The Origins of British Modernism:
A Study of Literary Theory and Practice from Walter Pater to Ezra Pound.

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the development of Anglo-American Modernism in London in the early twentieth century. It begins by depicting the economic and social position of the artist in the early nineteenth century, and agrees with Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson that the changing relationship between the artist and the market was responsible for what we call Romanticism. I then go on to argue that Romanticism explored the problems of artistic creation at a time when it seemed that aesthetic values were being sidelined in favour of materialism or utilitarianism, and that this raised the spectre of aesthetic relativism.

I then argue that these central problems were essentially the same as the problems facing the first generation of British Modernists, and that this can be shown by studying the transitional figure of Pater. By tracing Pater's vacillations between objectivism and relativism (in terms of the 'early' and 'later' Pater), we can identify two strands of modernist thought: one which emphasises a materialist, relativist aesthetic, and another Idealist, Neo-Platonic element that more obviously derives from Romanticism.

Following both of these elements into the twentieth century, I then demonstrate that W.B. Yeats belongs to this latter tradition, and that by the late 1890s he had formulated an Idealist metaphysic, which saw poetry as consisting of temporal 'moments' in which a spatial Neo-Platonic metaphysical universe could be glimpsed. Under the influence of Nietzsche and Synge, Yeats went on to modernise his diction and emphasise 'hardness' and 'precision' in his verse, a process that was

beginning by 1902.

I then show that Ezra Pound followed in Yeats's footsteps in this respect, that his early poetry also deals with the Neo-Romantic 'moment', and that Pound 'modernised ' his poetry under the influence of Yeats.

I then discuss the theorising of T.E. Hulme and argue that this follows in the footsteps of the 'early' relativist Pater. Hulme's earliest poetry posits a non-metaphysical aesthetic, which, nevertheless, resembles Yeats's in its emphasis on precise descriptions of poetic vision. Hulme, however, found this world view emotionally unacceptable (on the grounds that materialism is deterministic, and leads to aesthetic and moral relativism), and so (just as with Pater), as soon as he has stated his materialist poetic, he attempts to get beyond it, and affirm aesthetic value, and free will. His project, is, therefore, an attempt to create an objectivist but non-metaphysical way of thinking. Neo-Classicism and Anti-Humanism are his attempts to do this.

I then show that the 'Forgotten School' of Imagism develops out of this way of thinking, and that this school (contrary to what the poets involved claimed at the time), has little to do with Pound's later school of 'Imagisme'. 'Imagisme' develops instead, out of Yeatsian Symbolism, and consists of Pound's attempts to 'modernise' his own poetry (following Yeats) and work out a form that will structure the epic poem he was already planning. To Pound, the work of Richard Aldington and H.D. (nominally the other Imagistes) was of less importance than his relationship to Yeats.

Finally I explore the influence of Bergson on the early work of Wyndham Lewis, and show that Lewis's Vorticism is his attempt to work beyond what he saw as the basic flaws of Bergsonism, whereas for Pound, it was, again, an attempt to find a solution to his problem of poetic form.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis will deal with the aesthetics of Anglo-American Modernism.

Firstly, some definitions. For reasons that are made clear in Chapter One, I deal only with poets and painters. Novelists of the period (such as D.H. Lawrence), are therefore excluded. Secondly, since the publication of Peter Nicholl's *Modernisms* it has become clear that the Postmodernist tendency to refer to Modernism as though it were a single movement, consisting of artists with similar aesthetic aims, has become untenable. Instead, it has become clear that Modernism (a term posthumously attached to the movement (or perhaps tendency would be a better label)), consisted of many writers, artists and musicians, in many countries, all with their own artistic agendas. What they had in common was certain aesthetic problems, problems stemming in the main, I shall argue, from the rise of industrial capitalism, and the implications this had for the production of art (there were other themes they explored as well, of course, but many of these were clearly by-products of this first process; the transition from a mainly rural economy to an urban one, for example). However, despite the similarities of the problems they faced, the solutions they offered were frequently very different.

To explain why this should be so, we must be very careful to explain the specific cultural features of the countries where these Modernisms arose. In this thesis, for example, I contrast the differing approaches to modernity of the Italian Futurists and the British *avant-garde* based

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around the 'little magazine' *The New Age*. I shall show that these differences are related to differing conceptions of industrialism, progress, and the purpose of art, and that these can be linked back to the cultural and economic situation of these countries at the time.

It is, therefore, what has become known as Anglo-American Modernism (actually, Anglo-Irish-American Modernism would be a more accurate term), that I will deal with here; it is not necessarily the case that studying the 'solutions' of Wyndham Lewis, Pound *et al.*, will illuminate the very different aesthetic phenomena that arose, in, for example, Spain, Russia, or Germany (let alone Japan or Latin America) at this time, even though these too are frequently referred to as 'Modernist'.

The next point to make is that I study Modernism in relation to its predecessor, the late Romanticism of the 1890s (as well as showing the links between this 'Neo-Romanticism', and Romanticism proper). Since the publication of *Axel's Castle* by Edmund Wilson, it has become something of a commonplace that Modernism (or at least part of Modernism) is an adaption of Romantic aesthetics, and works such as *Romantic Image* by Frank Kermode, and *The Post-Romantic Consciousness of Ezra Pound*, by George Bornstein have done much to illuminate this connection. However, it is only recently that work by American scholars such as Leon Surette in *The Birth of Modernism* has enabled us to see the whole picture, and to realise just how much these early Modernists continued the Romantic view of the artist as being a

'visionary' or a 'seer'.

The findings of these writers, (which are prefigured by books such as Thomas Jackson's *The Early Poetry of Ezra Pound,* and Kevin Oderman's *Ezra Pound and the Erotic Medium*), are still controversial, but I think the evidence to support their findings is strong, and getting stronger as more work is done.

For example, Pound's work is filled with allusions to other texts, many of them obscure, or written in languages that, it is reasonable to assume, most readers will not be fluent in (such as Chinese). Moreover, Pound's poetry is frequently incomprehensible unless one understands these allusions. Why was he so obscure?

This is bound up with a broader question; why is Modernist poetry in general so difficult? It is frequently difficult, moreover, not just because the ideas it expresses are complex. It sometimes seems that Modernist poetry *sets out to* be difficult; to exclude the ordinary reader. I will argue that this is, in fact, the case, and that only by studying the philosophical beliefs that animated these texts will we discover why they look the way they do.

It has become fashionable in recent years (partly for the reasons mentioned above) to attack these Modernist thinkers for their alleged 'fascism' or 'élitism'; one thinks of works such as John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* This is a question it is not desirable to gloss over. However, I will argue that, while it is true that much of the political philosophy which is implicit (and explicit) in these Modernist

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texts is unpleasant by our standards, one must bear in mind the situation they found themselves in: that is, as artists, in a world where art seemed to be under attack. I will show that the materialist values of capitalism, seemed, to writers such as W.B. Yeats, to be destroying the values of the past, and that these values were necessary for the creation of great art. Since all these writers believed that art was essential for the continuance of civilisation, it followed that uncontrolled capitalist expansion was a bad thing for art. It would be better, they thought, to return to the values of older civilisations. Their views, were, therefore, on the whole, 'reactionary'.

Not only did the new socioeconomic situation seem to sideline the older, more 'spiritual' values of art, but they also brought in their wake the rise of democracy. To understand why these writers generally opposed democracy, we must understand, first, that, for these thinkers, value (aesthetic value, but also moral value), consisted of ordering. To say that Shakespeare was a greater writer than George Bernard Shaw, is to create an order, a ranking situation, in which Shakespeare is in a higher place than Shaw. And without this concept of aesthetic value, it was felt, art would become meaningless, and therefore redundant.

However, in the new egalitarian society, in which the masses ruled, this order would be decided solely on what was 'popular'. And what the masses preferred, thought Pound and Yeats, was junk; the *Daily Mail*, cheap novels, the cinema. It was easy to make the supposition that the

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'higher' aesthetic values of the past were related to their 'ordered' hierarchical society, in which cultured aristocrats gave patronage to the best and brightest artists of the day, and the ignorant masses were ignored (of course, we must not forget that all these writers were middle class, and that simple snobbery played a part in this idea as well), and that, therefore, the hierarchy of aesthetic value could only be preserved within a society ordered by a *social* hierarchy.

I will argue that it was W.B. Yeats who first formulated these theories, and that Ezra Pound learned his élitism from Yeats. However, this is not to say that *all* Modernist élitism descends from Yeats. Instead, I will show that there are two strands of Anglo-American Modernism, the one descending from T.E. Hulme, a philosopher whose theories owe most to the French school of psychological Associationism and Bergson, and the other being the school of Yeats and Pound.

Both these strands, can, however, be traced back to the earliest thinking of Pater, in the mid-nineteenth century. Not that Hulme was directly influenced by Pater (although Pound and Yeats certainly were). Instead, Pater was the among the first English thinkers to see that the rise of technology and capitalism created a new world, in which the certainties of the past were dissolving. Pater both welcomed and feared this world, and so, even as he celebrates it, he proposes ways of surmounting it, and affirming objectivism and 'value', even in a world of chaos, of moral and aesthetic relativism.

In Chapter One, therefore, I begin by setting out the paradigm I will

be using, which is of the 'cultural materialism' of Raymond Williams. I show how the rise of Romanticism is related to the commodification of art and the decline of the patronage system, and how these tendencies increased as the nineteenth century progressed. Then I illustrate how Pater dealt with these problems, and show that there is an 'early' Pater (who affirmed the new relativist worldview), and a 'later' Pater, who attempted to surmount it. Very roughly, Hulme followed the thinking of the early Pater (whilst also recapitulating his movement towards objectivism), and Yeats and Pound followed the later. I also deal with Pater's view of time, a theme that is developed in the next chapter.

In Chapter Two, I move on to the early work of Yeats, and show to what extent it is indebted to Romanticism. I show that Yeats's theories of apocalypse and the 'gyres' (known to most people from 'The Second Coming') actually date back to the 1890s, that there are similarities to Pater's theories of temporality, but that they owe more to occult thought (such as that espoused by the Order of the Golden Dawn). I then relate his mystical philosophy to his increasing attachment to élitism and authoritarianism.

In Chapter Three, I show how Yeats 'modernised' his verse under the influence of Nietzsche, Synge, Florence Farr and Lady Gregory. The newer, 'harder' Yeats was already visible by 1902.

In Chapter Four, I investigate the early work of Pound, and show the influence of Romanticism and Neo-Romanticism (such as that exemplified by the poetry of Yeats) on this early work. I show that

Pound was interested not only in Yeats's poetry, but also his occult philosophy.

Chapter Five deals with Pound between 1908 and the publication of *Ripostes* (1911). The main focus of this chapter is the vast influence of Yeats on Pound, and Pound's increasing interest in Yeatsian philosophy. The key task for Pound, I shall argue, was looking for a way to write the 'long poem' he had planned since his youth. This subdivided into two problems; how to create a valid form for this poem, and how to deal with the problem of temporality. I argue that *Canzoni was* Pound's first attempt to 'modernise' his poetry, and that the way he chose to do this followed in the footsteps of Yeats, both of them seeking increasing 'precision' in their poetry. I also explain that Pound's interest in French Symbolism functioned as an adjunct to his (primary) interest in the poetry of Yeats.

I claimed earlier that Anglo-American Modernism consisted of two main streams. Up until now, I have dealt only with the school of Pound and Yeats. Now, however, in Chapter Six, I begin to discuss the thought of Hulme. I explain his earliest roots in Associationism and Nietzschean relativism, and, that, even though he accepted their thought intellectually, he found it emotionally unacceptable, and that he found a way out of his dilemma in the philosophy of Henry Bergson. I also explore the so-called 'Forgotten School' of Imagism, and to what extent this prefigured Pound's 'Imagisme'.

In Chapter Seven, I show that Pound's school of 'Imagisme' was *ad*

hoc, with little thought going into formulating a coherent aesthetic. I show that Yeats, and not Ford Madox Ford (or Hulme) was the main influence on 'Imagisme' and that Pound viewed his relationship with Yeats as being more important than his links with the other 'Imagistes'. I also explore his increasing interest in foreign literature, specifically that they may help to act as a basis for the renaissance he believed to be imminent.

I then return to Hulme to show the links between his 'Neo-Classicism' and his earlier philosophy. I argue that there was more continuity than change in his position and that 'Neo-Classicism' developed out of his Associationist readings.

In the same chapter, I show that Pound's (like Yeats's) interest in China followed on from his interest in India. Both Pound and Yeats believed that these were the sort of hierarchical, static, religious (but non-Christian) societies they believed were necessary for the creation of great art. But they also felt they gave examples of a poetry which was precise (something his own poetry now attempted to be), and could give him examples of the sort of form that could structure his epic.

In Chapter Nine, I introduce Wyndham Lewis, and show that Lewis's Vorticism was originally a Bergsonian Neo-Romantic movement, and that only in the very few months before the first world war did Lewis begin to have doubts about Bergsonism. I also demonstrate that, like Imagisme, Vorticism was an *ad hoc* arrangement, and that Pound's

understanding of the word was very different from Lewis's.

In the final chapter, I show that Pound's 'Anti-Humanism' was based on his misunderstanding of Hulme's theory of the same name, which was, again, not a *volte-face* but instead a development of his earlier theories. However, even with Pound's Anti-Humanism was not a reversal of his earlier thinking, but instead a new name with which to deal with old problems.

Chapter One : The Romantics

and Pater

In order to understand Modernism, it is necessary to understand Romanticism, and the extent to which Modernism was a reaction against it.

Romanticism was not a unified 'movement' (any more than Modernism was), but instead a complex of ideas and attitudes which were held to a greater or lesser degree by all those who were (posthumously) dubbed 'Romantic'. The point I wish to concentrate on at present is the relationship between the writer and society, and the extent to which this became problematic during this period (I should add at this point, that this thesis will deal (with the exception of Chapter Ten) with lyric and epic poets. It is their situation that I am mainly concerned with. Therefore, when I use or quote the words 'artist' or 'writer', they are to be assumed to refer to poets only, and not to (for example), novelists, visual artists, or playwrights, where the subject is rather more complex). Raymond Williams lists the relevant ideas succinctly in *Culture and Society*.

There are five main points; first that a major change was taking place in the nature of the relationship between a writer and his readers; second that a different habitual attitude towards the 'public' was establishing itself; third, that the production of art was coming to be regarded as one of a number of specialised kinds of general production; fourth, that the theory of the 'superior reality' of art, as the seat of imaginative truth, was receiving increasing emphasis; fifth, that the idea of the independent creative writer, the autonomous genius, was becoming a kind of rule (Williams, 1958 : 32).

All these points are important, but they all seem to follow from this first point; that the relationship between the artist and society had radically changed. Williams clarifies this point as follows; 'Under patronage, the writer had at least a direct relationship with an immediate circle of readers, from whom, whether prudentially or willingly, as mark or as a matter of respect, he was accustomed to accept and at times to act on criticism [...] the writer "belonged"' (Williams, 1958 : 32).[1] Williams goes on to comment that whereas in the new literary 'market' the artist had opportunities for far greater financial gain than had previously been the case, this opportunity was gained at a price. Now, the artist was responsible not to any individual, 'but to the workings of an institution which seemed largely impersonal' (Williams, 1958 : 33). This new institution is, of course, the growth of

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[1] One could, of course, argue that this was a good thing, and certainly, many writers of the eighteenth century were unhappy with the system (see following footnote). However, patronage had one other advantage, as well as the 'personal relationship' discussed by Williams; security. A poet with a patron was guaranteed an income, regardless of whether the work in question was popular *in the market* (of course it would still have to be liked by the patron). Certainly, the artists who most regretted the end of patronage (like Yeats; see below), were those who knew that they could not have earned an adequate or secure living from sales of their literary work alone (Pethica, 1997). Perhaps the reason these concerns seem most prevalent in the works of epic and lyric poets is that, traditionally, these are the most 'unpopular' of the literary arts, (especially in an age increasingly dominated by the novel), and would therefore have had the most difficulty selling in an open market.

Novelists and playwrights do not seem to have been motivated by these concerns to the same extent. In Chapter Ten, for example, it is interesting that Wyndham Lewis (a prose writer and painter), does not seem to have been concerned with relativism, commodification etc. until after he had begun to associate with Pound and his friends, who certainly were.

It is often claimed that the so-called 'broadsheet ballad sellers' were an exception to this rule, in that they sold lyric poetry directly onto the market as early as the Elizabethan age, but this is a false analogy. The main difference between them and lyric poets of the eighteenth century is that the 'ballad sellers' had no consciousness of writing as a *career*. Many of them had no concept of it as a craft. Most of them were teenagers, hawking ballads (most of which were not written by them), around alehouses, brothels and so on, for a brief period of time in their lives. Most of them had, in any case, other sources of income; such as begging, theft, and, as a matter of fact, patronage.

The vast majority of them were, in other words, peddlers or criminals, who hawked ballads as well as their other wares. We will remember that Autolycus's (from *A Winter's Tale*) main produce was linen; selling songs was a sideline. (Watt, 1991)

what Williams calls the 'literary market'; in other words, the breakdown of the old system of patronage, and its replacement by the capitalist marketplace.[2]

This leads on the William's third point, that in the early nineteenth century, people began to look upon the work of art as a commodity, which would have to sell in the marketplace in the same way as any other commodity. But as Marx (following Adam Smith) pointed out, commodities have two kinds of value; their 'use value' and their 'exchange value'. The 'exchange value' of a commodity is whatever is it could be exchanged for; and for literary works this would obviously be the amount of money that the public was prepared to pay for it. The 'use value' of a literary work, was, however, much more problematic

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[2] This vast subject, is, of course, rather more complex than this brief note allows, of course. For example, whereas it is true that writers in the pre-Romantic period obtained money from patrons, this did not, of course, preclude them from obtaining income from other sources as well (such as inheritances, for example).

Moreover, there does not seem to have been quite as sharp a break between patronage and Capitalism as this passage implies. Critics are hazy about when patronage ended, with many proposing Samuel Johnson's cry "we have done with patronage" from 1773 as marking the final end of the system. (Donoghue, 1996 : 1). However, another critic can claim that Alexander Pope was 'a professional poet, the first to live successfully without patronage', adding that 'Dryden had tried to live without patronage, and had died in poverty' (Gurr, 1971 : 5).This would seem to imply that patronage was already breaking down at the end of the seventeenth century.

However, we must remember that Pope's translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which earned him the majority of his money (approximately £5,000 each) were due to innovative subscription techniques (and not, therefore, sales alone). No-one had ever made quite this much money from the writing of poetry before (Gurr, 1971). As a contrast, Milton made £10 in total for *Paradise Lost* (Hunter, 1978).

What seems to have happened in the eighteenth century, the most recent scholarship has discovered, is that the financial value of patronage stayed more or less the same throughout the period (and had remained at this level since the Renaissance), but that the literary market increased, so that *as a percentage of the money given to the arts* patronage became increasingly unimportant. It was, therefore, the population explosion at the end of the century which made patronage irrelevant as a solution to the problem of the funding of the arts (Donoghue, 1996).

One must not neglect in this discussion the decline of other forms of income, such as (as mentioned above), inheritance, during this period. Whereas in the Victorian period inheritance still played a part in sustaining some members of the bourgeoisie, by the early twentieth century it had all but died out, forcing writers increasingly to have 'careers' and make their money from what they could sell in the market, *and nothing else.*

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(Marx writes 'A commodity can be alienated as a use-value only to one whom it serves as a use-value i.e [...] , as a means of satisfying a certain want' (Marx, 1904 : 43). It is this question, if what particular 'want' art satisfies that was persistently asked during this period. Certainly a writer could defend his work on the grounds that it sold (and only if. Marx writes 'exchange value is a variable quantity'; i.e. it is not a consistent value (Marx, 1904 : 35)). If however, the work failed to sell in the marketplace, then this defence would itself, fail, and the writer would have to appeal to some other criterion of value. And positing such criteria would, by definition, challenge the view of art being a commodity, and nothing else.[3]

It was to this latter tactic that writers and intellectuals were increasingly driven to. It is no coincidence that it is at this point that the autonomous study of aesthetics began. (Williams writes 'Aesthetics, itself a new word, and a product of the specialisation (i.e. the narrowing of artistic to activities that only belonged to "high art"), similarly stood parent to aesthete, which again indicated a "special kind of person"' (Williams, 1958 : 44). Thus there is a relationship between Romantic aestheticism, and the new study of aesthetics). If it was true that there was some other form of value, that ignored (or,

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[3] The idea that art is simply a commodity and nothing else is often taken to be the belief of the class displacing the aristocracy at this time, the bourgeoisie. Whether this is the case or not, it is certainly true that artists and intellectuals believed it to be the case. It was Matthew Arnold, of course, who, speaking of this class, called them 'The Philistines' (Arnold, 1965), and 'The Philistines [...] dealt in education as though it were a commodity to be measured in terms of money and respectability' (Avery, 1971 :126). Avery points out that Mr Podsnap from *Our Mutual Friend is* a perfect example of the type. Dickens goes out of his way to point out that Podsnap considers Literature's only purpose to be to flatter himself and people like him. It was this attitude that the Romantics reacted against.

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possibly, was even antithetical towards) the value that the 'market' gave to a work, then what one meant by the concept of 'value' would have to be agreed upon.

So, the whole concept of 'worth', 'value', and what the 'literary merit' of a work might be, and how one might evaluate this, was up for debate in a way it had never been before. It is, therefore, no surprise that Romanticism expresses the problems with defining the ontological status of 'the aesthetic' at the same time as it expresses the growing division between what were perceived as being the values of the artist and the values of the rest of society. These problems were two sides of the same coin; and at the time they were expressed as the concepts that

A) the work of art needed no 'external' justification (that questions of the utilitarian value of art were unimportant; that its only justification was its aesthetic value, though the status and meaning of that last phrase had yet to be defined) and

B) the values of the 'public' were irrelevant to the concerns of the artist.

That these impulses began to be felt particularly strongly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was undoubtedly due primarily to the impact of what Eric Hobsbawm, in *The Age of Revolution 1789-*

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1848 calls the 'impact of the dual revolutions i.e. the French Revolution and the industrial revolution (Hobsbawm, 1988) (This is shown by the self valuation of the artists whose fields were not significantly affected by these changes. As Hobsbawm again points out; those creatively involved in arts where the role of the artist was not affected by these revolutions did not produce Romantic art (Hobsbawm, 1988)).

Hobsbawm elaborates; 'The real problem was that of the artist cut off from a recognisable function, patron or public and left to cast his soul as a commodity upon the blind market, to be bought or not' (Hobsbawm, 1988 : 316), and he goes on to show how this led to the development of the ideology of the 'genius'; a man somehow intrinsically different or better than the mass of common humanity.

This view of art led to two separate views of the standing of the artist. To the Philistine, the poet whose work had no obvious 'use value' was nothing more than a wastrel; to the artist, he was a superior being, whose genius was beyond the understanding of the bourgeoisie. However, these views were not as antithetical as they might seem. The critic Gerald Graff expresses this linkage thus:

There is a secret and unacknowledged collaboration between rebellious aesthetes and their Philistine detractors which remains an unwritten chapter in the social history of art. For both poetolatory's glorification of the artist as a demigod and the Philistines' denigration of him as an irresponsible social deviant share a common definition of the artist as a special kind of person, one who perceives the world in a way different to that of ordinary objective judgment (Graff, 1977 : 223).

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To discuss what Graff means by 'objective judgment' in this context, we must introduce a number of other points related to the 'dual revolution'. The first is the division between two kinds of knowledge (which we might call 'hard' and 'soft'). Up until now, we have merely looked at the introduction of the market to literature, and with the problems caused by treating art as a commodity.

However, a concomitant of the industrial Revolution was that science and technology were being brought into people's lives at an unprecedented rate (Hobsbawm, 1988 : 27-52). This had two major consequences for the relationship between the arts and the sciences.

Firstly there was the use of scientific or pseudo-scientific philosophies to justify the inequalities caused by the industrial Revolution.[4]   (Mainly economics. As Hobsbawm writes, 'The daring innovation of the classical rationalists had been to demonstrate that something like logically compulsory laws were applicable to human consciousness and free decision. The "laws" of political economy were

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[4] It was undoubtedly the capitalist's valuation of profit above morality, indeed, the statement that there *was no* morality except the accumulation of profit, that caused the Romantics to first oppose them and their thinking. The poet Southey, for example, 'rejected the notion that political economy was concerned with general welfare, and condemned its exclusion of all moral considerations [...] to Richard Oastler, it [...] seemed nothing less than blasphemy to him that such a principle should be seen, as he believed it was being seen, as the fulfilment of the laws of nature.' The Lake Poets soon coined the phrase 'commercialism' to define this attitude, to which they associated 'materialism' both being associated as philosophies that denied the existence of moral and aesthetic value.

It might be thought that they were exaggerating. But actually, many industrialists agreed with the poet's diagnosis. 'Robert Owen acknowledged that pecuniary gain was the governing principle of trade [...] to achieve this a man must buy cheap and sell dear, and to succeed in this he must acquire such powers of deception that he must lose all honesty and sincerity'. In short ' it was good, conceded Howitt, that two blades were growing where previously there had been but one, but humanity had needs beyond the physical ones, and provision must be made for the spiritual and intellectual, as well as the bodily needs' (Thomis, 1976 : 103-104).

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of this sort. The conviction that they were as far beyond liking and disliking as the laws of gravity (with which they were often compared) lent a certain ruthless certainty to the capitalists of the early nineteenth century, and tended to imbue their romantic opponents with an *equally wild anti-rationalism'* (Hobsbawm, 1988 : 343 (my italics))[5] . Thus, Shelley's suspicion of rationality in his *Defence of Poetry*, is, as he says, prompted by moral indignation; 'Whilst the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines labour, let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want.'(Shelley, 1909 : 149). The 'mechanist' and 'political economist', says Shelley, provide a psuedo-philosophy ('speculations') that have, in 'modern England' led to huge inequalities between rich and poor, because their thought does not correspond to the principles of the '*imagination*'. So writers of the time were driven to be increasingly suspicious of pure rationality; what one might call 'hard' knowledge, knowledge that ignores the principles of the imagination.

Secondly, as I have already mentioned, rationality was the tool with which the utility of art was questioned. To quote Shelley again; 'But poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists, on another plea. It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged that that of reason is

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[5] We should remember this identification of anti-rationalism and romanticism when we come to analyse the thought of T.E. Hulme.

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more *useful* (Shelley, 1909 : 148 (my italics)). Here,then, are the roots of Romantic distrust of rationality and science (the classic discussion of this is in *Science and the Modern World,* by A.N. Whitehead. Whitehead concludes his chapter on Romanticism; 'the romantic revival was a protest on behalf of the organic view of nature, and also a protest against the exclusion of value from the essence of matter of fact [...] The romantic reaction was a protest on behalf of value' (Whitehead : 1985 118). Whitehead was using 'value' in a slightly different way from the way I am using it here, but this is not important for this discussion).

Underlying this debate was the hidden assumption, which was held as fervently by the Romantics as their rationalist opponents, that the field of knowledge, which had once been 'organic' and 'whole' (just like society), had now become split in two; into rational (and empirical) knowledge, and, on the other hand, emotional, subjective knowledge. And the two were now perceived as having a different truth status. After all, was it not the case that if something had been shown to be the case by scientific experiment, this proved that it was *objectively* true? And was it not the case (to quote two contemporary linguists discussing 'objectivism') that 'Only objective knowledge is really knowledge'? (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 : 188).

If this is the case, however, then what is the status of other kinds of knowledge that we have; knowledge of our feelings and emotions; and feelings about what is valuable in our lives; so called 'subjective'

knowledge? The answer that one might well arrive at, as Lakoff and Johnson continue, was that objectivism implies that 'To be objective is to be rational; to be subjective is to be irrational and to give in to the emotions' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 : 188). According to this view, scientific knowledge, which is equated with rationality, is therefore the only true form of knowledge; subjective knowledge, knowledge of values and emotion, is of an inferior kind, and should be discounted whenever possible. But in the face of the encroaching of the capitalist marketplace, as stated earlier, it is precisely this 'subjective' world of values whose ontological status a whole generation of intellectuals were attempting to justify, under the name of aesthetics. Aesthetics attempted to deal with, and quantify the world of taste, emotion and sentiment that was involved when one 'appreciates' (for example) a work of art.

However, according to the 'objectivist' viewpoint, all this work was worthless; the conclusions it arrived at were not 'objective'. As Gerald Graff puts it.

It was the diminished status of rational knowledge, reduced to mere neutral fact, which inspired the romantic invention of imaginative truth as an antidote. But [...] the romantic exploitation of imaginative truth was shadowed by the age's apprehension that any truth containing a value- component (if not all truth) might be no more than an arbitrary construction. Objective facts, for all their unsatisfactory inertness, could at least be verified. If imaginative truth were determined from within rather than without, how could a poet know whether one myth prompted by his imagination were truer than any other? (Graff, 1977 :

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A division had therefore appeared between two modes of cognition; modes which had once (it seemed) been united in an organic unity, but were now divided. The natural response to those who would question the utility of the world of values, was for their opponents to emphasise its importance, and emphasise the shortcomings of the 'objectivist', rationalist, mechanist viewpoint. The key word was the word 'truth'. Science and rationality justified themselves because their findings were objectively true. The obvious response was to retaliate that value judgments, emotional states and so forth, were also true. Moreover in terms of the whole person, these truths were more important than 'mere neutral fact'.

As against the 'objectivist' myth, then, there now appeared the 'subjectivist' myth, defined by Lakoff and Johnson as follows; 'Art and poetry transcend rationality and objectivity and put us in touch with the more important reality of our feelings and emotions [...] it (i.e. subjectivism) takes as its allies the emotions, intuitive insight, imagination, [...] art, and a 'higher' truth' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980 : 188).

By attacking the scientific, 'rational' side of man and exalting the 'irrational', emotional, artistic side, therefore, Romantic poets admitted that a split had taken place and implicitly conceded that a unification was impossible. By claiming that value was brought into the world by the individual poet, one concedes that values (even poetic

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values) are to some extent, arbitrary. And this brings up the threat of aesthetic relativism; the idea that *all* value judgments may be only subjective, and therefore, perhaps, arbitrary (relativism, in the present context, therefore, means aesthetic, or moral, relativism, not epistemological relativism).[6]

And so, when Shelley began his *Defence of Poetry*, it was this division that it already seemed natural to begin with; the division between 'reason and imagination.' He continues that imagination is the 'principle of synthesis, and has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself', whereas reason 'regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results'. (Shelley 1909 : 120). It is reason, therefore, which disrupts the urge towards unity in nature, which splits it up. Genuine unity; 'organic ' unity, can only be achieved by taking the imagination into account. This

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[6] It is difficult to find statements made at the time which support these views by definition; the Philistines would not write philosophical treatises to support their philistinism. However, by examining the thought of Jeremy Bentham one can perhaps see something closest to what the Romantics feared. To be fair, as Bentham grew older his thought became more democratic and radical, but in his youth he was undoubtedly associated with the *laissez-faire* approach to the economy, and a benign authoritarianism (Dinwiddie, 1989).

It was Bentham who wrote 'Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either. Everybody can play at push-pin; poetry and music are relished only by a few [...] it is only from custom and prejudice that, in matters of taste, we speak of false and true' (Bentham, 1843 : 253-254).

Bentham spends much time ridiculing the idea of 'value'. If something is popular, says Bentham , it is, by definition, good. He thus makes the link between aesthetic relativism (as stated above), and a sort of populism that is deeply distrustful of any suspicion of élitism, especially literary élitism.

It is only by realising that, to the Romantics (and, later on, Neo-Romantics), Bentham was *saying* what many people were *thinking*, that one can understand artist's fears for the future of the production of serious art.

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irrationality can be misunderstood. Shelley is not of course, advocating the abolition of reason; his language, which posits holism, urges the reconciliation of the two modes of thought. But because it is imagination which most seems to be threatened, he stresses the extent to which it is necessary to the artist, and therefore to humanity.

But to accept this dichotomy brings new difficulties to the quest to escape from the aesthetic relativism discussed earlier. For by accepting this division, and by insisting that the imagination is more important (in terms of the whole being) than rationality, it therefore becomes difficult to rationally justify a system of aesthetics (by definition; one cannot rationally justify something if it is rational justification itself that has led to the need for justification). And yet, if art cannot be justified by an appeal to some *form* of aesthetic value, then it *really* is just a commodity, which must sell in the marketplace alongside boot laces and kettles. And, to reiterate, if artistic objects had no *intrinsic* value that could be justified in this way, then their value would be wholly contingent on their market value. But the rising bourgeoisie, as we have seen, had little taste for poetry that did not exalt their own beliefs (or rather, their Romantic critics had little faith that this would not be the case). It seemed safe to deduce, therefore, that the market value of texts such as a lyric poem would be small indeed, and, in the case of writers such as Keats and John Clare, their fears seemed to be borne out. Poets, therefore, sought a way of reaffirming the value of their works without relying on the vagaries of the bourgeoisie.

Caught in this trap, there was an obvious way out; to posit an *irrationalist* defence of aesthetic value. The form which this took will be discussed below; the main point to grasp here is that it was formulated as a reaction to the fear that art may indeed, in the new rationalist, mechanist, capitalist, world, have no purpose.[7]

The rise of science and technology also had an impact on people's perceptions of time. There are, again, two points to be made here. Firstly, as opposed to what now seemed to be the stasis of the past, under the influence of the 'dual revolutions', time seemed to have moved into a new gear; change instead of stasis became the rule. As Poulet writes in *Studies in Human Time:* 'The nineteenth century had in the highest degree what Renan called the "intuition of becoming" [...] time seems an essentially continuous motion which can only be understood in its trend away from an original cause; it is a becoming which is always the future' (Poulet 1956 : 31-32). Poulet continues; 'This perceptible time is such only because it is conceived as an immense causal chain. Everything is manifested in it, under the form of a continuous implication of causes and effects [...] There is from the first [...] a generative law, first principle of duration, but lacking duration. In order to conceive it, the mind must exile itself from time to enter into a kind of negative eternity' (Poulet, 1956 : 32). And this

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7 And may therefore become extinct.The Romantics themselves tended to be too optimistic to state this fear, of the redundancy of art openly. As we will see, however, Neo-Romantics like Yeats *did* state it, over and over again. And they specifically linked this fear, that art would become extinct, to the rise of the bourgeoisie, and to the bourgeoisie's 'materialism' (that is to say, their denial of metaphysical values). As I will show later on, Wyndham Lewis, Yeats, and even, at times, Ezra Pound, all believed that it was possible that high art was dying.

