual way."¹²⁷ The Image is thus a modern technique for capturing the feeling of this

changing world, a formal method which has somehow internalised the concrete content of modernity.

6. IMAGES AND AURAS

Before leaving Imagist theory for the analysis of the poetry, it is useful to consider once more the precise nature and function of the Image. The theoretical aims of the "Image" are given at the start of Pound's "A Few Don'ts":

An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term "complex" rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists such as Hart....It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.¹²⁸

This passage has attracted much interpretation, but little elucidation. Part of the problem is that the concept of the "complex" does not reappear in Pound's critical vocabulary. Exegesis of the Image was not helped by the incomprehension of the other Imagists. Looking back from 1940 F.S.Flint commented: "We had a doctrine of the image, which none of us knew anything about."¹²⁹ Trying to understand the Image in terms of Hart's "complex" provides only partial clarification. Wallace Martin has shown that Pound draws the reference from an early essay of Freudian explanation by Hart, "The Conception of the Subconscious"(1911). For

Hart, notes Martin, "the complex may be said to be the psychological analogue of the conception of force in physics."¹³⁰ This resembles Pound's later description of the Image in "As for Imagisme" (1915) as "a vortex or cluster of fused ideas...endowed with energy."¹³¹ Pound identifies energy with emotion: "Energy, or emotion, is an organiser of form."¹³² Intellect and emotion are combined in a linguistic form or complex, thus averting conceptual abstraction by running the concrete force of emotions through ideas. Emotional energy appears like electricity pulsing through ideas, sparking off poetic forms. Speaking of the artist's handling of this energy Pound notes, "The best artist is the man whose machinery can stand the highest voltage. The better his machinery, the more precise, the more exact will be the record of the voltage."¹³³

Schwartz argues that Pound, in essays such as these from 1913 to 1915, utilises two, seemingly antithetical, vocabularies.¹³⁴ The first is a discourse of objectivity, evoking an analogy between scientist and artist. This is seen in the example of the poet objectively and exactly recording his "voltage."¹³⁵ Later in "A Few Don'ts" Pound counsels "Consider the way of the scientist," a person who begins by "discovery."¹³⁶ The second discourse sees art as the expression of subjective emotions: the voltage recorded is that of the poet's individual emotions. Pound's two discourses contain familiar elements: Hulme's notion of the superior artist producing art-objects structurally akin to machinery; and Marsden's valorization of emotions as solid when compared to ideas. Hulme's trope is mechanical not scientific but what Pound really values is the hardness and objectivity both images offer.

Imagist directness is now both subjective and objective, presenting

a "complex" both "intellectual and emotional." Again the theory recalls Lukács's notion of the blissful reconciliation of subject and object under the sign of identity. For Schwartz, Pound aims in his poetry to integrate the discourse of objectivity with that of subjectivity: "Poetry expresses subjective emotions, but these emotions are objectified in the very things we perceive."¹³⁷ This theory was quickly picked up by other Imagists. Aldington, writing in 1914, notes, "We convey an emotion by presenting the object and circumstance of that emotion without comment"; this produces poems showing "A hardness, as of cut stone."¹³⁸ The Preface to Some Imagist Poets (1916) also endorses this theory: "The 'exact' word does not mean the word which exactly describes the object in itself, it means the 'exact' word which brings the effect of that object before the reader as it presented itself to the poet's mind at the time of writing the poem."¹³⁹

Subjectivity is reified in Pound's theory, but only as a way of producing poetic objects that do not display the abstract ideas of the poet. The artist solidifies her or his poems with emotions to produce textual objects able to give readers the "exact" and objective experience of the original emotion. This original emotion is itself prompted by some object viewed by the poet. This is the sense of Pound's idea that presenting an Image "instantaneously...gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits." The Image presents the original object directly, liberated from intervening mediations into a concrete amalgam of form and content, subjective feeling and objective realisation.

The sublime effect of the Image recalls Benjamin's discussion of the aura of the work of art. Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of

Mechanical Reproduction", celebrated the disintegration of the aura of the art-object. The uniqueness of the aesthetic object, which Benjamin sees as a quasi-magical "cult value", is shattered by mechanical reproducibility. Benjamin defines the aura in two ways. First, it is the "sensitive nucleus" of the art-object, the "essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced."¹⁴⁰ This is a temporal definition, applicable to "art objects": the aura of an object is its relation to "the domain of tradition."¹⁴¹ The second dimension of the aura is spatial, and Benjamin applies this to "natural objects": "We define the aura...as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be."¹⁴² The contemporary decay of the aura in the reproducible object threatens both dimensions.. Objects are no longer embedded in reactionary cultural traditions but are free to be appropriated for new purposes.¹⁴³ Likewise, the auratic distance around art-objects is negated by their reproduction: "Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction."¹⁴⁴ For Benjamin, mechanical reproduction erodes the distance the art-object has as "cult value", offering a more democratic relation between art and audience, object and subject. Importantly, Benjamin's argument relies upon stressing the "good" side of the commodity. Because the art-object is not unique but an abstractly equivalent commodity, its debilitating aura is destroyed by its new "exhibition value."¹⁴⁵

Pound's definition of the Image tracks similar spatial and temporal co-ordinates. The presented "complex" offers a "liberation" from "time limits and space limits." The original object sparking the poet's emotion is brought immediately before the reader. Mediated distance is abolished,

one's grasp upon the object is guaranteed. For Benjamin it is technology, for Pound science which will destroy spatial distance and liberate objects. For Pound, this liberation is the sense of **immediacy** we have diagnosed in Imagism. In the Image there is to be, in Sinclair's phrase, "nothing between you and your object". Just as the poet has sensually grasped the object, so ideally, in the concrete image presented, the reader is able to recreate this blissful liaison with the object. This is an experience of the sensual fullness of objects absent from the commodity, that type of concrete object whose abstract form we routinely and joylessly embrace.

There are two problems with destroying auratic distance as a tactic for liberating objects from commodification. We have already discussed the first problem. This concerns immediacy in Imagism, the way that the "things" presented for visual "grasping" are generally women. Secondly, immediacy as an aim, the liquidation of distance between word and thing sought for in the direct presentation of images, points to a crucial contradiction in Imagism. This is a contradiction which helps situate Imagism in the development of modernism, and which will receive further treatment when Pound is discussed in detail. It is useful, however, to indicate the contradiction now, as a way of concluding the developments traced in this chapter before moving on in the next chapter to discuss Imagist poetry.

7. CONCLUSION

The early Imagist propaganda, "Imagisme ", Pound's "A Few Don'ts" essay and the 1915 and 1916 prefaces share a desire to directly and accurately present "things". This chapter has interpreted this as a response to commodification. It is a response which in Hulme and Marsden, but most clearly in Imagist theory, requires a language which cuts through abstraction to produce an experience of the concrete. The 1915 Some Imagist Poets preface shows a definition of this theory: "4. To present an image....we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities....5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite."¹⁴⁶ The intention is for words to present clearly images of particular objects. Words in some sense should ideally be transparent to material objects. Imagist immediacy thus requires a dematerialisation of language, since a sensual grasp upon concrete objects can only be mediated and compromised if it appears in a linguistic structure. Pound was to point to this in 1914 when he commented: "The image is the word beyond formulated language."¹⁴⁷ A "word" that does not exist within "formulated language" cannot really still be called a word. The logical conclusion to this displacement of words by things would be a poetry of objects. As the American poet Jack Spicer was to say much later: "I would like to make poems out of real objects."¹⁴⁸ But this, of course, would be neither poetry nor discourse.

Faced with the prospect of abolishing its linguistic status in order to avoid abstraction, poetry has only one option: it must make its own words into things, not have words merely present images of things. This is the possibility glimpsed by Pound early in 1915 when, disgruntled with the "dilution" of Imagism by Amy Lowell, he hides himself away with Yeats in Stone Cottage in Sussex. "Language ", he writes to Harriet Monroe in

January, "is made out of concrete things."¹⁴⁹ Language should not present clear images of concrete things, it must reify its own forms and textures into concrete. Solidified in this way poetic language has no need to look outside itself for concrete experiences to present, it simply turns round and gazes in wonder at its own solidified forms. In this crucial period from 1909 to the last real Imagist anthology in 1917, we see Imagist poetics, in its shift from word to thing, on the verge of a longer haul to the modernist poetics exemplified by Pound's Cantos.

This chapter has mapped out why and how Imagism reached this position. T.E.Hulme and Dora Marsden were shown to be important for their influence upon early Imagism, and for their interrogation of the same problems the poets hoped to resolve aesthetically. Both Hulme and Marsden, from different perspectives, call for a strategy to contest abstraction in language. We have shown how Imagism reached a similar position, but offered a more radical solution. If the culprit is abstraction and the cause commodification, then the answer is to be reification. This solution was, however, fraught with difficulties. The problems around the question of gender raised by the immediacy of the Image demonstrate this. The next chapter analyses Imagist poetry in the light of these difficult relations to reification and modernism.

NOTES

1. T.E.Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, ed. Herbert Read, (1924; rpt. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p.76. Further references to this book will be given in the main text as S, and page number.
2. Sanford Schwartz, The Matrix of Modernism Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.9.
3. Ibid., p.9;10.
4. The notion of cultural formation is drawn from Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.118-9.
5. See Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p.184. Pound says he is "cogitating" about the anthology in November 1913. See Letter to Amy Lowell Nov. 1913, The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D.Paige, (London: Faber, 1950), p.24.
6. Richard Aldington, Life for Life's Sake, (London: Cassell and Co., 1968), pp.130-1.
7. Amy Lowell, Letter to Harriet Monroe 15 Sept. 1914; cited Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L.Smyers, Writing for their Lives The Modernist Woman 1910-1940, (London: The Women's Press, 1987), p.200.
8. Ibid., p.201.
9. Pound, Letters, p.38.
10. Ibid., p.48.
11. Ibid., p.49.

12. See the letter by Pound et al to the editor of the New Freewoman: An Individualist Review (London, 1913; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), Dec.15, 1913, p.244.
13. Michael Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.39.
14. Ricardo J.Quinones, Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.244.
15. Schwartz, Matrix of Modernism, p.62.
16. Alan Robinson, Poetry, Painting and Ideas 1885-1914, (London: Macmillan, 1985), p.64.
17. Pound cited in Graham Hough, Image and Experience: Studies in a Literary Revolution, (London: Duckworth, 1960), p.31. T.S.Eliot, reviewing Hulme's Speculations in the Criterion praised him for being "the forerunner of the a new attitude of mind, if the twentieth century is to have a mind of its own." See "Critics" <T.S.Eliot>, Criterion 11 Apr.7, 1924, p.232. For an account of Hulme's influence on Eliot see Ronald Schuchard, "Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Toward a Revaluation of Eliot's Critical and Spiritual Development", PMLA 88 (Oct.1973), pp.1083-94.
18. T.E.Hulme, Further Speculations, ed. S.Hynes, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p.81. Further references to this book will be given in the main text as FS and page number.
19. Schwartz traces this theory to Remy de Gourmont, Matrix of Modernism, p.57.
20. Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.129.
21. See Wallace Martin, "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic", PMLA 85 (1970), p.180. For the importance of Taine on linguistic thought see Hans

Aarsleff, "Taine and Saussure", in From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History, (London: Athlone Press, 1982).

22. Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans.T.E.Hulme, (1903; rpt. in trans. London: Macmillan, 1913), p.14. For the wider influence of Bergson in modernism see Maud Ellmann, The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), ch.1.

23. A.R.Jones, The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme, (London: Gollancz, 1960), p.84.

24. For general accounts of Bergson see Leszek Kolakowski, Bergson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Schwartz, Matrix of Modernism, pp.23-8.

25. Schwartz, Ibid., pp.28-9.

26. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p.139.

27. Ibid., p.140.

28. Levenson, Genealogy of Modernism, p.81.

29. Ibid., p.88.

30. Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy" (1912); rpt. in Jones, Life and Opinions of Hulme, p.187.

31. See Robinson, Painting, Poetry and Ideas, ch.4.

32. Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution", New Left Review 144 (Mar/Apr.1984), pp.104-5.

33. Ibid., p.105.

34. Ezra Pound, "The New Sculpture", The Egoist: An Individualist Review, Feb.1914 (London; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), p.68.
35. Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Pelican Marx Library, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.138;130. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p.184.
36. Schwartx, Matrix of Modernism, p.56.
37. Hulme, "Modern Art 1. The Grafton Group", The New Age (1914); cited Levenson, Genealogy, p.98-9.
38. Levenson, Ibid., p.99.
39. For accounts of these influences on Hulme see Jones, Life and Opinions, ch.9 and Levenson, Genealogy, pp.94-102.
40. Levenson, Ibid., p.102.
41. Walter Benjamin, Letter to Adorno Dec.9 1938, in Ernst Bloch et al, Aesthetics and Politics, (London: Verso, 1977), p.140.
42. Lukács, History, p.90.
43. Pound attended Hulme's lecture and reviewed it favourably for The Egoist, although he did describe it as "almost wholly unintelligible." See Pound, "The New Sculpture", p.67.
44. F.S.Flint, "The History of Imagism", The Egoist, May 1 1915, p.71.
45. Pound, unpublished letter Nov.17 1917, cited in J.B.Harmer, Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p.214.
46. Michel Foucault comments: "Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other." See

Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", in Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader, ed. Robert Young, (Boston and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.67.

47. For further information on the New Age see Wallace Martin, The "New Age" Under Oarge: Chapters in English Cultural History, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

48. Pound, Letter to John Drummond May 30 1934, Letters, p.259. For further information upon the Egoist see Jane Lidderdale and M.Nicholson, Dear Miss Weaver: Harriet Shaw Weaver 1876-1961, (London: Faber, 1970) and Hanscombe and Smyers, Writing for their Lives, chs.10, 11.

49. Cited Hanscombe and Smyers, Ibid., p.165.

50. Aldington et al, Letter to Editor, New Freewoman, Dec.15 1913, p.244. For further information on Pound's editorial tactics see K.K.Ruthven, "Ezra's Appropriations", TLS, Nov.20-26, 1987.

51. Carter, Egoist, July 1 1914, p.34.

52. Alan Durant, Ezra Pound: Identity in Crisis, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), p.107.

53. For biographical information on Marsden and feminism see Les Garner, Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918, (London: Heinemann, 1984), ch.5 and Hanscombe and Smyers, Writing for their Lives, pp.141-9.

54. Ibid., p.47.

55. Marsden, The Freewoman, Nov.23, 1911, p.3.

56. Marsden, The Freewoman, Dec.14, 1911, p.64.

57. Marsden, "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, June 15, 1913, p.3

58. Ibid.
59. Ibid. All further references in this paragraph are to this article, p.3.
60. Ibid., p.4.
61. Marsden, "Intellect and Culture", New Freewoman, July 1, 1913, p.24.
62. Marsden, "I AM", Egoist, Jan.1, 1915, p.3.
63. Marsden "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, June.15, 1913, p.5.
64. Ibid.
65. Marsden, "Concerning the Beautiful", New Freewoman, Sept.1, 1913, p.104.
66. Levenson, Genealogy, p.68. For other accounts of Stirner see R.W.K.Paterson, The Nihilistic Egoist Max Stirner, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and, from a more hostile position, Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, ed.C.J.Arthur, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974).
67. Marsden, "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, Oct.15, 1913, p.165.
68. Marsden, "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, Nov.1913, p.204.
69. Marsden, "Women's Rights", Egoist, Oct.1, 1914, p.361.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., p.363.
72. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time", in The Kristeva Reader, ed.Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.193.

73. Ibid., p.209-10.

74. Ibid., p.207.

75. Ibid., p.204.

76. It is interesting to compare Marsden's relation to male modernists on language with that of Mary Wollstonecraft to eighteenth century linguistic prescriptivists. Samuel Johnson, in the "Preface" to his Dictionary explicitly genders language: "I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven" (Johnson, "Preface", A Dictionary of the English Language, (London: 1755). Wollstonecraft attempts to reclaim solidity for women's words: "I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style. I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render my unaffected; for, wishing rather to persuade by the force of my arguments than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, or in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which, coming from the head, never reach the heart. I shall be employed about things, not words!" ("Preface" to A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, ed.Miriam Brody Krammick, (1792; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.82. Wollstonecraft's strategy is, like Marsden's, fraught with problems. For Mary Jacobus she ends up speaking "not so much for women, or as a woman, but against them - over their silent bodies." See Jacobus, Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Critique, (London: Methuen, 1986), p.32.

77. Marsden, "Views and Comments", Egoist, Feb.16, 1914, p.65.

78. Marsden, "Views and Comments", Egoist, June 1, 1914, p.206.

79. Marsden, "Truth and Reality", Egoist, May 1, 1915, 1915, p.68.

80. Marsden, "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, Oct.15, 1913, p.165.

81. Ezra Pound, "Aeschylus", Egoist, Jan/Feb.1919, p.7.

82. Marsden said of Pound in 1913: "As for Ezra Pound's poems, I haven't read 'em. Speak it not. He is a nice old chap." Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Nov.1913, cited Lidderdale and Nicholson, Dear Miss Weaver, p.73. For a consideration of Marsden's influence upon the early work of William Carlos Williams see, Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams: The American Background, (Cambridge at the University Press, 1971), pp.23-9.
83. Marsden, "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, Oct.15, 1913, p.165.
84. Marsden, "I AM", Egoist, Jan.1, 1915, p.1.
85. Ibid., p.2.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p.3.
88. Ibid., p.4.
89. Marsden, The Definition of the Godhead, (London: Egoist Press, 1928), p.20. See also Marsden, The Mysteries of Christianity, (London: Egoist Press, 1930) and The Philosophy of Time, (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1955).
90. Marsden, "I AM", Egoist, Jan.1, 1915, p.3.
91. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets An Annual Anthology, (London: Constable and Co.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916).
92. As well as resembling Kristeva at times, Marsden's critique of "Woman" also recalls Denise Riley's argument that the category of "'Woman' is inadequate." Denise Riley, "Am I that Name?" Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History, (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.112.
93. Ezra Pound, Ripostes (1912); rpt. in Collected Shorter Poems, (London: Faber, 1968), p.251.

94. Levenson, Genealogy, p.69.
95. F.S.Flint, "The History of Imagism", Egoist, May 1, 1915.
96. T.S.Eliot, "American Literature and the American Language", (1953) rpt. in To Criticize the Critic, (London: Faber, 1965); cited in Peter Jones ed., Imagist Poetry, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.14.
97. C.K.Stead, The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), ch.4. For a discussion of modernism's rhetorical claims about its own history see Carol Christ, Victorian and Modern Poetics, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
98. Stead, New Poetic, p.55.
99. John T.Gage, In the Arresting Eye: The Rhetoric of Imagism, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp.30-1.
100. Ibid., p.31.
101. For details of the incident see Levenson, Genealogy, p.69. "Imagisme" and "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste", were published in Poetry, March, 1913.
102. "Imagisme"; rpt. Jones, Imagist Poetry, p.129.
103. Graham Hough, Image and Experience, p.28.
104. Terry Eagleton makes a similar point about how "Leavis and Husserl both turn to the consolations of the concrete, of what can be known on the pulses, in a period of major ideological crisis." Literary Theory An Introduction, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.57.
105. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p.126.
106. Pound, Letter to Glenn Hughes, Sept.26, 1927, Letters, p.213.

107. Isobel Armstrong argues that one way to characterise the change from nineteenth century to modernist poetics is in terms of the shorter and more concentrated nature of modern verse: "one is led to the aesthetic of the short poem, in which the poem becomes a thing and not, as for so much Romantic poetry, a model of the structure of consciousness." Language as Living Form in Nineteenth Century Poetry, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p.15.

108. Symbolism in England is first discussed in Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899). For a discussion of its importance see Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957). Edmund Wilson said of symbolism: "All symbols are metaphors that stand for things and what symbolism did was merely to cut the metaphors loose from their moorings." Imagism might be regarded as an attempt to retie this broken link between word and thing. Wilson cited in J.B.Harmer, Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p.174.

109. Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste",; rpt. in Jones ed., Imagist Poetry, p.132.

110. Ibid., p.133. In 1936 Eliot was also to dismiss Milton for his "rhetoric" using Imagist criteria. Milton's rhetoric stemmed from his lack of a "visual imagination", traced eventually to his blindness. T.S.Eliot, "Milton", On Poetry and Poets, (London: Faber, 1957), pp.142-5. For a discussion of Eliot's use of a visual epistemology see, Andrew Ross, The Failure of Modernism Symptoms of American Poetry, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp.29-31.

111. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", p.131.

112. Richard Godden, "Icons, Etymologies, Origins and Monkey Puzzles in the Languages of Upward and Fenollosa", in Ian F.A.Bell ed., Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading, (London: Barnes and Noble, 1982), p.233.

113. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p.158.

114. Ibid., p.205.

115. May Sinclair, "Two Notes", Egoist, May 1, 1915, p.88-9. Sinclair's description of Imagism makes it reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's notion of "logocentrism." Derrida writes: "Logocentrism...determines the being of the entity as presence." That is, linguistic meaning is said to be the simultaneous presence of word and referent, image and thing. Derrida notes that one "subdetermination" of this general form of "metaphysics of presence" is of "presence of the thing to the sight as **eidōs**." Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.12.

116. Hulme, Letter to A.M.Pattinson, n.d.; cited in Jones, Life and Opinions, p.211.

117. Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.197.

118. Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir, (1916; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1970), p.84-5.

119. Richard Aldington, "Modern Poetry and the Imagists", Egoist, June 1, 1914, p.202.

120. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p.205.

121. See Hanscombe and Smyers, Writing for their Lives, p.200.

122. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets An Anthology, (London: Constable; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915).

123. Ibid.

124. F.S.Flint, Lecture 1940; cited Harner, Victory in Limbo, p.157.

125. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets (1915).
126. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets (1916).
127. Ibid.
128. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", Imagist Poetry, p.130.
129. Flint, Lecture 1940; cited Harmer, Victory in Limbo, p.17.
130. Wallace Martin, "Freud and Imagism", Notes and Queries, vol.206 (Dec.1961), p.471. For a more detailed discussion of Hart and the Imagist complex see Martin Kayman, "A Context for Hart's 'Complex': A Contribution to the Study of Pound and Science", Paideuma, 12 (Fall/Winter 1983), pp.223-235. Freud himself argued "dreams think essentially in 'images'" rather than concepts and that "words are frequently treated in dreams as though they were things, and for that reason they are apt to be combined in just the same way as are presentations of things." Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library vol.4, (1900; rpt. Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1976), p.113,403.
131. Ezra Pound, "As for Imagisme", Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber, 1973), p.345.
132. Ibid., p.346.
133. Ibid. In "I gather the limbs of Osiris" (1911-12) Pound argues that "words are like great hollow cones of steel....charged with a force like electricity." Prose, p.34. These energetic tropes are also to be found in Marsden, for whom the soul is "an individuated entity thrown out free by the stream of living energy." "Views and Comments", New Freewoman, Oct.15, 1913, p.165.
134. Schwartz, Matrix of Modernism, pp.65-9.

135. For detailed accounts of Pound's relation to science see Ian F.A.Bell, Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound, (London: Methuen, 1981) and Martin Kayman, The Modernism of Ezra Pound: The Science of Poetry, (London: Macmillan, 1986).
136. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", Imagist Poetry, p.132.
137. Schwartz, Matrix of Modernism, p.67.
138. Aldington, "Modern Poetry and the Imagists", p.202.
139. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets (1916).
140. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Fontana, 1970), p.223.
141. This historical dimension of the aura is the one Benjamin uses in his discussion of Proust's mémoireⁱⁿ volontaire. Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, (London: Verso, 1973), p.112.
142. Benjamin, Illuminations, p.224.
143. This idea is also found in Benjamin's idea of wresting tradition away from conformism in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illuminations, p.257.
144. Ibid., p.225.
145. This is part of what Adorno called Benjamin's "dialectical salvation of the commodity." Adorno, Letter to Benjamin, Aug.2, 1935, Aesthetics and Politics, p.119.
146. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets (1915).
147. Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, p.88.

148. Jack Spicer, Collected Books of Jack Spicer, ed. Robin Blaser, (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980), p.33.

149. Pound, Letter to Harriet Monroe, Jan.1915, Letters, p.49.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SEEN AND THE PALPABLE: IMAGIST PRACTICE

First came the seen, then thus the palpable

Ezra Pound, Cantos LXXI.521

1. INTRODUCTION

The gap between Imagist theory and Imagist practice is often very noticeable. Indeed, given the rigorous requirements of the Imagist manifestos it is, at times, difficult to point to any poems fulfilling all of the stated precepts. Pound, in "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste", recommended using "no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something."¹ But one can always quibble over whether or not some adjective is superfluous to the presentation of particulars.² This chapter will not attempt to test Imagist practice by comparison with the strictures of Imagist theory, but will show that the responses to commodification articulated in Imagist manifestos are, by and large, continued in Imagist poetics. I will consider those writers and poems contained in the five Imagist anthologies who best illustrate my argument about the relation between modernism and reification. Of course, this runs the risk of

presenting a one-sided view of a movement united, at times, only in name. Because of the very plurality of Imagism, some narrowing of focus is necessary if one is not to strain to find links between quite diverse writers. I will also discuss the texts of tangential Imagists such as Edward Storer and of Imagist poems not published in the anthologies but produced within the same period 1909 to 1930. This is in order to offer a wider, more representative picture of Imagism and its position in twentieth century literary history. I will, however, concentrate upon the four anthologies from 1914 to 1917, since the 1930 collection is perhaps only Imagist in name. Analysis of Pound's Imagist texts deserve independent study in a later chapter.

What becomes apparent reading Imagist poetry is the way its visual epistemology, the supposed libidinal compensation for the debilitating experience of commodification, is firmly situated in an urban environment. The 1915 Preface to Some Imagist Poets clearly called for a poetry inspired by modern industrialised and mechanical life. I will argue that Imagist verse is resolutely urban because of its fascination with looking and its frequent fear of touching. This unequal relation between the senses is brought about as a reaction to city life. In this metropolitan environment Imagism as a modernist poetry emerges. This is a poetry governed by urban capitalist life in the early twentieth century. The rules of engagement of Imagism with modernity are, in Pound's words, that the "seen" comes first, followed by "the palpable". The palpable is not human sensual contact but rather the materialised language of Imagist verse, verse which is a compromise for Hulme's "body poetry." The content of this palpable discourse, however, returns us to "the seen" in its obsessive figuring of women in cities. But this seeing is only a prelude to a reification of the

female form.

I want to approach this relation between the seen and the palpable in Imagism by comparing two texts. These poems appear to question the epistemology of poetic language in modernity, raising problems for a poetry seeking to present concrete images. Using insights from this comparative reading I will then broaden my focus, concentrating upon three forms of concrete experience found in Imagist texts.

2. OF POOLS AND PORTRAITS.

H.D.'s "The Pool" and William Carlos Williams's "Portrait of a Lady" employ ambiguous modes of Imagist method.³ They demonstrate crucial problems for a poetry using an Imagist approach to represent the experience of modernity:

The Pool - H.D.

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?

Portrait of a Lady - William Carlos Williams

Your thighs are appletrees
whose blossoms touch the sky.
Which sky? The sky

where Watteau hung a lady's
slipper. Your knees
are a southern breeze - or
a gust of snow. Agh! what
sort of man was Fragonard?
- as if that answered
anything. Ah, yes - below
the knees, since the tune
drops that way, it is
one of those white summer days,
the tall grass of your ankles
flickers upon the shore -
Which shore? -
the sand clings to my lips -
Which shore?
Agh! petals maybe. How
should I know?
Which shore? Which shore?
I said petals from an appletree.

Both poems ask how the subject can form a relationship with some object. H.D. asks of the pool she views, "What are you?" while Williams ends his poem with the forlorn question "How/should I know?" Both produce the condensed discourse prescribed by Imagist theory, and both root themselves in perceptions crammed with objects. But H.D.'s text figures the relation to objects in terms of touch, whereas Williams's epistemology, despite its uncertainties, is resolutely visual. Unlike H.D.'s poem, Williams's is clearly a gendered "portrait". The poet's verbal image is compared to the noted eighteenth century male artists Fragonard and Watteau, the former acclaimed for his fleshy depictions of the female form.

Williams' poem reads as an example of the doctrine of the "Image" and

as a critique of the presuppositions of Imagism. The poem opens with a typical example of the compressed Imagist simile: female thighs are directly compared, without "like" or "as," to appletrees. This Imagist simile follows Hulme's theory that thought itself "consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images."⁴ The definiteness of the statement, the thighs **are** appletrees, displays the Imagist tenet that "the natural object is always the **adequate** symbol."⁵ The woman's thighs, which the poem seeks to represent, are identified with the natural object, the appletrees; word and thing are united.

The adequacy of the identification is, however, undercut by the question in the next line: "Which sky?" From identifying a natural object with a human form, the poet is forced to reach for a cultural reference to an eighteenth century painter to help specify his comparison. The 1915 Imagist Preface required the writer to "render particulars exactly."⁶ Here the reference to "the sky" veers dangerously towards generality and so a signifier of visual specificity is introduced: it is Watteau's sky in a particular painting. The use of the painting analogy emphasises the visual grounding of the poem, but also distances it from a "direct treatment of the thing", for this is now treatment of an already represented thing in a painting. It is as if the sensual immediacy with natural objects praised by Imagism can only be achieved by cultural mediation. A threefold visual representation, poet's eyes, painted image and painter's eyes, blocks direct access to the woman's thighs. The palpable is only approached through visual tropes. As in Hulme's theory, a poetry of bodily sensations has to be replaced by a visual verse.

Faced with this disabling detachment the poem tries to recover its perspicuous relation of word to thing by comparing the lady's knees to "a

southern breeze". Once again the attempted linguistic purchase upon the concrete fails and uncertainty appears. Are the knees akin to "a southern breeze - or/a gust of snow"? Both comparisons seem inapt, since the solidity of knees, static or moving, is not rendered by the ephemeral force of a moving breeze or gust. The poem seems to draw attention to the problematic nature of capturing human objects in visual terms. The foremost problem is the lack of movement the visual medium yields. This was the reason, in part, that Pound shifted allegiance from static "images" to whirling "vortices".⁷ Imagist discourse, in privileging a visual analogy for its language, must enforce a reification of its subject matter. Linguistic images cannot capture the fluidity of human life and the poem's prevarication over temperatures (warm breeze or cold gusting snow) undermines the supposed unambiguous nature of the gaze. For Hulme, images were the privileged means of making one's discourse clear, solid and capable of utter directness. T.S. Eliot encapsulated this idea when he commented in an essay on Dante: "Speech varies, but our eyes are all the same."⁸ Eyes perceive unequivocally, unlike our words, though Williams's poem shows this up as an unattainable Imagist myth. The paradox Williams highlights, that language fails when required to follow the model of the visual sense, is at the heart of Imagist aesthetics. Pound's "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" had advised, "Don't mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another."⁹ Williams's poem seems to conclude that putting the visual into the verbal is bound to create a "mess", a non-direct form of perception unable to capture fully the physical qualities of an object.

Williams's poem perseveres with a visual epistemology in his description of the woman's knees. Again, this approach is seen to flounder when the woman is compared to the sign of nature ("the tall grass of your

ankles/flickers upon the shore"). If one failure in the text is when words are linked to looking, then another is shown to be the use of nature in the Imagist simile. Both sky and shore are questioned as legitimate objects of comparison, as are the petals at the poem's end. Though the final petals are said to come from a specific appletree, perhaps that of the start of the poem, the earlier despairing "How/should I know?" undermines the claim to know any particular object in the poem. The relation between words and things in this text is rendered unsteady and uncertain: knowledge of the women to be verbally portrayed is suspended by the doubts the poem evinces in its own Imagist method.

Williams's poem is typically Imagistic in its use of a visual epistemology and even more typical in its focus upon a feminine subject. Both Pound and Eliot produce poems entitled "Portrait of a Lady", with Henry James's novel of 1881 as one possible point of departure. Williams's version differs in its stark display of the shortcomings of the Imagist aesthetic. More than this, the poem can be read as a critique of all attempts to visually picture women in modernity.

H.D.'s "The Pool", included in Some Imagist Poets (1915), further dissents from the prevalent viscosity of Imagism. In one of H.D.'s translations from Euripides she refers to the gendered violence of looking: "This beauty is too much/For any woman./It is burnt across my eyes."¹⁰ Almost the same idea is expressed in her major later poem, Trilogy: "but from the visible/there is no escape;/there is no escape from the spear/that pierces the heart."¹¹ In "The Pool" she eschews presenting an image for a representation of an experience of touching: "Are you alive?/I touch you." Though the poem begins with a similar set of epistemological doubts as Williams (what is this object before me and how can I represent it in

verse?) H.D. jettisons sight for palpable contact. In so doing she attempts, in her direct use of pronouns, to enter into a relationship with the object rather than gaze with detachment: "I touch you." Blau Duplessis notes that the use of I/you pronouns is "resonant for H.D.'s work throughout."¹² This use of ungendered pronouns, "I" and "you" rather than "he" and "she", points to a utopian language which does not sexually divide its speakers. Williams only introduces the "I" of the subject at the end of the poem; previously his text masquerades as removed, objective portrait. Rather than lamenting the fact, as in Williams's poem, that a visual picture of the lady obliterates her movement, H.D.'s text prompts the "quiver" of the pool. Touching initiates the possibility of a reciprocal action that looking cannot produce.

It would be wrong to deduce that H.D.'s poem provides a perfect linguistic exemplar of modernist knowledge, for the poem ends in uncertainty: "What are you - banded one?" For a poem concerned with forming relationships between subject and object, the separateness of each line, sharply curtailed and end-stopped, suggests lack of connection. Each line reads as an atomised perception unable to heave itself up into anything other than isolated particularity. The "banded" pool thus matches the banded, divided language of the text itself, unable to produce a general knowledge of its object. The text can only produce individuated "bands" of perception. In Lukácsian terms the poem's form is directed towards a concrete content: separated lines point to how the concrete experience of touching is itself isolated and discrete.

The line "I cover you with my net" displays a more direct attempt to cognise the pool in non-fragmented fashion. This line can be read in terms of an Adornian lament that concepts cannot capture the essence of objects

other than by liquidating that which is of importance in each particular object.¹³ H.D. tries to trap the pool, to "cover" the object with a linguistic net. But the poem's final question suggests that capturing the object with a linguistic concept has not yielded true cognition. Though the pool is covered by the net there exist holes through which knowledge leaks and escapes from the concept. The poem thus ends in a state of epistemic doubt: "What are you - banded one?" Attempting to grasp knowledge through totalised concepts is bound to liquidate particularity. Covering particulars with a "net" means that one wantonly groups together quite disparate elements. "Knowledge", comments Adorno in Minima Moralia, "can only widen horizons by abiding so insistently with the particular that its isolation is dispelled."¹⁴ H.D.'s text concludes at just the moment when this might be understood, when the isolation of the object might disappear due to human tactile cognition, or when the discrete lines and perceptions of the poem might widen into a larger linguistic construct. The netting of the pool, however, is not an "abiding" with the particular so much as an inadequate attempt to smother it. The failure to "widen horizons" by answering the question "what are you" is due to the inability, in a commodified world, to unite particulars in any way other than abstractly as equivalent linguistic commodities. This is shown by the way the particularity of the pool can only be grasped through the mediation of the simile: "You are like a sea-fish". The pool, in order to be conceptually covered, has to surrender its own identity to that of a comparative object. It thus becomes something equal to itself, a pool that is like a sea-fish, two particulars that are linguistically made abstract equivalents. The Imagist simile, read in this way, is a perfect model of the commodity, establishing formal equality between concretely unequal

objects.

H.D. was described by Norman N.Holland as "above all a poet of the thingness of things. All her writings show a remarkable ability (...) to recreate the touch and feel of various objects."¹⁵ "The Pool" not only desires to capture the quidditas of a thing, but also points ambiguously towards a much bolder project. This is a vision of emancipation from the spell of reification, a **humanising** of surrounding objects. They are to be known as Objects rather than Things. The ascription of the personal pronoun "you" to the pool and the interplay between "I" and "you" in the poem attempts to produce Marx's truly "human object", reciprocally confirming the cognising subject and free from a sexually divided language.¹⁶ The use of pronouns for objects illustrates Benhabib's point about Marx and objects; namely, that ideally objects are not objects at all "but the other human being and his/her qualities and capacities as reflected and expressed through the object."¹⁷

Counter to Imagism's fetishism of the visual, H.D. understands that humanised objects cannot be grasped by one sense alone: she boldly tries to move through sight to touch. Her poem "The Garden", contained in the same volume as "The Pool", follows this shift from a visual perception of a rose to a sturdy grasp upon the object. This sensuous swerve of poetic language towards the haptic helps problematise the gendered nature of Imagist discourse. In this respect H.D.'s "The Pool" seems an advance upon Williams's "Portrait of a Lady", which recognises difficulties with the Imagist method, but seems unable to break from it. H.D. prefers tactile encounters with natural objects to visual reifications of women. Her method involves building up from singular visual perceptions to grappling encounters with objects, seemingly unhappy to remain at the level of the

merely visible. In this H.D. unwittingly follows Adorno's method for avoiding both abstraction and false particularity: "we are not to philosophise about concrete things; we are to philosophise, rather, out of those things."¹⁸

Before assessing how far certain forms of Imagism succeeded in this task it is instructive to consider those texts which follow the imperative to present a discourse about concrete things. Analysis of the development of Imagist practice uncovers the sources of the difficulties articulated in the poems by H.D. and Williams. My discussion revolves around three interconnected experiences that Imagist texts attempt to cover with their linguistic nets: the urban experience, especially that of London; the experience of transport and production within the city; and the gendered nature of looking in such urban, transportative contexts.

3. THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

English poetry had, since the mid-nineteenth century, frequently attempted to describe the urbanization of consciousness.¹⁹ Imagism, however, is the first English poetic formation to tackle the urban context of **modernity** and **modernization** utilising **modernist** techniques. Following Marshall Berman in All That is Solid Melts into Air, I understand modernity as "a mode of vital experience - experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils."²⁰ Modernization is seen as the "social processes" that bring modernity into being: from the industrialisation of production to new transport systems, from building programmes to mass political movements.²¹ Modernism, as I use the term,

means a reflexive formal language embodying the various features and experiences of modernity and modernization: the alienation of subjects, the restriction of the senses to sight alone, fragmented and shortened discourses, and the accelerated pace of life matched by attendant linguistic "shocks".²² The **content** of modernity must be channelled into the **formal** properties of writing in order for a text to be called modernist. The Symbolist and Impressionist poets of the English **fin-de-siècle**, drawing heavily upon French urban poets such as Baudelaire or Rimbaud, had situated themselves firmly within the muck and grime of the city, but had, by and large, remained within conventional nineteenth century literary discourses. In the light of Imagism's attempt to distance itself from symbolist practice, it is useful to consider the nature of the symbolist treatment of the city and its objects.

Arthur Symons, chief English symbolist and praised by Pound and Eliot, wrote obsessively of urban encounters.²³ London Nights (1895) contains a metropolitan mixture, familiar from Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal (1857), of hedonists, prostitutes, dancers and down-and-outs.²⁴ "Stella Maris" probes the poet's feelings after an encounter with one of "The chance romances of the streets,/The Juliet of a night."²⁵ "Paris" finds the poet in a city of "violent nights of black and gold", a vivid visual world that revolves around male and female gazes:

Eyelids of women, little curls of hair,
A little nose curved softly, like a shell,
A red mouth like a wound, a mocking veil:
Phantoms, before the dawn, how phantom-fair!

And every woman with beseeching eyes,
Or with enticing eyes, or amorous,
Offers herself, a rose, and craves of us
A rose's place among our memories.²⁶

This poem cannot be termed Imagist by dint of its stylised upholding of "literary language". Metre, rhyme and exclamatory diction distance the poem from Imagist "common speech". The strained and conventional comparisons, a mouth like a wound, a nose like a shell, are not the direct link of word to thing of the Imagist simile. Likewise, the final symbol of the woman as rose relies upon literary conventions rather than sensual perception to make its point. This is a poem of modernity, a woman gazed at in the streets, rather than a modernist poem where the equivalent Imagist moment would be pared of all the baggage of symbolic significance.

A later Symons poem, "London" from The Fool of the World (1906), signals more clearly the gap between Imagism and a poetry drawing its content from urban modernity, but whose formal linguistic strategy is pre-modernist:

London

The sun, a fiery orange in the air,
Thins and discolours to a disc of tin,
Until the breathing mist's mouth sucks it in;
And now there is no colour anywhere,
Only the ghost of greyness; vapour fills
The hollows of the streets, and seems to shroud
Gulfs where a noise of multitude is loud
As unseen water falling among hills.
Now the light withers, stricken at the root,

And, in the evil glimpses of the light,
Men as trees walking loom through lanes of night
Hung from the globes of some unnatural fruit.
To live, and to die daily, deaths like these,
Is it to live, while there are winds and seas?²⁷

Disenchantment with the city in comparison to the winds and seas of nature is the dominant tone here, the natural form of the orange sun is drained of colour and replaced by the "unnatural fruit" of the tree-like men. The poem is contained within its formal sonnet arrangement, straining to produce a natural symbolic artefact from an urban, constructed environment. The displacement of "fiery orange" by "the ghost of greyness" refers to more than the mere sinking of the sun; it stands for the insistence of the grey experience of modernity in the metropolis. Reification, Jameson argues, equalises all colours into a ghostly abstractive grey.²⁸ Nature is pushed aside by this urban ghost, voices of social human beings ("a noise of multitude") are suffocated by colourless "vapour" and the attempted comparison of men's shadows to walking trees merely conjures up the sinister "unnatural fruit." Symons commented in his 1909 prose work, London: A Book of Aspects, that "A city is no part of nature" and then elaborated the consequences of this unnatural modern condition:

All commerce and all industries have their share in taking us further from nature and further from our needs, as they create about us unnatural conditions which are really what develop in us these new, extravagant, really needless needs.²⁹

Symons is describing the modern craving for "artificial" stimulations, but his description holds equally well for how commodification takes one further from "natural objects". Symons failed to see, as Lukács points out, that symbolism itself takes one further away from "our needs", which in this case mean humanised not reified objects.

Aside from formal literary inflexions, Symons's poem is pre-Imagist in precisely its treatment of urban experience. Nature is seen, particularly in the last two lines, to signal escape from this melodramatic daily death. In contrast Imagism treats signs of nature not as bolt-holes from the horrors of urban life, but as a further language to be insistently urbanised. As commodification spread its iron grip further over life in modernity, creating gross "needless needs", so Imagist poetry transforms nature into a modernist language of the city. Nature in Imagism is an urbanised sign. With Imagism English poetry catches up with the full experience of modernity. A comparison of Symons's view of London with John Gould Fletcher's "The Unquiet Street", from Some Imagist Poets (1916), displays this change:

The Unquiet Street

By day and night this street is not still;
Omnibuses with red tail-lamps,
Taxicabs with shiny eyes,
Rumble, shunning its ugliness.
It is corrugated with wheel-ruts,
It is dented and pockmarked with traffic,
It has no time for sleep.
It heaves its old scarred countenance
Skyward between the buildings
And never says a word.

On rainy night
It dully gleams
Like the cold tarnished scales of a snake:
And over it hang arc-lamps
Blue-white death-lilies on black stems.³⁰

This urban street remains solidly resistant to transformation into nature. The final simile comparing the street successively to a snake and to lilies does not detach one from the urban environment. Rather these signs of nature are merely perceptual observations upon the surface image of the street. No symbolic portent is attached to either sign, in the way of the fruit in Symons. The inability of the street to articulate (it "never says a word") can be taken as a refusal to symbolise: the poet simply "presents". It emits no words but is rather like blank paper inscribed by the objects of urban life. Traffic leaves indelible marks upon its surface, but there is no attempt to cohere these particular signifiers into any more generalised statement of either positive or negative significance about city life. The repeated lines commencing "It is" also emphasise the unconnectedness of the poet's perceptions, just as no relation can be obtained between the snake and the "death-lilies". These are the disjointed fragments of a modernist metropolitan moment.

Whereas Symons's poem introduces human beings in the shape of naturalised signs of trees, the human is seemingly absent in Fletcher. Though the it is "not still" and hums with traffic, no person walks or is observed within the street. Instead broken signs of humanity are distorted into street objects: taxicabs have "eyes", and the street becomes a "pockmarked" and "scarred" face unable to sleep or speak. Rather than show a person alone and alienated within a city street, Fletcher presents the

street as a disfigured, tired, ugly and speechless human being. Perversely, it is a perfect depiction of reified and sensorily deprived life under urban capitalism.

This urbanising of the "natural" or human can be read as a response to a world of detached commodified objects. Jameson, in an essay upon the city in Ulysses, notes that modernist literature about the city exhibits a profound paradox. The city landscape is entirely constructed, full of objects produced by human beings. If this is so, asks Jameson, why is it so much modernist city literature displays the urban experience as meaningless and disconnected? The reason is that the modernist city is a macrocosm of the commodity, that micro-object which has erased the human labour that initially and meaningfully produced it.³¹ The Imagist response, confronted with urban objects lacking in meaningful signs of the human, is to reify ruthlessly these objects further in the hope that in the end they might resemble something human once again. City objects do not become symbols of the human. Rather, human signs are directly turned into city objects.

Another Fletcher poem in the 1916 Imagist collection continues this urbanisation of the human body. In "The Empty House" the poet leans from his window-sill to view a row of houses opposite. His attention is drawn to one in particular:

I know it is the only house that lives
In all that grim four storied row.
The others are mere sleeves, overcrowded layers,
Of warring, separate personalities;
But without a single meaning running through them;
But it, the empty house, has mastered all its secrets.

Behind its silent swarthy face,
Eyelessly proud,
It watches, it is master;
It sees the other houses still incessantly learning
The lesson it remembers,
And which it can repeat the last dim syllable of.³²

This house "lives" because it lacks human inhabitants. Houses with dwellers in them are mere containers ("sleeves") of atomistic bodies, "separate personalities" who do not collectively make the building meaningful. Evacuated of tenants the empty house mimics the form of a human body with "silent swarthy face". In keeping with the visual emphasis of Imagism, the house has only a head, or rather a face that, paradoxically, "eyelessly" looks out. The "I" of the speaker is confronted by this mutant human form; they gaze at each other and the poet's eye retreats before this "eyeless" "master". It is as if the house and the human are engaged in a bizarre and purely visual version of Hegel's master/servant struggle. The human gaze withdraws to let the house engage its fellow dwellings and display its superior education. This is a house miraculously imbued with some undisclosed meaning: it knows the "last dim syllable" of the lesson the other houses are still learning. This city object thus contains a meaning which has nothing to do with human production. Indeed the poet is unable to give any indication of what this educated house knows to make it "eyelessly proud". The oddity of this poem consists not least of all in the manner in which the house seemingly colonises Imagist aesthetics. Its ability to gaze brings power, the power of meaningful discourse which the other houses lack and which the Imagist poet himself is unable to know.

It is a poem which presents an experience of what Freud termed "The Uncanny" in the essay of that name in 1919. One source for Freud's sensation is the seeming reappearance of some "material reality" from an historical past we believe we have surmounted: "As soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny."³³ Elizabeth Wilson produces a re-reading of Freud's uncanny, stressing its appearance in urban contexts. For Wilson, "In the city...empty streets are sources or sites of the uncanny. It is precisely because there is 'nothing there' that fear comes to fill this vacuum."³⁴ In Fletcher's poem the lack of human inhabitants provokes the fantasy that the house is itself animate and more powerful than any human. Wilson continues to link this notion of the uncanny to the absence of nature in modernity. Nineteenth century workers who flocked to the city seem to have brought with them rural myths and superstitions; precisely the sort of archaic beliefs we think we have jettisoned with the leap into modernity. Wilson argues that the ghost stories which emerged towards the end of the century are modern versions of such rural tales of magic and evil, transposed to city settings. The uncanny becomes the psychic insistence of stories, in the modern urban world, that are linked to an earlier rural existence. It is the loss of the rural setting for these nature-associated feelings that produces the uncanny:

it is the very absence of nature in the city itself which acts as the source for uncanny experiences and feelings of all kinds in the metropolis: empty city streets are always slightly uncanny because they ought to be crowded, noisy and bustling....little closed-in squares and shuttered houses take on an impersonal malevolence

whereby we feel endangered by the very fact that there is nothing there.³⁵

City life, normally furious and crowded, appears uncanny when empty and silent. Ghost stories animate and populate the empty spaces that frighten because there is "nothing there." Houses, when emptied of human beings, appear strange because they lack the justification for their existence: to house people. An empty house becomes a curiously non-human object, a perfect compliment to the commodity which also displays a gross absence. There appears nothing in the industrially produced commodity to remind us of how the object was produced. Signs and traces of labour are notably absent from the many urban objects depicted in Imagism. It is thus the absence of signs of human activity, just as the city lacks nature, that marks Fletcher's text as curious. The uncanny springs from the reappearance of human characteristics, lost in the commodity, in urbanised form.³⁶ The uncanny appears because we suddenly see human forms in objects we have become accustomed to seeing as reified.

Imagism sometimes finds odd the very fact that artefacts, for example the buildings of modernity, derive from human labour. One of T.E.Hulme's early "Images" displays this feeling:

Old houses were scaffolding once
and workmen whistling.³⁷

The reminder that the urban environment is not natural but created through labour strikes the poet as worthy of mention. This can only be because, for most of the time, this information is too trivial to note. Modernity

has so naturalised its commodified existence that it has disguised its roots in the labour of "workmen". In Jameson's words reification "renders society opaque."³⁸ To read a text that glimpses the earlier "material reality" of objects, therefore, triggers a sense of the uncanny.

In other Imagist texts what is uncanny appears to be the very intrusion of human bodies into the urban landscape. If the human is successfully urbanised, as in Fletcher's watchful house, then any sign of real people in the city poses an archaic threat from an earlier aesthetic. The only person entitled, it often seemed, to a place in the city was the avant-garde poet. F.S.Flint's contributions to Des Imagistes (1914) take the form of five short pieces, two of which deal directly with urban life. The first is a fairly conventional depiction of London as a beautiful woman: "I think of her/and the glow her passing/sheds on men." The third poem is considerably more interesting in its treatment of the city and its dwellers:

Immortal?...No,
they cannot be, these people,
nor I.

Tired faces,
eyes that have never seen the world,
bodies that have never lived in air,
lips that have never minted speech,
they are the clipped and garbled,
blocking the highway.

They swarm and eddy
between the banks of glaring shops
toward the red meat,

the pot herbs,
the cheapjacks,
or surge in
before the swift rush
of the clanging trams,-
pitiful, ugly, mean,
encumbering.

Immortal?...
In a word,
watching the shadow of a bird
leap from frond to frond of bracken,
I am immortal.

But these?³⁹

This is a picture of an unaesthetic "swarm" of people preventing the poet from engaging with the city in an unmediated fashion. People are found "blocking the highway", figuratively standing in the path of modernity, literally separating the poet from contact with objects in the streets. There is no individuation in this encounter with people, they are simply an undifferentiated mass who "surge", "swarm" and "eddy".⁴⁰ Social masses were often described in these terms in the many sociological novels and reports of the late nineteenth century.⁴¹ But they are also terms which describe the great political gatherings of the early twentieth century: the "swarm" of the suffragettes "blocking" the streets of the city. The huge 1908 suffrage procession was described as "an innumerable swarm of humanity"; the crowd was "a flood with its slow but steady currents, setting hither and thither."⁴² The suffragette swarm replaces the "street-walker" of symbolist verse, entailing a different set of visual

representations for male Imagist eyes to negotiate.

For negotiation read avoidance. Although Flint's "swarm" is not defined as that of a suffragette crowd, the anxiety he expresses over this crowd can be read as a displaced reaction to spectacular suffragette displays. These are women who contest the visual space of modernism, challenging Imagism on its own epistemological ground: that of images. The curtailed clutter of short phrases in the third stanza of Flint's poem attempts to capture the sense of a buzzing city crowd. But the poet pulls back from immersion into such a "clanging" set of bodies. To step boldly into this agitated mass would surrender the poet to their "clipped and garbled" discourse. These are people whose "eyes...have never seen the world," they see objects through the imprecise abstractions against which Hulme fulminated. Their words are "garbled" because they are not rooted in "solid" visual images. And, in a revealing choice of trope, these people "have never minted speech." Lacking, then, in the two badges of Imagist credibility, visuality and an avant-garde language, such people stand in the way of "the highway" of modernity and modernization. The challenge of the swarming suffragette spectacle is thus aesthetically defused: they are not modernists.

In keeping with Pound's "aristocracy of the arts", Flint's poem positions the poet as an "immortal" ego outside the people of the city. The poet is immortal because of his ability to represent, in a non-garbled speech, the "shadow of a bird/leap from frond to frond of bracken". He steps outside the urban because direct treatment of objects is thwarted by swarming individuals: only the detached observation of the sign of nature, the bird in the tree, is offered as a poetic subject. For the poet the people in this urban text are not so much uncanny as irritating. It is

significant that it is a mass which is the object of dislike. Swarms are representations threatening to the egoistic impulse of Imagism. Aesthetic and political concerns here coalesce. Crowds, in Imagist terms, represent an abstraction from particular individual egos. A swarm of people, whether or not specifically gathered for political reasons, defies Imagism because it denies particularity, or at least reconstitutes it in a social fashion. Crowds can be seen as an example of a "good" abstraction, preserving particularity in a new form. Thus Sylvia Pankhurst said of the 1908 suffragette demonstration: "Self was forgotten; personality seemed minute, the movement so big, so splendid."⁴³ Such comments were anathema to Dora Marsden's egoism. The swarming crowd where identity is socially channelled opposes and challenges, politically and aesthetically, the solitary ego of the poet in the city. Ideally the Imagist poet must dwell in the city alone, for only then can direct unmediated perception of objects occur.

Hostility to people "encumbering" the artist's perception of the city is common in other Imagists. The poem "Cinema Exit "; from Richard Aldington's Images 1910-15 (1915), is an early example of the "high art" critique of the cultural practices of "mass civilisation".⁴⁴ The poem describes a crowd watching "the electric flickerings,/The banal sentimentality of the films." Leaving the cinema Aldington's vitriol increases:

Swift figures, legs, skirts, white cheeks, hats
Flicker in oblique rays of dark and light.

Millions of human vermin
Swarm sweating
Along the night-arched cavernous roads.

(Happily rapid chemical processes
Will disintegrate them all.)

Aldington's gaze fragments the cinema crowd into part-objects. In this "swarm" only perception of parts of people, rather than whole bodies, is possible; "figures" become legs, skirts or hats. More than this visual punishment, however, the swarm is said to be "vermin". This denies them human identity at all and suggests a malevolent mass out to infect Imagist dreams of aesthetic immortality. With the corrosive "disintegration" of these vermin by chemicals (a sign of Imagist allegiance to the perverse powers of technology), the poet will be left alone to commune with the city. While the eyes of the "swarm" concentrate upon despised films, the Imagist poet hopes for the disappearance of these inferior perceptions. Only then can his fresh modernist eyes see the city properly. Imagist immediacy in this instance relies upon chemical annihilation.

H.D.'s extraordinary poem "Cities ", published in The Egoist July 1916, provides a further example of a social formation preventing the artist perceiving urban beauty.⁴⁵ The poem demonstrates how Imagist aesthetics, even H.D.'s strained version, operates within the categories of early twentieth century British politics. The poem commences with "disgust" for the cities of "street after street/each patterned alike." It seems here that the very city itself follows the rationalising spread of reification, making all urban forms equivalent and "alike." The text contrasts this picture with a vision of beautiful cities produced by "the maker of cities." Here we see "the beauty of the temple...where sunlight stamped/hyacinth-shadows/black on the pavement." This city-maker, however, tires and finally fashions the modern city of "street after street alike":

he had crowded the city so full
that men could not grasp beauty,
beauty was over them,
through them, about them,
no crevice unpacked with the honey,
rare, measureless.

So he built a new city,
ah can we believe, not ironically
but for new splendour
constructed new people
to lift through slow growth
to a beauty unrivalled yet-
and created new cells,
hideous first, hideous now-
spread larvae across them,
not honey but seething life.

And in these dark cells,
packed street after street,
souls live, hideous yet-
O disfigured, defaced,
with no trace of the beauty
men once held so light.

Can we think a few old cells
were left - we are left -
grains of honey,
old dust of stray pollen
dull on our torn wings,
we are left to recall the old streets?

That most potent trope for the urban crowd, the swarm, appears once more in
this fantasy of an aesthetic elite upholding beauty in the crowded

contemporary city. The swarm is now directly akin to bees, furious collective workers. But these are workers whose very bodies are damaged by the city in which they live: they are "hideous" and visually scarred, "disfigured" and "defaced". In terms of Imagist epistemology these people are, as a crowd, literally "de-faced", lacking the visual sign, a face, that marks one's own identity.

It is the very density of people which prevents beauty from being grasped. Early twentieth century Britain was haunted by fears of an over-producing but unhealthy populace. This prompted the attention paid to eugenics in this period.⁴⁶ Quantity over quality of bodies is the worry and this fear echoes the way mass produced commodities undermine the unique beauty of the aesthetic object. It is up to "a few old cells" to recall nostalgically the beauty of "the old streets." "Cities" follows Hulme in desiring an aesthetic aristocracy which will preserve "classical" values.⁴⁷ The "old streets" refers to the classical values of the Greek or Roman polis. H.D.'s backward glance to the classics is connected, in this text, with the political espousal of aristocratic classicism in Eliot and Hulme.⁴⁸ This poem's pronouns call for an elite to "protect" art amidst the city:

You are useless. We live.
We await great events.
We are spread through this earth.
We protect our strong race.
You are useless.
Your cell takes the place
of our young future strength.

Here is a modernist coterie, hunched and waiting for an event, some "revolution of the word" upon which to act to protect "our strong race." The emphasis upon the uselessness of the plural "you" signals a shift from the Wildean aestheticism of 1890s poets. This modernist text conceives itself to be gainfully employed. This guaranteed art a social function in a commodified world where literature appeared unable to justify itself as a marketed commodity.