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other, prior time, is, as Poulet states 'a purely scientific time, made of determinations and effects, it is not the time of the human being' (Poulet, 1956 : 33). Behind, in other words, the idea of the organic time of 'a becoming' of, in other words, progress, lies the time that has been created by the scientific world; a world that is not organic, but consists of discrete events of cause and effect; and 'A world of cause and effect becomes an illusory world, a world that vanishes like the mist in shreds of duration, some of which, the more hallucinatory, last a little longer than others' (Poulet, 1956 : 33). And this also, clearly links up with Baudelaire's comment that 'The ephemeral, the fleeting forms of beauty in our day [...] [are] the characteristic traits of what [...] we have called "modernity"' (Baudelaire,1972 : 435). Peter Nicholls, in *Modernisms* shows the ubiquity of this idea in the mid nineteenth century in Emerson and Marx, among others. And he links this with the growth and increasing ubiquity of the capitalist market; 'Here, too the particular modernist preoccupation with time begins, for as Baudelaire's comment suggests, the conjunction of greed and inertia implies that the market has somehow frozen the movement of history, installing in its place a procession of ever "new" commodities' (Nicholls, 1995 : 7) (it is the ubiquity of the market, together with the new sense of 'becoming' that it engendered, that makes the experience of the capitalist market different from earlier market systems).

This scientific 'packaging' of time, again, clearly relates to Shelley's sense of time being related to 'place, number and the conceptions'; i.e.

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that which rationally divided things, rather than that which organically united them. Shelley writes 'A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his perception, time and place and number are not' (Shelley, 1909 : 124). Place and number are of course associated with the particular form of time that is associated with rationality. Therefore, Shelley creates another dichotomy; between the organic, holistic, and 'timeless' world of the imagination, and the rational world, which consists of discrete units of 'packaged' time (this urge for holism is ubiquitous amongst the early Romantics). 'All the major romantic writers, and Blake most emphatically, set as the goal for mankind, the reachievement of a unity which has been earned by unceasing effort [...] Blake recognised the strength of civilised man's yearning for simple self-unity of the life of infants and of instinctual creatures' (Abrams, 1971 : 260-261). The packaged time created by reason, science and commerce is emotionally unsatisfying; it seems to break reality down into mere contingent events. It makes time, and therefore life, seem to have no meaning. As John Shawcross writes, speaking of Shelley, 'It is from his keen sense of the obscurity, the complexity, and changefulness of the material world, where "nothing endures but mutability" and where so much seems accidental, aimless and superfluous, that Shelley's longing for a world of permanent forms and his faith in its existence are sprung' (Shelley, 1909 : xi). 'The material world' is therefore, for Shelley, now associated now with temporality, which as we have already seen, is associated with

rationality, technology, and the rest.

Shelley therefore posits the idea that poetry contains 'eternal truths'; it has in a way, defeated Time, which 'destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts' and he was not alone in doing so. But eternity is seen behind, and through, as it were, the apparent world of the moment. The writings of the early Romantics are suffused with this cult of the 'moment' in particular the poetry of Shelley and Blake (Abrams, 1971 : 387). In all their works, however, the moment in time leads to what Abrams calls a 'timeless revelation' And Wordsworth's poetry as well, frequently deals with instances in which his ' eye is fixed on the object [...] the object itself suddenly becomes charged with revelation' (Abrams, 1971 : 388). His 'higher poetry' (i.e. poetry of the exalted, timeless moment) combines '"the wisdom of the heart and the grandeur of the imagination"' (Abrams, 1971 : 393), because it saw eternal truth, which was in the final analysis, religious 'There is an affinity between religion-whose element is infinitude [...] and poetry-aetherial and transcendent' (Abrams, 1971 : 395).

Poetry, therefore, had a truth value. And its truth value was not less, but more, objective than scientific or rational truth, which were merely contingent. Poetic truths were timeless. And here, of course, was a way out of the relativist maze. For if a poem had an 'eternal truth value', then the ephemeral praise (or condemnation) of the bourgeoisie was irrelevant; the poem justified itself to society (because it was 'true') and, at the same time its value was eternal; value had therefore freed

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itself from the charge of relativism; even though public taste may be ephemeral, the aesthetic merit of a poem was established beyond a doubt.

But, again, since (for the reasons we have seen earlier) these visions of the 'real' world that lay behind reality, could not be justified 'rationally' (unlike Plato's for example) how were they to be justified at all? The problems had been stated by the first generation of Romantics, but they had generally backed away from the new 'subjectivist' world they had stumbled into (see, for example, the 'later' Wordsworth and Coleridge), and the second generation (of Byron, Shelley and Keats) had died before they had had a chance to explore these new problems. And so it was not until midway through the nineteenth century that work really began on working out the implications of the Romantic paradigm.

The first major thinker in England to follow through the implications of these ideas in a systematic way was Pater. His investigations were to have a profound impact on writers for the next half century, up to and including, the early English Modernists. This is not to say that all these writers were 'influenced' by him, but that, as F.C. McGrath puts it in *The Sensible Spirit*, Pater's texts 'as a whole present a conceptual paradigm that constitutes a substantial portion of the intellectual foundations of Modernist aesthetics and that consequently elucidates many of the premises, themes, motifs, and techniques of the major Modernist texts' (McGrath, 1986 : 3).

Pater begins, in his earliest essays, by dealing with the rise of science, and the implications of this for the humanities; in other words, with the same problems that had concerned the Romantics. 'Modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the "relative" spirit in place of the "absolute" [...] The philosophical conception of the relative has been developed in modern times through the influence of the sciences of observation [...] The moral world is ever in contact with the physical, and the relative spirit has invaded moral philosophy from the ground of the inductive sciences' (Pater, 1889 : 65-66). One must be careful to follow Pater's language here, or it is easy to misunderstand him. Pater is not claiming here that science has relativised *all* knowledge (after all, if science itself was just another myth, then it is not clear why its truth claims would matter to the humanities, or anything else). He does not say that relativism has drifted into the humanities because science itself tends towards relativism. Instead, he says that older, more holistic terms for reality, have broken down in the face of the more accurate, empirical descriptions of physical science. In the famous *Conclusion* to *The Renaissance*, he explains why, showing how science's tendency to break things down into their component parts has, in a sense, atomised reality; broken it down into discrete units ; 'What is the whole of physical life [...] but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names?' (Pater, 1980 : 186). It has done this not just to external reality, but to internal reality as well. 'If we begin with

the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid [...] At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects [...] but when reflection begins to act upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence [...] each object is loosed into a group of impressions [...] in the mind of the observer (Pater, 1980 : 187). Notice that Pater uses the phrases 'philosophical (not scientific) conception of the relative' and 'the moral world'. Inductive science is based on the ground (in its empiricism), but it is moral philosophy that becomes 'relativised'. There is no question, for Pater, of science having relativised itself; instead by dissolving the old moral and metaphysical boundaries, it has helped to relativise 'moral philosophy' (and, we might infer, the humanities generally. This is of course, a reiteration of the Romantic division between 'hard' (true, scientific), and 'soft' (subjective, relative), knowledge) (it is only fair to add that Pater's language is ambiguous, and that whereas he seems to be admitting that science is 'objectively true' here, in other passages he seems to imply that the relativism unleashed by science has relativised science as well, which would seem to undermine his whole argument: see footnote six).

Pater's investigation begins, therefore, by commenting that science's seizing of the particular, and its suspicion of theory (with the exception of scientific theory), has dissolved what we are used to taking for granted; the external world of 'objects' and even our subjective sense of ourselves as being unified personalities. Pater then

goes on to discuss the implications this has for our sense of time.

Analysis goes a step further still, and tells us that those impressions of the individual which, for each of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it [...] to such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a singly sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with the movement, the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off (Pater, 1980 : 188).

For Pater, then, time has been cut into what Poulet called 'shreds of duration'. There is nothing beyond the moment, and so 'the purpose of philosophy, [...] and culture [...] is to startle it into sharp and eager observation [...] to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moment's sake' (Pater, 1980 : 190).

In this emphasis on the moment, Pater is following on from the innovations of the English Romantics, as he himself is aware (the influence of the French Romantics, especially Baudelaire, is also apparent (Conlon, 1982 : 85-94)). However, his reading of the them was new (and influential). Wordsworth and Romantic poets in general were undergoing a revival during the 1870s (Guy, 1991 :109-110), but they were mainly viewed as being primarily great moralists, whose concentration on nature was a necessarily wholesome counterpoint to

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the evils of the industrial Revolution, and as helping to democratise the language of poetry, with their use of the demotic. It is these assumptions that Pater attacks. For Pater, Wordsworth's great discovery is, that in the world of the relative, the only sure knowledge was knowledge about one's own thought processes (Pater, 1889).[8] 'In much that he said in exaltation of rural life, he was but pleading indirectly for that sincerity, that perfect fidelity to one's own inner presentations, to the precise features of the picture within, without which any profound poetry is impossible' (Pater, 1889 : 49-50).

In this important passage, Pater identifies the 'picture within' as being the essential component of great poetry. And this picture within can only be discerned 'in select moments of vivid sensation' (Pater, 1889 : 50).In other words, the essence of poetry is the 'select moment' when one perceives an inner vision, when one sees that the world of nature is not just nature but indicative of something behind or beyond it (and Pater is well aware that this points belief points in the direction of Platonism or pantheism. This moment, is, therefore, an *internal* revelation in which *external* reality is seen in a different light. Since the 'truth' of these visions is open to the same objections to Romantic truths as Graff detailed earlier, Pater is fascinated by the pantheistic conclusions one would seem to be able to draw from them, but without

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[8] This follows from Pater's view of science as reducing reality to inert, desacralised 'facts' without the older metaphysical philosophical views to, as it were, wrap round them and give them meaning. However, even if this is the case, science still insists that these facts or objects do exist, that they are not merely subjective or idealist fragments of consciousness, which is what Pater seems to imply when he states that the only things we can ever really know is our own consciousness. In other words, Pater too easily elides between a scientific empiricism and a phenomenological view of reality without acknowledging the change. It may be that Pater's thought does not make sense here.

committing himself to whether they are metaphors or not). It is when Wordsworth forgets this, and introduces material extraneous to the 'inward presentation' that his poetry falters, according to Pater (Pater, 1889).

However, even though Pater has now defined the essentials of art, he has, as yet, failed to answer why this new approach to art is necessary. The *purpose* of describing one's own inner thought processes is still in doubt. For Pater is aware that it is difficult to claim that knowledge has been radically relativised without admitting the implications of this for aesthetics. Following the Shelley of The *Defence of Poetry*, he concludes that, when all is said and done, truth still exists, and we must use the concept to as a basis for aesthetically judging one's own 'inner thought': 'For just in proportion as the writers' aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist [...] and good art [...] in proportion to the truth of his presentment of that sense [...] Truth! there can be no merit, no craft at all without that' (Pater, 1889 : 6). Truth is therefore, exempted from the 'spirit of the relative' and valorised as an aesthetic criterion; we should judge the work from the degree of fidelity the author shows to his 'inner vision'.

Pater's next problem in justifying the new poetry is the problem of aesthetics. How can we judge the 'inner vision' that a poet produces? Pater here accepts the ideology of the 'genius' that Hobsbawm introduced us to earlier; that is, that some people's inner world has

greater fundamental worth than others. And he does this because his whole task is to face and surmount the problems of 'the relative spirit' introduced by science. If he were to radically democratise aesthetic value (by accepting that anyone's value judgments were as good as anybody else's) then he would be accepting the aesthetic relativism he had set out to face and surmount. And so he builds up a set of criteria by which the true poet will be separated from the masses. He (sic) must be a scholar writing for scholars, he will understand tradition, he will reject extraneous matter, he will choose the word or phrase that corresponds to the internal image, and so forth (Pater, 1889).

What few people have noticed in discussing Pater's definition of the artist in these very early essays, however, is that his definitions are tautological. Ultimately, the poet will only be able to justify his own sense of worth by turning inward, in line with Pater's previous strictures. For example, the true poet will understand tradition, but there are no objective structures of knowledge (to Pater) which exist outside himself, by which he can prove his understanding. Pater is well aware of the problem. He attempts to defend himself thus; 'A relegation, you may say perhaps - a relegation of style to the subjectivity, the mere caprice, of the individual [...] Not so! since there is, under the conditions supposed, for those elements of the man, for every lineament of the vision within, the one word, the one acceptable word, recognisable by the sensitive, by others "who have intelligence" in the matter, as absolutely as anything ever can be in the evanescent

and delicate region of human language' (Pater,1889 : 34). But Pater therefore cannot define who the sensitive are or how they come by this knowledge. Those 'who have intelligence' understand the one 'vision within', but are unable to explain how they evaluate the 'one acceptable word'.

So by a process of dialectic, even as Pater embraces 'the flux' most fervently, he is, at the same time, driven away from it, by his own logic. He relativises aesthetic and moral values, and even seems to attempt to relativise science and reduce all knowledge to merely a study of the individual's consciousness, but this immediately leads to confusion. As discussed in the previous page, despite his relativising, Pater is eventually forced to unrelativise the concept of truth, simply in order to give meaning to his whole aesthetic. Thus, even as Pater denies value and truth, an opposite force to affirm them is set in motion. This process begins almost immediately. As Ward puts it in *Walter Pater*, 'As he (i.e. Pater) dwells on the implications of this state of movement [...] Pater finds himself, almost in spite of himself, expressing a *contrary* movement of mind, which is suggested to him first in the word "fixing"' (Ward, 1966 : 33). Pater was, however, loath to simply return to the older metaphysical world of absolutes. Instead he wished to accept but surmount the world of relativism and the flux.

Pater begins his attempt by trying to get beyond the view with which he starts, that time consists of moments and nothing else. And in his attempts to get beyond a view of time as consisting only of moments,

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Pater was driven to see another kind of time behind them; 'Pater sees evidence for the dual character of time in *history* '(Ward, 1966 : 53).

It is here that Pater's dialogue with Hegel begins. Again, this fascination must be seen in its historical context. From the 1850s onwards, Hegel's reputation grew in Britain, until at 'the end of the century, Hegel's thought becomes the dominant force in English philosophy' (Ward, 1966 : 44). The aspect of Hegel's thought that Pater was particularly interested in was his concept of evolution. This was again, a common response to the increasing agnosticism of science in Victorian England (Christ, 1975 : 107-108). 'In order to answer Darwin and the natural scientists, it was clear that categorical refusal to accept the validity of their mode of reasoning would not do. If the independent life of the mind was to be reestablished it was necessary to lay the claim open to criteria of empirical verification-to accept all the scientist said, but to take his analysis a step further. Evolutionism impregnated every branch of knowledge after 1859' (Ward, 1966 : 45).

Hegel's view of history is, of course, evolutionary, and this is the aspect of his philosophy that Pater seizes upon. The actual mechanism of this evolution is immaterial, as is demonstrated by the fact that Pater lumped together Hegelian and Darwinian theories of evolution as though they were fundamentally the same theory (Iser, 1987 : 77). The *mechanics* of the evolutionary process were not important (again, Pater was in the mainstream here (Ward, 1966 : 45-52)). What *was*

important was the recognition that evolution existed; that is to say that in the material universe, there was a tendency for things to progress from simpler to more complex forms. Change occurred, but as part of an overall pattern. Pater was quick to apply Darwinian theories of evolution to human evolution, that is to say, history. With a 'progressivist' view of history one could acknowledge change, and yet give it meaning (Iser, 1987 : 75-80).

In the essay 'Winckelmann', Pater acknowledges Hegel in the text, and gives a very Hegelian view of the history of art (Shaw, 1987 : 237-239). 'The arts may thus be arranged in a series, which corresponds to a series of developments in the human mind itself' (Pater, 1980 : 167) he writes and goes on to show how, beginning with the Greeks, art progresses through architecture and sculpture, to 'painting, music and poetry'; the arts of modernity (Pater, 1980 : 168). The arts are always in a state of flux, and, conforming to his anti-metaphysical bias, for Pater, unlike for Hegel, there is no end result to this process. 'Evolution seen as the triumph of abstract principles over individual experience is alien to Pater, who prizes individual experience [...] Pater's rejection of any philosophy of history has its deepest roots in his concept of time as the background to all events. There is no philosophy of history that does not, in its own way, focus on the *end* of time' (Iser, 1987 : 79). Pater is not interested in anything as abstract as the 'point' of history. Instead, he sees history 'as a means whereby the individual could find reassurance and self-awareness' (Iser, 1987 : 78).

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And the individual could do this, because, with history, one could find certainty in the flux. Speaking of aesthetics, Pater talks about Greek art:

Again, individual genius works ever under conditions of time and place; its products are coloured by the varying aspects of nature, and type of human form, and outward manners of life. There is thus an element of change in art, criticism must never forget for a moment that 'the artist is the child of his time'. But besides these conditions of time and place, and independent of them, there is also and element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses. [...] The supreme artistic products of succeeding generations thus form a series of elevated points, taking each from each the reflection of a strange light, the source of which is not in the atmosphere around and above them, but in a stage of society remote from ourselves. The standard of taste, then, was *fixed* in Greece, at a definite historical period (Pater, 1980 : 158-159) (my italics).

Pater therefore discovers 'objective' standards of taste in history. And this idea is not antithetical, but complementary, to, his previous praise of the 'moment'. Writing in the 'Conclusion', Pater writes, 'a counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses?' (Pater, 1908 : 188). These 'pulses' clearly parallel the 'elevated points' of history. There is a harmony underlying reality, and man discovers it through history. When, in *Appreciations*, he writes of the '"moments of insight" when the mind is able to penetrate "beneath the veil"' (Ward, 1966 : 68), he is talking of moments in which one

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perceives the pattern of history underneath the flux of the moment. If
one wishes to use Hegelian language, the thesis of the moment meets
the antithesis of history, to create a synthesis, which acknowledges
both. When Pater writes, of art that 'The hard, gem like flame' will burn
(Pater, 1980 : 189), this is a symbol of this synthesis. The flame
represents the flux, and the gem represents stasis. Great art will consist
of both. This, then, is the Pater's ultimate way out from the threat of
aesthetic relativism; what he called 'the relative spirit'.

Pater's view of history is an adaption of Hegel's, and yet it differs in a
number of important respects. The most important of these is that, in
the final analysis, Pater has not abandoned his relativist views, but has
attempted to overcome them. He can thus, in the 'Conclusion',
continue to rail against a 'facile orthodoxy, of Comte or of Hegel'
(Pater, 1980 : 189). This orthodoxy is facile because it does not keep
close to experience; 'the particular spirit' of science has destroyed the
old fashioned idea of systems building. From now on there are to be no
systems; only experience of particulars.

The second point is that Pater did not believe in Hegel's *Geist*. *Geist*,
for Pater, is another metaphysical abstraction, which is postulated
rather than experienced.[9] Instead of *Geist*, Pater substitutes Art. Pater
'reverses Hegel's triad of absolute spirit and sees art, rather than

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9 'For Pater, the self-perceiving mind unfolded in the history of art is human and individual. He
does not view the world as a substance, but as a being ripened by the constant interplay
between challenge and response in his dealings with the outside world. Hegel, on the other
hand, saw the mind, or spirit, as substance, the teleological movement of the absolute on its way
to self-consciousness. Pater takes over the Hegelian schema of history, but not the ideas that
gave rise to it' (Iser, 1987 : 73).

philosophy or religion, as the most effective and powerful means of enhancing our understanding and appreciation of experience' (McGrath, 1986 : 111). And this is because, unlike religion or metaphysical philosophy, Art does not necessarily imply the Absolute (McGrath, 1986). And so Pater 'reverses Hegel's strategy. Instead of freeing a spiritual content from a material form, which is the process Hegel analyses, Pater 'praises art for freeing a refined and attenuated form from the bondage of any impure content or contaminating message' (Shaw, 1987 : 238). Therefore, Pater is, as Bloom points out, the first person to use the word 'aesthetic' in the modern sense, that is to say, freed from the philosophy that the Romantics burdened it with. For Pater, aesthetic appreciation simply means perception; and nothing else; free from the constraints of thinking about any 'contaminating message' (Bloom, 1974 : 163).

This does not however mean that the critic simply looks at a work of art. Instead, perception is simply the first stage in a complex process by which the viewer engages with the artwork. To see how this works in practice, we must look at Pater's famous description of the Mona Lisa.

All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for

strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives lonely in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea (Pater, 1980 : 98-99).[10]

To begin to understand this description, we must begin with the concept of time as a collection of moments. The picture, the Mona Lisa, is perceived 'all at once' (cf. his description of Browning's poetry. Pater 1980 : 171). Pater wrote elsewhere 'We receive from it the impression of a one imaginative tone, of a single creative act. To produce such effects at all requires all the resources of painting' (Pater, 1980 : 171-172). For Pater, the 'experience of viewing the Mona Lisa is a recapitulation of the history of art, which is perceived by the viewer in an intense moment in the present' (Ward, 1966 : 85). So for Pater, even though the Mona Lisa is an image, perceived in a moment, it still contains a historical sense, which is condensed into this moment. This is in line with his Hegelian thinking, as discussed earlier.

And yet, as Iser puts it 'The painting becomes the source of a diversified chain of impressions, the fashioning of which takes us further and further away from the picture itself, and deeper and

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[10] It is significant that Yeats chose this piece, broken up into free verse, as his first poem of the modern era : cf. his *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1936).

deeper into Pater's own imagination' (Iser, 1987 : 43-44). The actual process of the painting recapitulating and summing up the history of art takes place inside the viewer. Pater's view of aesthetics, is, therefore, as stated earlier, phenomenological (Weir, 1995 : 67). However, what the phenomenological perception reveals to us, is that the art work sets off a chain of associations which show the viewer that the history of art is continually recreating itself, based on the initial (and objective) aesthetic criteria of Ancient Greece, but constantly going beyond them and demonstrating to the viewer the truth of history. The way the picture works, and its justification, are the same.

And yet, even as it expresses evolutionary time, another kind of time is implied. In his description of the historical events, 'Pater's language consists of blocks of nouns mainly linked by neutral verbs to have and to be. He is clearly at pains not to give any one element precedence over any other' (Iser, 1987 : 44). But this contradicts the sense of progress that one would expect from this view of history. Instead, Pater seems to be deliberately echoing much older views of time.

We must remember at this point, that Pater remained in many ways a Platonist all his life, even though his was an idiosyncratic interpretation of Plato. What he rejected was the metaphysical and absolutist Plato (Conlon, 1982). What he is more interested in is Plato as a critical philosopher of the dialectic. However, he also thought that his positing of Absolutism was understandable give the Heraclitean philosophy of flux that was current in Greece at that time (see Buckler 1987 : 303-

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312 for a discussion of this. This flux of values Pater may well have thought was not dissimilar to the crisis of values of his own time). Pater could never commit himself to any form of Idealism, but he remained fascinated by it, surely because he realised that Idealism was the surest way to solve the relativist problem. It was, however, not an option for him, given his hostility to metaphysics (we will discover a similar dilemma in the thought of T.E. Hulme).

Thus, even though Pater's view of time is nominally progressive, he is fascinated by ideas of timelessness, or even the idea (clearly implied by the Mona Lisa passage) that time is circular. Take, for example, his obsession with the return of the old Gods. 'Pater leaves no doubt that they (i.e. the timeless Platonic forms) are still instruments of cognition, and are nothing but guidelines for grasping the meaning of experience. In the final analysis they represent condensed experiences, and so he can even go so far as to see in them the rebirth of the Homeric gods' (Iser, 1987 : 89)).

By the same principle that motivated him to go back to look back to ancient Greece to discover the 'fixed' and therefore essential part of the aesthetic experience, Pater looked backwards in time to discover the essentials of the human experience. As he wrote: 'Complex and subtle interests, which the mind spins for itself may occupy art and poetry or our own spirit for a time; but sooner or later they come back with a sharp rebound to the simple elementary passions- anger, desire, regret, pity and fear; and what corresponds to them in the sensuous

world; bare, abstract fire, water, air, tears, sleep, silence' (Pater 1889 : 221-222)[11]. Iser writes: 'Evidently the complexities of later civilisation cannot hold human interest for any length of time. Sooner or later a secret longing to turn back to the primordial forms of existence reasserts itself' (Iser, 1987 : 107). And so Pater writes about Demeter and Persephone, Dionysus, and the Homeric Gods with unmistakable nostalgia (Iser, 1987 : 127). And this springs, again, from the longing for wholeness that we noted in his thought earlier; even though by looking for unity in the past, he admits it may be impossible for modern man ('If classical myth stems from and dramatises visionary capacity to accommodate and synthesise difference, Pater's mythic fictions suggest such fusion is no longer possible for the modern mind' (Moran, 1991: 182)).

However, if the 'symbol of the modern idea' contains all the forms that have gone before it, then in some sense they *must* exist now, and therefore, on a deeper level, the symbol is a symbol of the organic relationship of all times ('We may take the developing idea of the "expanded moment" or the "moment of vision" in which all the manifold complexities of experience seem to be present at once' (Ward, 1966 : 106)). And if this is the case, then we may contact the past through the present, and if this is the case, then the past is, in a sense, not dead.

Therefore, Art may be a way of contacting, or even resurrecting this

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[11] Moreover there is also a link between Hegel's thought here and that of Vico, in terms of an interest in 'cyclical' concepts of temporality: cf. McGrath 1986 : 137-139.

past that only appears to be dead. Pater's task, from which we started, was for unity; to reconcile opposites. To quote Iser again, 'The unity that Pater found in Wordsworth was what he himself continued to look for, and from this grew his preoccupation with ancient cults and myths. In these primordial forms of existence he hoped to ascertain what created the totality which could no longer be found in the historical world. The telluric, chthonic, primitivistic beliefs of the ancient past, with the primal realities of earth and birth, blood and death, promised him the wholeness that he sought' (Iser, 1987 : 109).

We can see, then, that in the face of the relativist threat, Pater evolved a subtle defence that rooted 'objective' (to again use that weighted word) aesthetic values in history. To do this, he posited an aesthetic that depended on the symbol as being a moment in time, apparently subjective, that justified its objective truth in its relationship to history. But given Pater's organicism, this Neo-Hegelianism almost imperceptibly elided into a way of looking at time that resembled Platonism (given that Pater believed in Platonic forms, but did not believe that they were metaphysical absolutes) and the cyclic view of time, that we find, for example, in Vico (though Pater only ever spoke about the return of the pagan gods in metaphorical terms).

Pater was a complex and subtle thinker, who wished to safeguard the values of culture, despite the threat from the materialistic world-view that was gaining ground throughout this period (It is only fair to add

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that McGrath sees Pater's system as a response to the Humean scepticism, not so much about the value of art, but about the status of knowledge. However, it is clear that whatever the cause of the increasing scepticism of this period, it would have implications for cultural values as well (McGrath, 1986 : 21-37)). And it is obvious that there are two ways his thought could be developed; emphasising the sceptical side of his philosophy, towards greater and greater hostility towards metaphysics and the transcendental, and, on the other hand, developing his interest in Plato, Vico, and myth. I will attempt to argue that these are the two main streams of English Modernism, with T.E. Hulme and the original Imagists following the first path, and Yeats and Pound following the second.

Chapter 2 : Yeats Before 1900

Pater's main influence was, most notoriously, on the English aesthetes or 'decadents' (Hough, 1949). The most famous and influential of these poets was W.B. Yeats, and it is the Yeatsian influence I wish to trace into the Twentieth Century. The key points to follow are; the extent to which Yeats felt art was being threatened by the new spirit of relativism, the extent to which (as time became 'atomised'), he began to posit an art based on fragmentary 'moments' as being the approach best suited for the modern age, and the extent to which he looked 'behind' the moment to find a guarantor of poetic values in history. However, as I trace the development of Yeats's thought, we must remember that the resemblance of Yeats's thought to Pater's thought is not necessarily one of simple influence, but instead a similar reaction to the threat the encroachments of science and the market were making on the territory of art.

At the very beginning of his poetic career, Yeats was most deeply influenced by the Romantics (Ellmann, 1949 : 110). Significantly the author who had the most influence on him at this period was Blake. Yeats was impressed not just by Blake's hatred of science, but by Blake's urge (especially in the later poetry) to create what can only be called his own private mythology (Ellmann, 1949 : 119-120). The basis of this philosophy was the mystical conception of vision: the theory that, in heightened mystical states, it is possible to see reality as nothing more than representations of the metaphysical events which is its cause

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(Hough, 1984 : 44-48). As Raine puts it 'The created world is, at every level, a manifestation (and therefore a symbol) of anterior causes' (Raine, 1986 : 88); and that these anterior causes are not simply creations of the mind, but are real. To sum up: 'The point for Blake, [...] and Yeats is that, once the eye of imagination opens, the figures seen are not figments but realities' (Moore, 1973 : 91).

If the artist sees a metaphysical world behind the material world, then he is a visionary, and one of the other things Yeats liked about Blake's theories was that he stressed the visionary and symbolic aspect of poetry (symbolic used in the mystical sense explained by Raine above). We should remember that although we are used to thinking of Symbolism as being a French invention, Yeats was quite specific in stating that he derived his own theories from those of Blake. Writing some time later he claimed that, 'William Blake was the first writer to preach the indissoluble marriage of all great art with symbol', continuing 'a symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame' (Yeats, 1903 : 176). Yeats therefore links his poetic philosophy (symbolism) and his mystical philosophy of correspondences, and insists that they are both descended from the Romantic thought of Blake. (Yeats, 1903)(Interestingly, Yeats's language here is strongly Paterian).

Right from the beginning, then, Yeats was interested in theories that saw the material world as being merely a screen, beyond which the 'real' world could be 'read'. This real world had a metaphysical real-

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ity. And we should remember that Blake was influential not just on Yeats, but on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the English aesthetes; and that they too were soaked in Blakean (and therefore mystical) ideas (Raine, 1986 : 82-83). [1]

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that in the late 1880s Yeats then became influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; speaking of his earlier years, he was later to state 'I was in all things Pre-Raphaelite' (Yeats, 1956 : 114). The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of painters who began to associate together in the 1840s, inspired by a dislike of the academic style of painting then in fashion. They were inspired to look back beyond the Renaissance, to such painters as Giotto, in order to discover a genuinely 'honest' approach to art (Coughlan, 1967 : 13). They formed a 'quasi-secret' brotherhood (the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, or P.R.B.), which was to lead a revolt against what they saw as the degeneration of art; a degeneration which had set in with the Renaissance (we see here the beginning of Neo-Romantic distrust of the Renaissance which we shall see again in T.E. Hulme).

As opposed to the 'cleverness' of the Renaissance painters, the P.R.B. returned to nature. Their paintings tended to consist of extremely realistic paintings of nature, because they felt that, as Sister Coughlan puts it, 'reality examined and reproduced until it has expressed its innermost fact becomes symbol' (Coughlan, 1967 : 17). The Pre-Raphaelite

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[1] Contrary to his reputation as the the enemy of Victorian poetry, and all this it stood for, we should remember that other early influences on the young Yeats were Tennyson and Browning. What is surprising is that the influence of Browning, at least, seems to have increased as he got older. We should bear this in mind when studying the early influences on Ezra Pound (Shmiefsky,1970: 702-703). Moreover, Yeats saw Browning as a mystical /occult poet (Larissy,1994 : 37).

approach to art, therefore, has two main components; firstly that they were dissatisfied with the status quo and looked to the past for models for their art, and secondly that they were in the broadest sense of the word, symbolists.

Within Pre-Raphaelitism itself, there were, of course, many different strands. The two people that Yeats was closest to aesthetically in the movement were William Morris and Rossetti[2]. Morris was a poet and artist, who, in typical Pre-Raphaelite fashion, looked back to the art of the Middle Ages, (or rather, to the Nineteenth Century's view of the Middle Ages) for his aesthetic models. He 'found in earlier "primitive" literatures not only romantic subjects, but more importantly a diction and imagery which carried associations of great emotion and resonant experience' (Hunt, 1968 : 44). However, he was also, in many ways, a man who could be described as a socialist, or even a Marxist, and he was also attracted to older 'epic' verse forms because he felt that these would be the best way to express his political beliefs (Oberg, 1978). The most important part of Morris's political beliefs was that he posited a 'Utopian agrarian society' as the solution to contemporary political ills, and that he did that because he 'opposed industrialism' (Oberg, 1978 : 17). (It was under the influence of Morris that Yeats described

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2 Of course, to consider these two together we must remember that Dante Gabriel Rossetti was actually one of the originators of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose journal was *The Germ*, whereas Morris started off as a disciple of Rossetti's and was more involved with the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* of the Eighteen Fifties (Stevenson, 1972). But this is not important for this discussion.

his political beliefs in the 1880s as 'Socialist' (Yeats, 1956 :146))[3].

Yeats admired Morris's philosophy and poetry, but thought that his 'dream' world, the world of his poetry, was *too* dreamy; it was not rooted enough in the reality of his own native landscape (Yeats, 1956 : 150). Yeats was determined not to make the same mistake: 'Morris set out to make a revolution that the persons of his Well at the World's End or his Water of the Wondrous Isle, always, to my mind, in the likeness of Artimesia and her man, might walk his native scenery; and I, that my native scenery might find imaginary inhabitants, half planned a new method and a new culture' (Yeats, 1956 : 152). Yeats's 'native scenery' was to be his home town of Sligo.

Morris's own poetry, therefore, was dreamy and archaic, looking back to an idealised middle ages, to remind modern Man of what he had lost. (Hunt, 1968 : 41-44). Morris emphasised that the true artist was one whose dreams would have a visionary quality; and this was again a facet of his thought that was picked up on by Yeats (Oberg, 1978 : 168).

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, on the other hand, was in many ways unlike his fellow painters. One of the main tenets of the P.R.B. was that it emphasised the social utility of art, as we have seen in the thought of William Morris. Rossetti, however, saw a much more radical distinction

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[3] *Pace* Conor Cruise O'Brien, who claims that Yeats's politics were at their 'least sinister' in the 1890s (O'Brien, 1965 : 224), not the 1880s. However, even here we may doubt how sincere Yeats's 'socialism' was. As Harrison writes in *The Reactionaries:* 'It is strange that Yeats was ever attracted to socialism. He never seemed particularly concerned with the well-being of the masses, and he certainly had not the sympathy with ordinary humanity that one would expect a socialist to have' (Harrison, 1966 : 41).

between the world of dream and the world of action. He was, as Carol Christ puts it 'an intensely private poet, oblivious of any social role' (Christ, 1975 : 45). Moreover, he was less convinced than the others in the efficacy of political action. In his writings on art appreciation, he implies that good taste is confined to the few rather than given to the many, and that to pander to a mass audience may well be to the detriment of the work of art (Coughlan, 1967).

The way Rossetti expresses this is that only the gifted can see through the painter's naturalistic guise to see the symbolic world that lies beneath (Coughlan, 1967). This is significant, because it is Rossetti's theory of symbolism that Yeats takes over from the older writer; to the extent of, in many cases, actually copying his symbols directly (for example the Rose symbol, which is ubiquitous in Yeats's early volumes, is taken directly from Rossetti's paintings (Coughlan 1967 : 168)).[4]

Years later, Yeats was to describe his very earliest theory of art being a theory of vision, 'meaning by vision, the intense realisation of a state of ecstatic emotion symbolised in a definite landscape' (Loizeaux, 1984 : 144). Now, the Pre-Raphaelites were mainly painters, and it is not surprising that Rossetti's theory of symbolism is based on his practice as a painter. Yeats follows him in this. 'It is natural for a painter's son to believe that there may be a landscape that is symbolical of some spiritual

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[4] Again, despite being the older artist and poet, Rossetti in many other ways points forward to the future more than Morris. As Stevenson puts it: 'Rossetti's personality and work anticipated the next generation. He was the first English poet who entirely filled the public image of the *poete maudit* - manic-depressive in temperament, alienated from the *mores* of his time, sensually self-indulgent, and disintegrating under the influences of sex, alcohol and drugs' (Stevenson, 1972 : 77).

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condition and awakens a hunger such as cats feel for valerian' (Yeats, 1956 : 74). Yeats therefore elaborates the idea of the symbolic reality which lies behind mere material reality as being a geographical (or spatial) entity (Loizeaux 1984).

Yeats's very early philosophy of art is an amalgamation and adaption of both Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. We can see it stated in 'The Song of the Happy Shepherd' from his very first volume of verse, *Crossways* (1889).

The woods of Arcady are dead,
And over is their antique joy;
Of old the world of dreaming fed;
Grey Truth is now her painted toy;
Yet still she turns here restless head:
But O, sick children of the world,
Of all the many changing things
In dreary dancing past us whirled,
To the cracked tune that Chronos sings,
Words alone are certain good.
Where are now the warring kings,
Word be-mockers? - By the Rood,
Where are now the warring kings?
An idle word is now their glory,
By the stammering schoolboy said,
Reading some entangled story:
The kings of old time are dead;
The wandering earth herself may be
Only a sudden flaming word,
In clanging space a moment heard,

Troubling the endless reverie.

Then nowise worship dusty deeds,

Nor seek, for this is also sooth,

To hunger fiercely after truth,

Lest all thy toiling only breeds

New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth

Saving in thine own heart. Seek, then,

No learning from the starry men,

Who follow with the optic glass

The whirling ways of stars that pass-

Seek, then, for this is also sooth,

No word of theirs-the cold star-bane

Has cloven and rent their hearts in twain,

And dead is all their human truth. (Yeats, 1957 : 64-66)

The poem then goes on to create a Pre-Raphaelite dream world, which is contrasted unfavourably with the world of drab material reality.

This poem confirms that, as stated earlier, Yeats's aesthetic began with a distrust of rationality and science. Moreover, he goes on to contrast an older world when myth was still integrated with society; 'Of old the world of dreaming fed' with the drab, utilitarian world of the present. So we can see the same concern with time that animated the first generation of Romantics: 'But O, sick children of the world I Of all the many changing things I In dreary dancing past us whirled, I To the cracked tune that Chronos sings, I words alone are certain good'. The

world of time is 'dreary'; it 'dances' and 'whirls'. This is a reiteration of the Romantic's contempt of time as being meaningless, because rationalised. The alliteration of 'dreary dancing' emphasises that the 'flux', the 'changing things' of time have become boring, because they lack meaning. Notice as well that Yeats makes the connection explicit by having his condemnation of rationality in the same sentence as his references to time.

The poem goes on to praise passivity, 'Then nowise worship dusty deeds' The world of action is to be disparaged; instead, Yeats praises passive contemplation. However, what the poet contemplates is not 'external', or (to use the terminology of the last chapter) 'objective' truth, but instead the truth that lies within; 'there is no truth saving in thine own heart'.

We see then that Yeats has accepted what I have called the split between 'soft' and 'hard' knowledge; or 'objectivism' versus 'subjectivism' which lies at the heart of the Romantic world view; 'the cold star-bane has cloven and rent their hearts in twain, | and dead is all their human truth'. The word 'human' is the key point here, suggesting that scientific truth, the truth of those 'who follow with the optic glass, the whirling ways of stars that pass', is true merely to humans. What Yeats wants, even at this early stage, is extrahuman, that is to say, metaphysical truths.

Another feature of his early poetry is the concept of division. Whereas, for Morris, the dreamworld was simply a pleasant place to

imagine living, Yeats seems to have been tormented by its existence, and many of his heroes are tormented by the competing claims of material and spiritual reality. For example, in 'The Stolen Child', Yeats deals with a child who is stolen away to the Otherworld, by the Sidhe, or Irish Fairies:

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping
  than you can understand (Yeats, 1957 : 87).

is the cry of the Sidhe. For Yeats, therefore, the world was a world of 'weeping' and suffering. Thus the Otherworld seemed an attractive proposition. However, when the Sidhe are successful, the poem continues.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettles on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest
For he comes the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping

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than he can understand (Yeats, 1957 : 88-89).

Thus, the material world, though full of suffering, is also at least known, comforting, and understood. The world of the faery, is, on the other hand, unknown, strange and possibly dangerous. This is explored further, in 'The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland ' in *The Rose* volume. This poem deals with a man who has glimpsed the faery world, and can therefore find no happiness in the material world, because it seems so inferior to the Otherworld. Yeats now stresses in poems such as 'A Faery Song' the timeless, (and, therefore, Neo-Platonic) nature of the faery world: 'We who are old, old and gay, I O so old! I Thousands of years, thousands of years, if all were told' (Yeats, 1957 :116). The Otherworld is the timeless metaphysical world that is seen by the visionary poet (This idea is developed by, as we have seen, Yeats's description of the Platonic reality as being a landscape; by positing Platonic reality as being spatial he explicitly contrasts this with a view of material reality as being temporal (Loizeaux, 1984 : 146)). The Otherworld is a timeless (and therefore spatial) reality seen through a Paterian 'moment' in our own, timebound, world.

This undoubtedly reflects Yeats's own dilemmas. He was, himself strongly attracted to the world of metaphysical eternity (which manifested itself in his attraction to magic) and yet also attached to reality (represented by his poetry). He was, at present torn between the two (O'Donnell, 1975).

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Rossetti (and of course, Blake) were major philosophical influences on the so called 'Decadent' writers or 'Aesthetes' of the 1890s (Coughlan, 1967). And this leads us on the the next major influence on Yeats. In 1891 he helped to form the 'Rhymer's Club'; a society for the discussion of poetry. Here he was to meet poets such as Lionel Dowson and Arthur Symons; writers who were to become known as the Aesthetes (Alford, 1966). The Aesthetes were a group of British poets whose main contribution to poetry was to rethink the relationship between art and life. (William, 1966). To the Victorians, art had been closely allied to its social utility (William, 1966). Amongst the Pre-Raphaelites, as I have pointed out, Rossetti fought against this idea, but, although he was the leader of the group, he was still in the minority. Most of the other artists associated with the movement agreed with the beliefs paraphrased by Sister Coughlan; 'The moral function of art is like its intellectual function. The artist is obliged to use art for the purposes of good, especially social good' (Coughlan, 1967 : 34).

The Aesthetes called this into question, and began to insist on the autonomy of art, a position we have first seen stated by Pater: 'Art for Art's Sake'. The corollary of this, stated more strongly than in Pater, was that any activity other than art was worthless, a position we have already seen in Yeats's 'The nowise worship dusty deeds'. In a world of flux and change ('the cracked tune that Chronos sings'), art was the only sure belief ('words alone are certain good'). And so, for example, Lionel Johnson (a prominent poet of the movement) 'invested the poet

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with the role of a priest and elevated art to a sacrosanct, hieratic level' (Alford, 1966 : 79).[5] Instead of the flux of modernity, the aesthete stressed the necessity for a 'reverence for tradition' (Alford, 1966 : 79). And, most importantly of all, he denied that art need to have a social or moral purpose; for the 'Decadents believed that it was art, not life, that really mattered, and if one could perpetuate this doctrine and at the same time upset the equilibrium of the middle class, so much the better' (Munro, 1970 :12).

However, if art had no social use, and at the same time was to take on the status of a religion, then there was the possibility that this might lead to a breakdown between the poet and his audience, especially, of course, if one had an interest in mystical occultism. As Yeats himself wrote; 'I had an unshakeable conviction, arising how or whence I cannot tell, that invisible gates would open as they opened for Blake [...] I must some day-on that day when the gates began to open-become difficult or obscure' (Yeats, 1956 : 254). This important passage again shows the influence of Blake, and stresses that by the mid 1890s Yeats had seen a link between his desire for visionary experiences and the development of his poetry; specifically that by becoming more visionary (and as we shall see, this was a direction Yeats very much wanted to go in) he would necessarily have to become less intelligible; or, to put it another way, less 'popular'.

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[5] As well as Johnson, the influence of Symons on Yeats has also, perhaps, been slightly overlooked. Symons was particularly important in stressing the idea of the moment, which he seems, again, not to have learned from the French, but from Browning (Beckson and Munro, 1970).

This did not mean that he was turning his back on Pre-Raphaelitism. Instead, he was attempting to surmount it: 'If Rossetti was a subconscious influence, and perhaps the most powerful of all, we looked consciously to Pater for our philosophy' (Yeats, 1956 : 302). Now, as we have seen, Pater was an extreme relativist, who saw History as a way out of Heraclitean flux. He was, in other words trying to achieve a synthesis between the two world views; of stasis and flux. And this is a project Yeats would have had a great deal of sympathy with (Engelberg, 1964). It is at least interesting in this respect that, in his own poetical theorising, Yeats began where Pater had begun, with the individual's experience. Pater had written 'our knowledge is limited to what we feel' (Pater n.d.: 113) and this fitted in well with Yeats's view that 'there is no truth save in thine own heart'. Moreover, as we have seen, Pater saw the truths of history as being discernible through art; 'Pater opposed the Philistinism of a materialistic culture, and [...] regarded art with a reverence usually consistent with religious worship' (Nathan, 1965 :113) another idea that Yeats (and the rest of the Aesthetes) obviously found congenial.

Significantly, however, Yeats was more interested in the later Pater than the earlier; i.e. the Pater that emphasised stasis and certainty more than the flux (Bizot, 1976 : 398). This does not mean that he was not interested in 'the moment'. Writing much later, Yeats wrote: 'We may escape from the constraint of our nature and from that of external things, entering upon a state where all fuel has become flame, where

there is nothing but the state itself, nothing to constrain or end it. We attain it always in the creation or enjoyment of a work of art, but that moment though eternal in the Daimon passes from us because it is not an attainment of our whole being. Philosophy has always explained its moment of moments in much the same way; nothing can be added to it, nothing taken away; that all progressions are full of illusion, that everything is born there like a ship in full sail' (Ellmann, 1954 : 221). Now not just the ideas, but the language (for example, the use of phrases like 'the flame') is strongly Paterian here. However, whereas in the early Pater, the moment justifies itself ('art for arts sake'); Yeats stresses 'that, though temporary existence is constant conflict, the final aim and achievement is to transcend such existence, to transcend the dimensions of time and space, to stretch out "the moment"' (Melchiori, 1960 : 283) as Melchiori puts it; in other words, to reach the (metaphysical) eternity that lies behind the moment.

This is why, looking back much later, Yeats claimed the 'The pure "gem-like flame" was an insufficient motive' (Yeats, 1936 : ix), on the grounds that 'We were left to keep our feet upon a swaying rope in a storm' (Yeats, 1956 : 302-303). This interesting metaphor suggests (correctly) that what Yeats wanted was a shelter from the storm, or, to rephrase this, a foundation for his philosophy. In Pater's very earliest philosophy, he exalted the moment, and saw nothing outside the flux of temporality. However, as we have seen, Pater's defence of this theory became tautological, as it was bound to do. The only sure way in this

time to create a sure foundation for aesthetic values was by invoking metaphysics. Pater, as a materialist and relativist, was loath to do that (although he was fascinated by the project). Yeats, however, was not. As we have seen, Yeats had already developed a system of symbolism, but his theory was of a mystical landscape that lay behind reality, but could be read through reality by the visionary poet (Loizeaux, 1984). This mystical landscape, or metaphysical reality, was the form that structured and gave meaning to the otherwise inert and desacralised material world. The system of 'correspondences' that followed, was not mere metaphor, but the only correct way of 'reading' the world. Pater's philosophy was anti-foundationalist (in the early essays. Later he founded his system of aesthetics, as we have seen, in history) and anti-systematic (he disapproved of, to use the jargon, Grand Theory). Yeats, however, *was* a foundationalist, *and* a believer in systematic metaphysical theories. This does not mean that Yeats deserted Pater, but that instead, as he developed, he turned from the Pater of the 'Conclusion' to the Pater of the Leonardo essay; i.e. the Pater that stressed fixity.

The end result of all this was that if the poet was to become a visionary, reporting metaphysical truths, then art would have to become a kind of religion. Slightly later, Yeats wrote 'We write of great writers, even of writers whose beauty would once have seemed an unholy beauty, with rapt sentences like those our fathers kept for the beatitudes and mysteries of the Church; and no matter what we believe with our lips, we believe with our hearts that beautiful things [...] have "lain

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burningly on the Divine hand" and that when time has begun to wither, the Divine hand will fall heavily on bad taste and vulgarity. When no man believed these things William Blake believed them, and began that preaching against the Philistines which is as the preaching of the Middle Ages against the Saracen' (Yeats, 1903 : 169-170).

As we have seen, Pater discussed two intertwined ideas that were of great interest to the post-Romantic poet. Firstly, there was the problem of how art was to be justified in an increasingly utilitarian and 'rational' era; and secondly there was the problem of providing a foundation for aesthetic standards. There was, of course, the option of positing an anti-foundationalist aesthetic (what we would call postmodern aesthetics) but this was felt to lead merely to a facile relativism. Pater, as we have seen, sought an escape from relativism by turning to Hegelian theories of History and positing a foundation for aesthetic standards in the art of Ancient Greece. For reasons we shall consider shortly, Yeats did not wish to adopt this particular view of history. Instead, he turned back to the Neo-Platonism that was adopted by the earlier generation of Romantics (specifically Blake and Shelley). Pater had of course also done this, but what was for Pater a metaphor was for Yeats a literal reality. Thus, in the quote above, Yeats argues that aesthetic standards have a metaphysical reality. Therefore, since the truths of religion are also believed by many to be metaphysical and timeless, Yeats is only being consistent when he claims that art and religion are the same.

Yeats himself was perfectly aware of why he feels he must make these assumptions. He wrote; when 'they (that is to say educated people, the Bourgeoisie) had to explain why serious people like themselves honoured the great poets greatly they were hard put to it for lack of good reasons' (Yeats, 1903 : 169). In other words, again, how does one justify art (rationally)? Blake is the supreme poet in this view because he 'expressed every beautiful feeling that came into his head without troubling about its *utility* or chaining it to any *utility*' (Yeats, 1903 : 172)(my italics). Contemplating art as product, as an object that might have a use, or a monetary value, was the road to disaster; and in this, Yeats of course is following Shelley.

The distrust of utility that follows on from this, leads, of course, to praise of passivity; one of the mainstays of the aesthete's beliefs. 'Listening to sermons [...] doing or not doing certain things' (Yeats, 1903 : 169) should be of lesser importance. Only the supernatural beings that were represented by symbols were important. 'If the "world of imagination" was "the world of eternity" [...] it was of less importance to know men and nature than to distinguish the beings and substances of imagination from those of a more perishable kind, created by the fantasy, in uninspired moments, out of memory and whim; and this could best be done by purifying one's mind, as with a flame, in study of the works of the great masters, who were great because they had been granted by divine favour a vision of the unfallen world from which others are kept apart by the flaming sword that turns every way;

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and by flying from the painters who studied "the vegetable glass" for its own sake' (Yeats 1903 : 178-179). Yeats echoes Pater in stating, in a circular fashion that the only way to know who the great writers are and how to emulate them is simply to read the great writers. There is no attempt to give a rational explanation of their greatness except by invoking the doctrine of the Symbol; they were 'seers' who looked within themselves to see the real world. The only real world is the Platonic world, but we must remember in this Neo-Platonism the Platonic essences are inaccessible, except by introspection. Thus, only by painting the inner vision can we paint reality.

As we have seen, Yeats had a strong distrust of science, and a desire for visionary experiences, which, however, he wished to order into a coherent system. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that he felt strongly attracted to the occult. His first attraction was to Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy, which confirmed Blake's belief in the system of correspondences (Moore, 1973). However, his real occult initiation began in 1890, when he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (Ellmann, 1949). In terms of philosophy, The Golden Dawn's beliefs were quite close to those of Theosophy; in other words they believed in the system of correspondences. (Ellmann, 1949). However, there are a number of ways in which it differs from Theosophy which are significant for the way that Yeats's philosophy developed. The first major difference was that The Order of the Golden Dawn was primarily a secret and hierarchical order.The occult knowledge that one gained in

the Order was not to be passed on to outsiders (Ellmann, 1949). Instead of the relative democracy of Theosophy, the Golden Dawn took over from Rosicrucianism 'an elaborate system of grades, and a division into an outer and inner order' (Ellmann, 1949 : 95).

It is this division between the initiate and the non-initiate that began to fascinate Yeats, and the theme dominates his next book of poems; *The Rose*. The very name of the volume indicates the unity of his occult and literary researches. The Rose, the symbol which unifies the volume, is taken directly from Pre-Raphaelite sources (Coughlan, 1967). However, it is also a dominant symbol in Golden Dawn iconography. The Golden Dawn took over from Rosicrucianism the symbol of the Rosy Cross, which symbolised the mystical union of the male and female principles of the universe (Yeats, 1962). However, it was the symbol of much more as well. It also symbolised love, beauty, and Ireland, among other things. It was obviously the multifarious meanings that could be inferred from it that attracted Yeats to the Rose as a symbol (Ellmann, 1949 : 97). However, in his early poetry, its dominant meaning is undoubtedly 'spiritual and eternal beauty ' (Yeats, 1962 : 209) (Yeats himself wrote 'the quality symbolised as the Rose differs from the Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar' (Yeats, 1957 : 842)).

The first poem of the volume states the initial theme.

To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;
And thine own sadness, whereof stars, grown old
In dancing, silver-sandalled on the sea,
Sing in their high and lonely melody.
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
I find under the boughs of love and hate,
In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.

Come near, come near, come near - Ah, leave me still
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
The field-mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad rose of all my days (Yeats 1957 : 100-101).

This poem begins by showing Yeats's increasing interest in Irish litera-

ture and mythology as a basis for his 'system' (Brown points out that 'Irish nationalism and the occult [...] came to occupy the centre of his life simultaneously', and that for Yeats, these two interests were to become increasingly intertwined (Brown, 1972 : 315)). It is to be the Sidhe (the Irish fairies) who are to populate Yeats's mystical landscape.

In its emphasis on eternal beauty (as opposed to the 'cracked tune that Chronos sings' i.e. temporality) Yeats develops another opposition we have met before; between the timeless world of the imagination (or rather, the timeless, sacred, spatial world that the visionary poet can perceive with his imagination), and the material world, enslaved by temporality. It is therefore, the 'eternal' Rose that will give him the strength to 'sing the ancient ways' i.e., overcome the present by returning to the past.

However, Yeats also shows a greater appreciation of the dilemma that this dichotomy has set up. For since the dream world is an escape from reality ('which is more full of weeping than you can understand' to quote from 'The Stolen Child' again) the temptation is to live in it permanently and ignore mere reality; 'the common things that crave'. This is undoubtedly a discussion of his own dilemma; whether to be an artist or an occultist (O'Donnell, 1974). In 'To Ireland In the Coming Times' he writes 'to him who ponders well, I My rhymes more than their rhyming tell'; and Yeats links this with his occult experiences. Yeats is, therefore an initiate; his poetry contains 'hidden meanings'. 'The red-rose -bordered hem I Of her, whose history began, I before

God made the angelic clan, | Trails all about the written page. '(Yeats, 1957 : 137 - 138). The 'her'; who one could call the Rose woman, is a typical Rosicrucian - Golden Dawn figure; Yeats was well aware that in Golden Dawn iconography the Rose was a symbol of the eternal female principle (Larrissy, 1994).

However, regardless of how much he felt himself to be a magician, Yeats was always held back by his practice of art. For he continued to feel that for the sake of his poetry he had to deal with the material world as well as the spiritual. But The Golden Dawn stated quite explicitly that supreme Adeptship was 'antithetical to material existence' (O'Donnell, 1975 : 58). 'Despite a continuing admiration of Adeptship, Yeats was always an artist, and, as such, could not renounce the physical universe which provided the materials for communicable artistic expression' (O'Donnell, 1975 : 59).

This, then, was his dilemma. And, to understand the solution Yeats developed in the later half of the decade, there are a number of points to bear in mind. Firstly, there is the extent to which, in response to the relativist pressures discussed above, Yeats was driven to create an elaborate objectivist and foundationalist metaphysic. This derived from Pater, but differed from him in its *overtly* Idealist and mystical character. Secondly there is the extent to which this metaphysical system influenced the form of his artistic production, not just in terms of the way this was organised, and the ideas which it expressed, but in the very manner and style in which his poetry and stories were written.

Thirdly, there is the extent to which this system became increasingly *oppositional* in nature; that is, the extent to which Yeats's thought reacts against what he increasingly saw as the materialist tenor of his time. And finally, how this system acts as a link, politically, between the socialist Yeats of the 1880s and the more authoritarian Yeats that had evolved by the start of World War One.

As we go on to discuss these works of the late 1890s specifically the stories of *The Secret Rose* (1897), the poetry of *The Wind Among the Reeds*(1899) and the essays of *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903) we should remember, that, as Stephen Myers writes, in *Yeats's Book of the Nineties,* 'Yeats was at war. His enemy, as he perceived it, was the hungry Materialism of the fast-waning century, with Journalism as its mouthpiece, Abstraction in its head, and Technology spinning its cogs and driving it forward. Words were the weapons he would deploy, and he did so tellingly in the three books which together, comprise his Book of the Nineties, *The Secret Rose, The Wind Among the Reeds,* and *Ideas of Good and Evil.* The first of these offered an introduction to the Book of the Nineties, announced The Argument, brought on stage several key characters (who periodically entered and exited the book thereafter), and, in a significant gesture, gave the Book historical grounding. The second, a collection of short lyrics, strained away from history even as it fretted over a myriad of worldly frustrations' (Myers,1993 : 89).

Now, about the time that Yeats began to work on *The Wind Among*

The Reeds (that is, the last three years or so of the nineteenth century), he became increasingly interested in French Symbolism. This is not to say that Yeats suddenly came under the influence of Symbolism directly. What I have tried to show here is that Yeats had already discovered an indigenous proto-Symbolist tradition stemming from the English Romantics. As Yeats wrote at the time 'I have not French enough to understand the philosophy and criticism 'that might be 'hidden in the writings of M.Mallarmé'; and Yeats goes on to state that he developed his own theory of Symbolism from Blake. He also wrote that with regards to Mallarmé ' I seized on everything that at all resembled my own thought' showing that Yeats mainly viewed the Symbolists as people who had anticipated his own thinking, rather than an influence in their own right (Morris, 1986 :116). In any case, as Morris makes clear, Yeats was only interested in Mallarmé via Symons, not as an original source.

Now Symons (one of the major aesthete writers and theorists, and a good friend of Yeats) had written, in The *Symbolist Movement in Literature* 'Well the doctrine of Mysticism, with which all the symbolical literature has so much to do, of which it is all so much the expression, presents us, not with a guide for conduct, not with a plan for our happiness, not with an explanation of any mystery, but with a theory of life which makes us familiar with mystery, and which seem to harmonise those instincts which make for religion, passion, and art, freeing us at once of a great bondage' (Symons, 1899 :174) and continued 'it is at

least with a certain relief that we turn to an ancient doctrine, so much more likely to be true because it has the air of a dream' (Symons, 1899 :175). In other words these theorists were perfectly aware how implausible their theories sounded; they simply turned round and insisted that the more unlikely they sounded the more likely they were to be true.

Symon's reading of Symbolism, which is to say, seeing Symbolism as having mystical connotations, was a reading Yeats found highly congenial (Starkie, 1960). Moreover, in talking about Mallarmé, especially, Symons stresses the French writer's obscurity. 'Mallarmé was obscure,' he writes, 'not so much because he wrote differently, as because he thought differently from other people' (Symons, 1899 : 118). 'No-one in our time has more significantly vindicated the supreme right of the artist in the aristocracy of letters [...] and might it not, after all, be the finest epitaph for a self-respecting man of letters to be able to say, even after the writing of many books; I have kept my secret, I have not betrayed myself to the multitude?' (Symons, 1899 :119). This should remind us of Yeats's statement that after he became a visionary, his poetry would have to become more obscure. And the stress Symons put on literature as a way of 'keeping a secret', fits in with what Yeats was learning in the Order of the Golden Dawn.

This interest in 'obscure' poetry was in part because he was under pressure from other members of the Golden Dawn to decide whether he was to be a poet or a magician (O'Connell, 1975). In this he was

caught in two dilemmas. Firstly, was he to become a real mystic, albeit one who occasionally wrote poetry? And secondly, if he decided against this, and remained a poet first and foremost, how was he to talk about his mystical beliefs without attracting the attention of the profane? Yeats's response was to attempt to merge the two activities; to try and become a mystical-occult poet. And so he took what he needed from Symon's understanding of French Symbolism, and married it to the mystical idea of symbolism he had developed from Blake and the Neo-Platonists.

It has been argued that Yeats attempted to justify his position as an occult poet by looking to history (in much the same way that Pater did). However, since his occult view of history was not to be revealed to the multitude, he would have to express it secretly (Hough speaks of his 'irritating preference for that which cannot be understood' and correctly links this to his occult practice (Hough, 1949 : 228)). In the early volumes of poetry, Yeats has set up a system of symbolism in which the Rose woman is a symbol for the timeless Idealist world of the Gods. In his works of the later 'Nineties he develops these ideas into a more complex system, which he then draws on in his poetry (talking of these books, Seiden writes 'By means of his occult symbology, more-over, he had explained or defined all of his disconnected metaphysical opinions' (Seiden 1962 : 63)). The volumes in which this attempt to create a mystical system reach a peak are *The Secret Rose* (1897) vo-lume of short stories, and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). As Mar-

tin points out, *The Secret Rose* is not just a collection of short stories, but a unified volume that gives an occult history of the last two thousand years (Martin, 1975).

In dealing with the view of history that Yeats had evolved by this point, we should remember that it develops out of Pater. Pater's theory was, of course, evolutionary, but, at some points (for example, his description of the Mona Lisa) he seems to hypothesise a cyclical view of temporality, and of course his interest in Plato presupposes knowledge of Plato's theory of timeless Platonic Forms. Pater, therefore, discusses, at various points, three views of time; evolutionary, cyclical, and the theory that time is an illusion, and that timelessness is the only true reality. Due, however, to his hostility to metaphysics, he was, ultimately, unable to reconcile these philosophical positions. Yeats, however, had no such fears, and his philosophy of history is just such an attempt.

The volume of stories *The Secret Rose*, in which the theorising about history was explicated, is united, as the title implies, by the symbol of the rose. Thus he carried on the development of rose symbolism he had used since *The Rose* volume (1893), with this proviso; the rose is now to be 'secret'. The stories, in other words, chart the secret and occult history of the last two thousand years, with the Rose and its corollary, the Rose woman, representing the world of spirit, which is, as Yeats says, at 'war' with the material world. The protagonists of the stories ; poets, outcasts, visionaries, are men who have perceived the

true nature of reality, that is, who know that the spiritual reality represented by the Rose is the only genuine reality, and that to become a true adepts it is necessary to follow Her. For example, in The Binding of the Hair' the bard Aodh worships Queen Dectira, whom he calls 'Rose of my Desire' (Yeats, 1995 : 85). This represents the visionaries perception of a timeless Platonic world beyond the merely corporeal world of material reality. However, he is beheaded for his love. Thus the incompatibility of occult worship of the Rose woman and living in 'reality' is stated at the outset.

Yeats's problem is that, since he views the world of spirit and the world of matter as being wholly antithetical, the initiates who live in the material world must inevitably meet tragic ends. Worship of the Rose woman is simply incompatible with life in the material world. Yeats's response is to posit a theory of history in which the war between spirit and matter is eventually settled; by an apocalypse in which the world of matter will be defeated. This idea comes directly from the leader of the Golden Dawn, MacGregor Mathers. As Yeats wrote 'He (Mathers) began to foresee changes in the world, announcing in 1893 or 1894 the imminence of immense wars [...] it may have been some talk of his that made me write the poem that begins' and Yeats then quotes the first few lines of 'The Battle of the Black Pig 'from *The Wind Among the Reeds* (Yeats, 1956 : 336).

In line with this belief, *The Secret Rose* volume describes two thousand years of Irish history from pagan through to Christian times. In

'Where There is Nothing There is God' (one of the very earliest stories) monks in the early days of Christian Ireland take in a beggar who turns out to be a mystical philosopher (when he prays to 'Thou Who Dwells Beyond the Stars' there is a smell of roses (Yeats, 1995). The monks hold him in reverence, the purpose of the story being that in beginning of the Christian era Christianity had real spiritual value.

However as the story 'The Crucifixion of the Outcast' shows, Yeats believed that Christianity had decayed over time. This story, which is set a couple of hundred years later, shows how the poet and mystic Cumhal attempts to find shelter in a Christian monastery. Here, however, the monks are shown as being fat, arrogant, stupid and cruel, too interested in luxury to listen to what the poet has to say (Yeats, 1995). After Cumhal threatens to curse them because of their meanness, they decide to have him crucified because 'the bards and gleemen are an evil race, ever cursing and stirring up the people [...] immoral and immoderate in all things, and heathen in their hearts [...] railing against God and Christ and the blessed saints' (Yeats, 1995 :102-103). But before they do Cumhal takes out the food he carries with him and announces he will give it to the poorest person there. The beggars who have followed all clamour for the scraps but Cumhal replies "'I am myself the poorest"', and continues "'I have heard in my heart the rustling of the rose-bordered dress of her who is more subtle than Angus, the Subtle-Hearted and more full of beauty than Conan the bald [...] but, because I am done with all things, I award the tithe to you"'(Yeats,

1995 : 105).

Not only is the Rose worshipper persecuted by Christians; he is also misunderstood and ignored by the populace. This is another link between the adept and the artist; both are misunderstood by the masses. This is brought out in 'Out of the Rose' which also contains the clearest statement of his occult beliefs at this time.

The story deals with an aristocratic knight who helps some villagers in a feud; a noble and courageous act, but one which leaves him mortally wounded. As he lays dying a boy asks him why "'you fought like the gods and giants and heroes in the stories and for so little a thing'" (Yeats, 1995 : 111). The knight replies "'I'll tell you of myself, for now that I am the last of the fellowship I may tell all'", and continues "'I live in a land far from this, and was one of the Knights of St John, but I was one of those in the order who always longed for more arduous labours in the service of the Most High. At last there came to us a knight of Palestine, to whom the truth of truths had been revealed by God Himself. He had seen a Rose of Fire, and a Voice from out of the Rose had told him how men would turn from the light of their own hearts, and bow down before external order and outer fixity and that then the light would cease [...] Already the wayward light of the heart was shining out upon the world to keep it alive, with a less clear lustre, and that, as it paled, a strange infection was touching the stars and the hills'" (Yeats, 1995 : 111). The knight had been ordered to die in the service of the Rose, and now he had succeeded.

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We can now see, then, the basic outlines of Yeats's historical view. Already, by 1897, Yeats views history as consisting of two thousand year 'blocs'. Each bloc is separated from the other by some form of apocalyptic violence (Martin, 1975 : 25-27). Our own era is the era of materialism. The antithetical force, the realm of spirit, declines throughout this period, and as it does so 'a strange infection' sets in. Since Yeats is explicitly on the side of spirit, he therefore views our period as being one of decline.

Significantly, after the knight has told his story, the boy tries to remember it, but fails: '"He has told me a good tale for there was much fighting in it, but I did not understand much of it, and it is hard to remember so long a story"' (Yeats, 1995 : 112). He symbolises the ordinary man; ignorant of the Rose, stupid and materialistic, more interested in his poaching than in spiritual wisdom.

So far, the heroes in these stories have had a simple fate; they have worshipped the rose and died for her. However, as the power of the rose weakens, the pull of 'outer fixity' becomes stronger; and later heroes in the book are caught between the two worlds (rather like Yeats himself, caught between occultism and poetry). They have had the Rose vision, but are too afraid to follow this worship to death, which is where it inevitably ends.This theme is explored in the Red Hanrahan stories, set in the eighteenth century.

Hanrahan, who is the subject of five of the stories in this volume, is the paradigmatic 'weak' hero. Significantly, he is a poet (most of the

other heroes have been adepts), who dabbles in the occult without understanding the meaning, or the danger, in what he reads. 'The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hanrahan the Red' explains how he buys a book of occult wisdom from a a bookseller, and decides to call up the spirits for 'he had often longed to see the Shee' (Yeats, 1995 : 141). He successfully calls up a spirit woman who tells him that she loves him but he rejects her saying: '"I have had enough of women"' (Yeats, 1995 : 143). Angrily she curses him, saying: '"Owen Hanrahan the Red, you have looked so often upon the dust that when the Rose has blossomed there you think it but a pinch of coloured dust; but now I lay upon you a curse, and you shall see the Rose everywhere, in the noggin, in women's eye, in drifting phantoms, and seek to come to it in vain; it shall waken a fire in your heart, and in your feet, and in your hands. A sorrow of all sorrows is upon you, Owen Hanrahan the Red"' (Yeats, 1995 :144).

Hanrahan is now caught. No earthly woman will ever satisfy him, but he cannot accept the price of meeting the Rose woman; death (in this respect he is rather like Yeats himself).The rest of the stories explain how he is gradually reconciled to his fate, and eventually comes to accept his destiny in the world of the Sidhe.

Yeats, therefore, viewed his own era as being one of decay and decline, as drab materialism increasingly destroyed the power of art and magic (which, of course, for Yeats, were the same). However, he also thought that we were coming to the end of the two thousand year per-

iod in which this would be the case. This concept is explored in the last three stories of the volume. These stories are narrated by characters who have faced Hanrahan's dilemma, but instead of resolving it, have lapsed back into a hypocritical Christianity.