Pound, in 1917, said that H.D. had veered away from her "few but perfect" position.⁴⁹ In this poem H.D.'s sparse vocabulary and heavy, end-stopped lines maintain this principle. An aesthetic of few but perfect particular perceptions rather than generalised abstract sentiments matches the political eugenics of this poem. The poem ends by recalling "old splendour" as a prelude to the "new beauty of cities". As in Hulme, political content is transferred into a formal aesthetic principle.

Beauty in these poems is constantly thwarted by the presence of collective human bodies. In other Imagist texts swarming bodies are bypassed and aesthetic possibilities are found in the unmediated material textures of the city. One of the most ambitious of John Gould Fletcher's Imagist cityscapes is his conceptual volume of poems of 1913, The Dominant City. Here we find Fletcher mid-way between the urban modernity of Symons's Baudelairean pastiches and a more controlled Imagist vision of the city. The poem commences with a conventional appeal to "the city of night, of drunkenness, and of dream," but then looks directly to the objects of the city for inspiration.⁵⁰ His glance alights upon advertisement hoardings:

When into the town I go
Under sad and leaden skies

I see hoardings, row on row,
Flare in pink and yellow dyes.

Glittering promises they bear:
Food to gorge and drink to swill;
Spectacles of pleasure rare,
Cures for every mortal ill.

Opposed to the colourless "leaden" sky advertisements exude bright shades to the eye. If the eyes are pleased by this vibrant "spectacle of pleasure rare," other senses are satiated by the "Glittering promises" of food and drink. Again this poem displays modernity as its subject while remaining unable to express completely this experience in a new modernist language. In other words, this text confronts commodification in terms of its content. But it has not yet introjected the formal properties of the commodity into its own aesthetic construction.

The poem continues its celebration of modernity:

Poet do not vainly dream
Of a past forgot for long,
Let the wonderful hoardings' stream
In their splendour through your song.

Fling away the beautiful,
Withered flowers of ancient birth:
See! It springs a blossom full,
Fresh from out the teeming earth!

Calling for poets to modernize themselves by letting the "stream" of advertisements infuse their work is another example of a pre-modernist

aesthetic. The poem boldly welcomes images of commodities to puncture its song. It does not produce a text formally embodying the commodity, showing a direct treatment of things. It wants to present images of commodities rather than become itself a commodity; advertisements, of course, have the same rationale. The use of the word "stream" indicates a text of modernity where signifiers of nature are relentlessly urbanised. This stream represents the flow of urban life, its constant turmoil and movement away from the rural images of "withered flowers" and full "blossom". At a deeper level, the stream of hoardings echo the flow of things these images represent: the perpetual circulation of commodities in urban markets. In a sense, this "stream" of images displaces other urban phenomena such as the energetic movement of the "swarm" of the crowd. However, there is little sense of the energy or thingliness of the commodity in the actual language of this poem: the loose heptameter structure and circumlocutory diction distance this text from more modernist practices. The concluding pompous call to "See!" shows how this poem has to draw attention to the city-objects it wishes, but fails, to treat directly.

The real interest of such a text, however, is its attitude to such urban signs as advertisements.⁵¹ Advertisements are not to be despised for indicating a market economy in which poetry is threatened, the mood Pound's later Hugh Selwyn Mauberley forcefully displays. Instead this text desires, but cannot enact as linguistic practice, a song whose motor principle is embodied in the advertisement hoarding. It is a wish for a poetry that is urban, visual and deeply indebted to the formal powers of the commodity, producing phantasmagoric images of itself.

This is one of the more interesting sections of Fletcher's The Dominant City, which often lapses into near-parody of modern French poets.

The city becomes "a vague dream-tapestry" and pleasure in the city is compared to the image of a "vast cat".⁵² Equally familiar is the ritual visit to the prostitute in "Song of a Night.". However, Fletcher's poem, unlike that of Symons' aestheticised depictions of such visits, centres upon the commodification of prostitution. The poet lies "disgusted, sick at heart,/Beside a sodden woman of the street." Unable to find post-coital sleep, he begins to question the moral disjuncture between marriage and his own actions:

Was this the sordid end of passion's might,
This purchase? Or the purchase of a wife?

Sexuality in marriage is equally an arrangement, it seems, of economic purchase, "which all men buy and sell." It is a point made by Dora Marsden, who connected economic oppression to the exploitation of women: "Whereas men had a sex, women were the sex, which regarded as a 'commodity,' she sold in the best market."⁵³ For Fletcher recognition of the commodification of sexuality seems to assuage the poet's guilt:

The wives their bodies barter for a ring,
For one man's care, a home, maternity;
The husbands seek to rid them of the sting
Of sex, or they would happy fathers be.

So all sell love for some low earthly gift:
What matter then, what I have sold it for?⁵⁴

In comparison to some sensualised and romanticised account of an urban rendezvous with a "street-walker", this text is unable to represent pleasure, visual or more visceral, except as mediated by a commodified set of relations.

4. IMAGES OF TRANSPORT

Although many Imagist urban encounters, such as Fletcher's visit to a prostitute, occur while walking through city streets, a significant number of poems take place in contexts of transport.⁵⁵ "Transportation," Pound quoted from Kipling in 1917, "is civilisation." Furthermore, he added, "A tunnel is worth more than a dynasty."⁵⁶ Imagism welcomed transport as a modern sensation par excellence.

Poems concerned with transport concentrate four key modernist motifs. First, the transport encounter, for a series of reasons, is overwhelmingly a visual experience. It takes us to the centre of questions about reification and the modernist gaze. Secondly, the context of these texts, on trams, buses and trains, confirms not so much an experience of modernity as one of **modernization**. The new productive apparatuses of metropolitan capital relied heavily upon the ability to transport efficiently goods and people.⁵⁷ In Perry Anderson's view "the key technologies or inventions of the second industrial revolution" were a crucial co-ordinate determining the emergence of modernism out of modernity.⁵⁸ This is not to say, as might be the case with the Italian Futurist poets, that the Imagists celebrated urban systems of transport as signifiers of the triumphal power of capital.⁵⁹ Rather, as Anderson further notes, interest by artists and

writers in such technologies involved an "abstraction of techniques and artefacts from the social relations of production that were generating them."⁶⁰ In this sense the Imagist use of transport, an ambivalent sign of a love of the accelerated pace of urban life, resembles the abstracting operation of the commodity itself. Imagism aped the sleek speed of the trains, but was unaware that trains ran so swiftly because of the requirements of the more powerful velocity of the commodity.

Thirdly, writing about transportative experiences leads to direct encounters with those images that themselves abstract from their real referents; that is, as in Fletcher's Dominant City, the advertisements littering buses, trams and inside tube trains and stations.⁶¹ As Richards and MacKenzie argue, in their social history of the railway station:

With the development of new techniques of mass printing, mass production of advertising posters meant an all-out assault on the senses of consumers. The station...became a major location for the brightly coloured and eye-catching enamel signs that flourished between the 1880s and the 1930s....W.H.Lever, the founder of Unilever...set great store by railway station advertising.⁶²

Adverts "assault" consumers, but their vibrant colours offer visual recompense for not possessing the commodities advertised. This is pleasure in gazing at a reified object one cannot touch, matching the male gaze at women which is also unable to overcome visual distance for bodily pleasures.

In the acme of the Imagist transport poem, Pound's "In a Station of the Metro", and in other texts, the effect of the proliferation of modern advertising images is seen when these visual practices seep into Imagist

language.⁶³ Imagism closely intertwines with the visual language offered by pictures of commodities. In Fletcher's words, the poet's song is to be riddled with the "stream" of advertisements. Later, modernism's most famous worker in advertising, Leopold Bloom, will dream of "one sole unique advertisement" which will be "congruous with the velocity of modern life."⁶⁴ That is, an advert usurping literary claims to represent modernity. Meanwhile Imagism cultivated itself in those sites where adverts dominated perception: modern trains and trams.

Baudelaire's *flâneur*, arch-poet of French modernity, had the leisure to walk the streets of the city. The twentieth century Imagist, poet of modernism, travels through the metropolis. This is testimony to the fourth significance of new transport systems in modernism: a profound and much noted alteration in the experience of space and time.⁶⁵ Taking your pet turtle for a walk in the city, as the *flâneur* did in 1840s Paris to show distaste for the increased pace of life, was an option no longer available in a city like London in 1915.⁶⁶ Trains cut down the time of your journey; but they also lessened the spatial distance between you and other people. Locked inside small tubular carriages, your gaze could only fix on two sorts of image: adverts or people. Now, bohemian distaste for modern life turned towards those people who travelled with you on tube or tram. The aristocratic aesthetic of Imagism, and attendant disdain for the "swarm", is clearly noticeable in their transportative poems. And the aesthetic form of this antipathy borrows from the other images one encountered on trains: advertising posters.

A fine example of this is Richard Aldington's poem "In the Tube ", first published in The Egoist in 1915:

IN THE TUBE

The electric car jerks;
I stumble on the slats of the floor,
Fall into a leather seat
And look up.

A row of advertisements,
A row of windows,
Set in brown woodwork pitted with brass nails,
A row of hard faces,
Immobile,
In the swaying train,
Rush across the flickering background of fluted
dingy tunnel;
A row of eyes,
Eyes of greed, of pitiful blankness, of plethoric
complacency,
Immobile,
Gaze, stare at one point,
At my eyes.

Antagonism,
Disgust,
Immediate antipathy,
Cut my brain, as a sharp reed
Cuts a finger.

I surprise the same thought
In the brasslike eyes:

"What right have you to live?"⁶⁷

Aldington here casually displays what he called the Imagist method of having "an eye for the common people, even if it be only to pity or to hate them."⁶⁸ Both emotions are clearly evident. The final question can be read either as the protagonist's opinion of the "row of eyes" of the fellow travellers, or as the antagonism of the "eyes" to the poet. The image of the reed cutting the finger indicates the violence of perception between artist and people: this is a gaze of mutual antipathy. The poet, however, has the upper hand since he can try to represent and control the gaze confronting him. The Imagist drive to concision enacts a synecdoche of "eyes" of "pitiful blankness" to replace the other passengers. People are fragmented into component parts; these parts are then viciously solidified. Faces are "hard" and eyes, using a term displaced from the "brass nails" embedded in the train, become "brasslike." This reifying gaze signals not only contempt towards the non-artist, but also the defensive strategy of an aesthetic group threatened by the "blankness" of these eyes.

Concentration upon the fearful gaze of the public, however, springs initially from the economic realm. This is signalled by the "row of advertisements" greeting the poet's first glance. Jameson, **apropos** of Ulysses, argues that the "spatially visible" advertisement is the "ultimate terminus of reification."⁶⁹ Here the "row of advertisements" is precisely the origin of Aldington's reification of human subjects. The ordered structure of this "row" gets displaced onto other signifiers: the row of advertisement becomes a row of windows, which becomes a row of faces, only to conclude as a row of eyes. It is as if the formal coherence of the row constrains all future perceptions. Rows, such as those of urban houses, are symptoms of a rationalised and controlled society, opposed to the anarchy of a structure such as the swarm. Whatever else is gazed at must

conform to the pattern and visual power of the rows of advertising images. This is an exchange of abstractly equivalent images. One row is identical to another row and can smoothly take its place in this linguistic economy. The commodity-structure paraded by the advertisements insistently determines the experience of looking in the train.

This poem operates around both poles of the commodity. It exhibits structures of abstract equivalence, identifying rows of adverts with rows of eyes. It also reproduces the staticity associated with fixed exchange-value of the commodity. The travellers in the poem are not only punitively anatomised by the poet's gaze, but are also rendered static and "immobile." The whole text vacillates between movement and stasis, again mirroring the life of the commodity. The language of the poem itself jumps from condensed single word lines ("Antagonism/Disgust") to longer, jerkily moving lines such as "Eyes of greed, of pitiful blankness, of plethoric complacency". Faces are "immobile" but are situated within the "swaying train", travelling at speed through the "dingy tunnel". Aldington's gaze seeks to arrest antithetical faces, preventing them realising their violent dislike of him. Ferocious gazing at antagonist eyes will, the poet hopes, fix and contain their threat, transforming their active staring into the fixity of the brass nails embedded in the woodwork of the train. Eyes that were "pitiful" would thus become "pitted" like nails, their pointed ends safely hidden from view. The eyes resemble the commodity, a hard bundle of congealed value that hurtles through the market at speed. This mixture of solidity and movement also describes the advertisement. Fixed to the train, but pumped around at velocity within the metropolis, adverts bring a message of visual consumption to the gazing public.

F.S.Flint's poem, "Tube", from his Otherworld Cadences (1920), presents a similar experience of travelling:

TUBE

You look in vain for a sign,
For a light in their eyes. No!
Stolid they sit, lulled
By the roar of the train in the tube,
Content with the electric light,
Assured, comfortable, warm.
Despair?....
For a moment, yes;
This is the mass, inert,
Unalarmed, undisturbed;
And we, the spirit that moves,
We leaven the mass,
And it changes;
We sweeten the mass,
Or the world
Would sink in the ether.⁷⁰

Once more the focus is upon the eyes of other travellers. In contrast to Aldington's text, where active public eyes must be restricted, Flint's poem represents a desire to energise a "stolid" fixed "mass". This is a public who must be subjected to the flip-side of the reified commodity. They must be propelled into motion out of their inertia, infused, as poets are, with "the spirit that moves". Behind this image seems Pound's argument that the "spirit" moving through the poet is akin to electricity. In Flint's text the current powering the tube and its "electric light" is commandeered by the poet to disturb the "inert" public. Passengers on the Circle line must

match the velocity of their train and of the circulation of the commodity, capturing that experience of modernity in which "all that is solid melts into air."⁷¹ For Flint only poets can "sweeten" and "leaven", engineering a modernising rejuvenation of the public. The food analogy reminds us of Jameson's reading of modernism as an attempt to revivify gross bodily pleasures in a rationalised world. Only the artist, finely attuned to the dizzy world of modernity and modernization, can prevent the stasis of a world sensually sunk into "ether".

The final lines of "Tube" are unequivocal about the striking political function of the Imagist "aristocracy of the arts", dispersed amid the "mass". It is interesting that consciousness of this mission occurs when the poet is travelling. Traffic in urban environments forces a mingling of social, sexual and class relations. The desire to "leaven" the mass was thus prompted by the poet's encounter with large numbers of people while travelling.

T.E.Hulme had remarked that "The beauty of London <is> only seen in detached and careful moments" such as when the artist is "in some manner detached" travelling "on top of bus."⁷² Finding the material for Imagist "moments" upon transport was first suggested by Ford Madox Ford. In 1909 Ford argued that a renaissance in poetry would only emerge,

When some young poets get it into their heads to come out of their book-closet and take, as it were, a walk down Fleet St., or a ride on the top of a bus from Shepherd's Bush to Poplar.⁷³

Superficially this appears a call to authenticate poetry by rooting it in everyday perceptions, in the supposed objective manner of the 1890s

sociological novel. In actuality, as Aldington and Flint demonstrate, the result was a chance for poets to commodify other people for their own aesthetic works. Transport also, as Hulme noted, provided the "detachment" necessary for aesthetic creation.

Representations of meetings while travelling offered a double advantage to the Imagist. It brought one into perceptual contact with the "mass", and thus provided new everyday material, as Ford said, for a truly modernist poetry. But such liaisons allowed the writer to maintain a distance from the "mass". This distance helped uphold the poet's superior status in a world where the commodity was ruthlessly equalising old social hierarchies. Real relations with others could be avoided on trains, where visual contact predominated. In 1903 George Simmel, early German sociologist and a teacher of Lukács, explained the psychic consequences of travel in the metropolis:

Someone who sees without hearing is much more uneasy than someone who hears without seeing. In this there is something characteristic of the sociology of the big city. Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear. The main reason for this is the public means of transportation. Before the development of buses, railroads, and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another.⁷⁴

Simmel believed seeing dominates in cities due to the absence of human communication. Imagism attempts to divert the cause of the anomie this provokes, where speaking is displaced by looking, into a basis for new literary communications. This tactic, utilising the isolating effects of

modernity as a force for modernist production, parallels the Imagist strategy of using reification to fight reification itself.

Aldington's and Flint's poems demonstrate that a visually based language had little intention of overcoming the alienation and class-division consequent upon economic commodification. Instead they seemed to value the distance and reserve transport offered. In his lecture "The Metropolis and Mental Life"(1902), Simmel argued that the individual's sense of reserve in crowded cities is "because the bodily proximity and narrowness of space makes the mental distance only the more visible."⁷⁵ The experience of the "narrowness" of the London underground transforms, in Aldington's case, "reserve" into "antagonism." The mental separation of artist and unleaven "mass" is reinforced socially by the silence of the public. Imagism then uses this public silence and "immobility" to produce its own texts.

Simmel's analysis of the psychic results of urban transport can be complimented by a social analysis providing a context of technical modernization for understanding the Imagist, specifically "underground ", transport poem. The first underground was the London Metropolitan Railway in 1863. The first proper "tube" railway opened in 1870 and the first electric tube and the start of the Northern Line occurred in 1890. The Paris "metro" began in 1898.⁷⁶ Growth in transport systems in Britain accompanied major shifts in social and economic demography. In 1914, the year of the first Imagist anthology, the centre of London, particularly the East End to which Ford recommended travel, was populated by the working-class. Aldington's poem, "Whitechapel ", in the 1916 Imagist anthology, contains the "Iron hoofs, iron wheels, iron din/Of drays and trams" of city transport. The East End setting shows how Aldington's view here is not of

bourgeois "eyes of greed" on the tube, but of workers labouring in a heavily industrialised context:

Soot;mud;
A nation maddened with labour;
Interminable collision of energies-
Iron beating upon iron;
Smoke whirling upwards,
Speechless, impotent.⁷⁷

This labour robs its inhabitants of both speech and fertility. Spatially and socially distinct from areas such as Whitechapel were the "suburbs" ringing London, predominantly populated by the middle-classes in commercial employment. As Stevenson argues, expansions in the transport network "were the agents of the suburban revolution."⁷⁸ The composition of the people so despised by Aldington and Flint in the tube would most likely have been the suburban bourgeois, employed in the City in London, but able to escape from living amid the social space of the masses in the capital. For the working-classes, the cost of regular tube travel was prohibitive and railway companies, eager to keep their suburban customers happy in splendid isolation, resisted attempts to encourage workers to use trains.⁷⁹

Richards and MacKenzie note:

The inhabitants of the new suburbs were in the main middle class. They were drawn from that army of white-collar workers, managers, administrators, lawyers, technicians, and clerks which had been called into existence by Britain's commercial and financial pre-eminence. It was these men who travelled into London each day by train from Clapham, Wimbledon, Richmond, Putney, and Barnes.⁸⁰

The City of London up till the 1920s was, as Hobsbawm notes, the "source of the world's capital, nerve-centre of its international trading and financial transactions."⁸¹ The Imagists, in typical anti-bourgeois modernist mode, loathed those suburbanites transported into the hub of the city to administer the circulation of commodities. Imagism was, however, unaware of how its depictions of these travellers, with their "eyes of greed," were themselves aestheticised commodities.

One of the most sustained Imagist texts about urban transport, John Gould Fletcher's "London Excursion", published in Some Imagist Poets (1915), is curiously less interesting than the shorter pieces by Aldington, Flint and Pound treating similar material. Fletcher's poem fails to capture, it might be said, the intensity of the Imagist "moment" of perceptual experience on train or tube. Imagism seems better equipped to capture the instant of some urban meeting rather than attempt to map the totality of city space.

Fletcher's poem is in nine sections and recounts perambulations, initially by bus, across the capital from morning till early evening. The bus is "red bulk/Projecting the angular city, in shadows, at our feet."⁸² This journey summons the familiar feeling of alienation in the city:

Passivity,
Gravity,
Are changed into hesitating, clanking pistons and wheels.
The trams come whooping up one by one,
Yellow pulse-beats spreading through darkness.

Music hall posters squall out:
The passengers shrink together,
I enter indelicately into all their souls.

This is a fragmented set of urban impressions, tied together by the poet's relation to the objects he encounters. Though the passengers "shrink" together for comfort the poet seeks to isolate himself from real connection with them:

Yet I revolt: I bend, I twist myself,
I crawl into a million convolutions.
Pink shapes without angle,
Anything to be soft and woolly,
Anything to escape.

The desire to "escape" by being "soft and woolly" is achieved by forming the body into patches of colours, "pink shapes" that are not the angular structures of the city and its traffic. However, this escape is thwarted precisely by urban traffic: two viaducts of "red yokes of steel" appear, "Crushing my rebellion" and a "long hot bar" from the bus "pierces the small of my back." The poem continues via a series of melodramatic encounters with material forms in the city, "Black cubes close piled" or "rungs and slopes of curving slippery steel". In a section entitled "'Bus-Top" the poet looks down and sees "Monotonous domes of bowler-hats/Vibrate in the heat." The uniformity of the urban commercial worker is noted from a position which marks the poet's spatial distance above the object of his gaze: his visual skills separate him from "monotony." Amidst this quasi-Cubist vision the poet has a "Sudden desire for something changeless", for something "Unmelted by hissing wheels". This is a desire for fixity amid urban turmoil, for some grasp upon the solid cubes and angular objects among the "melting" city. In another sense it is an attempt to aestheticise the city, to make a "changeless" and meaningful art object as

a strategy for countering **anomie**. This leads the poet to try, like Eliot's Prufrock, to "force the moment to its crisis." He feels "an immense will" pushing him across the street before the traffic:

I will take all this city away with me-
People - uproar - the pavement jostling and flickering-
Women with incredible eyelids:
Dandies in spats:
Hard-faced throng discussing me - I know them all.
I will take them away with me,
I insistently rob them of their essence,
I must have it all before night

Like Aldington, Fletcher finds himself the object of scrutiny by other city inhabitants collectively grouped into a "throng". People have become part of the city, indistinguishable from the "uproar" surrounding them. Distinctions between particulars are eroded in a threatening way. The only images the poet can record are either of "eyelids" or shoes ("spats"), showing that the only possible relations are to the feet or eyes of other people. The poet, however, tries to maintain an epistemological distance from this **mélange**: "I know them all" he cries, as a retort to his fear that they malevolently discuss him. He must tap the "essence" of both people and city, find the structuring principle running through and making sense of these alienated experiences of modernity. But this insight is not forthcoming, the wish to escape with the secret of city life is denied: "I can no longer find a place for myself:/I go." Forced back into the position of a meaningless urban atom, the poet finds he has no choice but to join the "Straggling shapes" of commuters about to depart for home:

A clock with quivering hands
Leaps to the trajectory-angle of our departure.
We leave behind pale traces of achievement:
Fires that we kindled but were too tired to put out,
Broad gold fans brushing softly over dark walls,
Stifled uproar of night.
We are already cast forth:
The signal of our departure
Jerks down before we have learned we are to go.

The revolt against urban life fails and the poet finds himself controlled by that powerful symbol of capitalist rationality in the city, the clock.⁸³ He is left with "pale traces of achievement". No "essence" of urban life has been discovered and the poet travels home to the "green" suburbs with the wearers of the bowler-hats he had earlier looked down upon.

Discovering the hidden "essence" of urban life differs from the moment of intense phenomenal insight celebrated in other Imagist poems. This thwarted wish to understand modern life, aptly imagined in terms of an urban journey with no real destination, signals the modernist parentage of Fletcher's poem. Eagleton argues that modernism in the era of monopoly capitalism seeks to make sense of itself in two contradictory ways. First, there is the desire, epitomised by the Imagist moment, to understand the world through a chance encounter, an instant of "sensuous immediacy" pregnant with intense but brief meaningfulness.⁸⁴ Secondly, there is the attempt to find or posit some hidden formal and abstract system that will ultimately explain and cohere the multitude of fragments in modernity. The prime example of this, argues Eagleton, is the use of a naturalistic structure, such as myth, in someone like Eliot.⁸⁵ The problem, as Fletcher's poem illustrates, lies in linking these two disparate realms of

particularity and abstraction, in the manner of the modern commodity. The search for some "deeper controlling structure,"⁸⁶ generated out of chance visual encounters on buses and trains will always fail, as Fletcher's search for the essence of the crowd shows, because of the disabling power of reification associated with the commodity. As Eagleton paraphrases Lukács, it is the commodity itself which is "the source of all these disabling antinomies between general and particular."⁸⁷ The commodity can only coherently combine abstraction and concretion by disabling all other forms and structures from achieving a similar goal. Thus Fletcher's poem ends with its hero back in the thrall of the capitalist world whose essence he has sought, but inevitably failed to grasp, through a series of particular urban moments. The poet is back on the commuter train from work in the City, returned symbolically to the circulating world of capital.

Trying to grasp the "deeper structures" of capitalist modernity in poems of criss-cross journeys and meetings on trams and trains is not entirely fortuitous. Looking to the London Underground for the hidden meaning of modernity is both literally and metaphorically a sound place to start. Metaphorically, the ceaseless peregrinations of the submerged tube train is a perfect image of the **perpetuum mobile** of the commodity, constantly travelling with no rationale other than to serve as underground bedrock of metropolitan capitalism. Literally, situating aesthetics in encounters with other subjects on trains takes us to the heart of the class relations that necessarily compliment the economic requirements of capital. Transport in the modernist city, as we have seen, is class specific and assists the segregations of social space required by capital in urban economies. As David Harvey comments of what he terms, "The Urbanization of Capital" in modernity:

at the very historical moment when the potentiality of the city as "a place of encounters"(...) was at its apogee, it became a fragmented terrain held down and together under all manner of forces of class, racial, and sexual domination.⁸⁸

As Harvey notes, "the circulation of capital is a geographical movement in time."⁸⁹ Equally, the economic movement of labour power, people travelling to and from work, produces "geographically distinct labour markets."⁹⁰

Harvey's conclusion is that "the geographical structures of commodity markets...function as the real determinants of capitalism's dynamic."⁹¹

The people encountered by Imagists while travelling, from Whitechapel working class to suburban city worker, served as material capable of yielding a new modernist language. But when Imagism sought, as in Fletcher's "London Excursion ", to make wider sense of these chance visual meetings it stumbled across the hidden class structures of capital. These were the "concrete things" which produced the divisive and antagonistic nature of the transport epiphany. In other words, when travelling in the city the Imagists stumbled upon the "real determinants" of their aesthetic.

5. LOOKING IN THE CITY

Transport in the modern city, Simmel had argued, so conditioned experience that seeing usurped the other senses. A similar point is made in Fredric Jameson's reading of modernism as visual compensation for commodification. Visual qualities, such as that of colour, separate from their objects and become fetishised in themselves. Fletcher provides an

example of this technique, close in some ways to the earlier poetic formation of literary impressionism, in his series of poems in Goblins and Pagodas (1916) entitled "Symphonies". These are a series of impressions of city life distinguished by colours; the poems, respectively, are Blue, Black and Gold, Green, Golden, White, White and Blue, Orange, Red, Violet, Grey and Scarlet. "Solitude in the City (Symphony in Black and Gold)" commences,

Omnibuses lurch
Heavily homeward
Elephants tinselled in tawdry gold.⁹²

The absurdity of this image is partly because the forced comparison of buses to elephants bears little relation to the "tawdry gold" the image wishes to present for perception. The colour exists apart from either object, slapped onto both for convenience's sake and woefully inadequate in producing any real connection between the two elements of the Imagist simile. The colour is so disassociated from its objects that we are left contemplating a free-floating tinselly gold.

The vibrant yet isolated colours of Fletcher's poem remind us of Jameson's point that this visual discourse provides "gratification" for a reified world grey and "drained" of colour. Flint's 1909 volume, In the Net of the Stars, provides many examples of polychromatic pleasure bursting through the dismally urban:

AS I PACED THE STREETS

As I paced the streets there came to me,
Although the air with smoke was dim,
And bleak, black walls were frowning grim,
The vision of a sunlight sea.⁹³

Another Flint poem from this volume, "The Swan", included in condensed form in Des Imagistes (1914), is a more multicoloured example:

Under the lily shadow
and the gold
and the blue and mauve
that the whin and the lilac
pour down on the water,
the fishes quiver.

Over the green cold leaves
and the rippled silver
and the tarnished copper
of its neck and beak,
toward the deep black water
beneath the arches
the swan floats slowly.⁹⁴

Here, after scanning the various colours piled onto the object to be presented, it no longer seems important whether it is a swan or a soup tin lying beneath. The object itself is merely the vehicle of a multicoloured visual experience. This makes the object precisely like the commodity, infinitely substitutable for any other thing. The colourful context merely disguises the lack of individuality of the object one perceives.

It has already been noted that Imagist visual pleasure is best understood as an explicitly gendered reaction to commodification. Early Imagist examples of the gendered gaze take one of two forms. In the poems, following the French poets, many of the women depicted in the streets are prostitutes. Alternatively, the very city itself is represented in feminised terms. An example of this latter set of representations is Edward Storer's "So many pictures ", from his Mirrors of Illusion (1909).⁹⁵ The city conventionally forms the material for the poet's work: "So many pictures hath the City fair:-/I go a-gathering/A sheaf of twilight notes." These pictorial notes are then shown to be feminine: "The perfume of the City's hair,/Cool as the pillow of her western woods/The gleaming of her breasts." In Storer's longer poem, "Piccadilly Circus ", this sensual urbanised woman is transformed into a maternal body:

Here then is London's heart beating beneath its thin skin,
Here is the sound and the sigh, and the taste of the body
immense
Of the mother of cities, maw of the bountiful plains.⁹⁶

The synaesthesia employed here marks Storer's poem as only marginally Imagistic, although Flint called Mirrors of Illusion the first book of Imagist poems.⁹⁷ For Storer this woman-as-city is more than mere pictorial image; she exudes smells (the perfume of her hair), sounds and sighs and her maternal body is available to be "tasted". Imagist verse relentlessly narrows the focus of this sensual language to a solely visual discourse. These early synaesthetic texts hold out a problematic dream that women can function as sites for all-round realisation of the senses. Hidden beneath

the surface grime of the city lies a feminine body untarnished by the sensual degradations of urban life.