The narrator of the first story 'Rosa Alchemica', for example, is quite like Yeats in that he claims to have 'passed through strange experiences, which have changed me so that my writings have grown less popular and less intelligible' (Yeats, 1995 : 180) the words Yeats himself used to describe the path his own poetry used. This narrator has also written a book called, of course, 'Rosa Alchemica'. It is best, however, to see the narrator as a self criticism of Yeats as he used to be, for the narrator very much resembles Marius the Epicurean, the hero of Pater's only novel (Nathan, 1965). He writes 'I had gathered about me all gods, because I believed in none' (Yeats, 1995 : 181) thus echoing Pater's metaphorical use of pagan imagery; using mythology whilst denying its literal truth. The narrator remains aloof, apart from the world, until he is disturbed by Michael Robartes, who wishes him to join the Order of the Alchemical Rose, a secret, Gnostic order, not unlike the Order of the Golden Dawn.

It is important to remember that Robartes and not the narrator is the hero of the story, when he asks '"Will you become an initiate of the Order of the Alchemical Rose?"'. He continues; '"You have shut the world away and gathered the gods about you, and if you do not throw yourself at their feet, you will be always full of lassitude, and of waver-

ing purpose, for a man must forget he is miserable in the bustle and noise of the multitude in this world and in time; or seek a mystical union with the multitude who govern this world and time"' (Yeats, 1995 : 184). This is the dilemma all the protagonists of *The Secret Rose* (and Yeats's early poetry) face.

Robartes goes on to name this multitude; "'There is Lear, his head still wet with the thunderstorms, and he laughs because you thought yourself and existence who are but a shadow, and him a shadow who is an eternal god"' (Yeats, 1995 : 186). In other words the creatures of literature are the gods. The world of art and the world of magic are the same. It is the world of 'reality' and temporality that is the false one (it follows that the magician and the creative writer are trying to do the same thing; communicate with and try to 'materialise' these gods).

Robartes wins the narrator over, and they leave for the Temple of the Alchemical Rose. As they go they pass a peasant Christian who shouts out "'Idolaters, go down to Hell with your she dhowls"' (Yeats, 1995 : 190). He is of course the ignorant common man, who has dared to keep with an outdated Christianity. But perhaps there is hope even for him, for as Robartes says "'A time will come for these people also, and they will sacrifice a mullet to Artemis, or some other fish to some new divinity, unless indeed their own divinities [...] set up once more their temples of grey stone. Their reign has never ceased, but only waned in power a little, for the Sidhe still pass in every wind, and dance and play at hurley, and fight their sudden battles in every hollow and

every hill, but they cannot build their temples again till there have been martyrdoms and victories, and perhaps even that long-foretold battle in the Valley of the Black Pig."' (Yeats, 1995 :190). This battle is the apocalypse that will announce the victory of the forces of Spirit over Matter.

The narrator begins to prepare for his initiation into the ceremony by reading books of occult lore which reveal that 'the independent reality of our thoughts [...] was the doctrine from which all true doctrines sprang' (Yeats, 1995 : 192). This extreme form of Idealism is repeated as Yeats's own belief in essays published only a few years later.

At last it is time for the narrator's initiation. It will take the form of a circular dance around a room which has a gigantic picture of a rose for a ceiling. As this dance revolves faster and faster, and therefore closer and closer to the Rose (one might call this movement a vortex), the narrator will be plucked out of time and life, into the immortal (but dead) world of the Moods (or Shidhe). However as he dances he suddenly realises that his dancing partner is one of the Sidhe, and in his horror he passes out. This is his moment of fear, exactly the same as that which afflicted Hanrahan, but unlike Hanrahan, he will be given no second chance. When he wakes up he finds himself alone.

It is the third story that is particularly interesting, in that it deals directly with the theme of Apocalypse which has haunted the whole volume. It is told by the same narrator, and begins when 'three very old men with stout sticks in their hands' (Yeats, 1995 : 212) turn up at his

house late at night. They are three brothers who had lived in one of the western isles 'and had cared all their lives for nothing except for those classical writers and old Gaelic writers who expounded an heroic and simple life [...] At last a man, who told them he was Michael Robartes, came to them in a fishing boat, like Saint Brendan drawn by some vision and called by some voice; and told them again of the coming of the gods and ancient things; and their hearts, which had never endured the body and pressure of our time, but only of distant times, found nothing unlikely in anything he told them, but accepted all simply and were happy' (Yeats, 1995 : 213). This is the beginning of an elaborate revision of the New Testament story of the birth of Jesus. Michael Robartes is a mixture of John the Baptist and an angel of the lord. The three old men are of course the three wise men, but instead of studying astrology, they have studied literature, the new arcane lore.

Years pass, and one day they hear of the death of Michael Robartes.While they were still mourning, a voice informs them they must set out for Paris, where a woman will tell them the names of the Immortals. With this knowledge they will be able to call them up, and the Gods will walk the earth again (Yeats, 1995 : 213). This will mark the change from a religion based on ethics to one based on aesthetics. Moreover it will mark the change from a religion that is in the world, to one that is out of it, that will deal solely with things of the Spirit.

To emphasise this point, everything about this new annunciation is different. Instead of Palestine, the home of the New Testament, they

will set out for sophisticated Paris, the home of Symbolism. Instead of a young virgin they will find a dying whore. At first convinced that the Gods would never choose such a women they make to leave but 'Suddenly the second oldest of the old men crowed like a cock [...] before they could rise to their knees, a resonant chanting voice came from the lips that had crowed and said "I am not a Dhoul, but I am Hermes the Shepherd of the Dead, and I run upon the errands of the gods, and you have heard my sign, that has been my sign from the old days. Bow down before her from whose lips the secret names of the immortals, and of the things near their hearts, are about to come that the immortals may come again into the world. Bow down, and understand that when the immortals are about to overthrow the things that are today, and bring the things that were yesterday, they have no-one to help them, but one whom the things that are today have cast out"' (Yeats, 1995 : 215).

As they leave one of the old men reflects '"He (i.e. Hermes) meant, I think, that when people are good the world likes them and takes possession of them, and so eternity comes through people who are not good or who have been forgotten. Perhaps Christianity was good and the world liked it, so now it is going away and the immortals are beginning to awake"' (Yeats, 1995 : 216). Yeats develops the idea nascent in his earlier poetry, that the world of the spirit is a world of timelessness. To be 'driven out of time' is to enter the world of the Rose woman; and this shows the links between his own theories and Neo-Pla-

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tonism.

This, then, is Yeats's basic view of history. To quote Morton Seiden 'in the prose tales in 'The Secret Rose' the idea of historical cycles - symbolised by a winding staircase, geometrical images, and the whirling Sidhe - is very much elaborated on. An age is ushered into being by a supernatural influx, it perishes in cataclysm; it achieves heroism and Unity of Culture when human life converges upon Anima Mundi; and it is superseded by its cultural opposite' (Seiden, 1962 : 56). Yeats believed that our age was shortly to be replaced by its 'cultural opposite'; a transition that would be preceded by 'cataclysm'. To say that this would be a bad or good thing is, in this view, meaningless; it was simply inevitable. However, there is no doubt that in terms of personal preference, Yeats was in favour of a new world view based on the primacy of spirit, magic and art. Years later he wrote 'When I was a boy everybody talked about progress, and rebellion against my elders took the form of aversion to that myth. I took satisfaction in certain public disasters, felt a sort of ecstasy at the contemplation of ruin [...] Presently [...] the sort of images that came into 'Rosa Alchemica' and the 'Adoration of the Magi' took their place. Our civilisation was about to reverse itself, or some new civilisation was about to be born from all that our age had rejected, from all that my stories symbolised as a harlot, and take after its mother; because we had worshipped a single god it would worship many' (Yeats, 1966 : 932).

This is the view of history which Yeats had developed by 1899, and it

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develops out of, but goes beyond, Pater's evolutionary viewpoint. Change occurs, progress and decline, but within a a cyclical framework. (We have, of course, seen the germ of this idea is also present in Pater. However, Yeats would also have found it in Blake and Swedenborg; (Raine, 1986); and both of those men would have found the idea first put forward in the writings of the Neo-Platonists (Raine, 1986). Raine points out that not only the cyclical view of time, but also the view of history as being a constant 'alternation of cultures' is also Neo-Platonic). However, in his view that there is a timeless world which eternally battles the material world, Yeats also incorporates more conventional Neo-Platonic ideas into his system. Yeats's of the late 1890s uses this view of history as a backbone for his mystical philosophy, which he then draws upon in *The Wind Among the Reeds*.

The Wind Among the Reeds is the public book of poetry, as opposed to the private book of occult stories. It deals with the same situations, and in many cases the same people, as *The Secret Rose*, but instead of dealing with them in chronological order, as in the book of stories, it deals with them in a non-temporal fashion. The best way of imagining the structure of the book is to think of the dance of 'Rosa Alchemica'. This is a dance round about, and circling in on the Timeless Rose, ending with unification with the Rose, and the initiate being plucked out of time. However this can only happen for the individual. For the true union of the elite with the Rose, the Apocalypse, as described in 'The Adoration of the Magi' must happen. However, this event, by definition

must occur out of time, since it signals the end of time. A book of poetry, however much it circles the Rose, can never unite with it, because it remains in time. The book therefore must be unfulfilled; the apocalypse has not yet happened.

Since there is no chronological progression, Yeats unites the volume by using a system of allusions. Almost every symbol used in the volume is repeated over and over again, usually with a slightly different meaning each time. Words and phrases not just from this volume, but from *The Secret Rose* are used repetitively, until it becomes clear that they have a secret meaning. The whole volume in fact is best understood as a spell; an attempt, using personae, to abolish time and raise the old gods. But the attempt must be unsuccessful.[6]

The volume begins with three poems which are narrated by an unnamed first person narrator. They deal with the power of the other world, and act as incantatory poems, which set out the theme of the volume.It cannot be emphasised too much that Yeats wished to be both a magician and a poet, and one of the ways he wished to do this was to blur the difference between poetry and ritual magic. To quote Jacob Korg; 'Many of Yeats's shorter poems, as well as part of the longer ones, borrow some of the qualities of ritual performance [...] they are in the present tense; they employ invocations, questions or exclamations; and they witness some mystic transformation, so that they ap-

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[6] Instead of a chronological progression, in other words, Yeats chooses spatial organisation. In this he is attempting to structure his poetry so that he can build up more complex forms without compromising the fact that his poetry still consists of a collection of lyric 'moments'. We should bear this in mind when we come to look at Pound's poetry of 1913 and 1914, specifically the 'Xenia' sequence and those that follow it.

proach the conditions of deed or enactments, rather than mere expressions of feeling [...] It was the habit of ritual that led him to see everything as symbolic, so that his images ring with overtones of elusive significance (Korg, 1995 : 33).

This is a perfect description of the opening poems of *The Wind Among the Reeds*. The first poem is 'The Hosting of the Sidhe'. It begins 'The host is riding from Knocknarea'. The Host is of course the host of the Sidhe, and the present tense used throughout emphasises the ritual quality of the poem. The next four lines are thick with unexplained allusions;

'And over the grave of Clooth-na-Bare;

Caoilte tossing his burning hair, And

Niamh calling *Away, come away*'

These allusions are explained in Yeats's footnotes, but not in the body of the poem itself. What is significant about them is that, again, they create an air of mystery, a feeling that the poet has knowledge which he is not necessarily going to explain. Yeats is grounding himself in a magical tradition, the tradition of Irish myth. The poem continues;

Empty your heart of its mortal dream.
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are agleam,

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Out arms are waving our lips are apart;

And if any gaze on our rushing band,

We come between him and the deed of his hand,

We come between him and the hope of his heart

(Yeats, 1957 : 140).

This is of course the cry of the Sidhe to join them (significantly, Niamh is a woman). It immediately sets up a complex system of symbolism that we will recognise in part from *The Secret Rose*. The wind is of course a symbol of the Sidhe (Yeats writes 'the Sidhe have much to do with the wind. They journey in whirling winds, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias in the Middle Ages' (Yeats, 1957 : 800). This links the idea of wind, the idea of whirling round and round, and the idea of the dance. In this volume, reference to one of these symbols will imply the others. The idea of hair being unbound is also a symbol of the wildness of the Sidhe. The poem then returns to the narrator.

'The host is rushing 'twixt night and day

And where is there hope or deed as fair?' (Yeats, 1957 : 141)

In other words the narrator has now been convinced that only following the Sidhe can lead to true happiness. The narrator paves the way for the dilemmas of Red Hanrahan and the others in the rest of the volume.

The second poem is 'The Everlasting Voices' which follows the same format. Whereas the first poem dealt with the wildness of the Sidhe, this poem deals with their timelessness. It begins with the narrator begging the Sidhe (this time called the Voices) to leave him alone, for whereas they are immortal, he is old and lives in the world of Time.

> Go to the guards of the heavenly fold
> And bid them wander obeying your will,
> Flame under Flame, till Time be no more;
> Have you not heard that our hearts are old,
> That you call in birds, in wind on the hill,
> In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore?
> (Yeats, 1957 : 141)

This sets up the symbol of the flame (usually of a candle) being a symbol for time, and also the prospect of a time when time be no more'. The use of the flame, is of course, Paterian, and again, shows that Yeats emphasised that the poet looks through the moment' the flame' until he perceives eternity. Moreover it sets up more symbols for the Sidhe; birds, trees, and the sea. 'The Moods', the third poem in the incantatory sequence shows us another name for the immortals .

> Time drops in decay,
> Like a candle burnt out,
> And the mountains and woods
> Have their day, have their day;
> What one in the rout
> of the fire-born moods

The use of the word 'woods' reminds us of the boughs of the previous poem. This time it is used as a symbol of transience, and so while trees and so forth remind us of temporality, for the very same reason they remind us of the Sidhe.

After having established the theme of the volume and having set down some of the symbolism, the poetry proper can begin. The main structure of *The Wind Among the Reeds* is of the various personae we have been introduced to in the *The Secret Rose* volume addressing either the Rose woman or else the host of the Sidhe. As we untangle the symbolism, and unearth the layers of meaning, a whole aesthetic and philosophical system is unravelled. However, Yeats himself tried to cover up the meaning of this volume, almost as though he thought he had gone too far in revealing his occult system. For example, most of the poems in the book have titles such as 'The Lover Tells of the Rose in his Heart' and 'The Lover Asks Forgiveness for his Many Moods'. It is only when we find out that the original titles were 'Aedh Tells of the Rose in his Heart' and 'Michael Robartes Asks Forgiveness for his Many Moods' respectively that we see the links between this volume and the protagonists of the 'Secret Rose'. Aedh (or Aodh; Yeats uses both spellings) was the first character in the original *Secret Rose* volume, and so it is appropriate that he begins *The Wind Among the Reeds*. In a sense, his is the fourth introductory poem, because it sets out in its

simplest form the dilemma of the occult poet.

The poem begins with a list of things that are 'uncomely'; i.e. aesthetically displeasing. These are things that remind the poet of time, human suffering, and the existence of the despised peasantry ('the heavy steps of the ploughman'). These things 'Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart'. Thus the poetic Image and the timeless Rose are exactly the same thing, and it can only be perceived by introspection. Aedh continues: 'The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told; I I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart' (Yeats, 1957 : 142 -143). Yeats here shows what he will make clearer in his essays; that his system attempts to replace ethics with aesthetics. Moreover because of this he will try to sit 'apart'; to leave the world and pay attention only to the inner rose.

Having stated his themes, Yeats then interrupts the volume with a ballad. The poems in *The Wind Among the Reeds* are linked spatially, not chronologically, and Yeats uses poetry in the third person to let us know that a new section is beginning. The first four poems have set out the themes of the volume and Yeats's literary aesthetic; and it is now time to introduce the Rose woman, who will obsess all the rest of the characters. The ballad is called 'The Host of the Air' and it sets out the theme of the next section of poetry. The protagonist O'Driscoll is a farmer who 'at the coming of night tide' dreams of his bride Bridget.

'He heard while he sang and dreamed

A piper piping away,

And never was piping so sad

And never was piping so gay'

(Yeats, 1957 : 143-144)

O'Driscoll sees his beloved, but we know that she is now with the Sidhe by the symbolism Yeats uses to describe them; they dance and, play music. O'Driscoll scatters the cards and therefore loses Bridget. The next section of poetry will therefore be about how the various protagonists have lost the Rose woman in the same way.

To show how Yeats's occult symbolism works, we can take a poem like 'The Fish' and show how, whilst being technically a love poem, in the context of this volume, it has a deeper meaning.

Although you hide in the ebb and flow

Of the pale tide when the moon has set,

The people of coming days will know

About the casting out of my net,

And how you have leaped times out of mind

Over the little silver cords,

And think that you were hard and unkind,

And blame you with many bitter words

(Yeats, 1957 : 146).

Firstly, the metaphor of the fisherman is used explicitly as a metaphor for an occult searcher, and the fish as a symbol of the Rose

woman in the poem 'The Song of Wandering Aengus'. 'Pale' is also omnipresent as a symbol of the Rose woman's beauty (as in 'The Lover Mourns for his Loss of Love' with the line 'Pale brows, still hands and dim hair '(Yeats, 1957 : 152)). The moon is also a symbol of the Rose (as in the line 'the silver apples of the moon' also in 'The Song of Wandering Aengus') and we already know the tide is a symbol of Time. In the poem 'Into the Twilight' we have the line about 'come clear of the nets of wrong and right' (Yeats, 1957 : 147) as an example of the rational mind trying to contain the Rose. Silver is also used as a symbol of the occult.

This poem is, therefore, about an occultist who has failed to unite with the Rose Woman. He has seen her, but cannot reunite with her because she eludes him. However 'The people of coming days' will sympathise. Given Yeats's apocalyptic beliefs, we can guess that these are the people who will exist after time and matter have been destroyed, and the old gods have been brought back to earth.

This is the theme of the second section of the book; the unattainability of the Rose woman. However, this section ends with the ballad 'The Cap and Bells' and is followed immediately afterwards by the 'Valley of the Black Pig' (discussed earlier) which sets quite a different tone:

> The dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears
> Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
> And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries
> Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.

We who still labour by the cromlech on the shore,

The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,

Being weary of the world's empires, bow down to you,

Master of the still stars and of the flaming door (Yeats, 1957 : 161).

Yeats's note informs us that the persona of this poem is another peasant visionary, and that 'The Valley of the Black Pig ' is the legendary Irish apocalypse; a final battle that will signal the end of the world. We may link this with the coming of the Antichrist in *The Secret Rose* volume and the apocalyptic imagery of Yeats' poetry in general. The theme of this last section of the poetry is that truly being reunited with the Rose woman can only happen when Time and Space have come to an end. In 'He tells of a Valley full of Lovers' (original title 'Aedh tells of a Valley full of Lovers') Aedh cries out:

'O women, bid the young men lay

Their heads on your knees, and drown their eyes with your hair,

Or remembering hers they will find no other face fair

Till all the valleys of the world have been withered away'

(Yeats, 1957 :163).

Again, in context and with the key mention of the word 'valleys' we can see that this is not a conventional lover's cry, but instead a desire for apocalypse.

This section ends with the poem in the third person 'The Blessed' and

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then continues with 'The Secret Rose' the most direct poem so far. It is direct in that it makes explicit the connection between this volume and the book of stories, and also in that it makes clear that the rose and beauty and the rose woman 'a woman of shining loveliness' are the same and that only after 'the stars blown about the sky' has happened can he be reunited with it. The poem ends

'surely thine hour has come, thy great wind blows,

Far-off, most secret, and inviolate Rose?' (Yeats, 1957 : 170)

The first section announced the theme of the volume. The second section explored this theme. The third section introduced the idea of the Apocalypse. The last section deals with the idea that the apocalypse is not only necessary, but imminent. It trembles on the brink of revelation. The hope is therefore greater than the rest of the volume, but so is the despair that the revelation might not occur.

But the volume ends with Mongan despairing because 'I know all things now' (Yeats, 1957 : 177). Mongan has achieved all he can on this earth, but the apocalypse has not come. Indeed the apocalypse cannot come in this volume because the book and poetry are still in time, however much it wants to escape. The apocalypse will signal the end of time. The volume therefore ends as it began, on a note of longing.

This chapter may have seemed to be a digression from the main thrust of the thesis, which promised an elucidation of Anglo-American Modernism. However, it was necessary in order to explicate the links between the 'early' and the 'later' Yeats, and the extent to which there was continuity between the two position. Before going on to discuss the political implications of this theorising, we should sum up the implications of this book of poetry for later writers.

Firstly this demonstrates that, above all, Yeats was, at this stage, an occult poet. Secondly that his view of occultism, influenced partly by Symbolism and partly by the Order of the Golden Dawn, necessitated an insistence on secrecy, and that, therefore, the form of Yeats's poetry was designed to be, as he said, 'obscure' as opposed to 'popular' (see below). Thus the system of allusions which unify the volume are important not just to create unity, but also to create an air of mystery, and to render the work opaque to non-initiates. Thirdly, that Yeats did not write mere individual poems, but books of poetry, unified by a philosophy, and united by a sophisticated but non-chronological pattern, or series of patterns. This pattern, which could not be chronological (because, as a Platonist Yeats knew that time was a delusion) had to be structured spatially.[7] And finally that Yeats explicated his theories with the use of masks or personae. We should bear all these points in mind when we come to look at the poetry of Ezra Pound.

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[7] In other words, Yeats's distrust of temporality (which, as we have already seen, he and the Romantics generally associated with materialism, and therefore, relativism), stemmed from his metaphysical beliefs, and his use of spatial rather than temporal forms had its origins in this metaphysic.

Now, as we have seen, Yeats had decided to ground his mythology in Ireland, under the influence of the revolutionary John O'Leary (Yeats, 1956 : 101). Yeats was a Romantic first, and only afterwards decided to become a thoroughly Irish poet; as Edward Hirsch puts it 'Yeats aligns himself in a thoroughly Romantic tradition, but he localises that cult, and, as it were, grafts it onto Irish folk tradition' (Hirsch, 1982 : 77). Thus, Yeats's poetry and his view of Ireland were intimately bound together, just as his poetry and his occult beliefs were also bound together.

In 1904 he made a speech in which he discussed his views on Irish development .We must remember that Yeats's primary concern was the survival of art, and that he saw this as being menaced by the materialism of science and capitalism. So he begins by stating two views of the world. The English world view, which the Irish must try and avoid being contaminated by, is the world of industrial capitalism and materialism. Against this he argues that Ireland should stay loyal to the pre-industrial, agrarian world, 'Ireland will always be in the main an agricultural country' (Ellmann, 1949 : 116). And this is because the 'English' way of life destroys the life of the spirit.

Ireland, however, if it turns its back on the English idea of 'progress' will keep 'an imaginative culture and power to understand imaginative and spiritual things distributed among the people' (Ellmann, 1949 : 116). In other words 'we wish to preserve an ancient ideal of life' (Ellmann, 1949 :116) because 'In Ireland alone among the nations that I

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know will you find, away on the Western seaboard, under broken roofs, a race of gentlemen keep alive the ideals of a great time when men sang the heroic life with drawn swords in their hands' (Ellmann, 1949 : 116).

This essay was written after Yeats had discovered Nietzsche, and it is possible that his praise of the 'heroic life' was drawn from him, but on the other hand his thought had always tended in this direction (In his autobiography he wrote that when his father met Maud Gonne in the early 1890s 'She vexed my father by praise of war, war for its own sake, not as the creator of certain virtues, but as if there was some virtue in excitement itself' and he continues 'I supported her against my father' (Yeats, 1956 :123)). This again returns to his concern for art; for the heroic life as the concomitant of the myths that Yeats had decided should be the basis for art.

And so Yeats turned his back on the idea of 'progress' and insisted that art could only be safeguarded by rejecting materialism, and anything that menaced 'the heroic life'. Ireland was still in a position to do this. Yeats therefore started off by wishing to spontaneously write popular poetry with a subject matter 'known to the whole people', and the poems of his first collection *Crossways* (1889) reflect this (Yeats, 1903). True popular poetry, for Yeats 'presupposes the unwritten tradition' (Yeats, 1903 :10) and is, therefore, folk poetry. However, as we have seen, as Yeats developed, he became increasingly under the influence of Symbolism and the occult, both of which stressed the idea of

'secrecy'. And so Yeats began to posit as well a 'poetry of the coteries' which presupposed 'the written tradition' (Yeats, 1903 :10). In the beginning of Irish society, both of these traditions existed side by side, and they both complemented each other; 'the art of the people was as closely mingled with the art of the coteries as was the speech of the people that delighted in the [...] unchanging speech of poets' (Yeats, 1903 :13-14). However, at some point the serpent of the Middle Classes arose in this Eden 'the counting house had created a new class and a new art without breeding and without ancestry '(Yeats, 1903 :13). It is this new class, the Bourgeoisie, who menace Ireland with their English materialism and technology.[8]

We must always remember, to follow Yeats's argument at this point, that Yeats was an occult poet, who saw magic as being inseparable from poetry. Thus Yeats argues that the peasantry 'cannot separate the idea of an art or craft from the idea of a cult with ancient technicalities and mysteries' (Yeats, 1903 :13) (and he is, of course, talking about his own poetic practice as well). Thus, authentic 'popular (or folk) poetry' must also consist of 'words and verses that keep half their secrets to themselves' (Yeats, 1903 :13). By a complex process of argument Yeats, who begun the essay by calling for popular poetry, has ended up by calling for a poetry that even though it is still folk poetry (in Yeats's ra-

[8] And Yeats makes very clear just why he is worried by the rise of capitalism, and the class that benefits from it, the Bourgeoisie. 'The arts have failed', he writes, continuing, 'fewer people are interested in them every generation. The mere business of living, of *making money*, of amusing oneself, occupies people more and more, and makes them less and less capable of the difficult art of appreciation' (Yeats 1903 : 320) (my italics). And it is because of *this*, that 'If we would win the people again' we must 'take upon ourselves the method and the fervour of the priesthood' (Yeats 1903 :320). Yeats is therefore concerned that 'high' art is doomed in an industrial society. See note 4, Chapter Nine.

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ther specialised use of the phrase) should be at least partly incomprehensible to outsiders. To show how important this idea of a cult was with him one of the few criticisms of he makes of Shelley and Blake is that neither of them have a system of belief that is tied to the people. Blake was a 'A symbolist who had to invent his symbols' (Yeats, 1903 :173) and this makes them arbitrary, not universal.

We have seen how Yeats's thought developed from his dislike of science and technology, to a dislike of 'progress' as such; and thus to a cyclical view of time. However, one of the other interesting things about this essay, is its praise of a society based on 'the hut and the castle'; i.e. a hierarchical society. To follow this aspect of his thought, we must look at his beliefs as part of The Order of The Golden Dawn. By 1900 the group was in crisis. It was almost impossible to keep such a group of eccentric and individualistic people organised (Harper 1974 : 106-120). Moreover, the group were suspicious of Yeats' insistence that poetry was a kind of Magic (Harper 1974 : 99). Yeats, therefore made two attempts to make his position clear. Characteristically, this was done in two ways, a private way and a public one. Firstly in 1901, he wrote the essay 'Is the Order of R.R. and A. C. to remain a Magical Order?' (Yeats, 1974 : 68). This was an attempt to make his position clear to his fellow occultists; an attempt to show why the Order must remain united, and to show something of Yeats' beliefs in the unity of poetry and magic. This is the private version of the ideas that Yeats publicly expressed in the essays printed as *Ideas of Good and Evil,*

which we have already looked at.

The essay begins by stating that the order must remain true to the ideals of the past, and must stress the idea of obedience. The Order can only be saved by

'1: Insisting on a strict obedience to the laws and by laws.

2: By making the giving out of the knowledge lectures dependent on the passing of examinations' (Harper, 1974 : 71).

Then Yeats goes on to a deeper question; why have a mystic order at all? Moreover, what is the point of a secret hierarchical magical order?

'The passing by their means from one Degree to another is a evocation of the Supreme Life, a treading of a symbolic path, a passage through a symbolic gate, a climbing towards the light which it is the essence of our system to believe, flows continually from the lowest of the invisible degrees to the highest of the Degrees that are known to us (Harper, 1974 : 73). For Yeats the Degrees were literally, a ladder into Heaven (Harper, 1974). It was the task of the occultist to ascend this ladder, but if it was not done properly, the result would be chaos; 'disorder and disquiet' (Harper, 1974 : 80). Since Yeats believed that the occult path was the preferable one it is easy to see that he is 'arguing for the metaphysical validity of a hierarchical order of existence' (Harper, 1974 : 11). One must ascend the ladder in the right

order; therefore the higher rungs must be secret.

Yeats's belief in a hierarchical order of existence therefore came from the beliefs he had been taught in The Order of the Golden Dawn; a modernised version of the Mediaeval 'Great Chain of Being'. These are the beliefs that motivated Yeats to found 'The Castle of Heroes' 'the headquarters of a new cult through which the truths of the spirit might be disseminated to the materialistic nations' at the turn of the century (Ellmann, 1949 : 124). It is significant that approval of hierarchical, secret, occult groups is incompatible with democracy, but as Yeats wrote in the same essay, 'in our day every idler, every trifler, every bungler cries out for his freedom' (Harper, 1974 : 75) and continued 'It was the surrender of freedom that taught Dante Alighieri to say "Thy will is our peace"' (Harper, 1974 : 85). The form of Yeats's poetry (which tends to differentiate between initiates, and non-initiates), his belief in hierarchy, and his dislike of democratic ideals (albeit, at this stage, only in the context of the Order of the Golden Dawn) are all bound up in his occult philosophy.

Chapter 3 : The New Yeats

To see how Yeats set the course for Anglo-American Modernism, we must now look at how he reacted to the demands of the twentieth century.

The first decade of the new century proved to be a time of transition for Yeats. To begin with, he was beginning to become disillusioned with The Order of the Golden Dawn. As it became more and more difficult to keep such an egotistical and eccentric group of people organised (Hone, 1962 : 170-171) his interest in the practical aspects of magic waned. At the same time, the Rhymers club, and the *fin de siècle* aesthetic which lay behind it, was also in decline. Beardsley, Dowson, Johnson and Wilde all died early in the new century. In his personal life as well he faced acute disappointment over his failure to marry Maud Gonne (Hone, 1962 : 156-157).

As if to escape from the difficulties of his personal life, he became more interested in practical matters, such as the running of the Abbey Theatre, which he had set up on 1899. Instead of a political revolution (which his association with people like O'Leary had led him to want), Yeats began to think of a *cultural* Renaissance, which would, however, *lead* to a political Renaissance. He began to posit the idea that a new theatre which produced 'poetic' plays on Irish themes could wean the intelligentsia away from both the commercial theatre and 'the northern phantom' of Ibsenite realism (Yeats, 1975 : 163). This would lead to a new intellectual outlook which would help Ireland to fulfil her destiny; to bring 'a new national agreement, and the political tumult begin again' (Yeats, 1975 :

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196), for at this point Yeats still believed that Ireland had a special part to play in the new world order (Yeats, 1975 : 199).

Yeats's new found interest in the theatre was indicative of a slow but steady change in his views on art. In many ways this is symbolised by his discovery of Nietzsche. Yeats was introduced to the German philosopher in 1902 and immediately began to read him voraciously (Bridgewater, 1972 : 67). It was clear that Yeats saw Nietzsche as a way of overcoming the Idealist, 'decadent' approach to poetry that he had previously taken, and that he was now beginning to think about poetry that was more closely involved with present day reality. It was under Nietzsche's influence that Yeats wrote 'the close of the last century was full of a strange desire to get out of form, to get some kind of disembodied beauty, and now it seems that the contrary influence has come' (Yeats, 1954 : 402). Moreover, he now began to value the idea of 'hard' 'masculine' and precise poetry as opposed to 'soft', over emotional poetry, a distinction, which, again, seems to come from Nietzsche (Oppel, 1987 : 39-40). And Yeats was not only influenced by Nietzsche's ideas (many of which seemed a confirmation of his own) but by the German's epigrammatic style. As early as 1902, in the play *Where There is Nothing* Yeats had begun to purify his diction and to move away from the *fin de siècle* tone he had adopted up until this time (Liebregts,1993 : 120-125) (see also his attempts to stage *The Shadowy Waters* ; as Yeats himself writes, he found his earlier, *fin de siècle* style unsuitable for the stage, and had to cut back on his rhetoric to make it stageable (Yeats,

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1966 : 1293)). Therefore the simple act of writing plays that had to be playable in front of an audience forced him to abandon much of the flowing and diffuse 'fin de siècle' diction he had used up until this point. This was the general tendency of Yeats's revisions of his plays at this point; to make them 'harder' and more concise (Oppel, 1987 : 114-158).

This should not be interpreted as Yeats turning his back on his earlier views. In a letter he wrote to George Russell (AE) in 1900 he stated 'To write of a material object being "fiery footed" is almost always to write from the phantasy rather than the imagination. The imaginative deals with spiritual things [...] the phantasy has its place but it is a subordinate place [...] vague forms, pictures, scenes etc. are rather a modern idea of the poetic and I would not want to call up a modern kind of picture. I avoid every kind of word that seems to me either"poetical" or "modern" and above all I avoid suggesting the ghostly (the vague) idea about a god, for it is a modern conception. All Ancient Vision was *definite and precise*' (Yeats, 1954 : 343 my italics). This is a complex passage, but the general point of it is clear. Yeats had adopted an approach in the 1890's that was, in the broadest sense of the word, reactionary; he looked to the past as a guarantor of poetic values. He was by no means abandoning these values, but he was beginning to see that the *fin de siècle*, Symbolist approach, was itself a symptom of modernity. It was, in a sense, a 'decadent' art (that is to say, decadent in Nietzsche's sense, and not just in the sense that the Decadents themselves used it). Instead, the effects of the earliest (and therefore, to Yeats, best) poetry had been, he

thought, gained by precision and definiteness, not the vagueness and suggestiveness he had championed up until this point (Fascinatingly, these are exactly the distinctions that Ezra Pound will make in modernising his own poetry ten years later; between ancient clarity, and modern diffuseness).

As Flannery writes; '1900 marks the beginning of a conscious effort on Yeats's part to sift from his life, from his magic, his philosophy, and his poetry all that was vague and imprecise [...] Yeats solidly prefers Imagination over fantasy, the precise over the vague, just as he constantly prefers Magic over Mysticism, for Magic had come to mean control and command over form for him' (Flannery, 1977 : 110).

Previously, Yeats had been proud to have been thought a Mystic, with its connotations of dreaminess, imprecision, Idealism, and so forth. Now, however, he wished to become a Magician, and this was the task he would set himself in the new century (Foster catches this antithesis 'In the end Blake, like Russell, was a mystic, wrapped in obscurities, and Yeats was an apprentice mage, determined to penetrate beyond them' (Foster, 1997 : 101).

It is as a result of this new thinking that Yeats began to change the emphasis of some of his previous thought. Under the influence of Florence Farr, he began to reemphasise that poetry was influenced by the speech of the people. Yeats had met Farr in the 1890's, and she had impressed him by the way she chanted poetry, as opposed to reciting it a more conventional manner. Between 1905 and 1907 they even went on

lecture tours together, to explain and demonstrate their chanting approach to poetry (Schuchard, 1984 : 210-211). It was under Farr's influence that Yeats began to loosen the metre of his poetry, and start to abandon the strict forms he had always previously used. Farr had argued that a poem, as well as having a conventional, metrical, rhythm, also had a deeper, 'organic' rhythm as well, and that the greatest poets would break the conventional rules of metre rather than ignore organic rhythm. As a critic puts it Yeats and Farr 'held that the visual image finds its greatest power in the auditory imagination and that the cadence of the living voice, which gives expression to the imagination, gives metre the semblance of freedom' (Schuchard, 1984 : 214). However, we must remember again, that this was in no way Yeats expressing a desire to be 'modern'. Farr argued that the ancient bards of Ireland had based their poetry on 'organic rhythm' and that conventional metrical forms were a modern innovation. Thus, Yeats looser forms fitted in with his reactionary ideas; using organic rhythm and chanting poetry would lead to a resurgence of the oral tradition, with all that that implied (Schuchard, 1984 : 211).

We have already seen that the practical demands of writing for the theatre were partly responsible for the clarification of Yeats's diction that went on throughout the first decade of the century. However, Yeats was by no means interested in Realism. Instead, he began to be interested in the idea of chanting words in the theatre or reciting words in a way that stressed rhythm. Yeats wished to create a theatre that was down to

earth, and of the people, and yet anti-Realist; a theatre as he imagined that of ancient Greece would have been like.

Another influence on the purification of his diction at this time, was that between 1904 and 1907 Yeats rewrote *The Secret Rose* volume with the help of Lady Gregory. With her help and greater knowledge of the speech of the peasantry, he began to simplify his prose and to eliminate the Celtic Twilight feel of the volume. This project exemplified his development in this period; in 1914, looking back at the turn of the century, he said; 'We wanted to get rid not only of rhetoric but of poetic diction. We tried to strip away everything that was artificial, to get a style like speech, as simple as the simplest prose' (Yeats, 1974 : 413).

As quotes of the time show, Yeats admired Gregory immensely; and in fact linked her aristocratic outlook with that of Synge; next to Nietzsche the greatest influence on Yeats at this point in his life (Yeats, 1972[1])).

Yeats had first met Synge in Paris in 1896, but it was not until 1899 that Synge decided to give up the Bohemian life and live in the Aran Islands (Yeats liked to claim that he was responsible for the move, but this is doubtful (Grene, 1984)). He thereby gained knowledge that Yeats himself never had; how the peasantry actually thought and spoke. This interest in the 'primitive' fitted in with the general direction of Synge's thought;

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[1] It is commonly believed that at a time of great mental stress, Yeats was taken in and saved by Lady Gregory. This has an element of truth, but it is also the case that at this time Yeats was becoming increasingly interested in the idea of the aristocracy; specifically that of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, and that he was positively seeking out aristocratic contacts at this time.The reason he was engaged in such a quest was part and parcel of his move from writing of mythical, imaginary worlds (the Otherworld) to his increasing use of contemporary themes and subjects, which necessitated writing about real people, as opposed to the mythological figures he had previously written about. And so, whereas, in the nineteenth century, Yeats had written of a *spiritual* aristocracy who were to lead the world, he now had to find (or invent) a *real* aristocracy, with whose fate he could intertwine himself (Hone, 1965 : 131).

civilisation, Synge argued, was declining as Men lost touch with the old traditions. The poet's task was to reintegrate society with all that was 'primitive' in Man (Henn, 1950 and Kilroy, 1971). Moreover, Synge was increasingly stressing that toughness, even aggression, was necessary for great art and Yeats followed him in this. As Yeats wrote in 1908 'Even if we grant that exalted poetry can be kept successful by itself, the strong things of life are needed in poetry also, to show what is exalted, or tender, is not made by feeble blood. It may also be said that before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal' (Henn, 1950 : 76). (It is obvious how this must have fitted in with Yeats's reading of Nietzsche; see below. Henn writes 'There was something in Synge that accorded with Yeats's desire for brutality and violence' (Henn, 1950 : 78).

Synge's language too had an influence (Yeats found room for eleven of his poems in his *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Poetry* (Yeats, 1936)). Synge's plays were written in a style that was undoubtedly 'tough' and 'realistic' and yet which avoided Naturalism completely. They recalled, Yeats thought, the way speech must have been presented in the drama of Classical Greece (which again fitted in with what he was learning from Farr). Synge's language was symptomatic of his general approach, to bring language (and poetry) back in touch with the uncivilised and the primitive. In doing this he showed that there was an alternative to '*fin de siècle* attenuation on the one hand and linguistically pallid realism on the other' (Sidnell, 1996 : 77) (Since this 'alternative' was to be the basis for what we now know as the 'later Yeats' it is obvious that Synge was very

influential indeed. Pound himself thought that the influence of Synge was the main force that created Yeats's 'modern' style (Longenbach, 1988 : 15)).

It is in the context of these events that we must view the *In The Seven Woods* volume (1904), Yeats's first book of poetry in the new century. The first thing to be said about it, is that, like *The Wind Among the Reeds, In The Seven Woods,* is, above, all, a *book,* and not just a selection of poems randomly arranged (again, as I will demonstrate, this method of publishing poetry was taken up by Ezra Pound).

Unfortunately (and again this is what happened to *The Wind Among the Reeds*), Yeats later chopped up the volume so that its essential unity became almost impossible to discern. However, in the original, as well as the lyric poems which still go by that name, were printed the long narrative poems, *The Old Age of Queen Maeve,* and *Baille and Aillinn,* as well as the play *On Baille's Strand.* Yeats himself, in the introduction, wrote: 'The first shape of it (i.e. *On Baille's Strand*) came to me in a dream, but it changed much in the making, foreshadowing, it may be, a change that may bring a less dream-burdened will into my verses' (Yeats, 1966 : 814) demonstrating that he was aware of the new direction his work was taking (the play itself is heavily influenced by Nietzsche, thus demonstrating again that Yeats himself saw Nietzsche as being to a large extent behind the creation of his new style (Oppel, 1987 : 147-158)).

It is the long narrative poems that are the most interesting in this respect, in that thematically they point ahead to new directions not just

for Yeats, but for modern poetry as a whole. The major differences between these poems (and the volume as a whole) from the poems in the *The Wind Among the Reeds* is the absence of the Rose Woman. Instead, the mythical women who are referred to (Deirdre, Aillinn) exist *in* time (as opposed to the timeless Rose Woman), or rather, in narrative. For the pattern of the longer, narrative poems yet again deals with the problem of the war between reality and the Otherworld, but this time the battle is far more equal. For example, in *The Old Age of Queen Maeve* we are presented with yet another Yeats surrogate; a 'certain poet in outlandish clothes' (line 1); but notice that this man is undoubtedly a poet (and therefore in the world), and not a mystic or magician (who looks out of the world). Instead of looking out to a timeless, Idealist, reality, he instead tells a mythological story, which unequivocally happened in the past. This is the pattern of *Baille and Aillinn* as well. However, in both poems the poet is perpetually distracted from his mythological narration by the demands of the present day:

O Unquiet heart,

Why do you praise another, praising her,

As if there was no tale but your own tale

Worth knitting to a measure of sweet sound?

Have I not bid you tell of that great queen,

Who has been buried some two thousand years? (Yeats, 1957 : 181)

Now, this is how the poet (such as Hanrahan) was kept from earthly

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love in *The Secret Rose* volume, but as the poet makes clear, this other woman, who tears the poet away from the world of myth, is *not* the rose woman; this is, instead, a real woman who is <u>in</u> time and who will, therefore, eventually die. Whereas Red Hanrahan could not love a real woman because of the Rose woman, (in other words, he was distracted from reality by the demands of the Ideal world). Here the poet is being distracted from the Ideal world by the demands of reality.

Even clearer in this respect is *Baille and Aillinn*. The theme of this poem (which is again, a narrative) is the love story between the eponymous mythological protagonists. However it is interspersed again with the interpolations of the narrator who continually interrupts the story to with complaints such as:

O wandering birds and rushy beds,
You put such folly in our heads
With all this crying in the wind,
No common love is to our mind,
And our poor Kate or Nan is less
Than any whose unhappiness
Awoke the harp-strings long ago (Yeats, 1957 : 190).

In other words, the narrator poet resents the existence of myth, because it prevents him from enjoying real corporeal reality, the love of 'Kate' or 'Nan'. However, the mythic events happened a 'long ago' (compare 'two thousand years', above); that is to say, in the past (whereas, in *The Wind Among the Reeds* the mythic events were taking

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place, in some sense, even as the poet wrote; that is to say, in an Idealist Timeless reality). The world of material reality is unsatisfying, but inescapable.

So, in these poems, poets replace mages, and mythical narrative replaces the timeless world of the Rose Woman. However, the dilemma, of the difference between 'spiritual' and 'material' reality, remains. One may, therefore, see this as representing no great change from his earlier poems. But this ignores the theme that is absent from these poems; the theme of apocalypse. In *The Wind Among the Reeds* Yeats was almost unequivocal that the world of spirit was about to annihilate the world of matter, that a new order was about to appear. Now however, he is less certain, and by omission he raises the possibility that *this is just the way the world is*, that the poet's role, instead of preparing for apocalypse, will have to become that of dealing with the world of the 'real' (this is also the case for the volume as a whole, except for one brief enigmatic reference to a 'Great Archer' who but 'waits His hour to shoot' in the title poem; Foster calls this reference 'ironic' Foster, 1997 : 301).

This is an important development, and it was achieved with the help of Synge. In his Autobiography, Yeats acknowledged this, writing 'I did not see, until Synge began to write, that we must renounce the deliberate creation of a Holy City in the imagination, and express the individual' (Yeats, 1956 : 493-494). However, this was a judgment made much later in the day, and one may doubt if it is wholly accurate. For surely Yeats, even in these poems, does not *renounce* the Holy City. The mythological

events of these poems happened a long time ago, but there is no question but that they are real. Yeats was never a materialist. Instead, he engages in a dialectic between the world of myth and the world of reality, a dialectic, that, at this stage, has no chance of ending, except in contradiction. Asked to choose, he chose *both* '"pure imagination" and the "tumult of blood"' (Sidnell 1996 : 86) (Synge himself seems to have been aware of this, cf. Stallworthy, 1972), and Yeats, the poet, is still caught in the middle.[2]

If the narrative poems pointed the way forward thematically, a few of the lyric poems indicated his future style in terms of style and diction. The most famous of these is 'Adam's Curse', now generally agreed to be Yeats's first 'modern' poem (Foster, 1997).

We sat together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I, and talked of poetry.
I said: 'A line will take us hours, maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet

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[2] It is vital to grasp the point that here Yeats is using myth as a yardstick by which contemporary society may be compared, contrasted, and, in rhetorical structure at least, ordered. As Sidnell points out, this is the beginning of what Eliot called 'the mythic method', which he insisted was the main ordering process for works such as *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* (Sidnell, 1996).

Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake,
There's many a one shall find out all heartache
On finding that her voice is sweet and low
Replied: 'To be born woman is to know-
Although they do not talk of it at school-
That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said : 'It's certain there is no fine thing
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
There have been lovers who thought love should be
So much compounded of high courtesy
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
Precedents out of beautiful old books;
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown

As weary-hearted as that hollow moon (Yeats, 1957 : 204-206).

Firstly we should notice the purification of diction that has been undergone. Instead of the Pre-Raphaelite use of 'Thees' and 'Thous', we have a description of speech that might be described as colloquial. There are no archaisms. Moreover, the theme is neither mythological, nor a conventional love lyric; instead we have a more or less realistic picture of three people sitting about on a lawn; it could be an Impressionist painting.

It is the way the poem is structured, however, that points to a far more complex and ironical rhetorical structure than Yeats had used before. The poem begins with the poet propounding the ironic theory that whereas poetry is one of the most complex and difficult of activities, it must present itself as being easy to the reader. This is itself a more complex view than the views presented in his earlier poetry where 'work' and 'activity' were associated unequivocally with the 'world' the poet wished to escape.

Moreover, this view presents a further ambiguity. Whereas before, Yeats had (as the Romantics taught him), equated poetry with truth, here we see Yeats broaching the idea that poetry may deceive. The poem poses as something that only required 'a moment's thought'; the reality, however, is very different.

Then the poet iterates a claim that was a staple of *fin de siècle* poetics, that poetry is harder work than mere manual labour, but the 'noisy set'; the Bourgeoisie, would never recognise or admit this. However, again,

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whereas before Yeats was one of those who called these people 'the world', now those that think like this are treated ironically; 'the martyrs'. By this phrasing, and with our knowledge of their tragic lives, we can identify these 'martyrs' as the Rhymers club. Yeats is, therefore, ironically distancing himself from the position he himself had held up until this point.

In this third stanza the poet discusses the way that 'fine things' have passed out of the world. He contrasts the old ways of courtly love, how lovers used to 'sigh and quote with learned looks | Precedents out of beautiful old books'. Yeats of course, was not unlike this when he was younger. Now however, it 'seems an idle trade enough'. The word 'idle' of course, recalls its use in line 12; the 'idle set'. In the modern world 'since Adam's fall' we now no longer see the point of such courtly thought and expression. The ironic idea that poetry needs hard work but must seem not to, is further ironicised, by the play on the word 'idle', meaning not just lazy, but futile. Now that we see that everything requires work, the courtly expression of aristocrats seem to be merely the idle amusements of the rich. In the modern world we are so far from the world of courtly love that we no longer see the point.

And now, at the end of the poem, Yeats returns to his 1890s diction, in order to provide a rhetorical contrast with what has gone before.

He identifies himself with the courtly lovers of old. He recalls the days when he had loved the woman (that is, Maud Gonne), but now 'we'd grown as weary hearted as that hollow moon'. In the same way that in the

new century, the ways of courtly love (and the ideas of the *fin de siècle*) seem merely ridiculous, his love for Maud Gonne was something that somehow now belonged to the past.

Here clearly we have a radical new development in Yeats's poetic. In his use of the word 'martyr', Yeats acknowledges that there was something self fulfilling in the Decadent's prophecies of personal doom. In other words, their attempt to stand apart from the world was a failure; they unwittingly became implicated in the process they attempted to be describing. In the complex third stanza, he toys with the idea that whereas previously, lovers 'worked' at 'love', we now see this as being idle because

a) it no longer looks like real work to us, who see 'real' work as breaking stones 'like an old pauper' and

b) it seems pointless in the utilitarian modern world (in precisely the way that poetry does to the 'noisy set').

No-one is left unjudged in this poem, for the narrator (who is not Yeats, but is clearly a part of Yeats) himself admits that his own attempts to 'love' in the 'old high way of love' have failed, leaving him 'weary-hearted'. Maybe his attempt to ignore the modern world, like 'the martyr's', was a failure, ignoring the fact that 'time's waters' will always flow, despite Man's protests. And yet, there is no doubting the pessimism about the new world that the poet expresses.

This poem exemplifies the dialectical approach Yeats was now adopting. Unwilling to abandon his Romanticism, he now holds it within a

rhetorical structure that questions it, but does not unequivocally abandon it. This cautious ambiguity was to be his approach for the next five years, as he experimented with the Abbey Theatre, and his attempt to bring about an Irish literary (rather than political) Renaissance. These hopes were to receive a sharp blow with the controversy over *The Playboy of the Western World*.

This riots provoked by this play have been discussed many times before, and there is no need to repeat the story here (cf. Strand, 1996 for a discussion). The point, for Yeats, was not just that his plans for a theatrical Renaissance might have to be abandoned; it was that it was part of a more general disillusionment with Ireland. His involvement with Maud Gonne had already disillusioned him with practical politics (a process that continued during this period. By 1907 Yeats was openly opposed to Sinn Féinn, and 'pious nationalism' (Foster, 1997 : 360)). Now he began to think that his dream of recreating a theatre like the Greek Classical theatre of Aeschylus and Sophocles was impossible; impossible because the available audience was not up to the demands that playwrights of this calibre might make.

When Synge died in 1909, Yeats thought that the crowd who jeered the Playboy were partly to blame (Yeats, 1956). This was more important, for Yeats, than simply the death of a talented playwright. As we have seen, Yeats was increasingly under the influence of Nietzsche at this point, and Synge, for Yeats, did not merely write like Aeschylus or Homer; he was a man of their stature. Like them, he had expunged his own personality to

express the true feelings of the race (Liebregts, 1993 : 138-143). In fact, Synge was a Nietzschean Übermensch who was, like Zarathustra, 'lonely and brooding' (Liebregts, 1993 :139). Now it was easy to see him as a great man who had been torn apart by the mob.

He also had troubles closer to home. The Abbey Theatre had taken up so much of his time that he had written little lyric poetry since the publication of *In The Seven Woods*. He wondered if his powers had failed him, and privately despaired that he would have the creative energy to continue as a poet (Yeats, 1972 : 171). When he published his Collected Poems in 1908, many people thought that this volume marked the end of his career, and Yeats must have feared that they were right (Foster, 1997 : 400-401). Moreover, in 1908, Arthur Symons collapsed into a manic psychosis. It was the final death-knell for the 1890's generation (Foster, 1997 : 391-392). With Synge's death only a year later it seemed that Yeats's generation had finally passed into literary history (Foster, 1997 : 399). As T.S. Eliot wrote later 'Yeats did not appear, until after 1917, to be anything but a minor survivor of the '90s' (Longenbach, 1988 : 17).

It was in this mood of despair that he first met Ezra Pound.

Chapter Four : The Early Pound

The first three chapters of this thesis have deal with the background to the birth of Anglo-American Modernism. I have tried to show how Romantic aesthetics evolved as a response to the cultural threat of relativism, which challenged the accepted position of the artist in society. These attitudes problematised ideas that had been at the very core of the Western artistic tradition. In response to the atomising force of Modernity, in which the artist's very sense of time was torn apart and reconstituted, artists were driven to contemplate different and older philosophies of temporality, such as the idea of time as being circular, or the Platonic (and Neo-Platonic) view that there was a timeless Idealist reality that could be perceived through Poulet's 'shreds of duration'. Yeats in particular hypothesised a spatial Idealist landscape which could be perceived by the visionary occult poet, and which would act as (as it were) a scaffold on which aesthetic values could be hung (in other words, a metaphysical foundationalism or objectivism).

Artists were also driven to reevaluate their views of history, and the relation of human endeavour and artistic achievement to that history. As we have seen, Pater saw Hegel (and Darwin) as a way out of the relativistic maze, in that both of them seemed to offer a way to imbue reality with meaning through the medium of history. History acknowledged change, and yet provided continuity within that change. It has been demonstrated that it was a particularly extreme variety of this concept that the early (post-Paterian) Yeats chose to adopt. Yeats's

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view of history was, indeed, that it was the key to understanding reality, and that art justified itself in historical progress, but he added the twist that his view of history was apocalyptic. By hypothesising two thousand year blocs of time, each of which was the reverse of the other, and each of which ended in cataclysm, he had formulated a philosophy of history that explained and yet denied progress, which gave the artist the chance to comment on change, and yet to stand apart from the process.

Now, however, we must move on to the development of Anglo-American Modernism proper, and for this we must examine the development of Ezra Pound. The main point to remember is that, as a poet, Pound was subject to exactly the same problems, of audience, the fragmentation of time, and of history, as Pater and Yeats. Moreover, Pound developed his own Modernism from the groundwork laid down by these earlier writers. I therefore agree with Robinson when he states 'There is, I contend, an unbroken continuity in avant-garde aesthetics from the *fin de siécle* to Vorticism' (Robinson, 1985 : xiii).

In beginning to discuss Pound, it is necessary to go back to his very earliest poetic influences, in order to demonstrate that his early development was in many ways a recapitulation of the views we have already discussed. For the purposes of this chapter, then, I will examine his very earliest poetry, that is, the poetry he wrote before the *Canzoni* volume, which I will argue was his earliest attempt to 'modernise' his diction and themes. In discussing this early work, we must begin by

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looking at the earliest influences Pound had available to him.

Perhaps the earliest influence on the work of Pound was that of Browning. For Pound, Browning was a poet who raised the question of the situation he felt himself to be in; that is 'the position of art in a time of social fragmentation '(Gibson, 1995 : 53). For right from the beginning of his poetic project, Pound was obsessed with the problem of formulating an audience for his poetry, an audience that the pressures of contemporary society seemed set to prevent from appearing (Gibson, 1995). The theme of the 'alienated artist 'who is unable to relate to his fellow human beings, who is somehow 'other', is ubiquitous in Pound's early poetry. For example in 'Anima Sola', one of his earliest poems, he wrote

Exquisite loneliness:

Bound of my own caprice,
I fly on the wings of an unknown chord
That ye hear not,
Can not discern.
My music is wild and untaméd,
Barbarous, wild, extreme,
I fly on the note that ye hear not,
On the chord that ye can not dream (Pound, 1965 : 31)

Here the poet condemns and yet revels in his own alienation from society. The 'you', who is clearly the reader, is already stated to be someone who cannot understand poetic inspiration; the note 'that ye

hear not'. However, the use of words such as 'caprice' demonstrate,

the poet is, even while regretting his apartness, also responsible for it.

The loneliness is loneliness, but it is still 'exquisite'. This is, I would

argue, the key theme of his early poetry in terms of ideas. Certainly

almost all the poems from his first two volumes of his verse deal with

'the beleaguered original genius striving to make its mark upon the

world against negative forces from within and without' (Jackson, 1968

: 6).[1]

The reasons for Pound's estrangement from conventional society are

not hard to find in his poetry, as can be shown by analysing the poem

'In Durance' which dates from 1907. Unlike much of his other early

poetry, we can be sure that the 'I' of this poem is Pound and not a

persona (Ruthven, 1969 : 154). It can therefore reasonably be taken as

an unironic statement of poetic beliefs. It begins

'I am homesick after mine own kind' and elaborates

I am homesick after mine own kind

Oh I know there are folk about me,

    friendly faces,

But I am homesick after mine own kind.

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[1] Pound stresses not just that the poet is 'other' (a belief he would have found in Browning), but
that the poet is superior to the public who mock him. Thus, he accepted Shelley's idea that poets
were the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world' (Bornstein, 1977). His élitism, therefore, has
Romantic roots.

"These sell our pictures"! Oh well,

They reach me not, touch me some edge or that,

But reach me not and all my life's become-

One flame, that reaches not beyond

My heart's own hearth

Or hides among the ashes there for thee.

"Thee"? Oh, 'Thee' is who cometh first

Out of mine own soul-kin,

For I am homesick after mine own kind

And ordinary people touch me not.

     And I am homesick

After mine own kind that know, and feel

And have some breath for beauty and the arts

(Pound, 1984 : 20).

This last sentence is self explanatory, Pound is alienated from

conventional society because he is artistic; he understands aesthetic

value. This, according to Pound, puts him in a minority, but a privileged

minority. He has established this point by (significantly) quoting

Browning '"These sell our pictures"' to show why. It is the 'sell' here

that is important. Pound is alienated from the conventional 'art-loving'

establishment who justify aesthetic phenomena by appeals to

commercial value, to what 'sells our pictures'. As Ruthven puts it,

Pound, therefore accepted that 'art (had become) debased by

becoming a middle class commodity' (Ruthven, 1969 : 154). Pound is

therefore protesting against the view that art is simply another

commodity (in the way that was discussed in Chapter One), and against the class that espouses this ideology; i.e.. the Bourgeoisie. Pound is therefore in alliance with Pater and Yeats in his espousal of a Romantic rejection of the utilitarian commodification of art. Pound (and as the 'we' indicates, artists in general) is therefore set apart from conventional society; 'ordinary people touch me not'.

All this will be discussed further below, but it is first of all necessary to explore the fundamental Neo-Romantic concept of the artist's alienation that underlies all these early poems; for Pound is careful, even from the very beginning, to imply that his position is not completely unique. Instead he is keen to ally himself with others as 'Li Bel Chasteus' makes clear;

> But circle-arched, above the hum of life
> We dwelt among the ancient boulders,
> Gods had hewn and druids runed
> Unto that birth most wondrous, that had grown
> A mighty fortress while the world had slept
> And we awaited in the shadows there (Pound, 1965 : 43).

It is the poems 'The Decadence' that reveals that the 'we' are associated with keeping art alive, and as other poems make clear therefore the 'we' are artists, or, to extend this slightly further, artists and lovers of art. Moreover, this 'we' are openly counter pointed to the unartistic nature of the Philistine masses (as the line 'and ordinary people touch me not' makes clear).

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This is the Romantic dilemma par-excellence, and it is no surprise that at this point, Pound looked back to the Romantics and their successors for poetic inspiration. And this brings us back to Browning.

As we saw above, Pound began by drawing a sharp distinction between himself and the mass of humanity; leading to 'exquisite loneliness'.He would have found a confirmation of this viewpoint in Browning. It is significant in this respect that the poem Pound particularly looked at was *Sordello* (Makin, 1985 : 56). In *Sordello* Browning demonstrates that he accepts that 'the poet is a man set apart from those less sensitive than himself, and that his major advantage lies in the perception of beauty', and the poem deals with the poet's attempt to create poetry in a 'grimy imperfect society' (Collins, 1967 : 62).

It is significant in this respect that Browning does not deal with this problem as himself, but instead adopts a persona; the poet Sordello. Moreover, he frames the question of the poets relationship to society not in terms of contemporary society, but by recreating the world of Frederick the Second (Collins, 1967 : 62). This approach, which Browning was to make famous, is generally referred to as the 'dramatic monologue' in which a character from history is recreated and reveals himself in the first person. Browning therefore enters into an engagement with history, but it is important to notice here that Browning's approach was very different from the approach of a historian. Instead, Browning has a 'capacity to penetrate the historical

narrative of his chosen epoch and feel it from within by identifying with Sordello and reconstructing his individual consciousness. The result, a "mask" or "persona" was what Pound also sought' (Woolford, 1993 : 10).

This method of empathetic engagement with the past, is not to be confused with the method of the conventional historian. Instead, Browning recognised that 'historical knowledge, far from consisting of archival fragments waiting to be scrutinised, is an imaginative framing and *re-enactment* of past events. The historian's knowledge is also self-knowledge, a discovery of his own place in history' (Shaw, 1987 : 56 (my italics)). As we shall see, Browning's 'historicism' as we may call this method, was a strong influence on the early Pound.[2]

Now, we have seen, one of the main problem's faced by the Romantics was what to do when faced with the contemporary 'atomisation of time'. This could also represent itself as a battle between the universal and the particular; that is to say, between analysing the individual object in itself, (which corresponds to 'the moment'), as opposed to a more 'organic' or 'abstract' view of phenomena (Fundamentally, does one look for differences, or similarities between entities. In terms of temporality, this former view would accord with views of time that emphasise history and continuity). We will remember Pater condemning abstraction, and his

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[2] To be more specific, we might follow Longenbach (after Jameson) and describe Browning's approach as an existential historicism. He elaborates 'For the existential historian, history does not exist as a sequence of events that occurred in the past: rather it is a function of the historian's effort to understand the past in the present' (Longenbach, 1987 : 14).

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distrust of metaphysical theories; in other words ostensibly adopting a quasi-scientific empiricism, bordering on reductivism, as opposed to a more holistic viewpoint (although in practice Pater's aesthetic more closely resembles phenomenology). This is a consequence of his praise of the individual object. And it is interesting for Pound's own development that Browning follows Pater in this respect; that is to say, he was on the side of the particular in his own poetry. As Carol Christ puts it in *The Finer Optic:* 'The characters in Browning's dramatic monologues [...] spring from an insistence on the priority of the individual over classification, and delight in the very multiplicity, [Matthew] Arnold had condemned' (Christ, 1975 : 66).

And it is this emphasis on particularity (and therefore, a lack of interest in generality) which led him to be interested in 'the moment' which, as we have already seen, is another one of the bases of Pater's poetics. In Browning's dramatic monologues we so often come across people in the process of engaging in an act that will take a moment, but that will affect their whole lives; a moment of crisis, or of doubt.[3] (Writing of his own Browningesque monologues, Pound wrote: 'I catch the character I happen to be interested in at the moment he interests me, usually a moment of song, self analysis, or sudden understanding or revelation' (Pound 1951 :3-4). And this 'moment' raises the question of the relationship between this moment and the character's lives, or, to put it another way, between the moment, and the more general

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[3] We will remember at this point that Symons, too, saw Browning as being a poet of 'the moment' and that this was the reading he helped to pass on to Yeats (Munro and Beckson, 1970).

temporality in which we must live.

To quote Christ again 'Browning's vision of the particular moment as the medium in which man creates himself leads to the problem of how the moment attains a continuity beyond itself, how a good moment can become an infinite moment' (Christ, 1975 : 113).   And this is, again, the problem that Pater had faced; how to find the infinite in the finite; how to contact the universal from with the particular. As we shall see, it was also a problem that faced Ezra Pound.

As stated above, the method Browning chose to attempt to do this, not just in *Sordello,* but in many other poems as well, was the dramatic monologue. Here Browning could go back, and imaginatively reconstruct the moment in someone's life when they attempted to transcend the moment, and attempt to wring all the emotional significance of this that could be found. This donning of a 'mask' is, as we have seen, Pound's approach to the past as well. And it is significant given Pound's alienation from the commodified world of the present, that the 'personae' Pound tended to adopt were of the 'artistically minded misfit in ordinary minded society' (Jackson, 1968 : 5). For example in 'Cino' which begins:

Italian Campagna 1309, the open road

Bah! I have sung women in three cities,

But it is all the same;

And I will sing of the sun.

(Pound, 1984 : 6)

Pound creates a dramatic structure in which the womanising singer

Cino can explain his own contempt for the society of the time; and not

just the form, but the diction is strongly Browningesque (the poem

'Mesmerism' is even more striking in this respect; not only quoting

Browning and parodying his diction but containing the line 'You,

Master Bob Browning, spite your apparel, | Jump to your sense and give

praise as we'd lief do' (Pound, 1971 : 13) (cf. Bornstein, 1977 : 35-37,

for a discussion of Browning's influence on this poem).

Much of Pound's early poetry consists of Browningesque monologues

(such as 'Cino' and 'Scriptor Ignotus') in which Pound imaginatively

recreates the poets and outcasts of the past that he wishes to align

himself with; thus creating a 'tradition' of outcast poets (this is

particularly strong in 'Ignotus' which deals with Bertold Lomax, who

planned, but never began, an epic poem, as we know that Pound was

already planning an epic poem by 1906 (Writers at Work, 1963 : 39)).

However, the rest of Pound's earliest work tends to be influenced,

not by Browning, but instead by the Pre-Raphaelites and Decadents.

Given this interest in Neo-Romantic aesthetics, it is no surprise that

Pound became interested (just as Yeats did) in the writings of the Pre-

Raphaelites.

As we will remember from Yeats's own readings of Rossetti, Morris and

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so on, Pound would have found confirmation of Browning's emphasis on the moment in Pre-Raphaelite poetry.[4] Pound was, in fact particularly interested in Rossetti, and if we examine Rossetti's aesthetic we can find more influences on Pound's early work (Jackson, 1968). Firstly, and most essentially, is Rossetti's expression of the belief that the poet was alienated from the drab world of contemporary reality. As we have seen, this is a theme Pound (and Yeats) felt particularly attracted to (Howard, 1972).

Secondly is the strong *visionary* quality in Rossetti's poetry. Now, Rossetti was a painter as well as a poet, so we would expect to find a pictorial aspect to his poetry (and,again, it was 'pictorial' aspect which endeared him to Yeats), but Rossetti goes beyond being merely a 'painter in words', by continually suggesting the fusion of the outward world and the inner. As Rees puts it 'Not only sea and sky, but roads, hills, flame and coverts are prominent in his repertoire of symbols. His use of the natural world to provide images of elusive, fragile, deeply-affecting but scarcely graspable inner experiences is one of the most distinguishing marks of his poetry' (Rees, 1981 : 76) (Words such as 'flame' were taken over directly by Pound to suggest this 'fusion'). By the use of words such as 'fragile' and 'elusive' we get again the idea of the momentary nature of these experiences, and how this would fit in with Pound's reading of Browning is obvious.

Pound's early poetry is filled with these 'moments'.

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4 See Christ, 1975 :110 for a discussion of the similarity between this epistemological view to Pater's.

Sometimes I feel thy cheek against my face
Close-pressing, soft as is the South's first breath
That all the subtle earth-things summoneth
To spring in wood-land and in meadow space.

Yea sometimes in a bustling man-filled place
Me seemeth some-wise thy hair wandereth
Across my eyes, as mist that halloweth
The air a while and giveth all things grace.

Or on still evenings when the rain falls close
There comes a tremor in the drops, and fast
My pulses run, knowing thy thought hath passed
That beareth thee as doth the wind a rose (Pound, 1965 : 47).

In this poem, the poet describes three brief moments when he achieves poetic insight (what sort of insight he achieves will be discussed below). The language Pound uses emphasises the fragmentary and elusive nature of these insights; for example the contrast between the 'still' evening; emphasised by the alliteration of the sibilants in line 9, and the "tremor" caused when the moment of understanding is achieved. It is important to notice that the 'drops' of rain continue to fall; that is to say, outside; material reality is unaffected. This is an *internal* illumination. In the second stanza, Pound reiterates the sense of alienation felt by these 'man filled' place (i.e.. a place 'ordinary people' go) the poet seems has a visionary experience, and it is this

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knowledge that is instrumental in setting him apart from ordinary people in the first place (the poem is entitled 'Comraderie'; i.e.. it is the visionary experience that constitutes the contact that provides emotional support for the alienated poet).

In a note to these poems Pound explained his early aesthetic (this was written sometime around 1909).

Beauty should never be presented explained. It is Marvel and Wonder, and in art we should find first these doors - Marvel and Wonder - and, coming through them, a slow understanding (slow even though it be a succession of lightning understandings and perceptions) as of a figure in mist, that still and ever gives to each one his own right of believing, each after his own creed and fashion

Always the desire to know and to understand more deeply must precede any reception of beauty. Without holy curiosity and awe none find her, and woe to that artist whose work wears its "heart on its sleeve" (Pound 1965 : 87).