A poem from Fletcher's The Dominant City, "Pleasure's Awakening ", clearly articulates this male fantasy:

All day men walk the city up and down,
Shuffling monotonously their weary feet,
While pleasure sleeps behind that vague uproar;

But sometimes like a lightning flash she flicks
Some stagnant soul into a blaze of pain,
And shatters the conventional round of toil.

But when sick day has staggered his last steps,
And night like a black curtain rushes down
Upon the city, comes a sudden change:

Then pleasure, like a vast cat, stirs herself,
And yawning, stretches forth her velvet feet,
To grasp the city in her long, curved claws.⁹⁸

Pleasure is a feline, feminine form dormant beneath the "monotonous" city, offering a libidinal reparation for the "toil" of reified modern life. Pleasure here, in masochistic mood, can eradicate the negative terms "monotonously", "vague", "stagnant" and joyfully "shatter" the urban world of work. Woman is seen as the unconscious of the city, a perpetual evening salvation from the alienating realm of daytime existence. It is interesting to note the restriction in the range of sensations; the feline woman is described in the last stanza in purely visual terms, attention being drawn to the shape of her "feet" and "claws."

This poem poses a curious relationship between pleasure and palpable contact. The only touch this feminised pleasure can bestow is violent: in stanza two, she "flicks" a person into "a blaze of pain." The final image of the cat grasping the city in "long, curved claws" contains another hint of violence. The woman is visualised as an object bringing joyful respite from monotony. However the pleasure she offers is not visual, but of a painful touching and grasping.

In this context it is interesting to note Freud's 1915 work on "Instincts and their Vicissitudes", where sadism and masochism, as "ambivalent" palpable instincts, are closely associated with the visual instincts of scopophilia and exhibitionism.⁹⁹ Both sets of terms follow a similar change from activity to passivity: sadism turns round to become masochism, just as scopophilia turns into exhibitionism. In Fletcher's text the poet's gaze at the cat, and the sadistic pleasure this creature offers, are signifiers of activity. Once she "stirs herself", the cat promises a "blaze of pain." Looking at the cat prompts the animal to reach out and violently touch the inhabitants of the city. The poem suggests that distanced looking, the experience **par excellence** of the city, is a barely sublimated form of violent touching.¹⁰⁰ So, if Fletcher's text suggests haptic pleasure as an antidote to urban stagnation, it is an ambiguous form of relief. As Freud notes of the association of pleasure with pain: "The enjoyment of pain would thus be an aim which was originally masochistic, but which can only become an instinctual aim in someone who was originally sadistic."¹⁰¹ In this and other texts the primary sadism is a gaze directed at women. This distances one from touching, which is the repressed desire of looking, as in Hulme's compromised "body" poetry. People, isolated into urban atoms, are unable to freely touch other

subjects and can only look at others. The streets and trains of modern life bring ample opportunities for such visual pleasures. When bodily contact does occur it is in the perverse and violent form seen in Fletcher's poem. And touching takes this painful form because of its initial basis in the violence of the scopophilic gaze. Sensual pleasure can only seem to take the violent form of the predominant modern sense, that of looking.

Numerous examples of this debasement of bodily relations by the male gaze exist in Imagism. T.E.Hulme's small oeuvre contains several voyeuristic pictures of erotically displayed women:

Her skirt lifted as a dark mist
From the columns of amethyst.

*

The flounced edge of skirt,
recoiling like waves off a cliff.¹⁰²

Hulme's poem "The Sunset" is a sustained comparison of the setting sun to the "scarlet lingerie" of a dancer on the stage. This display produces "hostile murmurs" in the onlooking crowd, linking looking to a potential for violence. In "A Tall Woman" Hulme recounts an incident where looking is replaced by blissful touching. A tall woman enters "Horton town" and "secretly" she touches the poet's hand rather than that of the other assembled men:

When all are looking, she seems to promise.
There is a secret garden
And a cool stream....
Thus at all men she looks.

The same promise to many eyes.
Yet when she forward leans, in a room,
And by seeming accident her breasts brush against me,
Then is the axle of the world twisted.¹⁰³

The Imagist moment of "freedom from time limits and space limits", the turn in the earth's "axle", occurs here when the promise of the gaze is fulfilled by frottage. This is a poem concerned to "hand over sensations bodily".

Encounters with female prostitutes in the streets are evident in Imagist verse, although they differ in treatment from symbolist poems. In "Daisy", Aldington's erotic reminiscence of playing by the seaside with a young girl is prompted by seeing the same woman as "A whore in Oxford Street."¹⁰⁴ Fletcher's Irradiations Sand and Spray(1915), contains an image of "one painted face" standing out above the other women in the city:

You were neither burnt out nor pallid,
There was plain, coarse, vulgar meaning in every line of
 you
And no make-believe:
You were at least alive.¹⁰⁵

This focus upon one face illustrates the technique of particularising images, exemplified in Pound's "Metro" which picks out "these" faces from the crowd. Fletcher dwells upon this "painted face" since it has "meaning in every line", and is "alive" amid the "burnt out and pallid" city. Standing out as colourful recompense for a bland urban life, this woman becomes a mere object for sensual satisfaction. There is nothing "make-

believe" about her for she is, in essence, not a symbol but an Imagistic
Ding-an-sich.

A more Imagistic incident of male looking occurs in F.S.Flint's
"Accident" from the 1915 Imagist volume:

ACCIDENT

Dear one!
you sit there
in the corner of the carriage;
and you do not know me;
and your eyes forbid.

Is it the dirt, the squalor,
the wear of human bodies,
and the dead faces of our neighbours?
These are but symbols.

You are proud; I praise you;
your mouth is set; you see beyond us;
and you see nothing.

I have the vision of your calm, cold face,
and of the black hair that waves about it;
I watch you; I love you;
I desire you.

There is a quiet here
within the thud-thud of the wheels
upon the railway.

There is a quiet here
within my heart,
but tense and tender...

This is my station...¹⁰⁶

The poem protests its Imagist credentials by denigrating the "symbols" of the "dirt" and "squalor" of human bodies. They are merely symbols of why the woman's "eyes forbid" when gazed at by the poet. The woman possesses the ability to "see beyond" and understand that the other passengers are "nothing". This gift of vision makes the woman transcend the "dead faces" and "wear of human bodies". It is this perceptual gift that the poet desires. Watching the woman is swiftly transformed from "love" to "desire", but unlike Hulme's brush with the "tall woman" this gaze is curtailed by the train arriving at the protagonist's destination. The poem shows perceptual desire, "tense and tender", thwarted by the necessity of leaving the train. The "accident" of the encounter with the "dear one" is constrained by the systematic nature of the travelling: one has to leave at one's destination and seemingly make do with creating a poem from this experience.

A poem from Fletcher's Irradiations describes a moment when the distanced pleasure of gazing is insufficient recompense for the poet. Walking the city street,

I saw that all the women - although their bodies were
 dexterously concealed -
Were thinking with all their might what men were like:
And the men, mechanically correct, cigars at lips,
Were wanting to rush the women,
But were restrained by respectability or timidity,
Or fear of the consequences or vanity or some puerile
 dream
Of a pale ideal lost in the vast grey sky.

So I said to myself, it is time to end all this:
I will take the first woman that comes along.¹⁰⁷

Fantasizing about an open sexual encounter opposes the "mechanically correct" routine of modern life and morality. The women merely wonder "what men were like", passively awaiting the active intervention of the men. Comically phallic with cigars protruding from their mouths, the men are "restrained", fearing morality. Restraining desire is a "puerile dream" that takes its place in the drab "grey sky", as if the male "taking" of a woman will not only end this moral "pale ideal", but will also inject some colour into a "pale" and "grey" existence. Richard Aldington was to write, in the 1930 Imagist anthology, that "what enters by the eyes is desire" and when desire "speeds through the eyes/For a moment there is strange tumult/In the whole nature of man or woman,/And in a flash all life is changed."¹⁰⁸ The tumultuous change Fletcher's poem seeks is that completion of male perceptual desire which, if enacted, will bring a rush of colour and sensation to counter a mechanically vapid world. Women as available sexual objects thus serve as a fulcrum for contesting the dreary effects of reification. The poem curiously concludes with the appearance of God, laughing at the poet with "good humour", as if the thoughts of sexual action were mere temptations placed before the poet.

The following poem from Fletcher's collection emphasises how this imagined sexual "moment" should be read in terms of the relation of sensual pleasure to dehumanising reification. The poet recalls a day when "I did not write a line of verse:/Nor did I speak a word to any woman,/Nor did I meet with death." This is, however, not the failure it appears:

Yet all that day I was fully occupied:
My eyes saw trees, clouds, streets, houses, people;
My lungs breathed air;
My mouth swallowed food and drink;
My hands seized things, my feet touched earth,
Or spurned it at my desire.¹⁰⁹

This is a representation of all-round sensual satiation, an unfettered arena of pleasurable fulfilment akin to Marx's idea of the total emancipation of all human capacities. Such activity leaves the poet "fully occupied", sensual bliss replacing any alienating occupation or job. The poet is also free to refuse these things, he can "spurn" these pleasures if so desired. Writing, sexuality and death, the three negatives of the first stanza, appear at the end of the poem as feeble substitutes for this sensual realm of free labour:

On that day I know I would have been sufficiently happy,
If I could have kept my brain from bothering at all
About my next trite poem;
About the tedious necessities of sex;
And about the day on which I would at last meet death.

Unfortunately, sensual pleasures are bridled by conceptual activity: the poet cannot stop his "brain from bothering". This unequal relation between senses and intellect is, according to Simmel, characteristic of commerce in modernity: "The idea that life is essentially based on intellect...goes hand in hand with the growth of a money economy."¹¹⁰ A monetary economy produces a "fundamental re-orientation of culture towards intellectuality."¹¹¹ The mechanical world left behind in Fletcher's sexual

fantasy poem would be replaced, in this text, by living in a "fully occupied" sensual world. But commodification cannot be swept aside by simple hedonism since the realm of the senses is hampered by the urban rationality of capital. Sex, writing and death are associated as symptoms of the rational work of the poet's brain; all are viewed as pitiful substitutes, "tedious necessities" rather than part of a world of sensual freedom. Libidinal compensation for reification is here shown to be fundamentally inadequate.

There is another reason why Imagist scopophilia, that combination of writing, sexuality and reification, is a poor substitute for all-round sensual satisfaction. Looking at women to assuage worries of commodification only introduces another set of worries about masculinity. Two poems by Flint show male pleasure in the gaze as an ambivalent phenomenon. "Evil" and "Terror" occur consecutively in Flint's Otherworld Cadences, and can be read as companion texts:

EVIL

The mist of the evening is rose
In the dying sun,
And the street is quiet between its rows of plane trees
And the walls of the gardens
With the laurel bushes.

I walk along in a dream
Half aware
Of the empty black of the windows.

One window I pass by:
It is not empty;

Something shows from it, white, I feel, and round,
Something that pulls me back
To gaze, still dreaming,
To gaze and to wake and stare
At a naked woman-
O Beautiful-
Alone in the window, sitting.

Is there a sign?
Does she call me? What is the lure?
She does not move;
And I crawl to the gate, and stop,
And open the gate, again stopping,
And crawl again up the stone steps-
Fear driving my heart mad-
Up to the door.

Door, do not open
Though I beat you with my fist!

TERROR

Eyes are tired;
The lamp burns,
And in its circle of light
Papers and books lie
Where chance and life
Have placed them.

Silence sings all around me;
My head is bound with a band;
Outside in the street, a few footsteps;
A clock strikes the hour.

I gaze, and my eyes close,
Slowly:

I doze; but the moment before sleep,
A voice calls my name
In my ear,
And the shock jolts my heart;
But when I open my eyes,
And look, first left, and then right...

No one is there.¹¹²

The first poem is the more conventional of the two, presenting another meeting with a female prostitute while strolling city streets. Perambulation, however, is halted by a visual object. The gaze at the "round" shape of the naked woman produces initial thoughts of beauty; her "white" flesh contrasting sharply with the "empty black of the windows." The conventional symbolism of black and white shows that this poem will not easily burst into vivid colour upon perceiving a woman. Feeling a "lure", the poet slowly crawls to the gate and door where the woman sits, producing the crude symbolism of the man sexually penetrating the house. The poem, despite its hackneyed **femme fatale** narrative, interests for the way looking seems the impetus and true cause of the "lure." The gaze is said to "wake" the walker from his "dreaming." There is an uncertainty over whether it is the woman that calls and lures: "Is there a sign? Does she call me?" This renders ambiguous whether "evil" is ascribed to the object gazed at, or whether it resides in the actual act of seeing. This ambiguity highlights an anxiety over the status of male looking in the city; it may proffer sensual pleasure but its compensatory effects are more ambiguously received.

"Terror" seems to emphasise this point. The terror itself can be

related to Freud's urban phenomenon, the uncanny. For what is uncanny here is the very absence of an object, such as the naked woman in the previous poem, for the protagonist to view. We are so used to looking at objects in urban contexts that when our expectant gaze is not fulfilled a feeling of terror is produced.¹¹³ A voice seems to call the sleeper's name and a "shock jolts" him, although there is no body to which to attribute the voice. The poem clearly stresses the sense of sight: "Eyes are tired", after gazing "my eyes close" and when wakened the protagonist carefully looks from side to side. Pleasure in the semi-autonomous sense of sight operates as more than satisfaction, for it is now a more urgent requirement in modernity, one of the "tedious necessities" Fletcher bemoaned. Placed after a poem ambivalently celebrating the visual shape of the female form, this text implies a naturalisation of the voyeuristic gaze as a necessity to ward off "terror". If sight compensates for modern commodification, then the terror emergent when sight has no (female) object is the return of the repressed fear of being reified.

6. CONCLUSION

Male Imagist anxieties over commodification, and the relation of the gaze to those fears, have to be read in terms of other worries over masculinity in modernism. Similarly, the Imagist privileging of things over words in their theoretical texts fits a series of troubled responses to modernity and modernization. The compensations of male visual pleasure became increasingly problematic, given the changed social position of women in early twentieth century Britain. The prostitute in the streets is

replaced, in a poem such as Flint's "Accident ", by a female traveller in a carriage. What is striking is that the structure of looking at female prostitutes is simply transferred to the "proud" woman in this poem. The reason for the gradual disappearance of the prostitute figure in Imagist verse can be seen in terms of the visibility of women on the streets and public places of cities, engaged in roles other than that of sexual commodity. One role, of course, was that of transport worker in wartime. Although Flint's poem gives no indication that this woman is such a worker, the comparatively respectful treatment she is allowed must be understood in terms of changes in the public presence of women as workers. It was no longer so easy to simply write a poem of perceptual sexual desire when so many women encountered actually controlled the trams and trains on which one travelled: these were women no longer merely available as sexual commodities. The imperative to curtail that feminine power by visually presenting them as if they were prostitutes available for male desire, thus became all the more vital.

It seems Imagism is often unable to represent women in metropolitan modernity at all, so great is the anxiety created by feminist spectacles such as the suffragette demonstrations. Richard Aldington's poem "People", from Some Imagist Poets (1916), shows the poet threatened by an urban mass figured in terms of the sea. Close attention shows the implicit gendering of this fear:

PEOPLE

Why should you try to crush me?
Am I so Christ like?

You beat against me,
Immense waves, filthy with refuse.

I am the last upright of a smashed break-water,
But you shall not crush me
Though you bury me in foaming slime
And hiss your hatred about me.
You break over me, cover me;
I shudder at the contact;
Yet I pierce through you
And stand up, torn, dripping, shaken,
But whole and fierce.¹¹⁴

Not a particularly good poem, but a superb example of castration anxiety. The Christ-like poet is the "last upright ", still just able to effectively "pierce" and "stand up", remaining "whole and fierce." Although the title suggests an interpretation of solitary artist versus the swarming mass, the struggle of the protagonist is against a very feminine "people". Aggressively asserting the ability of the poet to remain unsullied from the cliched female imagery of waves and refuse, Aldington retreats from physical contact to "stand up" and presents images of his fear of being crushed and buried by this "foaming slime ". Male solidity, the upright break-water, thus holds good against the feminine crowd by distancing itself from palpable contact. Though there is not a woman "in sight" in this text, it seems difficult not to read this female absence as resolutely present in the poem's concerns.

It is illuminating to juxtapose Aldington's fear of being touched with H.D.'s famous text from the 1915 Imagist anthology, "Oread":

Whirl up, sea-
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.¹¹⁵

This is a poem sensuously welcoming all that Aldington fears. If the sea is used by Aldington as a simile for the urban crowd, H.D.'s poem respects the sensual powers of the sea in itself, holding closely to an Imagist directness of treatment. It is an invocation to the sea to "cover" the nymph of the poem's title. And unlike Aldington's beleaguered egoistic "I", the pronouns of the nymph are in non-gendered plural forms, "our" and "us". The green of the pines is not placed apart for detached perception, but is an integral part of the object touching the person. The touch of the pines is not the sadistic lash of Fletcher's image of the city as hedonistic cat, but of a sea whose "splash" is of sensuous "pools of fir".

"Oread" is a good place to conclude this discussion of the relation between seeing and touching in Imagist practice. In Pound's important essay "Vorticism"(1914) H.D.'s "Oread" is praised for the strength of its expression of emotion.¹¹⁶ In the next chapter I consider Pound's Imagist verse, seeing how the visual reactions to commodification, found in the other Imagist poets, are developed in Pound. It is Pound, more than any other Imagist writer, who pushes Imagism towards the practices of modernist poetry. But, like his fellow Imagists, Pound continues to be fascinated by a reifying gaze at women.

NOTES

1. Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste",; 1913, rpt. in Peter Jones ed., Imagist Poetry, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.131.
2. Pound rewrote Flint's poem "A Swan Song", shortening it to make it more Imagistic, although later Flint believed that the original poem was the closer to Imagism. See Jones, "Introduction", Imagist Poetry, p.20.
3. H.D.'s "The Pool" was first published in Some Imagist Poets An Anthology, (London: Constable; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915). Carlos Williams' "Portrait of a Lady" was first published in The Dial (Aug.1920). I give the slightly altered version printed in Poems 1918-21 and reprinted in The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams vol.1 1909-1939, ed. A.Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan, (New York: New Directions, 1986), p.129.
4. T.E.Hulme, Further Speculations, ed. S. Hynes, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p.84.
5. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", p.131.
6. "Preface", Some Imagist Poets (1915).
7. Pound was later to comment that one of the defects of the early Imagist theories was that it "thought only of the STATIONARY image." Pound, ABC of Reading, (London: Routledge, 1934), p.52.
8. T.S.Eliot, "Dante" (1929), Selected Prose, ed. Frank Kermode, (London: Faber, 1975), p.210.
9. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", p.134.

10. H.D., trans. of Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis (1919); rpt. in Jones, Imagist Poetry, p.69.
11. H.D., "Tribute to the Angels" (1945), Trilogy, (Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1973), p.86.
12. Rachel Blau Duplessis, H.D. The Career of That Struggle, Key Women Writers, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p.12.
13. See Terry Eagleton's account of this aspect of Adorno's thought in The Ideology of the Aesthetic, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.341-6.
14. Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E.F.N.Jephcott, (1951; trans. London: Verso, 1974), p.74.
15. Norman N.Holland, "Freud and H.D.", International Journal of Psychoanalysis no.50 (1969), p.310.
16. Karl Marx, Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Pelican Marx Library, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.352-3.
17. Seyla Benhabib, Critique, Norm and Utopia A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.59.
18. Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E.B.Ashton, (1966; trans. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.33.
19. For the notion of "the urbanization of consciousness" see David Harvey, The Urban Experience, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), ch.8. For an account of representations of the city in English writing see Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). For modernism and the city see Edward Timms and David Kelley eds., Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

20. Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts into Air The Experience of Modernity, (London: Verso, 1983), p.15.
21. Ibid., p.16. For a critical view of Berman's arguments see Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution", New Left Review 144 (Mar/Apr.1984), pp.96-113.
22. For the notion that modernity is characterised by an experience of "shocks" see Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn, (London and New York: Verso, 1973), pp.115-7.
23. Pound acknowledged the influence of Symons in a letter to Rene Taupin in 1928: "Influence fr. sur moi - relativement tard. Rapports fr.< eng. via Arthur Symons etc. 1908." Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D.Paige, (London: Faber, 1950), p.218. Eliot said of Symons' The Symbolist Movement in Literature that it was "an introduction to wholly new feelings...a revelation." T.S.Eliot, The Sacred Wood Essays on Poetry and Criticism, (1920; rpt. London: Methuen, 1960), p.5.
24. Arthur Symons, Selected Writings, ed. Roger Holdsworth, (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1974).
25. Symons, "Stella Maris", Ibid., p.43.
26. Symons, "Paris", Ibid., p.50.
27. Symons, "London", Ibid., p.60.
28. Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, (London: Methuen, 1983), p.63.
29. Symons, London: A Book of Aspects, in Selected Writings, p.90.

30. John Gould Fletcher, "The Unquiet Street", Some Imagist Poets 1916 An Annual Anthology, (London: Constable and Co.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p.42.
31. Fredric Jameson, "Ulysses in History", in James Joyce and Modern Literature, eds. W.J.McCormack and Alistair Stead, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp.130-1.
32. Fletcher, "The Empty House", Some Imagist Poets 1916, p.47.
33. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), rpt. Art and Literature, The Pelican Freud Library vol.14, trans. James Strachey, ed. Albert Dickson, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.371.
34. Elizabeth Wilson, Hallucinations Life in the Postmodern City, (London: Radius Hutchinson, 1988), p.167.
35. Ibid., p.170.
36. Freud argues that we find the appearance of human characteristics in such things as ventriloquist's dolls "uncanny", since we have accustomed ourselves to believing them to be inhuman. "The Uncanny", p.355.
37. T.E.Hulme, "Images", rpt. in A.R.Jones, The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1960), p.180.
38. Fredric Jameson, "Reflections in Conclusion", in Ernst Bloch et al, Aesthetics and Politics, (London: Verso, 1977), p.212.
39. F.S.Flint, "III", Des Imagistes An Anthology, (London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1914), p.32.
40. This notion of the crowd as "swarm" is taken from Kristin Ross, The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune, (London: Macmillan, 1988), ch.4.

41. For an account of this way of representing the city see Williams, The Country and the City, ch.19.

42. Cited in Lisa Tickner, The Spectacle of Women Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), p.96. Wyndham Lewis's description of crowds in London in 1914 views the crowd as feminine: "In ponderous masses they prowl, with excited hearts. Are the Crowds then female?" Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, (1937; rpt. London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p.78.

43. Cited Tickner, The Spectacle of Women, p.98.

44. Richard Aldington, "Cinema Exit", Images 1910-15, rpt. in Collected Poems 1915-23, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1929), p.34. For a discussion of the opposition between "high art" and "mass civilisation" see Andreas Huyssens, After the Great Divide Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism, (London: Macmillan, 1988), esp. ch.1,3.

45. H.D., "Cities", The Egoist, July 1916, p.102.

46. For short accounts of the growth of eugenics in Britain see Lucy Bland and Frank Mort, "Look out for the 'good time' girl: Dangerous sexualities as Threat to National Health" and Caroline Rowan, "For the Duration Only: Motherhood and Nation in the First World War" both in Formations of Nation and People, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). For a discussion of T.S.Eliot's The Waste Land in relation to eugenics see David Trotter, "Modernism and Empire: Reading The Waste Land", Critical Quarterly 28 no.1/2 (1986), pp.143-53.

47. In Aldington's poem "Eros and Psyche" the poet attacks liberal Free Trade, embodied in a statue of Cobden, by juxtaposing this figure with that of the lovers Eros and Psyche. The poet asks "who has brought their naked beauty/And their fresh young lust to Camden Town,/Which settled long ago to toil and sweat and filth,/Forgetting - to the greater glory of Free Trade - /Young beauty and young love and youthful flesh?" Some Imagist Poets 1916, p.4-5.

48. My reading of H.D.'s "Cities" goes against interpretations stressing her classicism as a way of contesting the conventional linking of the classics with male education. Thus Duplessis argues: "To enter the classics is to confront the issue of cultural authority, for knowledge of Greek and Latin, formerly barred to women and certain males, was the sigil of knowledge and authority, the main portal of the liberal humanist hegemony." Duplessis, H.D. The Career of That Struggle, p.17. What this reading ignores is what the text produces once one enters into a classical discourse, which, in the case of "Cities", is an reinscription of power and authority in an aristocratic aesthetic. For another reading of women, modernism and the classics see Sandra M.Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century vol.1 The War of the Words, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp.243-53.

49. Pound, letter to Margaret C.Anderson, ? August 1917, Selected Letters, p.112.

50. John Gould Fletcher, The Dominant City (1911-1912), (London: Max Goschen, 1913), p.7.

51. In the 1870s the French poet Rimbaud had produced a sonnet composed of advertising phrases from Parisian storefronts. See Ross, The Emergence of Social Space, p.151.

52. Fletcher, "London Evening", "Pleasure's Awakening", The Dominant City, p.12, 13.

53. Dora Marsden, "The Heart of the Question", New Freewoman Aug.1, 1913, p.64.

54. Fletcher, "Song of a Night", The Dominant City, p.19.

55. Richard Aldington's novel, Death of a Hero, (1929; rpt.London: World Distributors, 1965) contains many vivid descriptions of travelling through London by bus and train in 1914. E.M.Forster's Howards End (1910;

rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) sees King's Cross railway station as suggesting "infinity" and a "comment on the materialism of life"(p.27). On another Great Western railway journey, from London to Shrewsbury, the "long glass saloon" in which Margaret sits "became a forcing-house for the idea of sex"(p.209). This observation seems to derive from an interesting comment by Forster in his diary for 21 Oct.1909: "Women slower to sex and excitement than men; would never be moved by the sight of anyone in a railway carriage"(p.351). As in Imagist texts, railway travel is associated with vision and sexuality. For an interesting discussion of transport and imperialism in Howards End see Fredric Jameson, "Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature Modernism and Imperialism", Field Day Pamphlet no.14, (Derry: Field Day, 1988).

56. Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber, 1973), p.169.

57. Harvey, The Urban Experience, pp.18-20.

58. Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution", p.104.

59. For an account of Futurism stressing the gendered nature of its celebrations of modernization see Peter Nicholls, "Futurism, gender, and theories of postmodernity", Textual Practice 3 no.2 (Summer 1989), pp.202-222.

60. Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution", p.105.

61. Franco Morretti comments that advertising is a "classical example of the loss of the referent....Advertising...makes objects 'public', but in such a way that their truly 'social' qualities no longer have anything to do with the objects themselves, but only with the meanings and the values we associate with their possession. Advertising is never, therefore, advertisement of an **object**, but of the symbolic contents of which the object has become...the mere vehicle." Signs Taken for Wonders Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs and David Miller, (London: Verso, 1983), p.234-5.

62. Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, The Railway Station A Social History, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.336.
63. For an account of how advertising practices influenced the development of the novel see Jennifer Wicke, Advertising Fictions Literature, Advertisements, and Social Reading, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
64. James Joyce, Ulysses, (1922; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.641.
65. On the alterations of space and time in modernity see Harvey, Urban Experience, ch.6; Stephen Kern, The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983) and Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).
66. Benjamin discusses this fashionable pursuit in Charles Baudelaire, p.54.
67. Richard Aldington, "In the Tube", The Egoist, Mar.1 1915; rpt. in The Complete Poems of Richard Aldington, (London: Allen Wingate, 1948), p.49.
68. Richard Aldington, "The Poetry of F.S.Flint", The Egoist, May.1 1915, p.80-1.
69. Jameson, "Ulysses in History", p.135. Jameson's critique of advertising as the "terminus" of reification derives partly from the situationist Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle, (1967; trans. anon. Detroit, Michigan: Black and Red, 1977), esp. paragraphs 35-8.
70. F.S.Flint, "Tube", Otherworld Cadences, (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1920), p.36.
71. See Berman's discussion of "the modernist Marx" of the Communist Manifesto in All That is Solid Melts into Air, pp.87-129.

72. Hulme, Further Speculations, p.99.
73. Ford Madox Ford, "Modern Poetry", The Thrush Dec.1 1909, p.52-3; cited in Wallace Martin, "The New Age" Under Oration Chapters in English Cultural History, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p.162.
74. Georg Simmel, "Soziologie des Raumes" (1903); cited in Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, p.37-8.
75. Georg Simmel, The Sociology of Georg Simmel, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff, (Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p.418.
76. For details see Hugh Douglas, The Underground Story, (London: Robert Hale, 1963) and Richards and MacKenzie, The Railway Station, ch.7.
77. Richard Aldington, "Whitechapel", Some Imagist Poets 1916, p.8.
78. John Stevenson, British Social History 1914-1945, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.25.
79. Richards and Mackenzie, The Railway Station, p.167.
80. Ibid., p.166.
81. Eric Hobsbawm, "Labour in the Great City", New Left Review 166 (Nov/Dec.1987), p.86.
82. John Gould Fletcher, "London Excursion", Some Imagist Poets (1915), pp.39-49.
83. The importance of the clock for urban capitalism is pointed out by Simmel: "If all clocks and watches in Berlin would suddenly go wrong in different ways, even if only by one hour, all economic life and communication of the city would be disrupted for a long time." The Sociology of Georg Simmel, p.413. Also see Harvey, Urban Experience, pp.170-4.

84. Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, p.318.
85. Ibid., p.319.
86. Ibid., p.316.
87. Ibid., p.323.
88. Harvey, Urban Experience, p.178.
89. Ibid., p.19. Marx, in the 1844 Manuscripts, comments that "Movable property, for its part, points to the miracles of industry and change. It is the child, the legitimate, only-begotten son, of the modern age." Early Writings, p.339.
90. Harvey, Urban Experience, p.19.
91. Ibid.
92. John Gould Fletcher, "Solitude in the City", Goblins and Pagodas, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p.33.
93. F.S.Flint, "As I Paced the Streets", In the Net of the Stars, (London: Elkin Matthews, 1909), p.11.
94. Flint, "The Swan", Des Imagistes, p.36.
95. Edward Storer, "So Many Pictures", Mirrors of Illusion, (London: Sisley's, 1909), p.25.
96. Storer, "Piccadilly Circus", Ibid., p.41.
97. F.S.Flint, "The History of Imagism", The Egoist May 1 1915, p.70.
98. Fletcher, "Pleasure's Awakening", Dominant City, p.13.

99. Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes", (1915; rpt. The Essentials of Psychoanalysis, trans. James Strachey, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp.204-10.
100. Seeing, argues Freud, is "an activity that is ultimately derived from touching." "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality:(I)", (1905; rpt. Essentials of Psychoanalysis, p.300.
101. Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes", p.207. For an interesting discussion of modernism and masochism see Linda R.Williams, "Submission and Reading Feminine Masochism and Feminist Criticism", New Formations 7 (Spring 1989), pp.9-19.
102. T.E.Hulme, "Images", Life and Opinions, p.181.
103. Hulme, "A Tall Woman", Ibid., p.164.
104. Richard Aldington, "Daisy", Some Imagist Poets (1915), p.11.
105. John Gould Fletcher, Irradiations Sand and Spray, (London: Constable; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), XXV, p.27.
106. F.S.Flint, "Accident", Some Imagist Poets (1915), p.58-9.
107. Fletcher, Irradiations, XXVII, p.29.
108. Richard Aldington, "The Eaten Heart", Imagist Anthology 1930, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930), p.3,5.
109. Fletcher, Irradiations, XXVIII, p.30.
110. Georg Simmel, The Philosophy of Money, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, (1900; trans. Boston, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.152.
111. Ibid., p.411.

112. F.S.Flint, "Evil", "Terror", Otherworld Cadences, p.43-4.
113. Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, p.149.
114. Richard Aldington, "People", Some Imagist Poets 1916, p.11. When this poem is reprinted in Aldington's Collected Poems it appears under the title "Resentment."
115. H.D., "Oread", Some Imagist Poets (1915), p.30.
116. Pound, "Vorticism", Fortnightly Review (1914); rpt. in Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brezeska: A Memoir, (1916; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1970), p.89.

CHAPTER FOUR

POUND, LUSTRA AND A LANGUAGE OF COLOUR

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter Imagist practice was examined in conceptual terms, an approach which stressed the urban context of the poems. This chapter returns to a more literary historical approach as a way of focussing upon the Imagist texts of Ezra Pound. I have resisted the temptation to see Imagism solely in Poundian terms and have indicated how Imagism, for example in H.D., consists of responses to commodification that challenge Pound's visual doctrines. Now I consider Pound's own work to see how he progresses Imagism towards a modernist verse practice. Pound himself claimed to have rejected Imagism, moving on to Vorticism. However, close reading of the poems in Lustra and the major poetic sequence, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, shows that Imagist reification is still a dominant concern for Pound.

This analysis of Pound concentrates on the period from April 1913 to March 1915, the dates, according to Brooker, between which most of the poems of Lustra (1916) were composed.¹ In this period occurred key events in the history of Imagism and in Pound's individual development. In April 1913 Pound published "In a Station of the Metro" in Poetry. Late in 1913 he acquired the Fenollosa manuscripts that he was to edit and publish in

1920 as The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry. In February 1914 Des Imagistes was published, to little acclaim, and Pound consolidated his position on The Egoist. By August he and Lowell have quarrelled over Imagisme/Imagism, resulting in Pound's "resignation" from the movement he believed had become "diluted". In September 1914 Pound published his "Vorticism" essay in the Fortnightly Review. This is an important essay for many reasons. It shows Pound, stung by the loss of "his" poetic movement, striving to produce something that will distance him from Lowell's Imagism. To this end, the essay resorts to autobiography, using the composition of "In a Station of the Metro" to illustrate Pound's claims for Vorticist art. A close reading of the "Vorticism" essay shows, however, that Pound's poem should be situated within the Imagist "matrix" I have already discussed. The poem indicates a formal response to commodification in an urban setting. It is only later Pound realises that the poem gestures towards a more truly modernist verse. I will analyse the "Vorticism" essay alongside Pound's "Metro" text, as a prelude to discussing the other poems in Lustra.

2. VORTICISM AND THE METRO

Pound commences "Vorticism" by distinguishing Imagisme from Futurism and other aesthetic categories such as cubism. Imagisme, if seen clearly, is part of a wider category of Vorticist art, both verbal and visual.² Imagisme is a movement, he writes, "of criticism rather than creation."³ Contemporary poetry is not ready for "true" artistic creation, since analysis of poetry must to be followed by synthesis. Imagist doctrine is

discussed by means of an argument that attempts, but fails, to short-circuit a commodified aesthetic:

The arts have indeed 'some sort of common bond, some inter-recognition.' Yet certain emotions or subjects find their most appropriate expression in some one particular art. The work of art which is most 'worth while' is the work which would need a hundred works of any other kind of art to explain it. A fine statue is the core of a hundred poems. A fine poem is a score of symphonies. There is music which would need a hundred paintings to express it.⁴

Pound argues that certain emotions must only be rendered in specific aesthetic forms. As he later puts it in the essay: "Every concept, every emotion, presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form."⁵ This primary form may be colour, sound or word, but must be transformed into its appropriate "equation." Quoting Pater's "All art aspires to the condition of music", Pound distances himself from the symbolist aesthetic of this statement. The error of Pater's dictum lies in attempting to define one set of emotions in the discourse of an inappropriate form: forms cannot be considered to be interchangeable, their values are not to be compared as equals and the emotions they contain cannot be exchanged as equivalent values. But Pound's argument undercuts itself by then creating a hierarchy among art-forms, conceptualising them in terms of numerical value. One sculpture is identical to one hundred poems, a poem might be valued as twenty symphonies, and so on. In trying to define an economy resistant to the equalising of exchange-value, Pound can only rely upon a commodified trope. His use of number here recalls the use of money as a universal mediator of all value. But for Pound this structuring of formal

equivalence is possible because of the "common bond" between aesthetic forms and this bond is that of the artist's emotion.

Imagisme is distinguished from symbolism by use of this aesthetic economy. Symbolism, we learn, "degraded the symbol to the status of a word." On one level this represents Pound's elevation of things over words. But, as the text makes clear, the "things" contrasted to symbolist words are images: "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."⁶ Pound's mathematical discourse is, as Bell and Kayman have noted, a common feature of his early critical texts.⁷ Symbolism fails because it cannot display "variable significance". This is not a critique of symbolism for lacking a directness of presentation; rather it is criticised for a lack of semantic invariability. Prima facie, Pound's point is paradoxical, given his insistence in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" (1911-12) that the best writers, those "favoured of Apollo", are able to write "in words that hover above and cling close to the things they mean."⁸ It seems difficult to reconcile images having a "variable significance" with the fact that they must "cling close to the things they mean", reducing meaning to the single referent of a word. Pound seems to see that his argument is paradoxical, for he lets the algebraic analogy drop and concludes his distinction of Imagisme from symbolism by dismissing the latter for its "mushy technique".⁹ This is a theme he picks up later in the essay: "Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity, into elaboration and secondary application."¹⁰ In a letter from 1916 Pound claimed that symbolism suffered from "Soft mushy edges."¹¹ Here Pound employs the metaphoric "hardness" familiar from Hulme and the other Imagists. Pound

had criticised Lowell, a month before the "Vorticism" essay, for stifling the "hard light, clear edges" of Imagisme.¹² Flaccid symbolism seems to be indelibly linked to the feminine; to be countered by the solid male image. Pound's personal dislike of Lowell seems to blur into his new aesthetic criteria. Pound, however, has not made clear how Imagisme combines "clear edges" with images that can vary in significance: for movement implies a potential blurring of particular images. Vorticism, as the essay argues, is one way around this danger, a way that links poetry to the frantic pace of modern city life.

Having distinguished Imagisme from symbolism Pound proceeds by explaining the relation of Imagist poetics to the visual arts. This explanation, insists Pound, can only be made "autobiographically": "The precise statement of such a matter must be based on one's own experience."¹³ Before presenting this autobiographical justification for his theory, Pound compares his ideas to those of Whistler and Kandinsky.¹⁴ These artists were, unknowingly, following Imagiste ideas, as they were "ousting literary values" while "getting extraneous matter out of their art."¹⁵ They replaced such waste matter with "form" and "colour".¹⁶ It is in terms of form and colour that Pound now re-defines his sense of the image: "The image is the poet's pigment."¹⁷ There was nothing in "A Few Don'ts" to suggest this direct analogy with painting. Indeed in this earlier piece Pound had warned about scrambling Imagist clarity by mixing different sense perceptions.¹⁸ One explanation for this turn to the visual arts can be explained by Pound's increasing friendship with Wyndham Lewis in 1914, culminating with the Spring publication of Blast.¹⁹ But the analogy with painting can also be understood as a way for Pound to distance himself from Lowell's version of Imagism. Imagism had diluted Imagisme

because it had not understood the visual basis of the poetry, a lesson stressed by Hulme and, to a lesser extent, by Marsden.

Pound's further comments on the Image do not elaborate its visual elements, but rely upon Hulmean theories of immediacy: the image "is real because we know it directly."²⁰ Pound then decides to resort to his autobiography to demonstrate this epistemic directness:

Three years ago in Paris I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion.²¹

From Pound's account this incident dates from spring 1911. Setting this incident in the past is important, for it credits Pound with prescient Imagist visions. The emphasis on the suddenness of the incident accords with the "sudden liberation" of the Imagist complex in "A Few Don'ts". This sense of the instant is matched by the discrete set of faces Pound describes: he sees one face "and then another and another," and then separate faces of a child and a woman. These are particular faces that Pound seems unwilling to combine, the cumulative syntax of "and then" and "another" stressing the discreteness of the faces.

Brooker finds one source for this incident in Arthur Symonds's account, in Spiritual Adventures (1905), of practising his "religion of eyes" while walking the Strand: "I noted every face that passed me on the pavement; I looked into the omnibuses, the cabs, always with the same eager hope of seeing some beautiful or interesting person...This search without an aim

grew to be almost a torture to me; my eyes ached with the effort, but I could not control them."²² Fitting Simmel's observations about the preponderance of seeing in cities, both accounts render perception in contexts of travelling. Pound, unlike Symons, is not walking, for he has just been travelling upon the train. This, to some extent, marks Pound's experience as more modern. While Symons is exterior to transport, looking in at faces from the street, Pound is interior, contained underground having just stepped off the metro. Pound is one of the crowd of faces of travellers, and not detached from others like the non-travelling Symons. It is thus up to Pound to somehow extract himself from the abstracting power of the crowd of travellers.

The continuation of Pound's narrative shows that his initial difficulty in finding words to capture his experience eased when he turned to a visual discourse:

And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Raynouard, I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation...not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that - a "pattern", or hardly a pattern, if by "pattern" you mean something with a "repeat" in it. But it was a word, the beginning, for me, of a language in colour.²³

Again the revelation occurs "suddenly". But it occurs in the evening and as the poet is walking the streets. It is as if only the solitude of walking city streets can create the necessary conditions for writing this poem. When the poet is no longer part of the travelling crowd, but in the position of a Symons, walking and aloof from others, recreating the mode of

the flâneur.

After writing a thirty-line poem of "second intensity" about this experience, Pound produced a poem six months later of half that length and a year after that produced the two-line version of the poem. The poem, provoked by "sudden" emotion in Spring 1911, is finally completed at the end of 1912. As quoted in the "Vorticism" essay, the poem appears as follows:

In A Station Of The Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.²⁴

Although Pound is initially unable to find the correct words, the poem is now composed of "splotches of colour." It is strange, then, that very little colour appears in the finished text. We might, as Donald Davie does, read the image as "white faces against the gloom of the underground station are like white petals against a black bough."²⁵ But nothing really suggests the colour white in the poem. It seems only a desire to see pleasing binary structures in the poem that produces white and not red, green, yellow or brown petals on a tree. Even if we grant the black/white binary, however, this is still not the colourful discourse we have been led to expect by Pound's essay. It is, for example, nothing like the bubbling presentation of colours in the "pure vorticism" of Pound's "A Game of Chess", first published in the second issue of Blast: "Red knights, brown bishops, bright queens,/Striking the board, falling in strong 'L's of colour."²⁶ Pound, it appears, could not utilise this myriad of colour in

the metro poem. Even if read as white faces on black backgrounds, we see only a very restricted palette in this text.

Pound is unable to introduce the reified use of colour seen in other Imagist texts, that which compensates for the dreariness of urban life. But, following Simmel's notion of the visual experience of urban transport, Pound's discourse does resort to visualising his experience. His response to the metonymic "faces", like Aldington's tube poem, is an attempt at a language faithful to his visual experience in the metro. Although the emotional response Pound articulates is one of beauty in the faces, the actual movement of the poem displays a more negative judgement of the people. The "disgust" Aldington felt in the tube is not directly present in Pound's text, but we do find surprise upon discovering beauty in such a crowd.

Finding beauty in the urban crowd is an uncanny experience for Pound, as for the other Imagists. Imagist beauty lay in intense particulars, rendered precisely in verse. For this crowd to achieve aesthetic value it must be viewed in terms of such particulars. Beauty in the metro lies not in the crowd, not in a person in the crowd, but only in their faces. However this beauty is only evident at a perceptual distance. In his other account of the composition of the poem, Pound refers to being jostled by the departing passengers.²⁷ Touch is thus replaced in the poem by the detachment of the gaze. For it is not the faces-in-themselves that are beautiful, but their "apparition" which is pleasing to the poet. It is the faces appearing as "petals", not as direct things-in-themselves but merely things-as-they-appear to the poet. As Maud Ellmann notes, "the text records the 'apparition' rather than the faces per se."²⁸ Pound's claim that the poem is of "a thing outward and objective" is vanquished by the

subjectivism of the perceiving consciousness of the apparition. The poet does not just record objective "arrangements in colour",²⁹ but displays his emotions before the objects. It is a feeling which, as in Aldington, an-atomises human beings into mere "faces". The poem matches the negative emotions of other Imagist texts before crowds, but in a more aesthesised and disguised manner. Aesthetic egoism was threatened by the urban crowd as C.F.G.Masterman, leading commentator on the social consequences of urbanisation, noted in 1909:

It is in the city Crowd, where the traits of individual distinction have become merged in the aggregate, and the impression (from a distance) is of little white blobs of faces borne upon little black twisted or misshapen bodies, that the scorn of the philosopher for the mob, the cynic for humanity, becomes for the first time intelligible.³⁰

Crowds blur the particularity of individuals, producing "blobs of faces", an uncanny anticipation of Pound's own facial "splotches". The problem with blobs or splotches is that they threaten the pristine clarity of the Image, spilling image into surrounding image.

Pound's solution to this visual dilemma is found in the typography of the poem. It marks a small, but radical, break in the formal treatment of poetic language, an innovation that was to be developed in Pound's later writings. When originally published in Poetry in April 1913, and as reprinted in The Egoist of August 15th 1913, this is the way the text appeared:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals on a wet, black bough.³¹

Korn argues that this textual arrangement stresses the "sound-phrasing" and sequential development of the poem.³² But the poem's impression is primarily visual and designed to resist sequence and time in favour of spatial arrangement. The poem not only fragments people into faces, it also atomises its own language. The collectivism of the crowd is analysed into a form of linguistic monad. Language is literally chopped into separated components, each unit of discourse striving to render only one thing - the faces, the crowd, the petals, the bough. The words "these" and "the" indicate a definiteness of linguistic reference: it is not **a** crowd but **this** crowd, this word referring to this thing. Any sense of movement - as in the transport process of the metro itself - is resisted by the spatial form of the words. The text decomposes not so much into two complex images - the faces and the petals - which are then compared, but rather divides into six discrete images, six linguistic units parcelled off from one another by blank spaces. These six pictures now resemble nothing more than the rows of advertisements found in the underground station or within the train. The way adverts for different commodities are juxtaposed without any sense of their logical, narrative or economic connection is just how Pound's six linguistic things appear. Syntactical links are forced asunder by the Mallarmean blanks between the words, just as in "Vorticism" the faces were split by phrases such as "and then" and "another".

Pound's response to the reified images of the adverts, one form of the metropolitan assault upon "beauty", is the production of a discourse of atomic images. These images are not the smudged "splotches" of people in the crowd, but are themselves reifications of the bustling city crowd. In this he uses the content of his modern experience - travelling, gazing, a crowd, the perception of adverts - as the impetus for the text's formal images of particulars. This marks the text as a modernist poem: words do not clearly show things in this poem, words are to be handled as material objects. The "apparition" is not of Pound entering any relationship with these subjects. Instead he sees "faces", as restricted in their movements as the fixed "petals" on the "bough". Pound's gaze is thus that of Prufrock's "eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase", the formula here being the pseudo-objectivity of the Image.

Subsequent printings of the poem erased the spaces between the linguistic units. One explanation for this is Pound's advocacy of Vorticism as a "dynamic" art. A poem syntactically falling apart from within is a poor example of the vortex, "from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing."³³ Pound's original poem had, almost too clearly, grasped the nature of modernity: atomistic, reified, and where the only obtainable sensual satisfaction was that of a naked staring at "beautiful faces." And in this poem we are not even compensated by a myriad of pleasurable colours.

After quoting the poem in the "Vorticism" essay, Pound asserts that this kind of poem is an attempt to "record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective."³⁴ The type of "subjective" emotion the "Metro" expresses can best be illustrated by considering what might be seen as its companion poem

from Lustra, "Dans Un Omnibus de Londres". An odd transfer of discourses occurs between this poem and that of the "Metro" text. The poem about London travelling is written in French, while the poem about French travelling is written in English. The French text, however, clarifies the move from objective to subjective that occurs in Imagist perception:

Les yeux d'une morte
M'ont salué,
Enchassés dans un visage stupide
Donts tous les autres traits étaient banals,
Ils m'ont salué
Et alors je vis bein des choses
Au dedans de ma mémoire
Remuer,
S'éveiller.

(The eyes of a dead woman
Greeted me,
Set in a stupid face
All the other features of which were ordinary,
They greeted me
And then I saw many things
Inside my memory
Move,
Awaken.)³⁵

Closer in tone to Flint's poem "Tube", this objective image of looking on a London bus prompts emotions of the woman's stupid and ordinary nature. But Pound is able to shift from this object to his "mémoire", his subjective inward feelings. The lines which follow detail images of ducks, pigeons and "deux petite filles graciles" seen in the Parc Monceau in Paris. The

columns in this park are described as "en 'toç", a slang expression for something artificial or cheap, showing Pound's concern for the economic intruding upon the aesthetic. Later the poem recounts hiring chairs and watching "les cygnes noirs,/Japonais,/Leurs ailes/Teintées de couleur sang-de-dragon,/En toutes les fleurs/D'Amenonville." This is much more clearly a poem employing a language of colour, compensating for the "visage stupide" the poet has to contemplate inside the bus. The beauty Pound had found in the faces at La Concorde is here sadly missing; he has to recreate colourful female images to escape the "en 'toç" nature of the actual face at which he looks. The poem's subjective impression thus retreats from fidelity to the perceived outward object. Urban travelling stimulates the desire to look, but when the object viewed is deemed "ordinary", then Pound's own discourse travels from London to Paris, trying to recapture the beautiful objects of an earlier set of perceptions.

Levenson argues that Pound shifts from the rampant nominalism of "In a Station of the Metro" to a keen concern with processes. This he attributes to Pound's interest in the visual arts, due to Lewis, and his detailed reading from late 1913 onwards of the Fenollosa manuscripts: "Pound...had originally presented Imagism as 'direct treatment of the **thing**.' But with the example of Lewis and theory of Fenollosa, he moved from thing to process, noun to verb."³⁶ Fenollosa had argued that in nature nouns do not exist. They only appear as a consequence of verbs, following nature in which there are "things in motion, motion in things."³⁷ I am not so convinced that Pound jettisons "things" so swiftly, or that we should read his latter texts, from 1914 onwards, solely in terms of processes. Furious processes smacked too much of blurring and "mushy technique" to hold Pound's unequivocal support. My examination of other

texts from Lustra will thus try to consider just how far Pound moves from things to movement. In so doing we encounter the true nature of his reaction to commodification. The poems in Lustra show that Pound's attempt to salvage beauty from the "en toc" experience of modern life requires more than Imagist immediacy or the "processes" of Vorticism.

3. "LUSTRA": LIKE TO LIKE NATURE

If Pound's rhetoric is designed to escape the commodification of modernist aesthetics, the terms of that escape borrow from the commodity in order to resist the feminised "flaccidity" he had analysed in "Vorticism". Dead faces of "stupid" women could be countered by reified images of beautiful women. Many poems from Lustra illustrate this manoeuvre. In "The Condolence" Pound writes, "Our maleness lifts us out of the ruck."³⁸ The ruck, that is, of aesthetic forms such as impressionism or symbolism, but also the ruck as in that of the crowd or swarm smothering particularity. In "Women Before a Shop" Pound's use of images shows precisely what it means to avoid flaccidity through the male gaze:

The gew-gaws of false amber and false turquoise attract
them.

"Like to like nature": these agglutinous yellows!³⁹

This is an English modernist moment, a feminine gaze upon the commodities of a shop window that is distinct from the French **flâneur** of Baudelaire. Janet Wolff has argued that the literature of late nineteenth century

modernity characteristically involves male figures such as the *flâneur*.⁴⁰ The female *flâneuse* is "invisible" since her position would, in terms of conventional representations, have been indoors, in the private sphere, not in the public sphere of the city. As Wolff notes, the only women allowed access to representation in Baudelaire, were "eccentric" figures such as the prostitute, the widow, the old lady, the lesbian and the murder victim.⁴¹ But, as I have argued, by 1916 women in Britain had entered into the urban spaces represented in literature, whether as suffragette demonstrator or as wartime worker.

Pound's women before a shop window thus exist momentarily outside the domestic realm of the interior, engaging in one of the first activities in nineteenth century public space opened up for women, visual consumption or window shopping.⁴² However, the women are rapidly reassimilated into an interior. They are similar in "nature" to that at which they gaze, the "false" trinkets of little value. In a sense Pound's gaze punishes these women for their visual pleasures. The women err, for Pound, because they are attracted by the "false" beauty of inauthentic jewellery. The poem is partially a critique of the allure of commodification, but the form of that critique centres upon feminine consumers. These consumers are denied subjectivity in the process of transformation by Pound's gaze into objects for his poem. They are transferred into the "nature" of the interiorised objects they contemplate; their subjectivity is returned indoors. Simultaneously the women are devalued as "gew gaws", inauthentic objects of beauty. "Like to like", the woman are made abstractly equivalent to the jewels in the shop window.

The gew-gaws function as a variable image in the terms of Poundian vorticism. Simultaneously they connote commodification, the debasement of

true "value" by these "false" jewels, an identification of debased values with femininity (their natural form identified with the cultural construction of commodities) and finally, in the attention to colour (amber, turquoise and yellow), an attempt to provide sensual compensation for the reified objects in the shop window. A poem such as "Ts'ai Chi'h", included in Des Imagistes, demonstrates this last point, showing a fuller grasp of the language of colour of the "Vorticism" essay:

The petals fall in the fountain,
the orange-coloured rose-leaves,
Their ochre clings to the stone.⁴³

The falling movement of these petals, minute blobs of visual data, and their "clinging" attachment to the solidity of the stone, replicate Pound's repeated linguistic imperatives to unite word and thing. But if the colourful intensities of these images are meant to please the senses dulled by commodification and its demolition of difference, it is important to stress the gendered nature this pleasure takes in "Women Before a Shop". The male gaze of Pound the poet has reified the women in the same way that "commodities are simply congealed quantities of human labour."⁴⁴ Human activity in the commodity is, in Pound's word, "agglutinous". The women are not free to move, act and gaze in the public world, but are consigned to the interior place of the jewels. This reification enacts the denial of public agency to women at that historical moment when they were politically claiming the status of equal citizenship. In another sense the final "agglutinous" commodity, combining differing types of human activity (Pound the poet, Pound the gazer, women walking and looking, the construction of

the jewels) is that of the poem itself.

Another Lustra poem depicting a gendered encounter in the context of urban shopping serves as a critique of earlier, non-Imagist aesthetics:

Shop Girl

For a moment she rested against me
Like a swallow half blown to the wall,
And they talk of Swinburne's women,
And the shepherdess meeting with Guido.
And the harlots of Baudelaire.⁴⁵

Here the girl is the object Pound utilises to critique the "they" of an earlier aesthetic. She becomes a commodity to be used in Pound's campaign to "make it new". This poem is marked out from "Women before a Shop" primarily because here the girl is not contemplated from a distance, but is "blown" to "rest" against the poet. Recalling Hulme's erotic brush with a "tall woman", the experience prompts no description of the girl in terms of colour or form, but simply uses this tactile Imagistic "moment" as an instance of aesthetic value. The simile in the second line effectively denies the girl an autonomous agency, for she is "half blown to the wall" like a helpless bird. It is an image of a woman in an exterior public space unable to cope with being outside: she has to be metaphorically propped up by the sturdy poet positioned in the tradition of Swinburne, Cavalcanti and Baudelaire.

In another sense the encounter represents arrested movement, a moment plucked out of the bustle of the city and aestheticised into an object of contemplation. The girl as swallow repeats escape from the urban. This

instance of the Imagist sublime, the "sense of freedom from time limits and space limits", represents that critique of modern reification which insists on a haven outside the market.⁴⁶ Although working in a shop, the girl is not allied to the commodities of the shop in the manner of the women in the earlier poem. Instead, her ability to "rest" or arrest movement stands for some blissful moment outside the **perpetuum mobile** of the market place and the city. But this value, which boldly compares Pound to other great poets, relies upon the girl's inability to exist in the exterior world without "resting" on male support.

This woman epitomises "beauty" in a way that the girl in another poem, "The Tea Shop" cannot:

The girl in the tea shop
Is not so beautiful as she was,
The August has worn against her.
She does not get up the stairs so eagerly;
Yes, she also will turn middle-aged.⁴⁷

This tea-shop girl is subjected to the forces of historicity in a way that destroys beauty. Very little visual description of this girl is presented and instead we find comment upon her "worn" demeanour. The poem "Shop Girl" is more imagistic, both in content and form. Here in the midst of the market place of commodities may be salvaged some element of experience that is of a non-commodified value. The "Shop Girl" is a person Pound believes he can utilise as an object; she is an aestheticised object rather than a commodified jewel. This is the reason why this experience is of sensual touching rather than of distanced gazing, as in "Women before a Shop": it is an experience of actual contact in a world of supposed

alienation and atomisation. Moreover, this instant of transcendence for the male poet relies upon physical contact, an Imagistic "touching-up" of a working woman.

In the poem "Coda" the poet asks "my songs": "Why do you look so eagerly and so curiously into people's faces,/Will you find your lost dead among them?"⁴⁸ In a commodified world humanly produced objects are "lost" and "dead" to the producers of them; objects have, it seems, lost the tactile traces of their human originators and now can only be contemplated. But if metropolitan looking is a poor substitute for real human relations, the attempted remedy, looking into people's faces, reduces to things that which was supposed to help one escape reification. The reader is "eager" to obtain aesthetic satisfaction from the act of looking at other people, but the experience is "curious" because by looking we return to a reifying exchange.

"Salutation the Second" depicts a further prickly encounter of modernist poet with the literary market-place, redolent of some of the incidents in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. The praise which Pound's earlier books accrued is said to be due to their outdated nature: "I was twenty years behind the times/so you found an audience ready."⁴⁹ Now Pound's new verses are implored to "dance shamelessly" while they "Greet the grave and the stodgy". Even this dance, however, is explicitly masculine: "Dance the dance of the phallus". Four lines earlier Pound proclaims a mission for this phallic fling: "Go! rejuvenate things!" It is perhaps reading too much into "things" to interpret Pound as arguing that reification can be defeated by the power of the phallus, but the implicit desire is to restore or rejuvenate aesthetic production in modernity through phallic means. The line can be read as a phenomenological call to reclaim "things

themselves". Still explicit, however, is the gendered nature of this quest. In the last stanza Pound issues a further command for his dancing discursive phalloi:

Ruffle the skirts of prudes,
 speak of their knees and ankles.
But, above all, go to practical people-
 go! jangle their door-bells!
Say that you do no work
 and that you will live forever.