Pound therefore states the link between aesthetic claims and truth claims. Art is, for Pound, fundamentally motivated by the urge towards knowledge (we will remember similar claims by Shelley); and the illumination that is the aim of Pound's aesthetic is described as being a state of 'understanding'. However, Pound also emphasises his own version of the 'moment' or series of moments which he describes as 'a succession of lightning understandings and perceptions'. We should by now be able to recognise these moments of understanding as being similar to the moments sought by Pater and Yeats. Pound goes on to state that the understandings sought, since they are of 'Wonder', must

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not be immediately comprehensible. This is standard enough. If one wishes the reader to see the world anew, then the moment of poetic insight should leave a sense of strangeness (or Wonder), and thus the poet must not wear his 'heart on his sleeve'.

Now, in the poem above, these moments of insight are feminised; that is the vision is framed in the context of a mysterious idealised woman (c.f. e.g. Pound, 1965 : 47). To understand the feminisation of these moments of insight, we must understand another of Rossetti's tropes, the Ideal woman. Rossetti's paintings (and poetry) are filled with representations of this perfect, unworldly, Woman (Riede,1992 : 122). This was more than simply a symbol. Instead, as Rossetti went on to develop the theme in poems such as *House of Life*, he began to suggest that it would be possible to engage in a union with this perfect lover, culminating in the union of '"two souls" in one heaven' (Riede, 1992 : 123) a process that takes both of them beyond the world of the senses. This may imply, of course, that it may take them beyond the world of corporeal reality and Riede admits that Rossetti's thought here is 'mystical' (Riede, 1992 : 123). Whether Pound followed Rossetti in this 'mysticism' will be discussed below.

We have seen, then, that Pound is deeply indebted not just to the ideas but to the very words and diction of the Pre-Raphaelites, especially of course Rossetti. This alone might lead us to Yeats, but in actual fact, Pound was already steeped in Yeatsian thought. By 1903 Pound was reading the Decadents; Symons, Dowson and Yeats, but

especially Yeats (Carpenter, 1988 : 41,63). This influence goes further than merely an influence in terms of poetic tropes and diction, though these are undoubtedly there. To quote Schneidau 'Pound wanted from Yeats not only edifying insights into the practice of poetic composition but also much more: he wanted, in fact the key to the wellspring of true poetry, the secret and mystical key to the past' (Schneidau, 1965 : 222). What Schneidau means by the word mystical in this context will be discussed below, but to demonstrate the Yeatsian influence here is Pound's note to his poem 'La Fraisne', which is steeped in Yeatsian imagery and diction.

When the soul is exhausted in fire, then doth the spirit return unto its primal nature and there is upon it a peace great and of the woodland [...] Then becometh it kin to the faun and the dryad, a woodland-dweller amid the rocks and streams [...] Also has Mr Yeats in his *Celtic Twilight* treated of such, and I because in such a mood, feeling myself divided between myself corporeal and a self aetherial, "a dweller by streams and in wood-land" eternal because simple in elements [...] Being freed of the weight of a soul " capable of salvation or damnation," a grievous striving thing that after much straining was mercifully taken from me; as had one passed saying as one in the Book of the Dead, "I, lo I, am the assembler of souls," and had taken it with him, leaving me thus *simplex naturae*, even so at peace and trans-sentient as a wood pool I made it (Pound, 1965 : 14).

The reference in the last line of the above poem is Yeatsian (cf. the reference to the Rose woman), and there are many such references in this early poetry.[5]

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[5] 'La Fraisne' is also notable for being Pound's first exercise in what Carpenter calls 'fractured narrative'; i.e. the principle of disjunctiveness which is such a notable feature of the *Cantos*. We see techniques that were elaborated on when Pound claimed to be a 'modernist' originating in the period when Pound was openly a Yeatsian Neo-Romantic(Carpenter,1988 : 67)

Now, we have seen that in his early poetry, Pound is interested in moments of illumination which lead to insight; insights which is of 'slow understanding'. In other words we have a recapitulation of Yeatsian access to eternity through the moment. Now the question is, does Pound follow Yeats in hypothesising a Neo-Platonic mystical realm that lies beyond the moment, which can be accessed by the poet? To answer this question, we must look more deeply at his early poetry, i.e.., the poems Pound wrote before he left for Europe in 1908. It is in these works that Pound's earliest obsessions and themes can be seen, and I will argue that Pound's later development was an elaboration of these positions rather than a denial of them. This, however, begs the question, which is, what, at bottom, was his earliest philosophical position? In an early poem, Pound had written,

> But for all that, I am homesick after mine own kind
> And would meet kindred even as I am,
> Flesh-shrouded bearing the secret (Pound, 1971 : 20).

What is this 'secret'? As we have seen, Pound differentiated artists from the rest of humanity. Did he then (as Yeats did) go on to give this belief an occult interpretation? This depends to a very great extent on the extent to which Pound was influenced by not just Yeatsian rhetoric, but by Yeatsian thought. Now, the evidence is that between 1903 and February 1908 (when Pound left for Europe), as we have

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seen, Pound had immersed himself in the writings of the Decadent poets, especially, of course, Yeats himself. (Pound, 1951 : 92). It was in this period that he had written:

Aye I am wistful for my kin of the spirit
And have none about me save in the shadows
When come *they*, surging of power, "DAEMON",
"Quasi KALOUN" S.T. says Beauty is most that, a
"calling to the soul".
Well then, so call they, the swirlers out of the mist
of my soul,
They that come mewards, bearing old magic (Pound 1984 : 20).

The S.T. in this poem is Coleridge.[6] Now, the 'they' in this poem are clearly closely related to Yeats's Sidhe. They bear 'old magic', and are therefore old themselves, if not immortal. However they swirl out of the poet's soul; despite being real, they are in some way internal as well, and can therefore only accessible by turning inward. Moreover they are synonymous with Beauty. The similarities with Yeats's thought hardly need to be stressed, and become even more obvious with use of Yeatsian language; 'flame' 'blossoms' and 'singing' for example, all language used not just by Yeats, but by Rossetti. All this is fairly standard for a Neo-Romantic poet, as Pound was at this time. The question is, are these Sidhe like creatures merely a poetic trope, or did

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6 It is interesting in this respect that this poem contains one of the first uses by Pound of what one might call the 'allusive method', in which unreferenced (and untranslated) fragments of other works of literature are used in the body of the poem, interesting in that this is also one of Pound's most Yeatsian early poems ('The allusion (i.e. to Coleridge) is made in a manner that prefigures the elliptical mode of the *Cantos*' (Ruthven, 1983 : 154)). Of course we have seen a similar use of allusions, albeit without quite this level of obscurity, in Yeats's own poetry.

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Pound believe in their literal existence? (I will deal with this question below). Firstly, however, we should examine the influence of Neo-Platonism on Pound's early work (See Surette, 1993 for a discussion of the importance of Plato to occultists). Another very early poem is worth quoting in its entirety.

Plotinus

As one that would draw through the node of things,
Back-sweeping to the vortex of the cone,
Cloistered about with memories, alone
In chaos, while the waiting silence sings:

Obliviate of cycles' wanderings
  I was an atom on creation's throne
  And knew all nothing my unconquered own.
God! Should I be the hand upon the strings?!

But I was lonely as a lonely child.
I cried amid the void and heard no cry,
And then for utter loneliness, made I
New thoughts as crescent images of me,
And with them was my essence reconciled
While fear went forth from mine eternity (Pound 1965 : 56).

Here the poet is 'on creation's throne' which is at the 'vortex of the cone' while chaos spins around him. This place is his 'eternity'. To

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counter the loneliness inherent in his position he must look inside himself and create 'images'. The mention of a 'Vortex of the cone' in a poem this early is interesting, for it is an explicitly occult term. The occultist Allen Upward (who we shall meet again) referred to a 'whirl-swirl' which Surette glosses as 'the vortex, or funnel that is reported in many mystic visions of the other world' (Surette, 1993 : 137). This should make us suspect that what Pound is talking about here is a form of mystical illumination. Now, as the name suggests, this poem is concerned with Neo-Platonic cosmology. Pound himself was fascinated by Neo-Platonism, and spoke approvingly of Neo-Platonic mysticism in this period (see Jackson, 1968 : 77-89 cf. also Flory, 1980 : 20-23). Given this, we might then surmise that the subject of this poem is the poet's communion with the Neo-Platonic 'nous' that is the essence of the 'real'; that is to say metaphysical and mystical, reality.

The poet gains a mystical identification with this Neo-Platonic reality, that gives the poet the sense that he is in 'eternity'. This reality is therefore associated with a sense of timelessness; and we will remember this sense of a mystical escape from temporality in Yeats. The poet's task is to create 'images' the only way to remove 'fear'.

Now, in a letter to William Carlos Williams written in 1908 Pound lists his main task as a poet as '1: To paint the thing as I see it' (Pound, 1951 : 39). However, as 'Plotinus' suggests, it may be a mistake to think that Pound is limiting himself to visual sight. Much later on in his career, Pound discussed the definitions of the mediaeval theologian

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Richard of St Victor, especially Richard's idea that the Christian mystic could reach a state of 'contemplation' a transcendental unification with an object; an overcoming of corporeal limits. Richard of course, was discussing a mystical unification with God, but Pound was prepared to take the idea of 'contemplation' out of its Christian framework, and use it as a definition of the act of mystical transcendence that was to be the basis of his aesthetic (Stock, 1964). It is in this context that we should analyse the final stanza of 'Plotinus', with its line about creating 'images' of *himself*. Pound, like Yeats, is prepared to make the next step and posit an inner sight, which looks inside the poet, but therefore is truer than mere external sight (and again, this is a Paterian idea); a sight which produces 'images', which are the poets true subject. The poet, therefore, looks inside himself and, by an effort of will, unites with 'the object'; it is from this process that the poet's 'images' are created.

Now of course, as we have seen, Yeatsian thought is also Neo-Platonic. The actual world of the Sidhe is one of eternity and timelessness (represented in *The Secret Rose* by a painting of a rose). Moreover, Yeats and Pound saw both themselves as visionaries and seers; that is to say they privileged the idea of sight. But this is second sight as well as first; seeing with the inner eye as much as the physical eye. Pound wrote, in a letter to William Carlos Williams that 'Men think and feel certain things not with the bodily vision. About this time I begin to get interested' (Pound, 1951 : 3-4). In this early work, then,

Poundian thought and Yeatsian thought are fundamentally in agreement.

As we have seen, Pound took the idea of 'Personae' from the dramatic monologues of Browning. However, he would also have seen this technique used in early Yeats, especially, of course, the Yeats of *The Wind Among the Reeds.* (cf. Jackson, 1968 : 48 and De Nagy, 1960 : 132)). In Yeats, these 'masks' functioned as aspects of the poet himself, and Pound followed Browning's practice of 'historicism' in other words, an empathetic identification with figures of the past that remind the contemporary poet of his own situation (Gibson (following Jameson) calls this practice 'existential historicism', and points out the links between this belief and those of Pater, and the concurrent speculations of Croce and Dilthey. She also points out the strong Romantic basis of these beliefs (Gibson, 1995 : 6)). In other words, both poets saw their disguises as subjective interpretations; either of figures of the past or of fictional characters. The purpose of these 'masks' was, therefore, to illuminate the contemporary poet's situation.

Pound, however, was prepared to take his identification with figures of the past further than Yeats. In this early poem, 'Masks' he wrote.

These tales of old disguisings, are they not
Strange myths of souls that found themselves
    among
Unwonted folk that spake an hostile tongue,
Some soul from all the rest who'd not forgot
The star-span acres of a former lot

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Where boundless 'mid the clouds his course he swung,

Or carnate with his elder brothers sung

Ere ballad-makers lisped of Camelot? (Pound, 1965 : 52)

This poem discusses Pound's use of characters such as Miraut de Garzales in 'La Fraisne', and as we have seen, Pound saw the use of Browning's monologues as a way of aligning himself with this 'tradition'; a tradition of outcasts. However, we should observe the language here; Pound talks of old 'disguisings'. What does he mean by this? He begins by talking about 'souls that found themselves among | Unwonted folk that spoke a hostile tongue'. This was of course, the position that Pound himself felt himself to be in. 'Myths' are the stories of those who felt themselves in this position, but who could not reveal themselves to the populace. Hence the 'disguising'. We have met this theme many times before in Pound's early poetry. However, here the language used is more enigmatic. The creator of these 'strange myths' was 'carnate with his elder brothers', and 'boundless mid the clouds'. The reference to 'elder brothers' will be discussed below, but the language of 'boundless mid the clouds' suggests some sort of mystical state of 'weightlessness'. It is possible, therefore, to see this poems as going beyond merely romantic élitism, and into what we could call occult or mystical elitism, the idea that there are truths too profound to be revealed to the masses. Some people; 'elder brothers' know these truths. Like them, Pound will use masks because he too has seen things that he wishes to preserve from people who speak a 'hostile tongue'

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(Longenbach, 1988 : 21-23).

More evidence to support this thesis can be found in the poem 'Histrion':

No man hath dared to write this thing as yet,

And yet I know, how that the souls of all men great

At times pass through us,

And we are melted into them, and are not

Save reflexions of their souls.

Thus am I Dante for a space and am

One François Villon, ballad lord and thief,

Or am such holy ones I may not write

Lest blasphemy be writ against my name;

This for an instant and the flame is gone.

'Tis as in midmost us there glows a sphere

Translucent, molten gold, that is the 'I'

And into this some form projects itself:

Christus, or John, or eke the Florentine;

And as the clear space is not if a form's

Imposed thereon

So cease we from all being for the time,

And these, the Masters of the Soul, live on (Pound 1965 : 108).

This at least is clear enough. The personality of the poet is a receptacle for the dead souls of the past. This was of course known (by the occultists who Pound admired) but the poet is the first to speak of it; 'No man has dared write this thing as yet'. Pound takes the word

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'flame' from Yeats and Rossetti, but in this early poetry, the flame is always synonymous with a mystical state; the 'flame' here is, then, the mystical act of communing with the souls of the past and giving them voice. The 'sphere' of light is the soul which all of us possess; however, for such as Pound, this soul can be kept, as it were, blank, so that some spirit could project its form onto it. 'So cease we from all being for the time'; during this period of illumination, we are outside temporality; instead the 'Masters of the Soul' live through time through us. Giving the dead voice is the important point here: for if Pound was writing a poem in which the dead person was raised, this meant that the poem itself became an incantatory, exhortary act; a mystical ritual (Korg, 1995 : 71-82). Pound's relationship with his personae is, as I said, one of empathetic identification, within a mystical context that posits the existence of immortality. In other words, the idea that characters such as Villon were really dead, merely because their corporeal existence was over, was not a position that Pound would have regarded as being definitely proven. In the poem,

On His Own Face in a Glass

O strange face there in the glass!

O ribald company, O saintly host!
O Sorrow-swept my fool,
What answer?
   O ye myriad

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That strive and play and pass,

Jest, challenge, counterlie,

 I? I? I?

And ye? (Pound, 1965 : 53)

he is not (or at least, not just) metaphorically writing about the problem of identity. There is also the suspicion that the poet may actually be the receptacle of the dead spirits of men from the past (As McDonald writes; 'Whether through the imitation of an admired poet's style, through translation, or through prosopopoeia, to act as a prophet, to be spoken *through* is to be merged with other. Making is akin to metamorphosis. [Pound] became Villon, as he could become a tree. And as with his use of Neo-Platonic metaphysics, this prophetic stance became for Pound a way of signalling communion with spirits and gods, an act taking the poet out of time and out of self [...] Pound extends his metaphysic to include not just the gods, but the great of all time, and thus the past lives through him and in him' (McDonald, 1993 : 19)).

One of the main functions of the early Yeatsian project especially, of course, *The Wind Among the Reeds* is to express the wisdom of worshipping the Rose woman. As we have seen Pound was already inspired by Pre-Raphaelite poetry to embrace the idea of an Idealised woman, with whom mystical knowledge could be obtained by a mystical act of identification. It is no surprise then, that Pound found this aspect of Yeatsian rhetoric, again, highly congenial:

Soul,

Caught in the rose-hued mesh

Of o'er-fair earthly flesh,

Stooped you this thing to bear

Again for me? (Pound, 1965 : 41)

And again

'I - even I - am he who knoweth the roads

Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I have beheld the Lady of Life,

I, even I, that fly with the swallows' (Pound, 1965 : 58)

However Pound's vision is, again, slightly different. The Rose woman
in Yeats is, more often than not the source of torment; the man who
has seen her can never live happily in the real world again. Pound,
however, sees physical contact with the woman as itself as leading to
visionary (and therefore poetic) states. As Oderman puts it, 'To
understand [these] early Pound poems, dealing with the same complex
of ideas, it is important to focus on the fact that the lover's experience
with the woman involves a '"bust thru from the quotidian into the
divine or permanent world"' (Oderman,1986 : 14). And this is
portrayed as being an unalloyed good.

The other aspect of Yeats' thought that is entirely missing from these poems is the idea of apocalypse. Whereas Yeats's thought is, in general pessimistic, in that his Gnostic beliefs lead to a rejection of reality in favour of a tormenting Ideal; Pounds' thought is distinguished by a radiant optimism (cf. Surette, 1993). Pound came to believe that a change was coming in Western Culture, but for him this was to be a new Renaissance, unmarked by tragedy.

In this chapter, I have been attempting to chart the influence of Yeats's thought on the earliest thought of Pound. We have discovered not just influences of diction and poetic form, but convergences in their thought, as well. However, most of the evidence that has been marshalled has been in the form of Pound's own poetry, and so the suspicion must remain that these are merely rhetorical tropes. In other words, did Pound really believe Yeats's mystical beliefs? To find out, we must now look at Pound's view of history.

Now, as we have seen, both Pater and Yeats saw the ultimate foundation of their aesthetic beliefs in history. Did Pound follow them in this?. And, strangely enough, this question is bound up with another question; to what extent was Pound a committed occultist, like Yeats? It would be worthwhile here to quote Pound's own statement of his religious beliefs, and to remember that this was written as late as 1918;

What is a god?

A god is an eternal state of mind.

[...] When does a man become a god?

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When he enters one of these states of mind.

[...] By what characteristic may we know the divine forms?

By beauty [...]

What are the kinds of knowledge?

These are immediate knowledge and hearsay [...]

What is the greatest hearsay?

The greatest hearsay is the tradition of the gods [...]

To what do they (i.e.. the gods) appear when formed?

To the sense of vision (Pound 1973 : 47).

(to those that might argue that Pound was using the word god metaphorically, to represent a psychological state, here is an essay from 1921: 'The intimate essence of the universe is *not* of the same nature as our own consciousness. [...] God, therefore, exists. That is to say, there is no reason for not applying the term God, *Theos*, to the intimate essence', and he goes on to make clear that Gods are created from this non-material essence (Pound, 1973 : 49-52).

Unless one is to take these statements ironically (a position for which there is not a shred of evidence) this is conclusive enough. Pound was not, in these early poems at least, a materialist. He was, instead, a Neo-Platonist, with strong mystical leanings (c.f. Bernstein, 1980 : 84-91). Pound's poetry is, therefore, visionary in the same way that Yeats's is. It frequently (as in the examples above) deals with mystical unification with 'Theos', the mystical force that lies behind mere material reality.

Now, to reiterate, Yeats and Pater ultimately grounded their aesthetic in history. Pound rejected Yeatsian apocalyptism, but had a strong

interest in the past, history, and 'the tradition of the gods'. However, he did not, as Yeats did, look to history as a metaphysical grounding for his aesthetic system. Instead, he attempted to ground himself in a tradition, descending from the Greeks.

And this brings us to the last major influence on the early work of Pound, the work of the Mediaeval French-Italian Troubadours. Most scholars have contented themselves with discussing the influence of the style and diction of these troubadours on Pound's own poetry (for example, Kenner in *The Pound Era*). Pound would have discovered the Troubadours at University (Carpenter, 1988) (For more on the nineteenth century cult of Provence, see Alexander,1979). Here, however, I wish to discuss their influence on his theory of history.

And this takes us into very murky waters indeed; the extent of Pound's occult links. For, in his theories about history, Pound was influenced, directly or indirectly, by writers such as Abbe Barruel, Joséphin Péladan and Gabriele Rossetti- all occultists (Surette, 1993). These writers argued in favour not of Hegelian or even Platonic views of history, but instead for what one could call a 'secret' 'paranoid' or 'occult' theory (cf. Surette: Pound's thoughts about History 'do not really qualify as metahistorical. They are not Viconian, Hegelian, Blavatskian, or Spenglerian, in their treatment of history [...] They belong rather to secret history. They are intended to reveal the hidden truth about the conspiracies-both malign and benign-that have formulated the past, control the present, and generate the future'

(Surette, 1993 : 65)).

This view of history had two main components. Firstly, it was predicated on the idea of decline; that there was a secret wisdom that was once generally known, and which has now been lost to the majority of people. (What this wisdom may have consisted of will be discussed below). Secondly, that History, with a capital 'H', does not exist. Instead of the mass movements of social history, Pound views history solely in terms of individuals. For Pound, it is individuals, and not social or metaphysical causes that are responsible for 'events'. This latter opinion is, of course, an idea that fits in well with his elitism. In practice, it is only the 'few', the 'initiated' who *really* change history. To quote Rainey 'Civilisation, for Pound, consists not in a network of institutions or web of social structures, but in the constructive activity of [...] the mysterious creative force of an elect minority' (Rainey, 1991 : 131).

This is obviously very different to Yeatsian History, though there are affinities. But for Pound, there were two reasons why Yeatsian History was unacceptable. Firstly, he had, as we have seen, rejected apocalyptic thinking. And secondly, to Pound, the 'Modernist', History must have seemed an unnecessary abstraction, merely a rewrite of Hegel. Bizarrely, Pound's mysticism and his view of his history were inspired by the same attitude: the preference for the 'empirical' over the 'abstract.' Moreover his history justified his elitism and his optimism; for if the wisdom had once been widely known, it might become so

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again.

To discuss concretely what these views of history amounted to, we must look at *Psychology and Troubadours*, an essay by Pound that was reprinted in *The Spirit of Romance*. This essay was requested by George Mead, an occultist friend of Pound's, for his magazine *The Quest*, a mystical/occult magazine, in 1916 (Surette, 1993). It is beyond the scope of this essay to elucidate fully Pound's influences here, but it was, as well as the writers mentioned above, influenced by Friedrich Creuzer, who 'read myths as accounts of transcendental experiences that have been esoterically concealed beneath an exoteric surface' (Surette, 1993 :31). In other words; myths are hidden knowledge that have been concealed from the profane.

Pound starts from the groundwork laid by a book he reviewed in 1906 called *The Secret of the Troubadours by* Joséphin (sic) Péladan.[7] Péladan was a Rosicrucian (like Yeats) and his thesis was that there was a secret 'mystic extra church philosophy or religion' (Carpenter, 1988 : 67) (Péladan was also an influence on Yeats, cf. Larrissy, 1994). This sect was descended from the Greek mysteries and had been kept alive by amongst others, the mediaeval Troubadours of France and Italy, who Pound was also reading (Carpenter, 1988). This idea would have been appealing to a young man; Pound later described this period of his life as one of 'mysticism' (Carpenter, 1988 : 63).

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[7] Péladan was an occultist, a 'self styled magus', and, significantly, an aesthetician associated with the more mystical side of the Symbolist movement. That there was a mystical, even an occult, aspect to Symbolism is something we should bear in mind when we come to discuss Pound's idea of symbolism 'in its profounder sense' (Dorra, 1994 : 261).

Péladan went on to argue that the Troubadours were the origin of all 'modern' poetry (that is poetry in the Western tradition), as the Melic poets were the origin of all the poetry of the ancient world. Therefore the Troubadours were the origin of the Western tradition; a tradition that, as we have seen, Pound wished to be a part of. Troubadour poetry, Pound argued in *Psychology and Troubadours* had a double relevance for the contemporary poet; its 'involved forms' and its 'veiled meanings' (Pound, 1954 : 94) i.e. its technical discoveries and the wisdom it revealed (and concealed).

He therefore accepted the idea that Troubadour poetry contained hidden mystical knowledge (this is, incidentally, typical of Pound's thought, which almost invariably looks backward for inspiration. For example, Pound looked back, at first, to the Greeks for his views on free verse: 'If the earnest upholder of conventional imbecility will turn at random to the works of Euripides, [...] it is vaguely possible that the light of *vers libre* might spread some faint aurora upon his cerebral tissues' (Pound, 1954 :93), and not to his contemporaries, the Symbolistes. For Pound the tradition was a living tradition, in which the poet tried to live up to and emulate the standards of the *past*).

In other words, he argued that 'the poetry of the Provence and the Italian deucento was charged with values that were extra literary. It marked not just the spread of specific literary forms and practices, but the transmission of an ethic-religious culture whose most salient expression had been the poetry of the troubadours' (Rainey, 1991 :

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39). Pound believed that one could gain access to this tradition by reading texts that would reveal it to the initiated, and directly, by making contact with other initiates.[8] This should remind us of Yeats's experiences with the Golden Dawn; belief in 'enlightened souls' or 'initiates' who understand what the profane do not, is ubiquitous in occult thinking (there is, incidentally, no doubt that Pound did believe in these 'initiates' (Surette, 1993 :136). Rainey perhaps sums up Pound's attitude best: 'distaste for the world engendered by capitalism is structured through a radical anti-materialism that rejects both [...] bourgeois culture and [...] socialism. Meanwhile the "middle" (read "mediocre") socioeconomic strata are rejected in favour of an imaginary cultural aristocracy that is unified with the vitality of a traditional-rural folk, and this imaginary construct becomes a vehicle for values uncontaminated by [...] capitalist industrialism [and] materialism' (Rainey, 1991 : 68). Of course, all these things could also be said about Yeats).

Pound goes on by restating the Romantic belief in the superiority of the artist to the rest of the populace, and then explicitly links this to the artist's apprehension of a mystic vision; the public's misunderstandings of art are because they have not had the same mystical illumination (Pound, 1952 : 88-90). The artist is therefore a mystic, he has the power of 'vision', and his artistic task is to relate

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8 Schneidau writes: 'He (i.e. Pound) had developed the belief that he could receive the living spirit of past literature from the actual laying on of hands of those he regarded as incumbents "in a sort of apostolic succession". In other words, physical contact with those who had known the great masters would enable him to absorb their essences' (Schneidau, 1965 ::222).

this vision as precisely as possible. However, to be precise does not mean to be clear; because the true visionary artist will not wish to make his occult knowledge too clear to the masses.

There are, therefore, two kinds of poet; the poet who is comprehensible to the masses; 'that poetry, especially lyric poetry, must be simple; that you must get the meaning while the man sings it. This school had, and has always, the popular ear' (Pound, 1952 : 88). The other kind of poet is different. His poetry is a 'ritual', it is 'subtler', it makes its 'revelations to those who are already expert' (Pound, 1952 : 89). Though Pound is not contemptuous of the first kind of poet he makes it clear that he prefers the second. He also makes it clear that he believes the Troubadours were of this sort. He takes a line by Arnaut Daniel and shows how it could be interpreted in any number of ways. However Pound prefers 'the visionary interpretation' (Pound, 1952 : 90); in other words; to understand Daniel's poetry as a mystical, visionary occult kind of poetry, that does not reveal its meanings to the profane; 'The "chivalric code" was, as I understand it, an art, that is to say, a religion. The writers of "trobar clus" did not seek obscurity for the sake of obscurity' (Pound, 1952 : 87).

If the chivalric code of the Troubadours was a religion, what sort of religion was it? Pound argues: 'Consider the history of the time, the Albigensian Crusade, nominally against a sect tinged with Manichean heresy, and remember how Provençal song is never wholly distinct from pagan rites of May Day. Provence was less disturbed than the rest

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of Europe by invasion from the North in the darker ages; if paganism survived anywhere it would have been, unofficially, in the Langue d'Oc. That this spirit was, in Provence, Hellenic is seen readily enough by anyone who will compare the Greek anthology with the work of the troubadours [...] The question; Did this "close ring", this aristocracy of emotion, evolve, out of its half memories of Hellenistic mysteries, a cult - a cult stricter, or more subtle, than that of the celibate ascetics, a cult for the purgation of the soul by a refinement of, and lordship over, the senses?' (Pound, 1952 : 90). What Pound is doing here is tracing an occult tradition from Ancient Greece (what he elsewhere called the mysteries of Eleusis[9] and counterpointing this against another occult tradition; that of the Manichean. What Pound disliked about the Gnostic tradition, was simply, that it was too gloomy in its yearning for Apocalypse and hatred of the body. Pound on the other hand posits a sect that worships the body, and, moreover, which stresses the mystical possibilities of the sexual act. Walker summarises Pound's views here thus: 'Pound's Eleusianism is fundamental to his whole project [...] Eleusis is, for Pound, a veneration of the creative or generative urge of the vital free will, a force that [...] underlies erotic passion, evolutionary development, divine revelation, artistic invention, and civilised culture. The core of this revelation was, Pound believed, a sort of higher eroticism "a certain attitude toward, a certain understanding of, coitus, which is the mysterium". As he argued in *The*

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9 In 'Rosa Alchemica' the narrator asks Michael Robartes 'Even if I grant that I need a spiritual belief and some form of worship, why should I go to Eleusis and not to Calvary?' (Yeats,1995 : 185). Eleusis is used here as a synonym for the Order of the Alchemical Rose.

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Spirit of Romance, (and elsewhere), the *gai savoir* of Eleusianism had found its characteristic expressions in "archaic Venus worship, Christian Mariolatry, Provençal and Italian cults of Amor, troubadour poetry, and (outstandingly) Dante's Commedia'" (Walker 1989 : 41).

Pound argues that the poets of Langue d'Oc had had visions of 'Amor' (Pound, 1952 : 91) which was the root of their poetry; this tradition culminated in Dante's vision of Beatrice (Pound, 1952). 'There is the final evolution of Amor by Guido and Dante, a new and paganish god, neither Eros nor an angel of the Talmud' (Pound, 1952 : 92). 'I believe,' he continues, 'in a sort of permanent basis in humanity, that is to say I believe that Greek myth arose when someone having passed through delightful psychic experience tried to communicate it to others and found it necessary to screen himself from persecution [...] We should consider carefully the history of the various cults or religions of orgy and of ecstasy, from the simpler bacchanalia to the more complicated writes of Isis or Dionysus [...] One must consider that the types which joined these cults survived in Provence, and survive, *today* - priests, maenads, and the rest, though there is in society no provision for them' (my italics) (Pound, 1952 : 92-95).

Therefore we can now state quite clearly that Pound's Neo-Platonism is not merely metaphorical. Instead, he is an anti-materialist, who believes that the world is split into merely corporeal reality and the metaphysical, timeless, 'universe of light'. This is the visionary level, where the Gods live (or at least, where the Neo-Platonic 'essence', a

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non-material force that we interpret in the form of Gods, exists). As Jackson puts it

'Pound [...] would insist on the inadequacy of any strictly scientific conception of life and the universe [...] (T)he gods [...] exist and we should know them [...] he has again and again called for a vital interaction between human beings and the universe around them, a universe suffused with energy- life force, *nous*, the Supreme Intelligence [...] He is a religious poet in a curious sense, whose religion is a strangely occult kind of humanism. The poet, in his ecstatic or revelatory moments, is preeminently such a sentient man, suddenly aware -spiritually, emotionally, viscerally - of the life force emerging into form (Jackson, 1968 : 82-82).

Now, Pound frequently gives these moments of 'ecstasy' a sexual dimension; in other words stating that the sexual act can give the visionary poet these mystical moments of insight (Pound, 1952 : 92-94) (This linking of sex and vision is an idea that Pound was prepared to take very far; c.f. his belief that occult vision (which we know as myth) is due to an outpouring of semen in the brain (Pound, 1958 : 203-217)). See Oderman (1986 : 25-49) for a discussion of this essay. His statement 'The danger in reading Pound is to read symbolically what is meant literally' should always be remembered by all readers of Poundian 'philosophy' (Oderman, 1986 32)). This is again, quite close to what Yeats believed.[10]

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[10] As Henn writes: 'Yeats's view of the sexual act is the traditional one of both Hindu and Kabbalistic mythology. In it is symbolised the reconciliation of all opposites in the divine world. The lovers, the paired extremities, can achieve perfect unison only in the after life, but earthly union may offer a Platonic shadow of the joy that is eternity. Perfect consummation would result in the cessation of time' (Henn, 1950 : 103).

To sum up, the true occult (and therefore poetic) tradition is of occult sex worshipping visionaries, the mysteries of Eleusis, which were founded in Ancient Greece. However, with the fall of Grecian civilisation, the tradition had to go underground. 'Man is concerned with man and forgets the whole and the flowing. And we have in sequence first the age of drama and then the age of prose' (Pound, 1952 : 93). So Pound posits two different kinds of religion. 'There is the Mosaic or Roman or British Empire type, where someone, having to keep a troublesome rabble in order, invents and scares them with a disagreeable bogie which he calls a god.' On the other hand there are 'ecstatic religions' which are less concerned with morality than with the 'life force'. These 'old cults' are mystical and above all secret (Pound, 1952 : 95); and it is as one of these religions that we are to count the mysteries of Eleusis. The remarkable thing is that, as I highlighted above, Pound states explicitly that he believes these cults still exist.

Psychology and Troubadours is such an eccentric essay that it is easy to overlook its significance. I think it is best approached, as I have said, as a counterpart and a rival to Yeats's essay 'Magic'. What Pound is trying to do is to form a defence for 'difficult' or 'obscure' poetry. Like Yeats he states that religion and art are the same, but that this has nothing to do with morality, as Christianity does (Pound, 1952 : 97). Instead, poetry is the expression of a mystical, occult tradition, wholly bound up in the idea of a secretive cult. Outsiders, therefore, cannot

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be admitted lest the mysteries be profaned. This tradition, which originated in ancient Greece, still continues in Italy and France. Just as Yeats believed that the Irish peasantry were still connected with the Sidhe, so Pound believed that in Italy Christianity had not yet triumphed. And just as Yeats decided to use the Irish mythology as the basis for his system so Pound decided that his own, less systematic beliefs, would be based in Italy. Hence his frequent visits to Italy; these were, literally, pilgrimages.

This chapter, which began by discussing the influence on Pound of Browning, has ended up by talking of secret societies, seances and so on. But it was necessary to get ahead of our story, and discuss, at least briefly, the vast influence of mystical-occult thought on Pound. And it is clear, also, that in many ways we have not come that far. Browning's technique of using emotional empathetic identification for expressing figures from the past, could easily be given an occult 'twist' to suggest that the identification became literal. Browning's and Rossetti's outsiders have now become magicians, but the sense of alienation felt by them is the same. Pound's visionary philosophy may be eccentric, but we should remember that fundamentally the same Paterian/Yeatsian paradigm is being used. The poet still perceives 'images' or 'symbols' of eternity, through the Romantic 'moment', just as in Browning.

Chapter Five : Pound Between 1908 and 1911

It is important to retain a sense of chronology here. I will argue that the first phase of Pound's development was his early work, from the turn of the century until 1908, when he moved to London. Pound continued to write poetry after he had arrived in Europe, but this added little to the work he had done in America (These are the poems contained in *A Quinzaine for this Yule* (1908), *Personae* (1909), and *Exultations* (also 1909). (He also published a volume called *Provença* in 1910, but this consisted entirely of reprints from earlier books (Ruthven, 1968)).

It was not until 1911, therefore, that he published a volume of wholly new poems, the *Canzoni* volume. In this chapter, I will deal with Pound's development between his earliest poetry, (which we have already looked at) and 1911. I will argue that there were three main themes that interested him at the time. Firstly, there was his *increasing* interest in *fin de siècle* aesthetics, especially that of the early Yeats. Secondly, there was, again, an increasing interest in the Troubadours, and especially in what he felt were the implications of certain aspects of their diction on his own poetic project. And lastly, there was the problem of form; specifically, the problem of how to overcome the 'romantic moment' and try and build a poem of greater length than the lyric moments he had created up until this point.

It is, again, important to study Pound's changes of location, and to understand his real motivations for these changes. When Pound first left America, he moved to Italy. Given what he believed about Italy this is not a surprising choice. Moreover, it is significant that the only contact he

had there at this time was Kitty Heyman, an occultist and mystical writer he had met in the USA (Carpenter, 1988 : 48-50). However, after a few months, (during which he published his first volume), he moved to London. Why?

Doubtless, the potential for furthering his poetic career was a major consideration. In 1908-1909, London was at a nadir, especially in terms of poetry. Apart from the 'Forgotten School of Imagism' (whom I will deal with below) there was little of any poetic value being produced. However, this could be an advantage. If the world of London poetry was small, it would be easy to get in touch with all the important poets (Carpenter, 1988 : 97). And if the general level of poetry was low, it would be easier for a young poet to make his mark.

However, there were other reasons as to why Pound would be attracted to London. As we have seen, he was deeply attracted to the *fin de siècle* at this time, and moving to London would enable him to meet some of these poets personally. This was more than simply being a 'fan'. As we have seen, Pound was obsessed with the idea of joining a tradition, a tradition of outcast poets like himself. Previously he had restricted himself to merely reading their works, but now he wished to actually make contact with his contemporaries, to meet them in the flesh. And so he embarked on a systematic attempt to meet all of the Decadent writers personally (Carpenter, 1988 : 120). This action in itself was not without a mystical component. As he wrote in the important (unpublished) article 'How I Began' (extensively quoted from in Noel Stock's *Poet in Exile*)

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'Besides knowing living artists I have come in touch with the tradition of the dead. [...] There is more, however, in this sort of Apostolic Succession than a ludicrous anecdote, for people whose minds have been enriched by contact with men of genius retain the effects of it' (Stock, 1964 : 31). As Schneidau puts it: 'He seems to have literally believed in a laying-on of hands: those who had touched the great dead could pass on a power to him" (Schneidau, 1969 : 113). Thus, for Pound, travelling to London, was, literally, a 'journey to the land of the dead' (Schneidau, 1969 : 113)

However, of all the decadent writers he wished to meet, Yeats was the most important. Pound wrote later that 'I went to London because I thought that Yeats knew more about poetry than anybody else' (Writers at Work, 1963 : 43), and he quickly began to seek out as many of Yeats's friends as he could (Yeats was actually in Dublin in this period, and so Pound did not succeed in meeting Yeats personally until 1909 (Longenbach, 1988 : 11)). The difference was a quantitative one. The decadent writers, whilst being impressive, were primarily figures of the past. Yeats however, was still worthy of note; he was, as Pound put it, the 'only living man whose work has more than a temporary interest' (Parkinson, 1954 : 258). It was vitally important for Pound to seek out, and become friends with, the man who he considered to be the greatest living poet. It is not impossible that at this point, Pound was still unsure of his poetic vocation. If, however, he was recognised by a genius, it would validate his decision. It is important to note, however, that Pound

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viewed Yeats as someone who had brought the decadent tradition into the modern age; in other words, he had kept the tradition living. He did not see him as the start of anything 'new'. (It is necessary to stress this point, in the face of the persistent myth that Yeats's later style is directly indebted to the influence of Pound. See Godwin (1966) for conclusive proof that this is impossible).

As Pound looked to make contact with poets working in the same tradition as himself, he also scouted around for work. He was lucky insofar as he was permitted to teach a series of lectures on 'Romance Literature' at the London Polytechnic, at the same time as he was given a contract from Dent publishers for a study of mediaeval literature (Carpenter, 1988). He therefore managed to combine the two projects in an intensive study of the troubadours, which was eventually published as *The Spirit of Romance* in 1910. This was a crucial work which was to guide his interests for the next year. It is important for two reasons; firstly because it is the first major statement of his attitude towards history, and 'the tradition' (what I have called his 'historicism') and secondly because of what it showed him about how the form of troubadour poetry shaped its content.

What his study of the troubadours convinced him of was the virtue of precision. Up until now, as we have seen, Pound worked with Yeatsian rhetoric to obtain a sense of suggestiveness and vagueness, which he had decided were the best ways to discuss his mystical viewpoint. He had always valued the idea of craft but, as he studied the troubadours, he

began to see that the mystical viewpoint he believed they expounded had not been achieved by looseness and vagueness in their poetic diction, but, on the contrary, by stating the vision clearly. Talking, for example about Guinicelli, he says 'Here the preciseness of the description denotes, I think, a clarity of imaginative vision. In more sophisticated poetry an epiphet would suffice, the picture would be suggested. The dawn would be "rosy fingered" or "in russet clad". The Tuscan poetry is, however, of a time when the seeing of visions was considered respectable, and the poet takes delight in definite portrayal of his vision' (Pound, 1952 : 105).

Here Pound identifies over-complexity (in the shape of 'epiphets') with 'sophistication' or modernity. Now, as we have seen, Pound and Yeats both, in their different ways, looked back to the past, both as a guarantor of poetic value, and for models of societies less hostile to artistic production than their own. Pound, in particular, looked back to the past as a time when the mysteries of Eleusis were accepted and worshipped, as opposed to the barren materialism of modernity. To see complexity as being associated with the present was, therefore, definitely a pejorative description. Instead, Pound sees the mystical insight of the troubadours (their imaginative vision) as being best expressed in terms of simplicity, without the 'epiphets' (or poetic diction) he had used up until this point. This is a theme that is constantly repeated throughout the volume. For example, discussing Shakespeare and Dante he says that 'If the language of Shakespeare is beautifully suggestive, that of Dante is

more beautifully definite' (Pound, 1952 : 159) and makes it clear that he prefers the practice of Dante.

It is significant that when *The Spirit of Romance* was reprinted, Pound insisted that it was altered to included 'Psychology and Troubadours'. And in that essay, again, he writes of the virtues of precision, though this time in an explicitly mystical context. Mystical visions, Pound insists, were seen by the troubadours, and written about precisely; this is what they can teach the modern poet. It was with the Renaissance that decline (in the shape of vagueness and rhetoric) set in (The view that the Renaissance was the beginning of the West's cultural decline is strangely reminiscent of the thought of T. E. Hulme. See below).

As Pound investigated the Troubadours he became more and more interested in the fact that the purity of their sexual/religious vision was mirrored by the purity of their diction. In his later essay 'Cavalcanti' Pound wrote that he believed there he once been a world of mystical poetry (a sort of golden age), but that this had been lost by the time of Petrarch. 'The difference between Guido and Petrarch is not a difference in degree, it is a difference in kind' (Pound, 1954 :153). This manifested itself in the different styles with which the two writers chose to express themselves; 'In Guido the "figure", the strong metamorphic or picturesque expression is there with a purpose to convey or to interpret a definite meaning. In Petrarch it is ornament, the prettiest ornament he could find, but not an irreplaceable ornament, or one that he couldn't have used just about as well somewhere else' (Pound, 1954 : 154). In

other words; fake poets used ornaments or vagueness to obscure the lack of what should have been there: the mystical element (Carpenter, 1988) (N.B. it might seem to be getting ahead of the story to quote from the Cavalcanti essay; but although it was published in 1936, it was begun in 1910).

This is the beginning of Pound's theory of what one might call mystical precision. This is, of course, very similarly to Yeats's distinction between the Mystic and the Magician (which we saw in the last chapter), but it is still a difficult concept. It must, however, be understood if Pound's development is to be followed. Schneidau elucidates 'Pound does not think of mysticism, such as he finds in the Troubadours, as bodiless transmission of vague visions [...] Even of mystic visions, Pound predicated exactness, precision, definition as the life giving components [...] Pound's comments on the Middle Ages ceaselessly reiterate that they teach a lesson of precision' (Schneidau, 1969 : 124).

It was a result of his increased knowledge of Troubadour poetics, therefore, that Pound began to be interested in the concept of clarity, and precision. As Kenner puts it: from the Canzoni 'Pound learned not only to prefer crisp sounds to sleek, but to invest elaborate forms with spoken diction, to make it new, quickening conventions while passing through their forms, and to let structural analogies, reinforced by rhythm, do the work of assertion' (Kenner, 1972 : 374-375). And, as I have shown, this was in no way a reversal of his previous thought, but was instead complementary to his mysticism. Mystical precision,

therefore, denotes a belief that it is only through clarity, exactitude and the avoidance of unnecessary verbiage and rhetoric that a truly mystical or occult poetic can be created.

It is significant in this respect that the next project he embarked upon was a series of translations of Cavalcanti. As Carpenter writes 'He was drawn to Cavalcanti, because he believed that the Tuscan had managed to say, *very accurately,* some of the things that he himself was struggling to express. ' (Carpenter, 1988 : 145 (my italics)). In his introduction, Pound writes: 'Than Guido Cavalcanti, no psychologist of the emotions is more keen in his understanding, more precise in his expression; we have in him no rhetoric, but always a true delineation [...] of that stranger state when the feeling by its intensity surpasses our powers of bearing and we seem to stand aside and watch it surging across some thing or being with whom we are no longer identified' (Cavalcanti, 1982 : 12). This makes it clear that it was the hard, clear aspect of Cavalcanti's thought that interested him (and we may notice that it is Cavalcanti's precise description of what seems to be a mystical state that Pound particularly admires).

There are two things of importance here. Firstly, that Pound became interested in clarity, and precision, by looking back to Provence; that is, the earliest movement towards the 'later' Pound were still prompted by a reactionary outlook. And secondly, that this railing against rhetoric, viewing it as a modern decadence, is exactly the same position that Yeats had arrived at a few years earlier.

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And yet, to look at the Cavalcanti translations, we see lines such as these:

'Korè my heart is, let it stand sans gloze!
Love's pain is long, and lo, love's joy is brief!
My heart erst always sweet is bitter grown;
As crimson ruleth in the good green's stead' (Carpenter, 1988 : 157) etc.

Pound's anti-rhetorical rhetoric notwithstanding, this is as archaic as ever. What has gone wrong? The problem is that Pound was still under the spell of Rossetti (Dekker 1963 : 112). Rossetti himself had translated Cavalcanti, and Pound had simply taken over Pre-Raphaelite diction and tropes to produce a very old fashioned Cavalcanti indeed. When the volume was published, it was savaged for being old fashioned, verbose, and, fundamentally, for being a second rate copy of Rossetti. (Homberger, 1972 : 86-92).

However, it is significant, again, that rather than lose interest in Troubadour poetics, the failure of the Cavalcanti volume seemed only to spur him to new efforts. Pound moved to Italy for a holiday, after which he moved briefly to Paris. Here he worked with a friend on reconstructing the music of the troubadours, producing a book that was published a few months later. After this he devoted himself to *another* series of translations; this time of Arnaut Daniel, the troubadour whom Dante had called *il migglior fabbro* (Arnaut Daniel, 1991 and Carpenter,

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1988 : 155).

And it is significant that it was Pound's interest in the Troubadours, and especially the Canzon verse form they sometimes used, that was the inspiration for his next volume of original poetry, *Canzoni*. This volume is significant in two ways; firstly as yet another attack on the problem of form, and secondly, because it contains the first hints of Pound's later manner.

In order to see why Pound chose to write the *Canzoni* volume as he did, we must first backtrack and return to Pound's idea about the tradition. As we have seen, Pound had no grand theory about History. However, he did value the 'tradition' which he interpreted in an explicitly Neo-Platonic manner (his interested in Neo-Platonism was particularly strong at this point, to the extent of planning a book on the subject (Carpenter, 1988 : 156)). Whilst it is true he did not pontificate about History, he did believe in a timeless Neo-Platonic realm that lay, as it were, behind and beyond history. It was this realm that the poet could, in certain moments, interact with. And so, as Pound puts it in a famous passage 'All ages are contemporaneous. It is B. C., let us say, in Morocco. The Middle Ages are in Russia. [...] this is especially true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent' (Pound, 1952 : 8). Yet again, there are strong parallels with Yeats's thought. Pound, however, laid greater stress on the poet's ability to interact with other men from past ages.

As we have noticed, Pound believed in a tradition of outcast poets, the personae of whom he could adopt in a way that became a sort of

empathetic identification, a process that was not without its mystical elements. And Pound combined his belief in a timeless Tradition with this empathetic philosophy, to create a theory that the poet could interact with poets in this tradition, thereby creating a 'vital' tradition. 'Vital tradition is capable of making the dead live [...] because it is made by [...] authors [...] presenting particulars that cannot be worn away by time' (Schneidau, 1969 : 123).

This was, then, the framework which Pound had arrived at by the time of the *Canzoni* volume, and that volume would attempt to elucidate and explain this tradition, via a process that would energise and reinterpret that same tradition. In other words, by revealing the tradition, Pound would make it live for the next generation.

However, we cannot talk about *Canzoni* without dealing with another problem Pound was wrestling with; the problem of form. To recap again, Pound, like Yeats, believed there were isolated moments when the poet could interact with the timeless Neo-Platonic 'nous', and his own poetry was, from now on, to relate these moments with as much precision as possible. Thus, his poetry increasingly concentrated on fragmentation; not for its own sake, but because in these fragments of time, or moments, the holistic (and timeless) reality that lay behind these 'luminous details' would present itself.

The problem was, that since 1904, Pound had been planning an *epic poem*; considering this to be the highest form of literature (Writers at Work, 1963). However, it was clear that an aesthetic that privileged the

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idea of poetry consisting of the presentation of a series of moments would be extremely bad at narrative, or, indeed, development of any sort; the development that would be necessary to power any sort of long poem.[1]

The obvious solution, then, was to create a form that consisted of bringing together a sequence of moments, and presenting them in a particular order; and this is in fact what Pound now attempted to do. The result was 'an inherently fragmented structure proceeding through a sense of felt rightness in the succession of parts and their relations '(Fogelman, 1988 : 35). He had begun this arranging very early, but the *Canzoni* volume was to be his first attempt to do it systematically (and yet again, we are reminded of Yeats writing not merely poems but books of poetry)(Fogelman, 1988).

The next question was; what was the structure around which one could arrange these poetic moments? At this stage in his development, Pound settled for the most obvious of all narrative structures; a chronological schema. Pound, as we have seen, saw the poetry of Provence as being the beginning of all modern poetry. The *Canzoni* volume, would, therefore, begin in Provence, and trace the poetic tradition from this point to the modern world. As Pound put it himself; it attempts to 'be a sort of chronological table of emotions; Provence, Tuscany, the Renaissance, the XV111, the XIX, centuries, external modernity (cut out), subjective modernity [...] The plan is filled in, as you see, with translations and old

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[1] Pound wrote later 'I began *The Cantos* about 1904 [...] the problem was to get a form' (Writers at Work, 1963 : 36).

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stuff more or less revised' (Pound and Shakespeare, 1984 : 38) (Pound's model for this schema was Victor Hugo's *La Legende Des Siècles* a book that was important for him because it attempted to express chronology by presenting small poetic episodes from that chronology (Longenbach, 1987)).

Now, some of Pound's earlier books of poetry had also been planned in a set order. But these volumes had still been lost in the past; the diction and themes explored had been restricted by the *fin de siècle* diction which had ruined the Cavalcanti translations. Now, however, his interest in the troubadours had interested him in the possibilities of purifying his diction, and therefore being able to broaden the range of subjects he could deal with.

And this was important, because he wished to explore further the concept of the tradition; what it consisted of, and how he could relate to it. Hence the chronological theme of *Canzoni*. This was to be a study of, and an attempt to preserve, what was important in the tradition, and how the tradition of the past lived on in the present. As Longenbach puts it 'In *Canzoni*, Pound adopts the super-historical point of view; he searches for the eternal element in art, the element of the past still relevant to life in the present' (Longenbach, 1987 : 78). And what 'is still relevant' is what we have already seen; the poetic/occult tradition that descends from Provence. The book therefore begins with the five 'Canzon'; recreations of the courtly love theme of the troubadours of Provence. As we have seen, Pound gave this idealisation of the woman an occult meaning. In

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'Ballatetta' the poet writes of seeing what he elsewhere in the volume calls the 'Lady of Life';

The Light became her grace and dwelt among
Blind eyes and shadows that are formed as men;
Lo, how the light doth melt us into song:

The broken sunlight for a helm she beareth
Who hath my hearth in jurisdiction.
In wild-wood never fawn nor fallow fareth
So silent light; no gossamer is spun
So delicate as she is, when the sun
Drives the clear emeralds from the bended grasses
Lest they should parch too quickly, where she passes (Pound, 1984 : 38).

This makes a link between the light (the illumination given by the woman) and song; the creative process. The light she radiates is beyond anything mere nature can produce; even the sun watches to clear her path. A contrast is also make between the 'us' who sing her praises, and the 'shadows' who are ignorant of such things.

The poems continue by tracing this tradition through to the troubadours of Tuscany, and from there to to the Renaissance, and 18th and 19th Centuries (Significantly, the nineteenth century poems begin by discussing the influence of Pater (Longenbach, 1987 : 71)). However, it is the last twelve poems in the volume which are of particular importance. These are (again) a poetic sequence; the *Und Drang* sequence. These recapitulate the themes of the volume as a whole; that is to say, they

trace the mystic tradition of the mediaeval troubadours. However, for the first time, Pound traces this tradition into the modern world; the first time he attempted to do so. He could now broaden and develop his theme; using the Tradition as a benchmark against which modern reality could be compared. This has been obscured because Pound cut out six of these poems for the published volume; leaving only the concluding poems. And so, the sequence now begins with 'The House of Splendour'.

In 'The House of Splendour' the poet sees his Lady out 'beyond the worldly ways'. She is in her house, but she has also created it. Her symbol is light 'through the claret stone, I Set to some weaving, comes the aureate light'. And the seeing her is a mystical illumination; 'there are powers in this which, played on by the virtues of her soul, I Break down the four-square walls of standing time' (Pound, 1984 : 49) (we are of course reminded of Yeats when we read that the mystical illumination brings about a sense of timelessness). Here, then, is the initial statement of belief. Pound increasingly associates 'light' with the wisdom of the Troubadour tradition. Seeing this idealised woman is therefore an initiation into this tradition; what we know as the tradition of courtly love.

However, one could argue that 'The Flame' is the key poem of the volume in terms of ideas. It tells us that the 'game' i.e. the game of courtly love, was not about what the vulgar thought it was about;

Tis not a game of barter, lands and houses,
Provence knew.
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Instead to the wise there is a deeper meaning to the worship of the Lady;

man doth pass the net of days and hours.
Where time is shrivelled down to time's seed corn
We of the Ever-living, in that light
Meet through our veils and whisper, and of love.

And this is because

there *is* the subtler music, the clear light
Where time burns back about th'eternal embers·
[...] Sapphire Benacus, in thy mists and thee
Nature herself's turned metaphysical,
Who can look at that blue and not believe? (Pound, 1984 : 50).

And the poem goes on to state that this world is accessible when the poet merges his soul with the Lady; this timeless state gives the poet immortality: 'This thing that moves as man is no more mortal' (Pound, 1984 : 51).

This is an absolutely crucial poem in that it states Pound's mystical philosophy as clearly as he was ever to state it. Here we have all the themes we have dealt with so far. "Tis not a game'; that is to say, courtly love, the belief system of the Troubadours, was not merely an entertainment, or a literary trope. 'Provence knew'; that is to say, this knowledge was current in the era of the Troubadours, in Provence, but has subsequently been lost. Instead, courtly love is a way of discussing the *real* bases of this belief system, that of 'immortal moments'. In other

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words, in a moment of inspired vision, 'time's seed corn', the visionary ('we of the ever-living') can see through to the Neo-Platonic mystical realm of timelessness that lies behind the moment; 'man doth pass through the net of days and hours'. Moreover, this is the realm of the Gods, as the poem explains later: 'Lo, there are many gods who we have seen'. However, Pound stresses that these beliefs must remain a 'dark secret', known only to the mystical elite 'who are wise beyond your dreams of wisdom'.

In the next two poems, 'Blandula, Tenella, Vagula' and 'Horae Beatae Inscriptio', Pound goes on to clarify his beliefs that true knowledge is only accessible in these erotic states of epiphany: 'The right was love-making and the result was illumination' (Makin, 1978 : 245).[2] This, then, is the tradition with which Pound was dealing in this volume. Pound, does not, however, deal with the matter as chronologically as he makes out in his note. Instead there is a movement 'from one polarity of sensibility to another, from Provence to the modern world, by presenting luminous details characteristic of these extremes' (Fogelman, 1988 : 13).

The meaning of the phrase 'Luminous Details' mean will be discussed in chapter six, but it is enough to say here, that it is a poetic moment in which the poet empathetically interacts with a person (or persona) in the past. As a result of the empathy, the tradition is illuminated for the reader, as explained earlier.

But it is the tracing of the tradition into the modern world that is really

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[2] It is perhaps interesting here, considering that this is the beginning of Pound's 'modernity' that the 'Und Drang' sequence is still saturated in Paterian and Yeatsian ideas (McDougall, 1975).

interesting, because this was new territory for Pound. It is worthwhile dealing with the climactic poems of the sequence at some length because they are the first poems to be written in Pound's later manner.

Au Salon

I suppose, when poetry comes down to facts,
When our souls are returned to the gods
  and the spheres they belong in,
Here in the every-day where our acts
Rise up and judge us;

I suppose there are a few dozen verities
That no shift of mood can shake from us:

One place where we'd rather have tea
(Thus far hath modernity brought us)
"Tea" (Damn you!)
  Have tea, damn the Caesers,
Talk of the latest success, give wing to some scandal,
Garble a name we detest, and for prejudice?
Set loose the whole consummate pack
  to bay like Sir Roger de Coverley's

This our reward for our works,
  sic crescit gloria mundi:
Some circle of not more than three

that we prefer to play up to,
Some few whom we'd rather please
    than hear the whole aegrum vulgus
Splitting its beery jowl
    a-meaowling our praises

Some certain peculiar things
    cari laresque, penates
Some certain accustomed forms,
    the absolute unimportant (Pound, 1984 : 52).

The poem is a vast step forward in terms of technique. Pound brilliantly contrasts the anarchy of modernity with the order of the initiated ('some three we prefer to play up to') by the use of freer forms for the first section, contrasted with the Iambic/Anapestic regularity of the second. The poems that that were printed immediately before 'Au Salon' in the *Canzoni* volume were translations from Heine (the first section of the 'Subjective Modernity' part of the volume), and it is in these translations that Pound shows the first signs of being interested in the use of 'natural' speech; writing poetry with the language that people actually use on a day to day basis (Raffel, 1982 : 29-30). This is reinforced by mixing colloquialisms and Latin to create a sophisticated tone. Again, therefore, Pound discovered his 'modernity' via adapting another, older, poet's technique.

But it is significant as well that 'Au Salon' it makes clear that Pound's initiated audience would consist of no more than that three. Thus his occult élitism (which, at the risk of repetition, we have seen he

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developed by studying Yeats) is still very much a motivating force, even as he clarifies his diction. And the reference to the Gods makes clear the occult, mythic framework. What Pound has done is 'to set against the flux of morality and against chaotic modern fragmentation [...] what is essentially a mythic order that helps to impart unity to the volume' (Fogelman, 1988 : 136) (This may well remind us of Yeats's approach in *In the Seven Woods*).

This was to be Pound's way of coping with the new century. He would not, anymore, ignore the new realities. Instead he would adapt the ways of the past to cope with them. This is brought home for the reader in 'Au Jardin' the climactic poem in the volume. This is, again, a poem that deals with the relationship between the poet and the public; as we have seen, perhaps the most important of all poetic themes to Pound. The poetic protagonist is a mediaeval troubadour, and the poem is a response to Yeats's earlier poem, 'The Cap and Bells' This was written when Yeats was still presenting an unalloyed decadent aesthetic, and his poem deals with a jester who, after having failed to gain the heart of a lady, presents her with his cap and bells.

Pound's poem is more, tough, colloquial and matter of fact than Yeats's, presenting a poet who rejects the idea of pining away for the love of a mere woman. But this is not a rejection of Pound's metaphysical philosophy in favour of materialist 'realism'. Instead, the poet insists that he is not interested in mere romantic love, because he desires a relationship that transcends mere physical sexuality; in other words; a

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mystical relationship with an idealised lady, recalling the 'Lady of Life' (Makin, 1978 : 36).

But this poem, with its purified diction, and its harder, more aggressive mysticism, is more than merely an updated version of Pound's previous poetic endeavours. Instead, by referring to Yeats, it shows Pound's growing interest in Yeatsian philosophy, and, moreover, his increasing desire to follow Yeats in adopting a new approach to suit the new century. It is the new approach that Yeats and now Pound had adopted to which we must turn (Longenbach, 1988 : 8).

After *Canzoni* was written Pound arrived back in London, and began a period of heterogeneous activity, in which he attempted to soak up as many influences as he possibly could. He had so many interests in this period that it is difficult to keep track of his activities; however, some main themes stand out. Firstly, and most importantly, he began to attend the weekly Soirées Yeats was holding. As we have already seen, meeting Yeats had been one of the main motivations behind his move to London, and now he finally achieved his aim. He had not lost any of the admiration he had felt for Yeats when he had been in America. 'I find Mr Yeats the only poet worthy of serious study' he wrote at the time (though this was revised later. In the original he wrote 'I find Mr Yeats the only poet worthy of my serious study. ' (Longenbach, 1988 : 20)). It was, therefore, flattering, when Pound became not just an acquaintance, but a *confidant* of Yeats. Carpenter describes how Pound ingratiated himself with Yeats to such an extent that at times he (and not Yeats) seemed to

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dominate Yeats's Monday night meetings (Carpenter, 1988 : 171).

However, despite the regard in which he held the older poet, up until this point he had seen Yeats as predominantly a poet of the past; and Pound's own work up until this point had been an attempt to position himself in relation to the tradition of the past. But in the *Canzoni* volume he had begun to see a way of extending the tradition into the present day, thus providing him with a philosophy and method by which he could cope with modernity. For the first time, a new note begins to appear in his poetic theorising. He begins to associate the hardness and clarity he had learnt from the troubadours with the demands of the new century. In December 1911, Pound wrote 'As to Twentieth Century poetry, and the poetry which I expect to see written in the next decade or so, it will, I think, move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, [...] It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power [...] We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither' (Pound, 1954 : 12). This statement recalls what Yeats had begun to state in 1902, and it is interesting that Pound at this point (that is to say, the beginning of 1912) seemed to recognise, for the first time, that Yeats was moving away from the *fin de siècle* diction of the Eighteen Nineties (which Pound had slavishly copied). Certainly, 'Au Jardin' acknowledges Yeats's 'Adam's Curse' in terms of language; and 'Adam's Curse' is a poem written in what we would call Yeats's later style. Previously, (i.e. in in his pre-*Canzoni* phase)

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Pound had been baffled by the new developments in Yeats's poetry, and had kept his allegiance to the past. Now, however, he began to recapitulate Yeats's own modernisation, and to become interested in the poetic demands of the new century (Longenbach, 1988 : 13-17).

This new interest in the 'later' Yeats, was encouraged by his slow realisation of the meaning of *The Green Helmet* volume of 1910. For in this volume, even more than the *In the Seven Woods* volume, there were poems that show an unmistakable new development in Yeats's poetry, the most famous of which is 'No Second Troy'.

> Why should I blame her that she filled my days
> With misery, or that she would of late
> Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
> Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
> Had they but courage equal to desire?
> What could have made her peaceful with a mind
> That nobleness made simple as a fire,
> With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
> That is not natural in an age like this,
> Being high and solitary and most stern?
> Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
> Was there another Troy for her to burn? (Yeats, 1957 : 256)

This poem continues the trend in Yeats's poetry to deal with the present day, and real people, as opposed to the mythical figures he had deal with in his poetry of the 1890s. 'She' is of course, Maud Gonne. We should notice two themes that have been carried on, and developed since

the time of 'Adam's Curse'. Firstly, there is the Nietzschean idea of a spiritual aristocracy, a nobleness that is 'simple' (compare Yeats on Synge), and 'solitary' (compare Zarathustra on solitariness). This, Maud Gonne embodies. And yet, cutting against this, is the other main theme of the poem, the decline in noble values of the present day. This is of course, another Nietzschean idea. The aristocratic values of the past have been swamped by the democratic, egalitarian values of the present ('little streets upon the great'). These ideas combine together to create the ironic conceit that defines the atmosphere of the poem; that even though it is still possible to have genuine aristocrats, society has abandoned their beliefs to the extent that they can find no place in that society.

This irony is felt very strongly, and the implications of it are thought through. For, at this time, many people, not least in the nationalist movement, looked backwards to the heroic values of the past for an imprimatur of their own beliefs (and of course, Yeats himself had done this). The nationalist leaders of Sinn Féinn were busy resuscitating the heroic Irish values of the past, as opposed to the utilitarian English values of the present. Now, however, Yeats will have no more truck with this idea. The nationalist leaders he had only ten years previously associated with, were now merely 'ignorant men'. Politics, or indeed association of any kind, were beneath the dignity of the Übermensch.

However, in the final irony of the poem, Maude Gonne receives a backhanded compliment. At least she has attempted to do *something*. Given that this is not the age of Homer, the implication is that she did

her best to achieve something heroic (and Yeats may well have sympathised; thinking the nationalist struggle was 'heroic' was a mistake Yeats himself had made). There was, after all, no Troy for her to burn. A woman of the stature of Helen, she could find no place for her values in society.

And neither, is the the implication, could Yeats. This poem marks a break in Yeats's thought; a sign of his disillusionment with Nationalist (or, indeed, any) politics, and an indication that he now regarded the gap between society and the aristocracy (spiritual and artistic, but also, possibly, financial) as being absolute. And this fits in well with his new rhetoric of hardness, toughness, and so on; he pitches these 'heroic', 'aristocratic' values against the egalitarian slush with which he was surrounded. Only by safeguarding the heroic values of the past (something that is now seen as being the task of the individual sensibility, rather than something which could be easily brought back to society at large) could the present be gauged.[3]

However, as important as the literary contacts that Pound was able to make through Yeats, were the occult contacts. At Yeats's meetings he met, among others, Allen Upward, a mystical writer. Pound wrote reviews of Upward's books (he called The *Divine Mystery* 'indispensable to clergymen, legislators, students of folk lore, and the more intelligent public' (Pound, 1973 : 375)) and later claimed to have read all of them

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[3] This volume also contains 'Upon the Land Agitation', which, for the first time, extols the virtues of the *real* Anglo-Irish aristocracy, against the demands of the general populace (as opposed to the 'fantasy' aristocracy of the spirit he had praised up until now). For the political background to this poem see Moynahan, 1995 : 217-220.

(Schneidau, 1965 : 226).[4] Upward was fond of using scientific terms as metaphors for the occult and Pound was to follow him in this. It was through G. R. S. Mead, an occultist friend of Yeats that Pound's essay 'Psychology and Troubadours' (which we have already looked at) was published in the occult magazine, *The Quest.* This essay was itself influenced by Upward. During 1912 and 1913, therefore, Pound was increasingly interested in (and influenced by) his occult friends, as we shall see when we examine his poetry of this period.

Pound also regained contact with what was left of the Forgotten School of Imagism (see below), and it was by renewing his acquaintance with T. E. Hulme that he was introduced to A. R. Orage, editor of the *The New Age.* Orage was impressed by the young American, and commissioned him to write a series of articles on poetry for the magazine, which appeared under the title of 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'.

These articles (which appeared in the Winter of 1911-1912) have two main themes running through them. Firstly, Pound attempts his first printed explication of what he was to call the New Method in literary Scholarship; the backbone of which was the concept of the Luminous Detail (which we have already met). Secondly, there was a discussion of poetic technique, which contained Pound's thinking on the forms that poetry for the new century had to take.

Pound begins by discussing his new method of scholarship. However, and characteristically, Pound goes on to explain that his new method is not really new at at all. Instead, it is a *return* to the values of the past

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4 See Davie (1982 : 63-72) for a further discussion of Upward's influence on Pound.

that have been obliterated by modernity (McDonald, 1993 :151-152).

This new method was explained as being the theory of the 'Luminous

Detail'. This meant that the scholar (i.e. Pound) would no longer have to

have encyclopaedic knowledge of a subject, but would instead look for

the one detail that would illuminate the rest: '[C]ertain facts give one a

sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their

effects, into sequence, and law' (Pound, 1973 : 22). 'The artist seeks out

the luminous detail and presents it. He does not comment. His work

remains the permanent basis of psychology and metaphysics' (Pound,

1973 : 23). And, as we have seen from studying Pound's historicism, what

Pound meant is that the imaginative scholar (Pound) would be able to

look back into the past, seize the moment, and then wring the

imaginative significance from this moment of the past with his

empathetic poetic imagination. It is this theory, of the luminous detail,

that had animated the *Canzoni* volume. And it is easy to see how this

theory is basically a development of the theories he had been working on

since he studied Browning; of grasping a moment in someone's life in the

past and making its significance live for the present. One should note in

passing that Pound describes the luminous detail as being the permanent

basis of *metaphysics*. We may, therefore relate this to arguments about

the contemporaneity of all ages; and see Pound's view of history being

developed as a series of moments (usually experienced by members of

Pound's tradition), which were in themselves all that is permanent about

that history. Pound therefore stresses that the scholar must be a

historian; he must know all the relevant facts about the moments which he wishes to understand (and the individuals who experienced those moments at their maximum intensity).