Two social formations block the rejuvenation of "things": women (prudes in skirts) and workers of indeterminate class (practical people). Pound's phallic discourse draws equal attention to these women's bodies (their knees and ankles) and the fact that this verse, in good 1890s aesthetic style, does no work. Reification denies the body full sensual expression and Pound seemingly equates that which escapes the imperative to labour with acknowledgement of the body. But, once again, it is the body of a woman, cowed before the dance of the Imagist phallus, providing the object on which to base the critique of commodification. In another sense the male body is unmercifully reified into the phallus that will "live forever." In order to produce a transhistorical aesthetic object ("you will live forever") that, like the beauty of the shop girl, does not need to engage in the conventional labour process, sexual difference and the superiority of the phallus is required. Pound not only equates commodification with the feminine, but also reification with the phallus, showing how escape from the former relies upon the latter.

"Commission" continues Pound's imperial hectoring of his verses. As

his songs sally forth to those "enslaved-by-convention", they are required to combat the "tyranny of the unimaginative." These tyrants are explicitly noted:

Go to the bourgeoisie who is dying of her ennui,
Go to the women in suburbs.
Go to the hideously wedded,
Go to them whose failure is concealed,
Go to the unluckily mated,
Go to the bought wife,
Go to the woman entailed.⁵⁰

As Janet Wolff notes, the confinement of women to the suburbs was a result of economic changes in the nature of the public and private spheres in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵¹ The growth of modern transport systems also encouraged the "ennui" of the suburbs. But by the early twentieth century women had emerged to some extent from this suburban existence. So, on one level, the poem seeks to prevent women from encroaching upon the site of the city. In October 1914 Pound wrote in his proposed prospectus for a College of Arts that "London is the capital of the world", and furthermore "Art is a matter of capitals."⁵² The city had to be preserved from those elements which might blunt the aesthetic rejuvenation of things, in this instance the female bourgeoisie, or women generally. Women were not to occupy the centre of the vortex of London for another reason. In Pound's "Postscript" to De Gourmont's The Natural Philosophy of Love, he asserted that the artist was "the phallus or spermatoid charging, head-on, the female chaos....Even oneself has felt it, driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London, a sensation analogous to the male feeling in

copulation."⁵³ If London was a feminine object to be "driven" into by a new aesthetic, then actual women were to be pushed to the margins. In a sense, the women took the new tube to the suburbs while Pound acted as the driver of the new metropolitan language, displacing them from the centre of modernism.

If the suburbs signified a place of exile for women, to many commentators they represented an unaesthetic and purely commodified existence. One writer in 1905 characterised the suburbs in the same terms as the "false gew-gaws" of "Women Before a Shop":

You will understand, as it were, intuitively, and without further ado, the cheapness and out-of-jointness of the times; you will comprehend the why and wherefore and **raison d'etre** of halfpenny journalism...you will perceive the whizzers, penny buses, gramophones, bamboo furniture, pleasant Sunday afternoons, Glory Songs, modern language teas, golf, tennis, high school education, dubious fiction, shilling's worth of comic writing, picture postcards, miraculous hair-restorers, prize competitions, and all other sorts of twentieth-century clap-trap have got a market and a use, and black masses of supporters.⁵⁴

The nick-nacks of bourgeois life designed to alleviate ennui are here associated with "dubious fiction" and "halfpenny journalism", both forms of language that Pound remorselessly assaulted. Consumers of these objects lose their identity, becoming "black masses", though this whole world is dominated by the "cheapness" of the "market". If true art dwelled in the capital, then suburban aesthetics was, by definition, inauthentic. On another level, the suburbs of London took one away from where the power of commodities, like the force of the vortex, was to be found. The city, for

Pound, was site of the capital of Capital, of the exhilarating movements of money. In a 1928 article, "The City", a call to plan metropolitan construction around the needs of transport, Pound wrote that the "wiggly and twisty streets of the garden suburb are...silly, a product of reaction and dilettantism, conducive to no convenience".⁵⁵ Dilettantism, in its symbolist form, had produced 1890s ennui. This was a fall from aesthetic grace that Pound now transferred to bourgeois women in the suburbs of the modernist city. The city centre became the strenuous environment in which was to be developed a forceful literary discourse.

4. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

In "Further Instructions", Pound situates his discourse firmly in a city of labouring bodies. It is a discourse to which he strives to attach a physical, as well as visual, existence:

Come, my songs, let us express our baser passions,
Let us express our envy of the man with a steady job and
no worry about the future.
You are very idle, my songs.
I fear you will come to a bad end.
You stand about in the streets,
You loiter at the corners and bus-stops,
You do next to nothing at all.⁵⁶

As in "Salutation the Second", this text violently opposes the world of work, while also seeking to avoid the idleness of aestheticism. Employed

people in cities are constantly on the move, travelling to or from sites of work. Pound's songs mock this ceaseless movement by the way they "loiter" and "stand about" in streets, specifically at bus-stops. His songs do not catch the tube to work. But the poems also articulate a "fear" and "envy" of the world of labour and transport that they lazily despise. For Pound, linguistic languor recalls the discredited "mush" of the symbolist aesthetic. The vorticist desire was to present "constantly rushing" ideas.⁵⁷ Or as Pound put it earlier in this essay, Vorticism was an "intensive art" designed to capture "forms of expression" more intense than others by being "dynamic".⁵⁸ In one sense Pound's fear is that in order for his songs to be "dynamic", they need elements of just the experiences they loath. If the man with a job and people travelling by buses signify the aesthetic torpor of modern bourgeois life, they also, paradoxically, represent the two energetic facets of modern life Pound wishes to capture for his literary discourses: the dynamic realm of labour and activity in the market and the modernization represented by new transport systems.

Producing poems that "do next to nothing" may function as a protest against the imperative to alienate one's labour, but this lazy stepping outside of social norms creates a distance from that which is to be critiqued. The more powerful critique is an immanent one which harnesses the forces of the commodity and its metropolitan life against its reified existence. The difficulty encountered by such a project is clearly evident in "Further Instructions":

And I?
I have gone half cracked,
I have talked to you so much that
 I almost see you about me,
Insolent little beasts, shameless, devoid of clothing!

The poet recognises the potential madness of attempting to use reification against itself. The desire to transform literary discourse into a more tangible form is shown in the poet's idea that he can actually "see" his texts about him, existing as physical beings, competing with the "man with a steady job" earlier in the poem. The typographic space before "I almost see you about me" signifies this inexpressible instant, the verbal manifested in gross physical form and thus unamenable to linguistic representation. This is the "word beyond formulated language" to which Pound referred in "Vorticism", a reified word straining to articulate its being in language. But the physicality of these texts only exists at a non-human level, that of naked beasts, not yet human subjects. This reference to the body is related to the phallic songs in "Salutation the Second", drawing attention to knees and ankles. This "body", devoid of the "shame" of the "prudes" in the earlier text, also lacks clothing and human characteristics. A further stage in the moment of critique is necessary in order to elevated bare physicality into true subjectivity:

But you, newest song of the lot,
You are not old enough to have done much mischief,
I will get you a green coat out of China
With dragons worked upon it,
I will get you the scarlet silk trousers
From the statue of the infant Christ in Santa Maria

Novella,
Lest they say we are lacking in taste,
Or that there is no caste in this family.

This represents the final stage of Pound's didactic instructions for his verse. First, they were to position themselves outside the realm of commodified life. Second, they discover the problems with simply doing "nothing", and hence have to be recast as naked bodies not yet suffering the imperative to labour of the man with the steady job. Thus Pound as labouring poet transforms his discursive object, these texts, by equipping them with the clothing of colour (green coat, scarlet silk trousers) and culture (China as signifier of the Fenollosa manuscripts Pound possessed, and the Italian Renaissance statue of Christ). Again, these are images with a variable significance. We can read the clothes as literal additions to a naked form, the artist transforming the bare material of language into an artefact. But this poem is also a cultured body, replete with "tradition" (the reference to "caste" in the final line) as well as "newness" and vivid modernist colour.

Other Lustra poems display in more condensed fashion the colourful clothing of Pound's verse. "L'Art, 1910" freezes the revelation of colour into a complete metaphor for the aesthetic:

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,
Crushed strawberries! Come, let us feast our eyes.⁵⁹

Ostensibly a description of Post-Impressionist art, exhibited for the first time by Roger Fry in London in 1910, this text perfectly illustrates

Pound's pleasure in pure form and colour.⁶⁰ The poem describes the arrangement of paint on a canvas in terms of a set of highly tactile actions. Lurid colours not only compensate for the "greyness" of modernity, but attention is also drawn to the physical action of their production: they are "smeared" and "crushed", actions of human hands upon objects (the strawberries). This is resolutely an art of handicraft rather than mechanised labour. The artist who has tactilely produced this canvas still retains a human, sensual hold upon the object. However, it is significant that the shift from the actions of the producer of the object to the "us" of the viewer or reader involves a displacement from tactile to visual sensations. In a tone of macho swagger we are enjoined to "feast our eyes", both on the painting and the poem. In other words, finally the only space for sensual pleasure is the realm of the visual, the gaze detectable in other Pound texts of this period. And this looking detaches us from both the object itself and the experience of smearing or crushing it. No matter that we are asked to "feast" our eyes upon this visual/verbal object (the food trope displaced from the adjacent strawberries), this is an object at which we may look but not touch. Imagist visual pleasure, designed to take us closer to reified objects, actually takes us even further away from them, teasing us with the description of denied tactile sensations.

In Pound, when the visual is usurped by the palpable, that which is touched is repeatedly figured as feminine. In "The Encounter", the female gaze is countered by the male touch:

All the while they were talking the new morality
Her eyes explored me.
And when I arose to go
Her fingers were like the tissue
Of a Japanese paper napkin.⁶¹

In "Vorticism", Pound argued "All poetic language is the language of exploration", and that the Japanese clearly understand this linguistic "sense of exploration."⁶² Here visual exploration is replaced by the feel of the woman's fingers, recalling the delicacy of Japanese paper. The movement of the text is thus away from conceptual abstraction, the "new morality" being discussed, towards the sensuous, the specific and the concrete. It represents Pound's repeated desire to move away from verbal abstractions to the pleasure of "things" but, as the text demonstrates, this escape can only occur via the visual. Exploring eyes escape from the empty phrases of the "new morality", but only by providing a platform for the reification of the encountered subject. The woman's exploring gaze is defused by the exploring hand of the poet, an exploration reducing her to mere fingers, fingers prevented from developing her earlier visual explorations. The poet thus touches the woman as a means to stop himself being gazed at.

The economy of this poem, from verbal to visual to the thing, deserves further attention. For the deflection of the feminine gaze is closely connected to Pound's fetishisation of concrete things as a salvation from the abstraction of commodification. In "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris"(1911-1912), Pound called for words to be united with things:

For it is not until poetry lives again 'close to the thing' that it will be a vital part of contemporary life. As long as the poet says not what he, at the very crux of a clarified conception, means, but is content to say something ornate and approximate, just so long will serious people, intently alive, consider poetry as balderdash - a sort of embroidery for dilettantes and women.⁶³

For poetry to acquire social value it must be reunited with the textures of things. Godden notes that between 1910 and 1916 Pound became preoccupied with "man's relation to objects."⁶⁴ In 1908, however, Pound wrote to Williams outlining the "ultimate attainments of poesy", noting the first to be, "1. To paint the thing as I see it."⁶⁵ In 1913 he argued that the Melic poets composed "to the feel of the thing...as have all good poets since."⁶⁶ This concern continues in Pound after 1916. Pound wrote to Williams in 1920 with advice similar to that which he had given twelve years earlier: "When did I ever, in enmity, advise you to use vague words, to shun the welding of word and thing, to avoid hard statement, word close to the thing it means?"⁶⁷ This is interesting for its semantic theory that words are best presented "close" to their referents. In The Pisan Cantos, composed in 1945, he praised Ford Madox Ford because his "conversation was better/consisting in **res** non **verba**".⁶⁸ Although Pound's recourse to "things" was often recommended on stylistic grounds, he is clear, as in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris", of the political efficacy of bringing words closer to things. In Gaudier-Brzeska (1915) he considers how Italy "went to rot" due to the growth of rhetoric: "For when words cease to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish. Rome went because it was no longer the fashion to hit the nail on the head."⁶⁹ Pound's rhetoric of empires collapsing due to a disassociation of word and thing is part of

his campaign to establish a "value" for poetry in a modern world defined by the values of commodities.

The belief that only poets can properly "hit the nail on the head", and thus show the political worth of literature, is most clearly articulated in How to Read (1931):

The individual cannot think and communicate his thought, the governor and legislator cannot act effectively or frame his laws, without words, and the solidity and validity of these words is in the care of the damned and despised **literati**. When their work goes rotten...when their very medium, the very essence of their work, the application of word to thing goes rotten, i.e., becomes slushy and inexact, or excessive or bloated, the whole machinery of social and of individual order goes to pot.⁷⁰

The validity of words is seen to rely upon their association with the solidity of things and it is the "essence" of the work of the poet to satisfactorily "apply" discourse to objects. Although Pound's argument can be read as a theory of representation, rather than a call for a reification of language, it is the nature of the "application" of word to thing that is ultimately more than merely a matter of pristine representation. In 1916 Pound had advised the young poet Iris Barry to read certain writers who correctly understood the relation of word to thing: "AND YET there is a lot in Stendhal which Flaubert hasn't. A trust in the thing more than the word. Which is the solid basis, i.e., the thing is the basis."⁷¹ This is strange counsel to offer an aspiring poet: give up words, stick to things. As Hynes notes, it is "a fallacious argument for a poetry of things, by which the discursive efficacy of words is minimized, and poems become

relationships among arranged objects."⁷² Pound seems to grasp a point only barely articulated by Imagism. It is all very well to present clear images of things in poems, but the more daring, and socially useful, tactic lies in using words as things, granting discourse a validity by showing its formal solidity. Only by a complete "trust" in things will poetry avoid being the pursuit of "dilettantes and women."

Poems such as "The Encounter", first published at the end of 1913, show Pound rejecting the "ornate and approximate", the sort of abstract discourse of the "new morality". In doing so Pound wrests poetic discourse away from 90s aesthetes and an undifferentiated mass of reading women, laying the foundations for a modernist verse.⁷³ Trusting in things is thus intimately connected to cleansing modernist poetry of female "embroidery." The poem focuses on the "thing", the woman's fingers, as a disavowal of the initial power she manifests in her "exploring" looks. If the poet feels the woman is "reading" him, then by touching her and linking his words to her physicality, he wrests his own "language of exploration" away from her gaze and over to his "clarified" tactile object. Her fingers are thus the things upon which his words gain their power.

Pound's poem thus enacts a defensive "reaction formation" to the gaze of the woman with whom he believes contemporary poetry is falsely associated. Just as Pound had effected the titular alteration of The New Freewoman to The Egoist as a defensive reaction to the challenge of feminism, so "The Encounter" presents another moment of egoistical defence. The potential challenge of the gaze of the exploring woman becomes part of Pound's crusade against "flaccidity" in verse, part of the shift from word to thing in the poem. The crude phallic dance of Pound's "Salutation the Second", voyeuristically exposing the ankles and knees of "prudes in

skirts", is not evident in this poem. It is replaced by re-directing the instinctual force of the woman's gaze to the poet as phallic object, the poet who "arose" after being looked at. In other words, it is the male "thing" which modernist poetry must approach, a tactic designed to reassure Pound of his own integrity as well as wresting poetry from the "embroidery" of women. This "embroidery" was no doubt designed to cover up his phallic dance and turn modernism into "slushy" inexactitude.

An encounter remaining purely at the visual level of exchanged glances is found in "Pagani's, November 8":

Suddenly discovering in the eyes of the very beautiful
Normande cocotte
The eyes of the very learned British Museum assistant.⁷⁴

This was one of four poems that the printers refused to publish in the first, private, edition of Lustra.⁷⁵ "Cocotte" is French for a Parisian prostitute, only used in English from the early twentieth century. This poem, however, is not a Baudelairean fantasy of eyeing up a street-walker. The poet's gaze veers from the beauty of the prostitute to the learning of the British Museum assistant. It was in the British Museum cafe in 1912 that Pound had scrawled "H.D. Imagiste" on the bottom of H.D.'s "Hermes of the Waves."⁷⁶ So Pound's poem, at one level, retreads some of the themes of "Shop Girl", distancing Imagisme from earlier poetic movements. From an exterior position as street prostitute the "cocotte" is now situated in the centre of London culture, a prestige Pound ironically undercuts by associating learning with prostitution. This poem, because the referent - the eyes - is ambiguous, does not reach a fixed resolution. The language

of visual exploration ("discovering") is again utilised, but we are left unsure whether the eyes of the prostitute recall the eyes of the Museum assistant or vice-versa. Is the poet looking at a prostitute who, real or imagined, recalls a woman in the Museum? Or is his gaze directed at a Museum assistant he has mistakenly taken for a cocotte, and has now, in an Imagistic instant ("Suddenly"), realised his false vision of her as prostitute? It is a similar undecidability to that found in the "Metro" poem: are the petals compared to faces or the faces compared to petals? If the movement of the visual gaze circulates dynamically back and forth between learning and beauty, librarian or prostitute, London or Normandy, the element of reification remains that of the woman as gazed-at object. The fixed central point of the vortex of this poem is the woman.

A concern with the powers and pleasures of the visual is evident in Pound's verse before his articulation of the formal language and concision of Imagism. In an early text such as "The Eyes", the slavish eyes plead with their master, the poet, to "Free us, for without be goodly colours/Green of the wood-moss and flower colours." This longing for pastoral pleasures, as in the later "The Encounter", implies an escape from the perceived constrictions of language:

Free us, for we perish
In this ever-flowing monotony
Of ugly print marks, black
Upon white parchment.⁷⁷

Textuality implies a lack of fixity, a "monotony" of endless movement lacking in the sensual beauty of colourful sights. It resembles the

ceaseless production of industrial commodities, "ugly marks" of monotonous labour. Pound's development into the position outlined in the "Vorticism" essay involved harnessing the fixing force of the visual gaze with a sense of movement that was not idly repetitive. Only when his poetic discourse had disavowed language and clamped itself to things could he then reintroduce flow in a non-regular, non-linear form. Otherwise Pound's verse might be suspected of the "accelerated impressionism" of Futurism.⁷⁸ The freedom to interpret the eyes of the librarian as those of a cocotte, or petals as faces instead of faces as petals, are examples of Pound's "dynamic" use of "solid" images. Pound can reconcile a sense of movement with retention of an Imagistic clarity of outline. By solidifying the things which are then viciously circulated one can sidestep Futurism's failure to avoid blurring distinctions between particulars. The theoretical grounds are thus laid for the "things in motion; motion in things" of The Cantos.⁷⁹ In other words, Pound's progression away from words, through the fixity of visual image to the dynamic objects of vorticism, represents an Hegelian kind of advance, simultaneously negating and conserving earlier forms. Things are not jettisoned, rather movement is introduced into their solidified forms.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced Pound's version of Imagism as articulated in the poems of Lustra. The claims of Pound's "Vorticism" essay, when read in tandem with his poetry, must still be understood in primarily Imagist terms. "Flaccidity" in modern verse is contested by solid verbal images,

most often of women in urban contexts. Pound's innovation consists in his insistence that these images should not remain stationary, since this would not ally verse to the energies of modernity. "In a Station of the Metro" glimpses the possibility of words being treated as things, offering the poet a set of her or his own commodities. Faced with the commodification of all modern values, where poetic words lack "solidity and validity" precisely because they are not commodified, Pound's strategy for upholding the status of verse involves reifying poetic language. Poetry is then "valid" because it is as "solid" as the commodities demeaning it, but without any of the damaging abstraction of the commodity-form.

The poems in Lustra see Pound working towards this awareness of how, in Lukács's words, to direct form towards a concrete "material substratum". But the depiction of "things in motion" is compromised by the shortness of the texts in Lustra. In a note at the end of the "Vorticism" essay Pound argues, in response to frequent questions, that a long imagiste or vorticist poem is a possibility. In the next chapter I consider Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Pound's first attempt at a larger Imagist construction.

NOTES

1. Peter Brooker, A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound, (London: Faber, 1979), p.82. For other discussions of Lustra see K.K.Ruthven, A Guide to Ezra Pound's "Personae (1926)", (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) and Hugh Witemeyer, The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewals 1908-1920, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
2. For a consideration of the concept of "vorticism" in Pound see Timothy Materer, Vortex Pound, Eliot and Lewis, (London: Cornell University Press, 1979). One of the sources for the idea of the vortex is found in Allen Upward, The New Word, (London: A.C.Fifield, 1908). The book was praised by Pound for its "clarity and hard writing". See "Allen Upward Serious", in Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber, 1973), p.378. For further information on Upward see the "Upward Issue" of Agenda 16 (Aut/Winter 1978-9) and Richard Godden, "Icons, Etymologies, Origins and Monkey Puzzles in the Languages of Upward and Fenollosa", in Ian F.A.Bell ed., Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading, (London: Barnes and Noble, 1982).
3. Ezra Pound, "Vorticism", Fortnightly Review (Sept.1914); reproduced in Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir, (1916; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1970), p.82.
4. Ibid., p.84.
5. Ibid., p.88.
6. Ibid., p.84.
7. For detailed accounts of Pound's use of a scientific terminology see Ian F.A.Bell, Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound,

(London: Methuen, 1981) and Martin A. Kayman, The Modernism of Ezra Pound: The Science of Poetry, (London: Macmillan, 1986).

8. Pound, Selected Prose, p.29.

9. Pound, "Vorticism", p.85.

10. Ibid., p.88.

11. Pound, Letter to Barry, 27 July 1916, The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D. Paige, (London: Faber, 1950), p.90.

12. Pound, Letter to Lowell, 1 Aug. 1914, Letters, p.38.

13. Pound, "Vorticism", p.85.

14. For a discussion of Pound and the visual arts see Pound's Artists Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1985). For a general account of Pound, modernism and modern painting see Alan Robinson, Poetry, Painting and Ideas 1885-1914, (London: Macmillan, 1985).

15. "Vorticism", p.85.

16. Ibid., p.86.

17. Ibid.

18. Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste", (1913); rpt. in Peter Jones ed., Imagist Poetry, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.134.

19. For details see Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp.198-9 and Michael Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.125-136. Lewis later disagreed with Pound's association of Imagism and Vorticism, claiming that "vorticism was purely a

painters affair (as Imagism was a purely literary movement, having no relation whatever to vorticism, nor anything in common with it)." Cited in Robinson, Poetry, Painting and Ideas, p.148.

20. Pound, "Vorticism", p.86.

21. Ibid., p.86-7.

22. Brooker, Student's Guide, p.103; Arthur Symons, "A Prelude to Life" in Spiritual Adventures (1905), rpt. in Selected Writings, ed. Roger Holdsworth, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1974), p.89.

23. Pound, "Vorticism", p.87.

24. Ibid., p.89.

25. Donald Davie, Ezra Pound Poet as Sculptor, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.57.

26. Pound, "A Game of Chess", rpt. in Collected Shorter Poems, (London: Faber, 1968), p.120. Pound refers to the poem as "pure vorticism" in a letter of 1915 cited by Levenson, Genealogy, p.127.

27. Pound, "How I Began", T.P.'s Weekly 6 June 1913; cited in Stock, Life, p.170.

28. Maud Ellmann, The Poetics of Impersonality T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), p.146.

29. Pound, "Vorticism", p.87.

30. C.F.G.Masterman, The Condition of England (1909); cited in Andrew Lees, Cities Perceived Urban Society in European and American Thought 1820-1940, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.181. Masterman gives a longer description of the effects of urbanisation in "The English City" in England: A Nation Being the Papers of the Patriot's Club, ed.

Lucian Oldenshaw, (London and Edinburgh: R.Brimley Johnson, 1904), pp.44-95.

31. In a letter to Monroe, 30 Mar.1913, Pound notes: "In the 'Metro' hokku, I was careful, I think, to indicate spaces between the rhythmic units, and I want them observed." Letters, p.17.

32. Marianne Korn, Ezra Pound Purpose/Form/Meaning, (London: Middlesex Polytechnic Press, 1983), p.80.

33. Pound, "Vorticism", p.92.

34. Ibid., p.89.

35. Pound, "Dans Un Omnibus de Londres", Collected Shorter Poems, p.160. My translation.

36. Levenson, Genealogy, p.128.

37. Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, ed. Ezra Pound, (1920; rpt. London: Stanley Nott, 1936) p.14. I tend to agree with Loy Martin's view of Pound's relation to Fenollosa: although Pound "used Fenollosa's essay in his polemics; he was not influenced by it." Loy Martin, "Pound and Fenollosa: the Problem of Influence", Critical Quarterly, 20 (1978), p.57. For a detailed discussion of Fenollosa see Lawrence W. Chisholm, Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963).

38. Pound, "The Condolence", Collected Shorter Poems, p.82. Hereafter I will refer to this volume in the footnotes as CSP and page number.

39. Pound, "Women Before a Shop", CSP, p.114.

40. Janet Wolff, "The Invisible ~~Flâneuse~~ ^{Flâneuse}: Women and the Literature of Modernity" in Andrew Benjamin ed., The Problems of Modernity Adorno and Benjamin, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

41. Ibid., p.148.
42. Ibid., p.153.
43. Pound, "Ts'ai Chi'h", CSP, p.108.
44. Karl Marx, Capital A Critique of Political Economy Vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.141.
45. Pound, "Shop Girl", CSP, p.112.
46. Pound, "A Few Don'ts", Imagist Poetry, p.130.
47. Pound, "The Tea Shop", CSP, p.116.
48. Pound, "Coda", CSP, p.103.
49. Pound, "Salutation the Second", CSP, p.85.
50. Pound, "Commission", CSP, p.88.
51. Wolff, "Invisible **Flâneuse**", p.151.
52. This prospectus is reproduced in Pound, Letters, p.41.
53. Pound, "Postscript" to Remy de Gourmont, The Natural Philosophy of Love, (London: Casanova Society, 1926), p.170.
54. Cited in John Stevenson, British Society 1914-45, Pelican Social History of Britain, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.24.
55. Pound, "The City", Selected Prose, p.194.
56. Pound, "Further Instructions", CSP, p.94.
57. Pound, "Vorticism", p.92.

58. Ibid., p.90.
59. Pound, "L'Art, 1910", CSP, p.113.
60. Richard Humphreys, "Demon Pantechnicon Driver: Pound in the London Vortex, 1908-1920", Pound's Artists, p.62.
61. Pound, "The Encounter", CSP, p.110. Ruthven argues that the "new morality" refers to the recently translated work of Freud. Ruthven, Pound's "Personae", p.63.
62. Pound, "Vorticism", p.88.
63. Pound, Selected Prose, p.41.
64. Godden, "Icons, Etymologies", p.222.
65. Pound, Letter to Williams 21 Oct.1908, Letters, p.6.
66. Ezra Pound, Literary Essays, ed. T.S.Eliot, (London: Faber, 1954), p.93.
67. Pound, Letter to Williams 11 Sept.1920, Letters, p.158.
68. Ezra Pound, The Cantos, (London: Faber, 1975), LXXXII.525.
69. Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, p.113-4. Linda Dowling notes that this image of the fall of Rome haunted late Victorian theories of language. See Linda Dowling, Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin-de-Siècle, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.86-7.
70. Ezra Pound, How to Read, (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1931), p.17-8.
71. Pound, Letter to Iris Barry 27 July 1916, Letters, p.89. Later in the same letter Pound writes of the need "of presenting an image, or enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader....I think there must

be more, predominantly more, objects than statements and conclusions"
(p.90-1).

72. Samuel Hynes, "Pound and the Prose Tradition", in Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.134.

73. After reading Eliot's The Waste Land James Joyce wrote: "T.S.Eliot ends <the> idea of poetry for ladies." Cited Richard Ellmann, James Joyce, Rev.Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.495. For a general discussion of modernism and misogyny see Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century vol.1 The War of the Words, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

74. Pound, "Pagani's, November 8", CSP, p.161.

75. Stock, Life, p.244.

76. Ibid., p.152.

77. Pound, "The Eyes", CSP, p.35.

78. Pound, "Vorticism", p.78.

79. Fenollosa, Chinese Written Character, p.14.

CHAPTER FIVE

A VACANT GAZE: HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY

1. INTRODUCTION

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley is Pound's last major poem before he concentrated upon The Cantos. It also represents, as Pound noted when the poem was published in Personae (1926), "a farewell to London".¹ Pound left London for Paris in 1920, the year Mauberley was first published. However, the poem marks more than Pound's departure from what he depicted in Cantos XIV-XV as the "hell" of "LONDON, the state of English mind in 1919 and 1920."² It marks a final farewell to the Imagist aesthetic Pound had espoused since 1913. I will read Mauberley as an Imagist text busily deconstructing the presuppositions of Imagism. Central among the facets of Imagism contested by Mauberley is the ability of the Image to challenge commodification.

Pound's poetic trajectory may be simplified as a perpetual struggle against the commodified systems of modernity, Lukács's closed facticity of capitalist abstraction. Two versions of this oppositional project can be discerned. For Pound, in 1934, "the disease of the last century and a half has been 'abstraction.'"³ From 1913 onwards Pound's Imagist poetics sought to fight abstract systems with minute sensual immediacy. Ultimately, this

strategy lacked both dynamism (thus Pound's shift to Vorticism) and some way to connect small "moments" into a larger and more powerful linguistic body. The cohering of a "phalanx of particulars"(LXXIV.441) in The Cantos⁴ aimed to provide the correct combination of sensuality and system, rooted in the deep mythic structures of the Odyssey, with which to counter the abstracting power of the commodity.⁵ But this great heaving mass of "factual atoms" is at once both too disorganised (Pound's inability to finally cohere it) and too rigid (the "difficulty" of understanding such a monstrous system) for it to function as a critique of reification.

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, as a historical and aesthetic mid-point between these two moments in Pound's development, represents the possibility of reconciling Imagist immediacy with the grand totality of The Cantos. This chapter can do no more than suggest how one might go about reading Mauberley's discredited aesthetic as a prelude to the The Cantos. Study of Mauberley, however, suggests that Pound's shedding of Imagist principles, those of vision and "solidity", is not as complete as the poet maintained. The failure of the character Mauberley can be seen as the failure of Imagist immediacy to combat commodification, rooted in a visual reification of women. Once again, however, we discover that commodification can only be attacked in a reifying way.

2. MAUBERLEY, POUND AND JAMES

In 1913 Pound wrote to Dorothy Shakespeare: "The real meditation is, however, the meditation on one's identity."⁶ Critical debate has often revolved around the relations between Pound and "Mauberley": which parts of

the text are Pound speaking **in propria persona**, and which are the supposed words of the poet Mauberley? And at which points is Pound to be identified with the personae of his fictitious creation? Summarising the critical interpretations of these questions in Espey, Brooke-Rose and Brantley Berryman, Maud Ellmann suggests the message to be gleaned from these hermeneutic conflicts is that "the text divides the speaker from his speech, putting the integrity of voice itself in jeopardy."⁷ Pound is thus alienated from his object, the text. Though the poem continues the Imagist critique of commodification, this text dramatises the failure of that critique in a startling fashion. For if the poem is meant to represent a stylised howl of anger at commodification, the problematics of identity it reveals display a failure to grasp textual objects, a grasp necessary if critique is to operate effectively. If Pound cannot maintain control over his linguistic product, then he merely replicates the fate of all objects produced by alienated labour. The poet is thus divorced from the objects he would use to fight the commodification of aesthetics. His final "Exclusion from the world of letters" should be taken quite literally. Pound, by the time of composing the poem, had repeatedly argued that things should ideally replace words. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley displays the poet in exile from letters and words, drifting amidst the debris of his own text, a debris of reified fragments ("Series/Of intermittences") that do not yet form the vast interwoven system of The Cantos.

Describing Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Pound invoked Henry James: "Of course, I'm no more Mauberley than Eliot is Prufrock....Mauberley is a mere surface. Again a study in form, an attempt to condense the James novel."⁸ Issues of identity are thus associated with the question of reification. Pound valued James for his formal skills as a novelist, his representation

of a truly modernist concern with the surfaces of style.⁹ Many of James's texts replicate Pound's own struggles against the commodifications of society. Pound asserted that James "perceived the Anangke <necessity, fate> of the modern world to be money."¹⁰ Jamesian style, with its languid suspension of progress within the sentence, is an attachment to the very materiality and specificity of language suppressed by the abstractions of the commodity-form. James's language does show form directed to some Lukácsian "material substratum", but that concrete content is language itself.¹¹ Additionally, certain of the central narrative contests in James focus upon the relation of subjects to the world of commodities. In The Portrait of a Lady, for instance, Madam Merle and Isabel Archer disagree over, amongst other matters, the relation of people to Things. Merle argues that the "self" is largely constructed from the objects one possesses:

I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for **things!** One's self - for other people - is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps - these things are all expressive.¹²

This is a good paraphrase of Marx's notion that human relations under capitalism come to resemble the form of the commodity, as one's self for others is seen as a Thing. Isabel fervently protests at the transformation of social relations into relations between things: "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me."¹³ For Isabel, the exchange-values of things cannot be used to "measure" the value of the self, because it utilises an abstract measure with which to judge a concrete individual. Isabel's final

tragedy, in one respect, is that Madam Merle's analysis of modern capitalist society is the correct one.

James's suggestion that "things are all expressive" as mediators between human subjects encapsulates a central point about the commodity in Marx. The commodity exists in a **phantasmagoric** form, in which social relations between subjects appear mysteriously as relations between things.¹⁴ This phantasmagoria is precisely the non-material "surface" form of commodities, "sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible or social".¹⁵ Indeed, Pound's terms for Mauberley - "surface", "form" and "condense" - all describe Marx's commodity: a condensed, abstract measure of human labour which as a commodity has a dense material form combined with a surface value.

In the second section of "Mauberley 1920" we learn that the poet has, for three years, "moved amid her phantasmagoria". Ian F.A. Bell has intricately traced the genealogy of Pound's use of this term, in this poem and elsewhere, detecting its usage in several texts of James.¹⁶ For Bell, phantasmagoria defines the poet Mauberley at a crisis point between real and imagined worlds in his "life and contacts".¹⁷ Bell compares this to Pound's own imaginative crisis in his London years, attempting to enact his vision of a new modernist verse, but being thwarted by other individuals. Pound himself later said that Mauberley was a "remedy" for "the dilution of vers libre, Amygism, Lee Masterism, general floppiness".¹⁸ Bell does not make the link with Marx's use of phantasmagoria, a link which situates Pound's text within the Jamesian fight against reification, inhabiting the surface forms of the commodity in an attempt to turn its power around against itself. As Pound's reference to Amy Lowell shows, reification is

to be set against the feminine "floppiness" of modern verse. "Her phantasmagoria" was to be countered by his reification of poetic language.

3. RESUSCITATING POETRY

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley's central struggle is against the economisation of the aesthetic, the fact that "The pianola 'replaces'/Sappho's barbitos." But the first section of the poem, "E.P. Ode Pour L'Election de Son Sepulchre", commences with another kind of replacement, that of an old aesthetic for a new modernist discourse:

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"
In the old sense. Wrong from the start-

Bell argues that the three years refer to the period 1911-13, when Pound struggled to impose his vision of modernism upon the literary establishment.¹⁹ Alternatively, Ellmann reads the dates as 1914-17, the years of his vociferous championing of Vorticism.²⁰ The first Imagist anthology appeared in 1914, with subsequent ones appearing in 1915, 1916 and 1917. Brantley Berryman argues that the "three years" refer to Pound's attack upon Lowell's version of Imagism.²¹ The indeterminacy of the historical referent suggest all of these interpretations may be correct. Pound seems to superimpose, just as the Imagist complex commanded, the struggles of his earlier career in London upon his vituperative movement

out of Imagism. Maintaining an outmoded sublime might refer to Pound's pre-Imagist phase, still enthralled to an extent with 1890s aestheticism, and Pater's cultivation of the exquisite moment.²² This interpretation repeats Pound's view in "Salutation the Second" that his early books were praised because he "had just come from the country", like the "half savage country" of "E.P. Ode", and thus "was twenty years behind the times". Or the resuscitation of poetry might be that pioneered by Imagism. The Imagist "sublime", the freedom from space and time of 1913's "A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste", is considered to be "wrong", still bearing an allegiance to the "old sense" of poetry, being too closely tied to "flaccidity".

"Resuscitate", however, presents a sensual poetry breathing life into a demoded modern language. Pound's linguistic resuscitation is seen in the first of the myriad of names in this text: "Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn/Capaneus; trout for factitious bait". Names in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley function partially as emblems of particulars; in Imagist fashion they are words directly related to things. Unlike the "petals" or "faces" of the "Metro", these are proper nouns, one further removal from the potential abstraction of an ordinary noun. The seeming isolation between semi-colons of "Capaneus", one of the seven warriors sent from Argos to attack Thebes, emphasises the isolated nature of names in Pound's text, a manoeuvre used to extreme in The Cantos where Pound calls for "nouns, not one noun plus an adjective." (CV.747) For Bell Pound's excessive use of nominalism occurs because he views the noun as "a special order of object...the primary solid of a language structure."²³ Reviving poetry by nominalist means thus brings words close to what Pound had termed the "beauty of the thing".

The word "factitious" is an early example of Pound's use of compound

terms in the poem, seen fully in its closing stages. In one sense it boldly attempts to condense a Jamesian sentence into one word. Factitious refers to something artificial, resulting from a work of art. But it also combines this aesthetic sense with its Latin root **facere**, to make, as a signifier of production and manufacture. In the later Guide to Kulchur Pound describes Malatesta, productivist hero of Cantos VIII-XI as a "factive personality".²⁴ Factitious also suggests the Poundian obsession with epistemological **facts**, strings of words affixed to things forming factual statements. "Knowledge", Pound claimed, "is built up from a rain of factual atoms."²⁵ Pound extends his use of the Imagist "complex", aligning an empiricist quest for indubitable facts with industrial manufacture and the aesthetic creation of a work of art.

All of these meanings of "factitious" are sandwiched between the naturalistic economy of trout, lilies and acorns. This mix of nature and artifice hints at the problem addressed by The Cantos: the aesthetic construction of a "natural language"(XLVI.231) amidst the "sin against nature"(XLV.229) of an economy based on usury. It is for this reason that the poet is "out of date". Using trout for artificial bait allegorises the adoption of nature as a subject for art and artifice, in the manner of the Romantic sublime or the despised Georgian poets of Edwardian Britain. The seeming unnaturalness of using trout, rather than some more worthless fish, as bait ironises this outmoded aesthetic. Basing an aesthetic in nature in a modern world of commodified manufacture is indeed a perverse act. Nature as a signifier is shown to provide no escape from the commodifications of the city. Pound appears to agree with Fenollosa's opinion that "Nature would seem to have become less like a paradise and more and more like a factory."²⁶ This is why Capaneus or the out-of-date poet "fished by

obstinate isles." The isles are perhaps the British ones that stubbornly refused to let Pound's artistic project flourish or metaphorically catch anything.²⁷

Nature, then, is discarded as a starting point for a resuscitated aesthetic. This echoes the way much Imagist poetry refused to portray the city as opposed to natural values. Two other possibilities of revival are canvassed in "E.P. Ode", that of the myths of The Odyssey, first quoted in 1.9, and that of the French stylist of modernity, Flaubert, consistently praised in Pound's essays:

His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Flaubert, as Pound notes in ABC of Reading, represents an "attempt to set down things as they are, to find the word that corresponds to the thing."²⁸ At this stage the rejection of Penelope, Odysseus's faithful wife, represents a refusal to base modern poetics in Greek traditions, as Pound was to do in The Cantos or Joyce in Ulysses. Myth as rejuvenating system is displaced by the particularity of Flaubert's search for "things as they are". The detached observing gaze at Circe's hair replicates the Imagist version of seeing "things as they are", figuring women as objects of a rejuvenated aesthetic. Corresponding words to such feminine things evacuates one from the temporal "limits", signified by the signs on sun-dials; the poet is now "out of date" in a more literal sense. However, Pound undercuts this pseudo-Imagist idyll, since to be thus "Unaffected by

'the march of events'" entails aesthetic failure and irrelevance: "the case presents/No adjunct to the Muses' diadem." The "presentation" of the Imagist "case", clamping words to things by observing Greek objects, does not situate the poet in modern life. Looking at Circe's hair as a model for a visual poetics is fine, but one is then only uniting words with an ancient fiction. Circe is no woman on the streets of modern London capable of Imagist "presentation".

Pound seems critical of those elements within Imagism which dwelt upon Hellenic themes.²⁹ This rejection of the "classics in paraphrase" for a true poetry of modernity continues in the second poem of the sequence:

The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Modernity's demands, the price of escape from being Hellenically "out of date", are tortuously ambiguous. In order to be modern, to assert one's status as an artist, one is required to produce a contemporary image. But in doing so one is at the behest of the demands of the age. The modern image to be produced must adhere to modernity's "accelerated grimace". It is only through producing an image of the commodified world that any kind of critique can be mounted upon commodification. This means that poetic language is circumscribed by the discourse to be resisted. One tactic upon confronting this impasse is to try to step out of the commodified language which is making such taxing demands and turn it round upon itself. In Mauberley Pound attempts this by means of internal quotation from his own

text. The phrase "the age demanded" recurs as "The 'age demanded' chiefly a mould in plaster" and then as the title of a whole poem later in the sequence. Quotation from within one's text attempts to solidify one's own words against the external reifications of modernity. Pound's words become material things he can hopefully position against the materialist demands of the age to "see **τὸ καλόν** /Decreed in the market place."³⁰

In Hugh Selwyn Mauberley quotation is also a principle for ironically matching the "accelerated grimace" of modernity. Acceleration implies the Imagist experience of transport in the metropolis, the faces of the travellers in Pound's "Metro" now distorted into a "grimace", more expressive of the **anomie** of travel in the city. However, acceleration also duplicates the world of commodities. For if the commodity only exists in mobility, perpetually being exchanged in the market, then quotation is a way of constantly shuttling words about within the restricted economy of a poem. Among many other examples in Mauberley Penelope and Flaubert reappear in "Mauberley 1920"; the opening reference to "three years" occurs in poem II of this section; the "three years, out of key" becomes "for three years...he drank ambrosia"; the "vacant gaze" in "Yeux Glauques" is re-worked in "The Age Demanded" (itself a reference from poem II) as both "gaze" and "glaze". "Conservatrix of Milésien" becomes "conservation of the 'better tradition'"; "alabaster" returns, transformed in "Medallion", as "Luini in porcelain"; and a pianola becomes a "grand piano".

Quotation avoids the problem of the "stationary image" identified by Pound with Imagist immediacy. It makes images appear to have a life of their own, turning up in new configurations. Ian F.A.Bell, writing of Pound's use of quotation in The Cantos, argues that "words themselves are offered in the form of tangible objects as...quotation involves shifting

the emphasis from language as a means of representation to language as the very object of representation."³¹ Slight alteration of the quote, as in Mauberley, ensures a critical edge to this reified transaction, a way of differentiating discourse from economic exchanges measured by abstract values of equality. By the time of the Adams Cantos, Pound's use of quotation is direct and the quotations are not, as in Mauberley, "tangible objects" to be altered and styled from the poet's own words, but are objects taken from other authors.

Quotation within one's text also internalises the method of Vorticism, a ceaseless circulation of clear discursive objects. It produces, in the manner of the commodity, both solidity and movement, or as Pound's poem puts it: "a mould in plaster,/Made with no loss of time/A prose kinema". A commodity, on one level, is always made with no loss of time since, as Marx puts it, "As exchange-values, all commodities are merely definite quantities of **congealed labour time**."³² A commodity is thus a restrictive material "mould" around temporal amounts of labour power. Comparing this "moulded" textual object with a "prose kinema" presents the next stage in the life of the commodity, its ceaseless peregrinations in the market place.

4. STILL GAZING AND GRIMACING

The reference to the "kinema" prefigures Pound's interest in the aesthetic potential of the ideogram. It is also an example of a medium using non-stationary images. A year after the publication of Hugh Selwyn

Mauberley he compared the "accelerated grimace" of metropolitan life to cinematic language:

The life in a village is narrative, in a city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are 'cinematographic', but they are not of a simple linear sequence. They are often a flood of nouns without verbal relations...a species of ideographic representations.³³

Pound seems to value cinema for its combination of solidity and movement, just as he presented the petals and faces of the "Metro" as existing both discretely and as part of an "apparition". Quotation within and across Hugh Selwyn Mauberley mimics the overlapping method of the cinema. A "flood of nouns" occurs in the poem in the lists of names ritually invoked: Sappho, Dionysius, Heracleitus, Pisistratus, Apollo, Ruskin, Burne-Jones, etc. Words tied to referents are now pushed into motion by the "flood" of modern city life. One such "flood", as Hugh Kenner notes in relation to Eliot's The Waste Land, is that of the commuters pumped into the city centre each day by modern "accelerated" transport systems.³⁴ The danger represented by such flows is the loss of individual identity, as seen in the images of the crowd as "swarm". The other danger with a "flood" or flow is its signification of the feminine. Complaining in 1917 that H.D.'s work has declined since Des Imagistes, Pound blames it upon the "flow-contamination of Amy <Lowell> and Fletcher."³⁵

For some, however, life in the crowd atomises more than it unites in common purpose: any one person becomes like the commodity, abstractly equivalent to any other particular person. As Marsden argued, abstract groups smother egoistic identity. Pound's insistence upon the primary

separate entities of cinema, film as constructed from discrete "stills", shows a desire to prevent this abstraction. As Pound quotes Heracleitus: "All things are a flowing". But if flowing things are hammered into gritty atoms, then one is spared the blurring effect produced by Futurism, "a sort of accelerated impressionism."³⁶ Names are thus reified nouns that "flood" together, but nevertheless maintain, as Pound puts it in "Maunderley 1920", a "Firmness,/...an art/In profile". Another example of Pound's attempt to maintain clear borders around the "flood of nouns" is his use of quotation marks. Here they are a linguistic marker, not so much of another author or of irony, but of words and phrases that must be kept apart for fear of dissolving their particularity.

Pound's appeal to a cinematic epistemology occurs amid a series of negations ("not, not assuredly") of alternative aesthetics. Cinema is used approvingly because, as a technological development displaying Imagist principles, it combines its overlapping discourse with clear visual cognition. External gazing at a screen is opposed to psychological forms of cognition: "Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries/Of the inward gaze." The cinematic look, by comparison, lacks obscurity and prefigures the "clear gaze" of Elizabeth Siddall in "Yeux Glauques". The obsessive figuring of eyes and the act of looking in Maunderley is manifestly within the visual epistemology of Imagism. However, as with Imagist texts, it is instructive to consider who looks and at whom or at what.³⁷ Among the numerous examples of male looking in the poem the only representation of a female gaze is that of Siddall in "Yeux Glauques". This is a stare instantly disabled since the woman only exists frozen and "preserved" in a painting by the male Burne-Jones.

In sections IV and V of the first sequence, the poems dealing with

the effects of World War One, the sets of eyes are male ones crippled by war:

Died some, pro patria,
non "dulce" non "et decor"...
walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,

Hell covers up active eyes, here a hell of outdated propagandist discourse. The next poem somewhat refines this critique: the "myriad" that died in the war did so for "an old bitch gone in the teeth/For a botched civilisation". The mistakes of modern civilisation are associated with a woman lacking metaphorical bite. This dental disaster is then contrasted with the fine molars in the "smiling" mouths of the war victims:

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under the earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

Brooker claims the "quick eyes" are those of Gaudier-Brzeska.³⁸ In Canto XVI Pound repeats the story of books borrowed by T.E.Hulme from the London Library which were subsequently buried beneath a shell-blast in his dug-out. Explicitly, then, this poem mourns the destruction of Imagism by the war. Destruction is figured in terms of lost visual power, eyes sunk beneath the vast "lid" of the earth, itself metamorphosed into a giant eye-socket.³⁹ The literal blinding of these male modernists is all the more

poignant because of the reasons for which they went to war, an amalgam of Poundian dislikes: a toothless bitch, a messed-up culture and a mass produced aesthetic ("two gross" of statues, "a few thousand" books). The repetition of "for" only stresses the lack of purpose in the fighting.

In poem III in the first series of Mauberley Pound associates the ascendancy of a commodified culture, a suburban "tawdry cheapness" and the beauty of "the market place", with a loss of male power. The "Phallic and ambrosial" Dionysius is displaced by Christian "macerations", a wasting of the flesh to flaccidity. Contemporary government is not that of the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus, but rule by "a knave or an eunuch". Poem V continues to associate social decline with emasculation, a commodified and "botched civilisation" resulting from contact with a feminized "old bitch". However, the next poem in the sequence, "Yeux Glauques", concentrates upon paintings of women, showing a re-instatement of the "Quick eyes" of men blinded by war. Ironically, this attempt to resist the threat of the feminised commodity by the male gaze is undermined. Pound is concerned in this poem with ambiguously celebrating the Pre-Raphaelite gaze. As Brantley Berryman notes, the speaker expresses "attitudes toward the Pre-Raphaelites that seem at once admiring and condescending."⁴⁰ In a sense they are parodied because they fail to grasp the cinematic dimension of modernity. In this respect the overdetermined meaning of the word "still" in the poem bears consideration.⁴¹ The poem starts in an era when "Gladstone was still respected", where "still" denotes a sense of temporal permanence. Subsequent uses of the word evoke quite different senses:

The Burne-Jones cartoons
Have preserved her eyes;
Still, at the Tate, they teach
Cophetua to rhapsodize;

Thin like brook-water,
With a vacant gaze.
The English Rubaiyat was still-born
In those days.

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faun-like from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive....
"Ah, poor Jenny's case"...

The "preserved" eyes of the Burne-Jones' cartoons are associated by Pound with Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall, Rossetti's wife, who had a still-born child. This, as Espey notes, is a misattribution since the model for the paintings was not Siddall.⁴² Pound also mischievously links these eyes to those of the prostitute Jenny, subject of a Rossetti poem. Pound's merger of the eyes of these three women as "the same" yet again identifies feminine signs with the form of the commodity. Unlike the specific and differentiated eyes of Gaudier-Brzeska and Hulme, these female eyes are treated as abstractly equivalent. They possess a "vacant gaze" since they have no intrinsic value except as exchangeable signs of looking. They are all form, with no concrete content in their images. The eyes become like film stills, both rigid yet in movement, separate yet blurred by movement into a disavowal of diversity. In further cinematic mode the word "still" itself pops up in the text with a regularity that belies its semantic variability, much as a repeated visual motif might in a film. This

commodification of female vision into a set of stills entails a loss of the potential power of this gaze. Eyes are "preserved" in frozen state in the paintings, reified into stillness. In this form, fixed and "still" in a painting, the castrating threat of a gaze that violently "darts out" is averted. The face is "half-ruin'd" because, as a painting, it lacks the real ability to fix by looking. It is both "Questing" yet, by dint of its stilled form, pleasingly "passive". This dialectic of gazing and gazed at, voyeurism and exhibitionism, is thus resolved by Pound's re-assertion of the masculine look. The mode of this re-assertion, required after being blinded by the "old bitch", utilises the very structure of the commodity: abstract equivalence (eyes all the "same") and reification (passive, still eyes).

5. STILL-BORN VALUES

A further level to Pound's use of "still" in "Yeux Glauques" occurs in his reference to the "still-born" Rubaiyat, discovered by Rossetti. This reference is in part an indictment of the lack of kudos for cultural treasures such as the Rubaiyat in the modern market-place. However, it also recapitulates Pound's gendering of commodification. Siddall's "still-born" child, matched in "Siena Mi Fe" by "pickled foetuses", is an emblem of the failure of maternal reproduction. This reproductive failure reinforces the idea of a "botched civilisation" textually attributed to women. These images from 1920 of failed female reproduction are succeeded in 1921-1922 by Pound's reproductive editing of Eliot's The Waste Land. Eliot is the "mother" of the text, while "Ezra performed the Caesarean

Operation".⁴³ Koestenbaum has skilfully analysed this reproductive "double writing" between Eliot and Pound as a sublimation of homosexual desire and as a way of containing the rise of women in modernist literary circles.⁴⁴ For Koestenbaum, "Fantasies of maternity buttress male modernism".⁴⁵ Mauberley, depicting failed literary reproduction amidst the market-place, dwells upon a fantasy prior to male (literary) birth: a denial of the efficacy of female reproduction. Women, it seems, can only bring forth "still-born" gazes, "half-ruin'd" creations that are removed from the fertile "Quick eyes" of Pound's poetic kinema.

If non-fecund women are aligned with the stifling world of commodities, the subsequent avowal of male reproduction appropriates a quite different facet of the commodity, its magical ability to reproduce itself. For Marx, the relation of surplus-value to the initial value of a commodity is figured precisely in mysteriously reproductive terms:

value is here the subject of a process in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original value, and thus valorizes itself independently....By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs.⁴⁶

The commodity has successfully captured the power of reproduction. This is a power Pound ascribed to himself and Eliot, when in The Waste Land they shifted modernism from the "still-born" of women to the caesarean "births" of men. The metaphoric exclusion, in Marx's text, of a maternal subject who reproduces surplus-value is linked to the ceaseless valorization of the

commodity. This feature resembles the "variable significance" of Pound's vorticist rhetoric, constantly seeking to "**create** form".⁴⁷ Vorticism itself is described as an art of "conceiving" rather than "receiving".⁴⁸

The commodity's circulating circumvention of the maternal appears in Marx in a religious, rather than aesthetic, form. The commodity "enters into a private relationship with itself" in order to multiply itself within circulation.⁴⁹ In this way it resembles the miraculous birth by God of Christ the son. The commodity,

differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value, just as God the Father differentiates himself from himself as God the Son, although both are of the same age and form, in fact one single person.⁵⁰

The miraculous ability of the commodity to give birth (to surplus value) without a mother is the same ferocious power of circulation and movement as Pound's "accelerated grimace". "Yeux Glauques" is the final stage of an allegory, begun in poem II, of how the vorticist-like energy of the commodity is salvaged from the contemporary market-place of art. The macerated "eunuch", castrated and blinded by the "old bitch" civilisation, now stills the eyes of the three women - Siddall, Jenny and the unknown Burne-Jones model - into equivalent commodities as a prelude to the male birth of modernism. This male offspring was only hinted at in the 1890s writers of "Sienna mi fe" and "Brennebaum". These are writers whose aesthetic creations were merely a series of "pickled fetuses". They attempted to escape, by a pickled death (the "tissue preserved" of Lionel Johnson, killed by alcohol abuse), something they should have embraced: the

generative power of the commodity.

However, this passage out of commodification into modernist self-creation has to wait for Pound's liaison with The Waste Land. Mauberley continues the saga of aesthetic commodification with "Mr Nixon", the literary reviewer who advises an escape from poetry for financial reasons: "'And give up verse, my boy,/There's nothing in it.'" We might read these lines against the grain by arguing that Pound too felt contemporary poetics had "no-thing" in them and insisted upon reification to remedy the century-long disease of abstraction in literature. The "stylist" in the next poem is therefore a case study of someone failing to incorporate a reification of language. Refusing to turn his words into things, such a writer can only take "shelter" from the economic (he is "unpaid"). Shelter, here, is that blocked possibility in "E.P.Ode", the lost sign of nature: "Nature receives him" and he "exercises his talents" while "the soil meets his distress."

The failure of this aesthetic escape (the "haven" is said to "leak" and has another blemish, a "creaking latch") is followed by two further instances of commodification. Both are explicitly feminine. Poem XI decries the ability of the female to be, as De Gourmont had argued, the "Conservatrix of Miliesien", guardian of traditions integral to aesthetic creation.⁵¹ Rather than the "uneducated mistress" accompanying the earlier "stylist", this woman lives in suburban "Ealing" with "the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen". Pound's phobia of suburbs outside the vortex of the city centre is once again linked to the feminine. Whereas the male working in the bank can be trusted to look after or "conserve" the economic affairs of commodities, the female cannot do likewise for aesthetic "Habits of mind and feeling". This contemporary woman is unable to co-opt the

strategies of banking for her traditional role of preserver of aesthetic instincts.

Poem XII presents another version of this manoeuvre, where femininity is simultaneously allied with commodification and opposed to it, sign of a blockage in the reifying rejuvenation of poetic language. The literary hostess Lady Valentine, situated in the interior world of the commodity ("the stuffed-satin drawing room" recalling the bourgeois homes in many of James's novels), is characteristic of an important set of aesthetic and economic relations in modernism. As Gilbert and Gubar have noted: "many prominent modernists were subsidized by a series of wealthy women or publicized by a set of powerful women."⁵² Of women such as Lady Gregory (Yeats), Ottoline Morrell (Lawrence), Harriet Shaw Weaver and Sylvia Beach (Joyce) and Amy Lowell, Harriet Monroe and Dora Marsden (Pound himself) Pound remained, in the terms of Mauberley, "Doubtful, somewhat, of the value/Of well-gowned approbation/Of literary effort". Pound's doubts over the financial support such women offered arise for two interlinked reasons. Just as the "conservatrix" cannot preserve the literary heritage so these literary hostesses seem part of the commodification of the aesthetic they are intended to support. Pound juxtaposes the "highest cultures", the "cultivation" of the roses of the muses' home of Pieria, to the "sale of half-hose". Hostesses, by funding modernist experimentation, corrupted these art-works with the mark of money.

The other level of doubt in Pound proceeds from this intrusion of economics into the aesthetic. It produces a language of mass-production, the "Fleet St. where/Dr.Johnson flourished", a writer of high art forced to negotiate the commodification of his art, the sort of payment by article advocated by Mr.Nixon. This division between "mass civilisation and

minority culture" is itself, as Andreas Huyssens has argued, a gendered binary opposition.⁵³ As Huyssens argues, "aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture...clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities."⁵⁴ For Pound, literary hostesses, by 1920, seemed to have subverted this ideological division. In "Women Before a Shop" Pound signified mass culture as woman, but Lady Valentine in Mauberley challenges this association by positioning herself not as consumer of mass culture, but as a patron of high art. Such feminine support smacks too much of the maternal fostering of art and literature feared by Pound.⁵⁵

Pound proceeds to critique Lady Valentine's role as hostess using aesthetic criteria:

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata
Where the lower and higher have ending;

This woman has failed to observe the primary Imagist imperative to keep a rigid clarity of outline. Her "edge" is "uncertain" since her hostess vocation is a way of "blending" the "higher" realm of art with the "lower" area of the commodifications of mass culture, Fleet St. journalism and the "sale of half-hose".⁵⁶ If the other women in Mauberley can be contained or driven from the centre of modernist innovation, the literary hostess has aesthetically to be denied such a position. The clarity and hardness of Imagist discourse is used to defend Pound's language from the

commodification signalled by literary hostesses. Financial support from the sex associated with linguistic "flaccidity" had to be combated with a hard-edged discourse.

This discourse is gestured at in the closing poem of the sequence, "Envoi (1919)", and picked up again in "Mauberley 1920". "Envoi" is a distant cousin of the hectoring verses of Pound's "Salutation" poems in Lustra. In contrast to the confident and assertive early poems, "Envoi" is linguistically hampered: "Go, dumb-born book/Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes". The book is born without a voice since it emerges from the financial support of the feminine hostess, thus spoiling the aesthetic integrity of the poem's voice. It also represents another example of maternal reproduction failing to give birth to a living being.

Deprived of speech, "Envoi" proceeds to seek linguistic re-birth through reification. It will not matter that this text is struck speechless, for the song will emerge directly from objects. Counterposed to the feminised roses of Waller and Lawes, Pound's strategy for his rosy books is clear:

I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

These roses, Pound's dumb books, do not spring from nature, but from processes of industrial production. The roses are sealed in amber "made" by being "overwrought". Colour is spread over objects in the style familiar from other Imagist texts, trying to grant a vivacity to objects

drained of it. If "overwrought" signifies the covering of red roses in orange amber, it has an additional sense, deriving from its root in the old English for "work", of industrial production, as in "wrought iron". Nature (the rose) is thus covered with a mechanised shell, a shell producing abstract equivalence. Just as iron is wrought into identical products of whatever form, so here the rose in amber lives as false identity: "One substance and one colour". The colourful differences represented in "L'Art 1910" are here collapsed into one beautiful and abstract commodity. The strategy is to construct an art-object capable of "Braving time", existing free from the exigencies of temporality "Till change hath broken down/All things save Beauty alone." This commodified rose/book, austere fixed as material object, pertains to the eternal status of Keats's Grecian urn or the golden bird of Yeats's "Byzantium". For Pound, in contradistinction to these two examples, it is not nature but features of commodity production - equivalence and materially wrought words - which bring about this most traditional of aesthetic aims.

6. COINING CURIOUS HEADS

The second sequence of poems in Mauberley may be read as Pound's final attempt to use Imagist principles to produce an object which can "brave" both time and commodification. "Mauberley 1920" presents the development of this project by reference to the artisan work of the engraver and the forger of coins. Artistic crafting of material objects is taken as the model of the poet's engagement with language. Flaubert,

earlier model of modernist precision, now reappears to carve his craft upon coins, those materialised images of economic value:

"His true Penelope
Was Flaubert,"
And his tool
The engraver's.

Firmness,
Not the full smile,
His art, but an art
In profile;

The clipped precision and condensation of these lines enacts the "Firmness" Pound cherishes in the art of engraving, having "turned", in the opening line, from the etchings of the Parisian Jacquemart to ancient coins containing the head of Messalina.

Coins with sideways views of human heads are signs which compress into one Imagist complex many of Pound's concerns in the poem. Coins stand for economic value and exist simultaneously as material objects, as fixed signs of value and as objects in constant economic circulation. Money, claims Pound, is or should be "solid", and part of his attack upon contemporary economics in the 1920s and 30s was for neglect of this fact.⁵⁷ Murray argues that Pound dislikes the way contemporary money only represents value rather than, in good Imagist fashion, directly presenting value as ancient coins did.⁵⁸ Pound praises those historical periods when he believed money was solid and firm, when it was based on the inherent value of specific metals. Examples of such periods are the first century A.D. of Messalina and later fifteenth century Verona, shown in the

reference to the forger Pisanello. Pound thus wants, as Murray puts it, "to fix sign back on to thing."⁵⁹ In the same way Pound seeks a reified language to bolster aesthetic experience against abstraction.

When he starts, from circa 1920, to espouse Douglas's social credit economics (where money becomes a certificate of work done) Pound, according to Murray, encounters a contradiction: "money as he wants it to operate is an abstraction, a sign referring to a **relation** between things of value, not to something concrete."⁶⁰ Pound ignores the fact that money is a sign of the value of labour as productive power. This abstraction is precisely what he feels usury brings to economic and social life. In Canto LXXIV usury is described as "lending/that which is made out of nothing".

(LXXIV.440) Usury lacks a material foundation, and this initial abstraction will have further repercussions for art in such an ungrounded society. Usury is thus like a word broken free from its thing. In poem IV of Mauberley's first sequence usury is said to be "age-old and age-thick". This "thickness" is explained in Canto XLV, where usury affects the clear outline of objects and art: "with usura the line grows thick/with usura is no clear demarcation".(XLV.229) The result is blurred generalisation rather than pristine particularity. The atomistic clarity guaranteed by strict reference between word and thing, money and value, is lost in an economy rooted in equivalence and abstraction.

In Mauberley, however, Pound's economic concerns are subsumed under the use of coins to represent an aesthetic of reification.⁶¹ Ellmann, following Ruthven, notes that the line, "Pisanello lacking the skill/To forge Achaia", refers to a Veronese medallist who produced fake copies of ancient Greek coins (signified by the head of Messalina).⁶² Forge as an industrial term, echoing "overwrought" in "Envoi", also refers to forgery

as faking. Pisanello's crime, as Ellmann puts it, was not merely the act of forging old coins, but the fact "he reified these coins into high-class objets d'art, rather than a circulating currency."⁶³ These coins are compared to a "Colourless/Pier Francesca", objects lacking the vibrant authenticity of this great Renaissance painter. These etiolated coins now resemble the earlier rose in amber, for something which is all "one colour" might just as well be described as "colourless" since there exists no other colour from which to distinguish it. A lustreless, grey world was precisely what was resisted in the stress on visual brilliance in Imagist texts like Lustra. The shift from the rose in amber to "one colour" to "colourless" signifies a failure in this Imagist perceptual strategy. Just as the rose in amber sought to escape historical alteration so, in their fake artistry, these coins crave an avoidance of their destined circulation as money.

Coins out of circulation become like art objects braving temporality or coins as notations of value, all representing formal fixity of a material object. This fixity is an escape from the velocities of the market, the earlier "accelerated grimace" of modernity. This refusal of commodification by adopting reification is shown, in the second sequence of Mauberley, to be inadequate. But it is a failure which can be read as part of Pound's transition from Imagism towards the project of The Cantos. As Peter Robinson describes the second sequence, taking it as an example of the aesthete Mauberley's own art, Pound's poem "is an identification and renunciation of qualities in his own art that by 1920 he had come to consider limiting."⁶⁴ Whether Pound truly obliterates his past aesthetic in The Cantos is debatable, but that is not the point at issue here, which is the manner in which Pound seeks distance from his previous beliefs. One

quality identified in "Mauberley 1920" as part of an outdated aesthetic is that of a reification divorced from the dynamism of the commodity. In other words, Pound discredits a "sculpture of rhyme" made **without** "accelerated" movement.

The "firmness" of Pisanello's coins is followed by the "fundamental passion" of the second poem:

This urge to convey the relation
Of eye-lid and cheek-bone
By verbal manifestation;

To present the series
Of curious heads in medallion-

Imagist preoccupations are signalled in the desire to "present" a set of hardened heads on coins. The numerous faces ("eye-lid and cheek-bone") occurring in Imagist verses are mocked as "curious". They are fixed in their form as discrete medallions in an unrelated series, much as the atomistic phrases of Pound's first version of "In a Station of the Metro" strained to connect with one another. Medalled heads are replaced by "still stone dogs,/Caught in metamorphosis", a reference to the sequence's epigram from Ovid. In the Metamorphosis, Cephalus's dog, Laelaps, futilely snaps at empty air in a vain attempt to sens a monster to terrorise Thebes. As Cephalus turns aside, he looks back to see both monster and dog turned to stone.⁶⁵ In Medusan fashion, movement or metamorphic change is arrested and transformed into "still" images of "heads in medallion". This set of images recurs in the last poem of the sequence, "Medallion". Here the Imagist face appears in material form as a sculpture (Praxiteles's

Anadyomene reproduced in a book by Reinach) and as a "face-oval" produced in metal or the "intractable" amber of "Envoi". As a final scene of immobility the gaze of the "face-oval" is subdued through lack of energy: "Beneath half-watt rays/The eyes turn topaz".⁶⁶ The earlier "vacant gaze" now appears as a precious stone, a signifier of value but lacking any power of movement, doubly displaced from the "quick eyes" of Gaudier-Brzeska. It is thus a reified object without the electric "dynamism" of the modern commodity.

7. STOPPING THE FLOW

Some fourteen years after Mauberley's publication Pound commented on the poem in terms that complicate his critique of the art of immobility. Giving advice to Mary Barnard, Pound asserted:

Thing is to cut a shape in time. Sounds that stop the flow, and durations either of syllables, or implied between them, "forced onto the voice" of the reader by nature of the "verse"(E.g., my Mauberley.)⁶⁷

Robinson argues that this claim displays a crucial ambiguity in Pound. The wish to view the poem as an object carved from language seeks to render "solid" the "flow" of syllables.⁶⁸ However, by stopping the temporal "flow" we get a "mould in plaster" stolidly denying dynamism. Pound's problem is to discover a way of energetically connecting these disjunct still "shapes". Duration only inheres in syllables (or the "splotches of

colour" of Pound's discourse in the "Metro"), or in the gaps between them, and thus it is up to the reader to make the connections between the discrete atoms. The role of the reader is to understand a poem made up of "Series/Of intermittences". The difficulty with this method, developed at length in The Cantos, is evident: what happens if the reader fails to see the implied relations between items?⁶⁹

The search for sounds preventing linguistic flow is clearly illustrated if the heavily punctuated and curt language of "E.P.Ode" and its subsequent poem are contrasted with the languid, polysyllabic language of "The Age Demanded". The sonority of the latter encourages the "drifting" flow of discourse hinted at in poem II of the second sequence:

Incapable of the least utterance or composition,
Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition,"
Refinement of medium, elimination of superfluities,
August attraction or concentration.

The inability of the writer to follow these Imagist rules for the "Refinement" of language is displayed in the abstract and elongated terminology that is used here. This is a language which surrenders its hold upon the concrete and the specific to drift with the earlier "phantasmal sea-surge" into the Pacific of the following poem, to become "Washed in the cobalt of oblivions".

Mauberley's text finally peters out into a series of disconnected units whose sense of movement is not the energetic exchange of the commodity, nor that of vorticism, but merely a languid drift towards extinction. Following Brantley Berryman, I understand "Medallion" to be

Pound's Imagist poem.⁷⁰ One further collapse in Mauberley's text is that of the Imagist epistemology of "Medallion", that masculine power which in the first sequence of Mauberley fought off the female gaze threatening modernism.

"Mauberley 1920" places us back within the reifying gaze of Imagism. Messalina, the unfaithful wife of the emperor Claudius, is symbolically punished for her misdemeanours by having her head fixed upon a coin for all to see. Signs of women and commodities are once again united. And, as with most faces on coins, the woman's own gaze is averted from that of the onlookers. She is seen in "profile", looking safely away to the side. This averting of the castrating female gaze is linked to the feminisation of the commodity, or vice-versa, and is continued in the next poem. Here, "ANANGKE prevails", that modern necessity or fate which Pound had defined as money and the market. **Anangke** becomes gendered as the poet "moved amid her phantasmagoria/Amid her galaxies". Marx's phantasmagoria of the commodity was the detachment of its formal image from its materiality. To escape this suprasensible feminine existence, Mauberley must reunite image and material, sign and thing, as signalled in the head of Messalina and referred to in the "fundamental passion" of presenting "heads in medallion". Only by such a reification of the feminine can the poet avoid drifting "To the final estrangement", his disappearance from linguistic creation ("the world of letters"). At another level, the recovery of a visual aesthetic will result in a rediscovered male sexuality: "His new found orchid", where orchid, from the Greek for testicle, proves to be a "mandate/Of Eros". If he fails to reunite image and matter in a visual aesthetic, and thus recover the phallic power of poem III in the first

sequence, Mauberley's miserable fate will be the fearful Medusan ~~one~~
hinted at in the "full gaze" of the Botticelli Venus he has just passed:

Mouths biting empty air,
The still stone dogs,
Caught in metamorphosis, were
Left him as epilogues.

Unless the male gaze is able to present reified images in "verbal
manifestation" it runs the risk of being "caught" and emasculated, fixed
into "still stone" and left sexually frustrated, biting at nothing.

In "The Age Demanded", Mauberley is offered another chance to
recapture the "quick eyes" of a masculine aesthetic. Unfortunately, he is
found to be "unfit" for the dynamics of this "agility":

The glow of porcelain
Brought no reforming sense
To his perception
Of the social inconsequence.

Thus, if her colour
Came against his gaze,
Tempered as if
It were through a perfect glaze

He made no immediate application
Of this to relation of the state
To the individual,

The "glow" is the image separated from the material, the free-floating phantasmagoria of the commodified porcelain art-object. The head of a woman on a coin or medallion is displaced by the equally solid sign of porcelain, which is again explicitly female ("her colour"). The gaze is prevented from "direct treatment" of the object by the "glaze" of the porcelain, just as the rose was earlier encased in amber. Both are instances of an inability to reach the Lukácsian "material substratum" of the object. The object cannot be touched beneath its glaze, even though the "perfect" nature of the transparent glaze allows the illusion that looking engages one fully with the object. As in Imagist texts, the privileging of the visual sense and the colourful intensity designed to compensate for a true emancipation of the senses only ends up reconfirming the alienated nature of looking but never touching objects.

Espey argues that this sections shows Mauberley's blindness to the social purpose of art or beauty in the state.⁷¹ This reading, however, ignores the manner in which art is perceived to have social value. Pound theorised the relation of state to individual in terms of an individual's faculty for uniting word and thing: the literati is in charge of "the **application** of word to thing".⁷² In "The Age Demanded" we see clearly the "things" to which the budding modernist poet should apply his words: reified images of women. Thus, for Pound, the social welfare of the state relied, in quite direct fashion, upon a suppression of the diluting "flow" of women. Failure to follow such a programme would result in a world dominated by the eunuch and the market-place of poem III; where the feminised commodity castrates the "quick eyes" of the male artist.

8. CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis provides a way to resolve the ambiguous status criticism has allocated to the final poem in Mauberley, "Medallion". Returning to the problematics of identity, "Medallion" can be read as the poem of Pound or Mauberley. If, as some have suggested, the poem represents failure, is the failure that of Pound or Mauberley?⁷³ Brooker argues that the poem could be Pound's and still remain a failure, a representation of the inability of the Imagist movement to live up to the standards Pound had set it.⁷⁴ Alternatively the poem could be seen as Pound's warning to himself and other modernists of what happens if the lessons of Imagism are not extended. The perceptual hardness Imagism brought to language, colourful visions of "intractable amber" or the "Honey-red" colours encircling the "face-oval" in "Medallion", is always in danger of aesthetic disablement. Clamping words to things is always necessary, but one has to make sure that the feminine things one reifies with a glance do not, as with the Medusa, return the glance with redoubled violence, transforming one's aesthetic to the undynamic solidity of "topaz". The final "face-oval" in "Medallion" is that of Mauberley, a poet reified by the eyes of the "sleek head" of the Venus emerging from "the gold-yellow frock". Unable to see the political and aesthetic importance of cutting through the "glaze" to the thing-in-itself, the poet is reified, becoming "The face-oval beneath the glaze".

If "Medallion" shows Mauberley failing to learn from Imagist aesthetics, it also reminds Pound of the precarious nature of his own project. Linguistic reification was a defensive posture against the commodity, aggressive in its assertion of concrete sensuality in a world of

alienation and abstraction. In Pound, however, the Imagist application of word to thing gave way to a reification of word as thing. Slapping colourful "glazes" on objects did not really produce, in Hulme's phrase, "realised objects". The real trick was to realise one's words as material objects.

This chapter has argued that Mauberley represents Pound's "farewell" to Imagism as well as to the London he left in 1920. Pound does not say goodbye, however, to the challenging of commodification introduced by Imagism. Neither is the Imagist method of visually presenting objects abandoned. It is simply seen as in need of further development. One way to view Pound's trajectory after Mauberley is as a shift from a partial to a total usage of the powers of reification. Imagism uses reification to particularise language and prevent abstraction. The Cantos seek to employ the larger vision of capitalist commodification, using specific reifications to produce a "phalanx of particulars" which will defend aesthetics from the systematic totality of commodification. The Cantos must thus be an "endless poem" until that which the poem opposes, commodification, is at an end.⁷⁵ The end of commodification, however, as the fate of the poet Mauberley shows, cannot hope to emerge through a language which remorselessly reifies the female form. "Wrong from the start", this solidification of modernist language could not hope to produce anything but a limited linguistic vision of human sensual emancipation.

NOTES

1. All reference to Hugh Selwyn Mauberley will be to the version printed in Ezra Pound, Collected Shorter Poems, (London: Faber, 1968).
2. Ezra Pound, Letter to John Drummond 18 Feb.1932, The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D.Paige, (London: Faber, 1950), p.239.
3. Ezra Pound, "The Teacher's Mission" (1934), rpt. in Literary Essays, ed. T.S.Eliot, (London: Faber, 1954), p.59. Peter Nicholls detects two kinds of abstraction identified by Pound: a damaging tendency to generality of expression and a "sensuous platonism" which Pound used positively in his verse. Peter Nicholls, Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writing A Study of 'The Cantos', (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984), p.11.
4. Ezra Pound, The Cantos, (London: Faber, 1981). Reference will be given in the main text by canto and page number.
5. For this sense of the systematic yet particular nature of the commodity in modernism see Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.316-25.
6. Pound, Letter to Dorothy Shakespeare 21 Apr.1913, Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare Their Letters: 1909-14, ed. Omar Pound and A.Walton Litz, (New York: New Directions, 1984), p.206.
7. Maud Ellmann, The Poetics of Impersonality T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound, (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p.149. For the other accounts of the poem see John Espey, Ezra Pound's 'Mauberley' A Study in Composition, (London: University of California Press, 1955); Christine Brooke-Rose, A ZBC of Ezra Pound, (London: Faber, 1971); Jo Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft Ezra Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley', (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983).

8. Pound, Letter to Schelling 8 July 1922, Selected Letters, p.180.
9. For Pound and Henry James see Espey, Pound's 'Mauberley', ch.4.
10. Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber, 1973), p.242.
11. For another account of Jamesian style and reification see Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, (London: Methuen, 1981), pp.221-2.
12. Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, (1881; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p.253. James is, of course, littered with references to this conflict between economic and aesthetic "things". For example, in The Spoils of Poynton, (1897; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), Mrs. Gereth is said to possess a "disposition to thrust in everywhere the question of 'things', to read all behaviour in the light of some fancied relation to them"(p.49). Raymond Williams, commenting upon the display of commodities in this novel, said that "after the first chapter of Capital, people should be sent to read The Spoils of Poynton." Raymond Williams, Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review, (London: New Left Books, 1979), p.258.
13. James, Portrait of a Lady, Ibid.
14. Karl Marx, Capital A Critique of Political Economy vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.165.
15. Ibid.
16. Ian F.A. Bell, "The Phantasmagoria of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", Paideuma vol.V no.3 (1976), pp.361-85.
17. Ibid., p.383.

18. Ezra Pound, "Harold Monro", The Criterion July 1932; rpt. in Ezra Pound, Polite Essays, (London: Faber, 1937), p.8.
19. Bell, "Phantasmagoria", p.364.
20. Ellmann, Poetics of Impersonality, p.151.
21. Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft, p.3.
22. Ibid., p.9.
23. Ian F.A.Bell, Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound, (London: Methuen, 1981), p.210.
24. Ezra Pound, Guide to Kulchur, (1938; rpt. London: Peter Owen, 1952), p.194.
25. Ibid., p.98.
26. Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, ed. Ezra Pound, (London: Stanley Nott, 1936), p.28. For a discussion of Mauberley and changes in the nature of work in the early twentieth century see James F.Knapp, Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern Press, 1988), pp.32-36.
27. Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft, p.16-7.
28. Ezra Pound, The ABC of Reading, (London: Routledge, 1934), p.74.
29. Pound, in a letter to Anderson <?>Jan.1917, attacks the "new Hellenism". Letters, p.107.
30. For a similar argument see Ian F.A.Bell, "'Speaking in Figures': The Mechanical Thomas Jefferson of Canto 31", in Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading, ed. Ian F.A.Bell, (London: Barnes and Noble, 1982), pp.171-2.

31. Ibid., p.243.
32. Marx, Capital, p.130.
33. Ezra Pound, "Poesies: Jean Cocteau", The Dial Jan. 1921; cited in Max Nanny, Ezra Pound: Poetics for an Electric Age, (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973), p.39.
34. Hugh Kenner, The Mechanic Muse, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.27-8.
35. Pound, Letter to Anderson <?> Aug.1917, Letters p.114. It is interesting to compare Pound's early championing of James Joyce with his later dislike of works such as Work in Progress. The early Joyce "writes a hard clear prose....He gives the thing as it is", Literary Essays, p.399-400. By 1937 Pound talked of "Mr.Joyce's leisurely flow", Selected Prose, p.425.
36. Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir, (New York: New Directions, 1970), p.90.
37. Ellmann notes that the many faces "could be seen as Mauberley's creations, the fragmentary visions of his still-born art", Poetics of Impersonality, p.155.
38. Peter Brooker, A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound, (London: Faber, 1979), p.200.
39. Levenson notes a related loss of visual power due to the war: "the most articulate supporters (and practitioners) of experiment in the fine arts (Hulme, Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska) became involved in the war - and only one of them survived....Not only were the literary figures able to keep working, they assumed the task of defining the modernist position....The immediate result was that Pound became the leading exponent of the new art". Michael H.Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism A Study of

English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.146.

40. Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft, p.95.

41. See Berryman, *Ibid.*, p.107 for a different analysis of the word "still".

42. Espey, Pound's 'Mauberley', pp.90-1.

43. Pound, Letter to Eliot 24 Dec.1921, Letters, p.170.

44. Wayne Koestenbaum, Double Writing The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration, (London: Routledge, 1989), ch.4.

45. *Ibid.*, p.122.

46. Marx, Capital, p.255.

47. Pound, "Vorticism", Gaudier-Brzeska, p.91.

48. *Ibid.*, p.89.

49. Marx, Capital, p.256.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Brooker, Student's Guide, p.210.

52. Sandra M.Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century vol.1 The War of the Words, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p.147. Berryman argues that Lady Valentine refers to Amy Lowell, Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft, p.133.

53. Andreas Huyssens, After the Great Divide Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism, (London: Macmillan, 1986), ch.3 "Mass Culture as Woman; Modernism's Other".
54. Ibid., p.47.
55. Pound does not dislike the financial sponsorship of the arts so much as the sponsors being female. In Jan. 1918 he wrote to Anderson about Lowell's support for a new magazine: "Re Amy. I DON'T want her. But if she can made to liquidate, to excoriate, to cash in, on a magazine...THEN would I be right glad to see her milked of her money, mashed into moonshine, at mercy of monitors." Letters, p.129-30.
56. A similar portrait of a wealthy but vacuous female literary hostess is given in Richard Aldington, Death of a Hero, (1929; rpt. London: Counsel, 1965). pp.120-40.
57. Pound, "In the Wounds" (1935), Selected Prose, p.413.
58. David Murray, "Pound-signs: Money and Representation in Ezra Pound", in Bell ed., Tactics for Reading, ch.2. For a good account of Pound's economic thought see Peter Nicholls, Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writing.
59. Ibid., p.63.
60. Ibid.
61. For details of Pound and Major Douglas see Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), ch.13.
62. Ellmann, Poetics of Impersonality, p.156. K.K.Ruthven, A Guide to Ezra Pound's 'Personae (1926)', (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p.142.
63. Ellmann, Ibid.

64. Peter Robinson, "Ezra Pound and Italian Art", Pound's Artists Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy, (London: Tate Gallery, 1985), p.164.
65. Brooker, Student's Guide, p.198.
66. In 1912 Pound had argued that words were "charged with a force like electricity", Prose, p.34. Mauberley seems to suffer from a rather weak linguistic battery.
67. Pound, Letter to Barnard 23 Feb.1934, Letters, p.254.
68. Robinson, "Pound and Italian Art", p.150.
69. In 1940 Pound wrote to the philosopher George Santayana to elicit support for his economic theories. Pound advocated Fenollosa's ideogrammatic method, which went "From the **thing** to the grouped things", Letters, p.333. Santayana's reply emphasises the problem with dwelling too much upon particulars: "When you ask for jumps and other particulars, you don't mean (I suppose) **any** other particulars, although your tendency to jump is so irresistible that the bond between the particulars jumped to is not always apparent. It is a mental grab-bag." Cited in Stock, Life, p.477.
70. Brantley Berryman, Circe's Craft, p.145.
71. Espey, Pound's 'Mauberley', p.100.
72. Ezra Pound, How to Read, (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1931), p.18.
73. Espey reads "Medallion" as the failed Mauberley's sole poem (p.101), while Brantley Berryman sees it as Pound's own successful Imagist poem (ch.5, 6).
74. Brooker, Student's Guide, p.222.

75. Pound wrote to Homer Pound 18 Dec.1915 saying that he was preparing to write a "big long endless poem", cited Stock, Life, p.237.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has studied Imagist poetry in the light of recent debates about modernism and commodification. I have suggested that there are problems with the interpretation, derived from the work of Lukács, Adorno and Benjamin, of modernism as a sensual linguistic recompense for a world made abstract and meaningless by the commodity. Imagism called for a new poetic language faithful to the material forms of perceived objects. It promised a poetry which, in its rhetorical claims of "solidity" and "immediacy", would offer pleasure in a palpable form. I have shown that this pleasure in the materiality of poetic language is a development from an earlier position, where words were to be transparent to their represented objects. Mainly in the texts of Pound, Imagism developed away from a poetry which rendered precisely the objects and images of modernity. It became a poetry whose formal properties drew upon the content of modern life: reification, atomism, acceleration and alienation. Imagist poetry in this latter manifestation did not merely reflect or mirror modern urban life. Instead it attempted to cut through the abstractions of modern life to capture, in Lukács's phrase, the "material substratum" of everyday objects. But it found that this utopian task could only be achieved if the objects whose "material substratum" it displayed were those of its own language. The terminus of Imagist solidity is thus a search to display the solidity of its own language.

This thesis concludes at this point, leaving Imagist aesthetics halfway to the familiar self-referential modernist texts of the 1920s -

Pound's Cantos, Eliot's The Waste Land, Joyce's Ulysses. In concentrating upon the earlier formation of Imagism I have drawn attention to the gendered nature of the various ways modern poetry is to be reformed. What I have called the reification of language has to be thought through in relation to the way conventional accounts of modernism either erase or downplay the contributions - theoretical and practical - of women. It is not merely a task of reaffirming the crucial role women played in modern poetry. A larger project would aim to show that many of the formal categories we use to conceptualise modern verse are gender specific. Imagism, I have suggested, is not so much phallogocentric as phalloreocentric. And this point has important consequences for any account of modernist reification which sees "solidity" as a bulwark against the abstract and equivalent forms of the commodity. Early Imagist attempts to grasp the immediacy of objects in visual images rely upon reifying the women who appear as the content of these poems. Further work could be done suggesting how the second, self-referential, stage of Imagist reification also requires a gendering of poetic language.

Any such project would need to consider Pound's development after Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. I have not discussed The Cantos for reasons of length and also because I believe they represent a more fully realised version of this second stage of modernist reification. However, study of the poem would have to be conducted, I would argue, through Imagist eyes. The Cantos, like Pound's Imagist verse, is a poem which responds to commodification with a language of reified particulars. The Cantos's difference resides in the manner in which it unites these gritty discursive atoms into a larger construct. Further study might reveal that this larger structure also utilises features excavated from the "material substratum"

of the commodity, this time drawing upon its abstract rather than particular aspect.

Consideration of the relations between later modernism and commodification should keep uppermost the lessons of Imagism's concrete language. Marx, an unlikely Imagist, points to the difficulties inherent in using the language of the commodity in order to critique commodification. In the commentary he wrote on James Mill in 1844, Marx argues that under capitalism the "only comprehensible language we have is the language our possessions use together. We would not understand a human language and it would remain ineffectual. From the one side, such a language would be felt to be begging, imploring and hence **humiliating**. It could be used only with feelings of shame or debasement."¹ The Imagist attempt to produce a sensually replete and human language using the reified form of commodities is ultimately ineffectual. It rests upon a discourse which commodifies one half of the proposed beneficiaries of this new language, women. Debased and humiliated, reified women can serve as no true basis for a humanised language.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, "Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy", Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.276.

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