But this does not mean that the scholar was to become merely a historian. Gail McDonald in *Learning to be Modern*, argues that, without doing much violence to Pound's thought, we could equally well express Pound's new method as the belief that 'to employ the main metaphor of Pound's essay, gathering limbs can, if done with care and reverence for the gods, raise the dead' (McDonald, 1993 : 152). For Pound, accurate scholarship is merely a means to an end; to make the tradition live again (and we must remember again, that given Pound's mysticism, this may well need to be taken literally). Pound's scholarship is an attempt to find a middle way between mysticism and history 'a teacher may derive authority from intermittent visions of "light" and yet remain firmly attached to the particulars of history and the present moment.' (McDonald, 1993 : 153). Pound's stress on accuracy and scholarship are in no way antithetical to his mysticism; instead they are part of the same project, in the same way that his emphasis on clarity in poetry is in no way a repudiation of his mystical philosophy. 'For Pound, the historian who borrows the tools of positivism is powerless to understand the past: but the historian who is endowed with the magical powers of the artist may penetrate its mysteries' (Longenbach, 1987 : 51-52).

In the second part of these essays, Pound wrote about poetry, and these articles illustrate his views on poetry in the Winter of 1911. Pound

writes that as regards rhythm one should again follow the troubadours (and of course Yeats) in trying to find the right melody for the idea of the poem. The poet is 'apt to find barriers in the so called "laws" of music or verse' (Pound 1973 : 37). One must use all forms of verse, including quantitative verse, to find the 'inner form' of the poem (Pound, 1973 : 38) (these views recall Florence Farr's; so influential on Yeats), adding 'I have no especial interest in rhyme' (Pound, 1973 : 42). The idea that poetry had to rhyme to remain poetry was another rule that may have to be discarded in the search for 'inner form.'

In terms of diction, Pound speaks more clearly than ever before in favour of simplicity. 'As far as the 'living art' goes, I should like to break up *cliché*, to disintegrate those magnetised groups that stand between the reader and the drive of it [...] for it is not until poetry lives again 'close to the thing' that it will be a vital part of contemporary life [...] I mean by that that one must call a spade a spade in form so exactly adjusted, in a metric itself so seductive, that the statement will not bore the auditor'. To sum up; 'we must have a simplicity and directness of utterance' (Pound, 1973 : 41). This is more forthright than, but clearly a development out of, the ideas engendered by his study of the Troubadours.

However, despite this emphasis on direct utterance etc., this does *not* indicate a break from the *fin de siècle* ideas that Pound had held up until this point. Instead, it is best viewed as the latest development of Pound's thinking about his concept of 'mystical precision'. Pound insists,

against those who would model poetry on the speech patterns of ordinary people, that 'there are few fallacies more common than the opinion that poetry should mimic the daily speech'. Instead the poet's simplicity must be 'something which exalts the reader, making him feel that he is in contact with something arranged more finely than the commonplace' (Pound, 1973 : 41) (this Romantic exaltation is exactly what Hulme was writing against in the same magazine; thus demonstrating how little Pound was influenced by him at this point). Nor does this directness of utterance result in poetry that is less 'indefinite' in the Symbolist sense.

When I say that technique is the means of conveying an exact impression of exactly what one means, I do not by any means mean that poetry is to be stripped of any of its powers of vague suggestion. Our life is, in so far as it is worth living, made up in great part of things indefinite, impalpable; and it is precisely because the arts present us with these things that we - humanity - cannot get on without the arts. The picture that presents indefinite poems, the line of verse that means a gallery of paintings, the modulation that suggests a score of metaphors and is contained in none; it is these things that touch us nearly that 'matter' (Pound, 1973 : 33).

'The Seafarer', a translation from an Anglo Saxon poem, was published by Pound in November 1911 in the *New Age*, and is therefore a good example of the concrete influence his new theories were having on his poetry. The poem is too long to print here in its entirety, but it begins

May I for my own self song's reckon,
Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days

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Hardship endured oft.

Bitter breast-cares have I abided,

Known on my keel many a care's hold,

And dire sea-surge, and there I oft spent

Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head

While she tossed close to cliffs (Pound, 1984 : 64).

There are two main points to be made about this poems, and the first is about language. As we have seen, from about 1909 onwards, Pound had become interested in getting beyond the Pre-Raphaelite diction he had used in his poetry up until this point, and from 1911 he had become interested in developing a language that could cope with the realities of the twentieth century.

And his reading of the troubadours he had begun to work out a way to do this. He wrote in 1912 'Thought is perhaps important to the race, and language, the medium of thought's preservation, is constantly wearing out' (Pound, 1973 : 331). This was one objection to Rossetti's language; it was too old fashioned for the present time; it had worn out. But Pound also insisted that translation was to be an attempt to recapture the essential simplicity of the older period. Where Rossetti had gone wrong was to represent the middle ages in the language and diction of his own time, by using florid language, he had failed to capture the simplicity of the language of the troubadours (Pound, 1973).

For Pound, therefore, translating poetry of the past was *not* to be an attempt to make the past 'up to date', or to see the past through the eyes of the present. On the contrary, it was the past's pastness, its

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foreignness, which the translator must attempt to represent through his diction. Whilst all ages were the same, it was nonetheless true that each era should be seen through its own eyes; and therefore the poet must avoid the arrogant presumption that only the diction of 'modernity' was valid for poetry.

And it is as a result of these theories that 'The Seafarer' reads the way it does. Anglo-Saxon techniques (kennings, alliteration, and so on) are used to highlight the strangeness of the poetry. This explains what may have seemed puzzling in the *Canzoni* volume; why such archaic diction (as in the Canzon) could exist side by side with the 'modern' diction of the Heine translations, and the final poems. The answer is, that for Pound, the diction should match the theme. While an ironic, colloquial presentation would be good enough for contemporary London, there was no question about using these methods to deal with Provence.

'The Seafarer' was a controversial poem, in that it was widely attached by Anglo Saxon scholars for its 'inaccuracy'. As Ruthven points out, in many respects Pound only had himself to blame. If he had presented the poem as a version, or a free rendering, he would probably have been left alone. However, Pound wrote instead: '"The Seafarer" was as nearly literal, I think, as any translation can be' (Pound, 1973 : 39). And yet, the poem is riddled with inaccuracies (that some of these were clearly intentional is beside the point). What did Pound mean?

The answer lies in the title under which it was originally published: 'An Example of the New Method of Literary Scholarship' (Ruthven, 1983 :

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213). What this meant is that Pound took the luminous detail (i.e. the moment of the poem) as it was happening in the poet's mind (the poet who becomes, therefore part of the tradition), and attempts to recreate it, in a language as close to the poet's own as possible, whilst remaining comprehensible to readers in the present day. Another way of putting this, of course, is that Pound is attempting to raise the poet from the dead, to make him, and his work, live for a new generation. The poem is literal, therefore, in a special sense; in the sense that Pound attempts to *become* the author of 'The Seafarer' as much as possible. To criticise the poem for errors, therefore, misses the point; Pound attempts to recreate the sense of the poet's personality, to become the poet in the form of a persona, something far more important than merely knowing the 'correct' meaning of the individual words.

Over the Winter of 1911, Pound had been working on his new volume *Ripostes*, which was to embody these new ideas. In February he handed it over to the printers; though it was not published until October (Carpenter, 1988 : 173). The timing is crucial in that, famously, it was in 1912 that Pound coined the term 'Imagisme', and set down certain aesthetic tenets which were to dominate his thinking for the next two years.

Ripostes is as much a transitional volume as *Canzoni*, but it contains more hints as to what Pound's later manner will be. Pound was at this time formulating the ideas of Imagisme, but there is not a poem here that could be described as Imagiste (and there are concrete reasons for this;

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see below). Instead there are mystical Yeatsian poems, and tougher, more precise poems in his later style. It would be Pound's task for the next two years to try and combine these two modes.

As 'The Cloak' shows, Pound had not yet shifted away from Yeatsian diction;

'Thou keep'st thy rose-leaf

  Till the rose-time will be over,

Think'st thou that Death will kiss thee?' (Pound, 1984 : 67).

The use of the Rose as a mystical/erotic symbol of course derives from Yeats, but the diction is far more archaic than Yeats would have used by this point; showing yet again that Yeats 'modernised' his poetry before Pound. Other poems continue to propound Pound's erotic mystical philosophy; 'The Alchemist' (subtitled 'Chant for the Transformation of Metals') compares the alchemist's magical transformation of lead into gold with the transforming power of mystical erotic worship; they are seen as being identical. 'Apparuit' continues Pound's symbolic linking of light, flowers, and mystical states. Other poems show the increasing influence of Yeats's mystical philosophy. 'Pan is Dead' mourns the decline of the old Pagan deities. 'The Return' however, posits that soon a Pagan Renaissance will come (cf. 'Rosa Alchemica'). Pound seemed to look forward to the cruelty that this would involve.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
  sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!
  These were the swift to harry;
These the keen scented;
  These the souls of blood (Pound, 1984 : 74).

This idea that the Gods will return is new in Pound, and obviously
derives from Yeats (Yeats himself was very impressed by this poem and
specifically associated it with his belief that the Christian era was coming
to an end; for a discussion of this, and the poem's use of looser verse
forms see Kirby-Smith (1996)). As Longenbach puts it 'this poem is about
the ancient spiritual presences which Pound wants to restore to his work
in order to resurrect "the aristocracy of the arts". The poem also
announces (as Yeats wrote) "some change of style", but for the initiated
members of the secret society of modernism, the poems is a manifesto of
a new artistic, social, and political order' (we shall look at what form this
'new order' would take later on (Longenbach, 1988 : 94)).

But the form of this poem derived not from Yeats but instead from
Régnier, and this points towards a major new influence on Pound; French
Symbolism. Pound had managed to avoid much contact with Symbolism
up until this point (that is to say, French Symbolism. There was also the
Yeatsian brand of symbolism, which, of course, he did know of) (He

wrote 'Avec toute modestie, je crois que j'étais orienté avant de connaître les poètes francais modernes' and went on 'L'idée de l'image doit "quelquechose" aux symbolistes francais via T. E. Hulme, via Yeats < Symons < Mallarmé' (Pound 1951 : 293-295). Pound was aware that up until now his knowledge of Symbolism had come from Hulme, and of course, Yeats. He went on to say that 'Que j'ai profité de leurs inventions techniques (comme Edison ou aucun autre homme de science profite des découvertes' (Pound, 1951 : 293)). Pound was, he said, mainly interested in the French as technical innovators.

Significantly, the poet who had the earlier and profoundest influence on Pound was Gautier. Gautier was important for Pound, because he hammered home the idea that poetry must be precise and 'chiselled' (Again, this is in no way a break from *fin de siècle* poetics, but a development from them. Symons had written of Gautier in much the same way (Temple, 1953 : 131)). Baudelaire himself described him as master of 'le mot propre, le mot unique' (Hamilton, 1992 : 32)). Gautier used this approach to create a poetry that was more realistic, that could more easily deal with the facts of the modern world. But this realism was not Naturalism; it was a 'satirical realism' that attacked the modern world at the same time as it described it (Hamilton, 1992 : 13). This is the way an important strand of Pound's own poetry would develop. But this is only one side of Gautier's poetry. For as well as a satirist, Gautier was also a proto-Symbolist, who first proclaimed the doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake'. He upheld the philosophy of Ideal beauty and his satirical

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pose stems from his contrast between this Platonic Beauty and the degraded world of reality. Pound sometimes stressed Gautier's satirical side, but he could also compare him to Lionel Johnson or Swinburne; posing Gautier as a decadent *avant la lettre*. He was very aware of the Romantic underpinnings of his satire (Hamilton, 1992 : 27-29).

Gautier had his mystical side too, as did de Gourmont and Régnier, the other main French influences on the *Ripostes* volume, and Pound took not just the form, but some of the mystical essence of Régnier's 'Medailles d'argile' to make 'The Return' (Hamilton, 1992 : 43). 'Both poems emphasise the borderline existence of the divine realm and the necessity of creative vision in order to evoke the presence of these gods' (Hamilton, 1992 : 43). So Pound, in the final analysis *was* interested in the French for more than just technical reasons; but it was only insofar as they confirmed his own mystical speculations. Gautier and Régnier's belief that 'Les dieux vivent dans l'homme' (Hamilton, 1992 : 47) was something Pound would have agreed with, and he would have been impressed by the way Gautier in particular could believe this and yet still insist on absolute precision of diction. This idea of 'mystical precision' was exactly what he was looking for in the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore at the same time (see below). Gautier showed another way ahead.

In August 1912, F. S. Flint wrote his groundbreaking essay 'Contemporary French Poetry' in *The Poetry Review* (Pondrom, 1974). This essay had a double significance. Not only did it now make the study of French poetry essential for any practising poet, it also finally brought

the British intelligentsia up to date with activities on the continent. Up until now, even the most *avant-garde* poets in Britain had spoken of the çenacle Symbolists of the 1890's and early twentieth century as though they were contemporaries.

But now at last, the British could see what genuinely contemporary French writers were creating. British readers heard of the 'Unamistes' and the 'Futurists' for the first time. From this point on, Pound increasingly turns to the Symbolists to try and help him find a language that he can use to explore the new century's realities.

At the end of *Ripostes* he had written approvingly (for the first time) of 'The Forgotten School of Imagism', and announced that its future lay in the hands of a new movement 'Les Imagistes'. At the time there was no such movement; and no Imagistes. Why Pound chose to make this statement is a mystery, but a clue is that he was finally catching up with the innovations of Hulme three years previously (His new volume included *The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme*). Pound had known about Hulme's innovations for some time, but his own poetic theorising had been too old fashioned to make sense of them. Whether he ever understood Hulme's position is debatable (he certainly lacked the knowledge of contemporary French philosophy that Hulme had) but his own reading of the troubadours and the later Yeats, now enabled him, at least to understand Hulme's poetry itself.

This brings us to the question of what Hulme's theories were. This is what the next chapter will explore.

Chapter 6 : T.E. Hulme and Imagism.

Modernism is simply an adaption of Decadent aesthetics, which are themselves merely adaptions of Romantic thought. However, the Yeatsian tradition is only aspect of what was to become the English version of Modernism. Alongside the Yeats /Pound school, another kind of poetry was being developed in England.[1] This new way of writing poetry which was later to be called 'Imagism' had, itself, two main subdivisions. Firstly, there was English adaptions of French Symbolist aesthetics (as opposed to the indigenous, English, proto-Symbolist tradition, which Yeats drew on). Secondly, there was a strand which drew not only on Symbolist aesthetics, but from French Associationist psychology. This aspect of Imagism derives from T.E. Hulme.

Hulme was born in 1883 in Staffordshire, enrolling at Cambridge in 1902 (interestingly, he chose to study mathematics, not the humanities). However, he was dismissed in 1904, for some unspecified offence, and, after some years of travelling and casual employment, returned to London in 1908 (Jones, 1960 : 22-25). It was in this period, (that is to say from 1904-1908) that he worked out his earliest philosophical beliefs.

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[1] It is important to realise that there are two main strands of British Modernist poetry: the Hulme-Associationist-Bergsonian viewpoint, and the Yeatsian, Poundian, mystical viewpoint. Kayman is one of the few critics to grasp this point in his book *The Modernism of Ezra Pound* (Kayman, 1986) (I am assuming for the purposes of argument that Georgian poetry is not genuinely Modernist). One might add that there are, as well, at least two strands of the British Modernist Novel: that stemming from D.H. Lawrence, which was Bergsonian/Nietzschean (this also includes the very early work of Wyndham Lewis), and that stemming from Ford Madox Ford/Joseph Conrad, which was, broadly speaking, Impressionist. It is often thought that this Impressionist Modernism was highly influential on Ezra Pound, but this is false: see chapter eight).

I am also ignoring the Bloomsbury movement on the grounds that it did not produce genuinely Modernist novelists until the post-war works of Virginia Woolf and E.M Forster. See chapter nine for a discussion of Bloomsbury art aesthetics.

In discussing Hulme it is important to remember that, although he wrote poetry at one point, he was a philosopher and critic, not a poet. In other words the fear of the redundancy of art in the Capitalist marketplace, which was a matter of such concern for writers such as Yeats, does not feature greatly in his thought. Instead Hulme raised the issue of the impact of science on what we may call the humanistic tradition: specifically the impact of the rise of what Hulme saw as logical or scientific language, and the concurrent increase in belief in materialistic determinism (as mentioned above, his interest in the relationship between the humanities and science may have stemmed from his University experiences). His earliest philosophical position was based mainly on his reading of contemporary French psychology. This philosophy is contained in two unpublished manuscripts, 'Cinders' and 'Notes on Language and Style', which are important not just because they state Hulme's earliest position but also because traces of this early philosophy are discernible throughout all of his intellectual development.

In 'Cinders', the earlier document, Hulme attacks first and foremost the ideal of a Grand Theory: 'Formerly one liked theories because they reduced the world to a single principle. Now the same reason disgusts us' (Hulme, 1994 :10), and this is because 'All is flux. The moralists, the capital letterists, attempt to find a framework outside the flux, a solid bank for the river, a pier rather than a raft(Hulme, 1994 : 10). Metaphysical thinking, which tried to formulate grand abstract theories to explain reality, was therefore, always doomed to failure 'The ruling

analogy, which is quite false [...] is that of the eagle's eye. The metaphysician imagines that he surveys the world as with an eagle's eye [...] Hence we can see the world as pure geometry [...] But [...] the eye is mud [...] Pure seeing of the whole process is impossible' (Hulme, 1994 : 19). And 'The absolute is invented to reconcile conflicting purposes. But these purposes are necessarily conflicting, even in the nature of truth itself' (Hulme, 1994 : 13). Thus he concludes: 'Philosophical syntheses and ethical systems are only possible in armchair moments. They are seen to be meaningless as soon as we get into a bus with a dirty baby and a crowd' (Hulme, 1994 : 13).

Previously, faced with this extreme epistemological scepticism, thinkers could at least console themselves with the 'objectivity' that could be gained by the natural sciences. Hulme's scepticism, however, cuts deeper: 'The aim of science and of all thought is to reduce the complex and inevitably disconnected world of grit and cinders to a few ideal counters, which we can move about and so form an ungritlike picture of reality' (Hulme, 1994 : 11)
(These speculations are clearly indebted to Nietzsche. Hulme actually mentions the German in 'Cinders' and the form of the document is obviously modelled on *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Hulme, 1994)).

In other words, reality is meaningless without human consciousness to give it meaning, ('Only in the fact of consciousness is there a unity in the world' (Hulme, 1994 : 10)) but consciousness (at least rational consciousness), always fails, due to the basic structure of our thought,

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which is dependent on the basic structure of language. We always perceive (and therefore, to an extent create) reality through the prism of language. However, language does not exactly mirror the flux of existence. Hulme compares language to an artificial grid which we impose on the meaningless flux of reality. Words are mere counters and 'the world [...] is not reducible to counters' (Hulme, 1994 : 9).

Instead, the world consists of a dialectic between the 'cinders' of brute, corporeal reality, and the human concepts by which these are ordered. The result of this is that what we see as being 'objective' reality is, at least in part, a human creation, or as Hulme puts it, 'Truths don't exist until we invent them' (Hulme, 1994 : 20). Having established his perspectivism, Hulme then goes on to express his scepticism about rationality, claiming that we invent these 'truths' for emotional and sociological, as opposed to logical, reasons. Hulme writes, 'Note the fact that all a writers's generalisations and truths can be traced back to the personal circumstances and prejudices of his class, experience, capacity, and body' (Hulme, 1994 : 13) (Hulme may well have been influenced here by the German philosopher (and cultural relativist, Max Scheler, though it is not clear precisely when he read Scheler. See Roberts, 1971).

Hulme begins, therefore by criticising philosophy and science. Both of these activities try to fit the flux of existence into a 'mould' into which it will not fit. Reality, is not, therefore, rationally comprehensible. It always eludes Man's efforts to impose order on the flux (This distrust of rationality and science was typical of Edwardian thinking: see Hynes,

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1968). For Hulme, there is only one constant in this Heraclitean flux: human nature. Like Nietzsche he sees human desires as unalterable. 'The unalterability of motives. Motives are the only unalterable and fixed things in the world [...] They are more than human motives, they are the constitution of the world' (Hulme, 1994 :16). It is not clear why Hulme thinks this, when everything else is conceived of as being pure flux, but it possibly because of the difficulty of creating a worldview of pure relativism. If all cultural systems are completely arbitrary, it is not clear why there should not be infinite variation in human conduct. But this is, of course, not the case, and Hulme explains this by invoking the idea of an unchanging 'human nature'. (Possibly, as well, he found it difficult to conceive of a *completely anti-foundationalist* epistemology.) Moreover this idea of the impossibility of changing 'human nature' doubtless fitted in with Hulme's deeply pessimistic world view.

Hulme's philosophy is therefore very similar to Nietzsche's, but unlike the German, Hulme could not get surmount his nihilism and create the great affirmation of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. For Hulme, nihilism (except with regard to human motives) was irrefutable: yet nihilism meant despair. 'Ennui and disgust, the sick moments- not an occasional lapse or disease, but the fundamental ennui and chaos out of which the world has been built' (Hulme, 1994 :13). One way out of the dilemma would be hedonism, but for Hulme this is a false escape: 'The pathetic search for the different (cf. Gide). Where shall they find it? Never found in sex. All explored sex is the same' (Hulme, 1994 :15). The only sane philosophy to

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cope with nihilism is egoism 'the common return to egoism, the roundness of the world, the absence of all infinitude, the denial of all Utopias- are extended to the ultimate nature of the world' (Hulme, 1994 : 8) but even this brings no joy: 'Disillusionment comes when it is recognised that all heroic actions can be reduced to the simple laws of egoism' (Hulme, 1994 : 15)(this position is clearly similar to Max Stirner's, though again, it is not clear whether Hulme had read Stirner at this point (Hansen, 1980 : 384-385)). We have seen similar positions in Pater, and of course, in Nietzsche. But Hulme goes beyond Pater in his scepticism, and beyond Nietzsche in his relentless pessimism.

For Hulme repeatedly writes about his pre-Bergsonian philosophy (i.e. the philosophy of the 'Cinders' manuscript) as leading to a state of 'nightmare' (Hulme, 1994 : 127). What was the cause of this nightmare? Hulme is explicit- his earliest philosophy was unendurable because it was materialist (Hulme, 1994 : 140-141). However, Hulme was not, in the conventional sense, a religious man. It is important to realise that Hulme did not so much oppose materialism as such, as what he thought materialism *implied*. For Hulme materialism implied two things: firstly, determinism (which in turn implied the non-existence of free will) and secondly, aesthetic and moral relativism.

In his early writings Hulme is so anxious to demonstrate that materialism means determinism, and that this is an emotionally unacceptable viewpoint, that in one document he devotes a whole page to scientists who equate the two positions. For example, he quotes

Laplace: "'An intellect which at any given instant knew all the forces with which nature is animated and the respective situations of the beings that compose nature-supposing that the said intellect were vast enough to subject these data to analysis-would embrace in the same formulae the motions of the greatest bodies in the universe and those of the slightest atom: nothing would be uncertain for it, and the future, like the past, would be present to its eyes"' (Hulme, 1994 :140). In our own post-Quantum world, we have less difficulty in separating the scientific world view from this Laplacian determinism. However so strongly were the two linked at this time that Hulme uses that two (or mechanism as he calls it) as synonyms. But for Hulme, any philosophy that denied free will, and therefore denied free moral choice, made life meaningless. Hulme was therefore not so much reacting against materialism as against the nineteenth (and eighteenth) century view of the world as a vast machine (the links between Hulme's thought here and Romanticism are obvious)(Hulme, 1994 : 140-141).

Hulme's other objection to materialism was that it seemed to lead to relativism. He writes 'The world is pictured as a mass of atoms and molecules, which are supposed to carry out unceasingly movements of every kind. The matter of which our bodies are composed is subject to the same laws as the matter outside' (Hulme, 1994 : 141) and goes on 'Is it [...] possible to believe in any values of this kind (i.e. moral and aesthetic) and at the same time [...] hold the mechanistic view of the world?' (Hulme, 1994 : 145). He then answers his own question: 'Now in

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such a world (i.e. the materialistic worldview) the word "value" clearly has no meaning. There cannot be any good or bad in such a turmoil of atoms [...] If this view of the world is the true one, then all the bottom drops out of our set of values' (Hulme, 1994 :145) (Thus we can see that despite their differences, there were clear similarities between the thought of Yeats and Hulme). It is this deep sense of pessimism that resulted from what Hulme saw as materialism that underlies all his thought. And in the same way that, as we will see, Hulme still continued to believe certain aspects of his early philosophy until he died, so he never managed to shake off the sense of despair that this philosophy engendered. He was untouched both by the optimism of the Edwardian period, and by the more messianic optimism of the Continental avant-gardes: the Futurists and Expressionists.

There is one aspect of his earliest philosophy that *is* positive, however, and that is his writing on art. Hulme's theory of art is developed from his linguistic speculations. Hulme, as we have seen, adopted a position of extreme scepticism, especially as regards language (cf. Hulme, 1994 : 29 'large clumsy instrument'). Language is portrayed as being a chessboard which human beings lay over the indefinable flux-like nature of reality. Given this view, language is merely the manipulation of counters, which, as we have seen, he did not believe to be capable of accurately describing reality. Some forms of language were definitely to be considered worse than others at achieving this task, however. Hulme particularly deplores 'rational' or 'scientific' language: 'In expositional reasoning, the

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intermediate terms have only counter value' (Hulme, 1994 : 24). Rational prose, being abstract, fails to make contact with the real corporeal nature of reality. 'In expositional prose we get language divorced from any real vision' (Hulme, 1994 : 24).

The other main enemy of language that possesses 'real vision' is language that uses cliché. A cliché is a 'counter' word or phrase that no longer provokes an emotion: it has become separated from the emotional reality that originally produced it. To use words as counters is, however, the tendency of modern prose: ('that dreadful feeling of cheapness when we contemplate the profusion of words of modern prose' (Hulme, 1994 : 25). Hulme puts it like this: 'Compare in algebra, the real things are replaced by symbols. These symbols are manipulated according to certain laws which are independent of their meaning. N.B. At a certain point in the proof we cease to think of x as having a meaning and look upon it as a mere counter to be manipulated. An analogous phenomenon happens in reasoning in language. We replace meaning (i.e. vision) by words. These words fall into well-known patterns into certain well-known phrases which we accept without thinking of their meaning, just as we do the x in algebra' (Hulme, 1994 : 24).

Against this view of language Hulme pitches the concept of 'vision'. Vision is superior to language because it is less abstract: it is physical (as opposed to merely rational, an abstract thought process), and because 'all emotion depends on real solid vision or sound' ((Hulme, 1994 :24) Hulme is making clear that as far as art is concerned, anyway, emotion is

preferable to the workings of the intellect (there are obvious parallels here with the thought of Pound, and before, him, the Romantic tradition generally: specifically the Pre-Raphaelites). It follows, then, that even though reality can never be contained by language, language which is based on the emotion caused by vision will fail less badly than discursive prose: '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' (Hulme, 1994 : 25). Literature, to most accurately describe the real, should therefore consist of visual images: 'The art of Literature consists exactly in this passage from the eye to the voice' (Hulme, 1994 : 31).

In adopting this position, Hulme was greatly indebted to the French school of Associationist psychology, especially the work of Th. Ribot. Ribot was concerned with providing a materialist account of mental phenomena, and particularly for mental events that had previously seemed to have required a metaphysical explanation such as the creative imagination (Rae, 1989). Central to his account of creativity was his concept of the 'image'. Ribot distinguished between two kinds of thinking: abstract and concrete or 'symbolic'. Abstract language, according to Ribot, tended to manipulate words according to the rules of language: they therefore tended towards becoming merely manipulatable counters. Concrete language, on the other hand, has emotional significance: and tends towards what Ribot calls the 'logic of images' (Rae, 1988 : 80). Hulme picked up on this distinction, and saw

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that it could be used as the basis for a poetic language that would by pass the rationalism of 'counter language' (Ribot uses this phrase).

Ribot differentiated between 'concrete' and 'symbolic' images. Concrete images, according to him, relate to the immediate bodily sensations that flow directly from reality. Symbolic images, on the other hand, are mediated through the intellect. It is easy to see that Hulme could relate the idea of 'concrete' images to some of the ideas he had worked out in the 'Cinders' document: specifically the insistence on visual images bypassing rational thought (Csengeri, 1982 : 22). Ribot was a scientist, whose aim was, more or less openly to secularise Symbolist thought, and to rid it of its mystical components (as we have seen, it was precisely its mystical elements that fascinated Pound and Yeats). He does not, therefore, choose between logical and 'Imagistic' thought, regarding them as both being equally valid modes of cognition. However, in the writings of Jules de Gaultier (1885-1942), which Hulme was also reading at this time, he would have discovered that Gaultier, whilst accepting Ribot's distinctions, insisted that poetic language was the superior form of discourse (Csengeri, 1982 : 21). In his book *Le Bovarysme*, he argues that 'because of the attribution of the imagistic associations of words, most of them have lost their precise descriptive and denotative values, thus becoming mere "notions"' (Martin, 1970 : 201). Moreover, these ideas were standard in the French psychological tradition. (N.B. it used to be thought that Remy de Gourmont was a main source for these ideas, in his book *Le Probléme Du Style*. This is a

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somewhat old fashioned viewpoint, now that it has been realised that the reasons for the similarities between de Gourmont's ideas and Hulme's are that they both are indebted to the Associationists (Martin 1970)).

We can see then that, despite the fact that they were facing the same problems, Hulme comes from a completely different tradition from that being created concurrently by Yeats. Hulme himself was aware of the difference. He suspected, correctly, that Yeatsian thought led to a mystical brand of Idealism: 'W.B. Yeats attempts to enable his craft by strenuously believing in supernatural world, race memory, magic, and saying that symbols recall those where prose couldn't. This an attempt to bring in an infinity again' (Hulme, 1994 : 43). As opposed to Yeatsian Neo-Romanticism, Hulme is very much a Post-Romantic. He no longer believes (as Pound still did) the great Romantic idea of the poet being the 'unacknowledged legislator of the world'. As I stated at the beginning of this thesis, Romantic thought, whilst proclaiming the power of the poet, also acknowledges, at the same time, the ontological uncertainty that underlies this idea. Hulme, explicitly (rather than implicitly) brings out and analyses this uncertainty. He suggests that the Romantic concept of the artist as having access to more profound, metaphysical truths than the mass of the population will no longer hold. Instead, once one has conceded the reality of the scientific worldview, then the metaphysical beliefs that gave meaning to Romantic philosophy collapses. This is not a rejection of Romantic aesthetics: instead he gives the other side of the coin. It is, in a real sense, the return of the repressed: the return of what

had to be repressed to create Romantic glorification of the artist. 'Poetry after all for the amusement of bankers and other sedentary armchair people in after dinner moods. No other [...] So no infinite nobleness and function about that '(Hulme, 1994 : 38). As we have seen, the view of poetry as being merely 'entertainment for the bourgeoisie' is what the Romantics were protesting against. Hulme admits that the battle was lost.

Or does he? Even though Ribot was a scientist, his philosophy of art was still based on Symbolist principles, albeit reconceptualised to give them a materialist slant (There is not even anything particularly new about his materialism. Martin points out the intellectual debts to 18th century materialism (Martin, 1970)). And many writers have noted the similarities between even this early thought of Hulme's and a certain kind of Romanticism (E.g. Krieger, 1953). For example, even though Hulme denies art has any spiritual or metaphysical meaning, *in the very same document* he describes certain images of poetry as leading to 'ecstasy'. 'Life as a rule tedious, but certain things give us sudden lifts. Poetry comes with the jumps cf. love, fighting, dancing. The moments of ecstasy' (Hulme, 1994 : 44). This clearly implies that literature is one of the few things that make life worth living (the classic Aesthetes' position). Moreover it is easy to see how the idea of poetry as leading to 'ecstasy' or 'illumination' could lead to mystical ideas (though Hulme would not have seen this as desirable). The debate over Hulme's Romanticism has not ended, nor will it. However, it is fair to say that

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whether one regards Hulme as being, in the final analysis a Romantic or not, it is not difficult to see how his thought could be adapted to a Romantic tradition (And this is merely the published work. In his unpublished work he reveals the debt his aesthetic owes to that of Symons, therefore showing even more openly the continuities between Symbolist thought and his own (Harmer, 1975).[2]   Hulme had developed these early ideas in isolation, but when he arrived back in London in 1908, he started to search out people who agreed with his views that contemporary language (especially, of course, literary language) was worn out, and needed to be renewed.

In Chapter Two of his book *Poetry, Painting and Ideas,* Robinson demonstrates that the Decadent movement in England of the 1890s failed to be as important a movement as the Symbolists in France both because they were not radical enough in breaking with the poetic norms of the period, and because they lacked the philosophical knowledge of the French. And so, after the failure of the Aesthetes to reroute the mainstream of English poetry along French lines, British poetry regressed. In the first decade of the twentieth century, English poets were notable mostly for their 'insufficiencies of language, their often mechanical attitude to poetic form, the inadequacy of their language' (Harmer, 1975 : 6). However, by the second half of the decade, new forces were emerging. These were based around the 'little magazine' *The New Age.*

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[2] However, the main distinction between Hulme and Pound/Yeats remains. For Pound and Yeats, the romantic 'moment' is a brief moment of insight into the 'real' Neo-Platonic world. Hulme, however, disbelieves in this world: for him, these moments remain moments: they do not act as a pathway to an Idealist, timeless world behind them. In this, he is closer to the anti-metaphysical position of the early Pater.

The New Age had been a radical socialist magazine with a small circulation, until it was taken over by the New Zealander Holbrook Jackson, and the English critic and thinker A.R. Orage in May 1907. For the next seven years, *The New Age* was to be to be undoubtedly the foremost intellectual journal in England. From 1908 onwards Orage (Holbrook left the magazine that year), began to publish articles not just on politics, but on literature and culture in general. And it was Orage's appointment as poetry editor, F.S, Flint who began the revolution in English poetry (Sullivan, 1985). In his first article for *The New Age* Flint wrote (reviewing a translation of Japanese poetry): 'It is a pity that the translators did not choose some other measure than the heavy English rhymed quatrain [...] I could have wished that the poems in this book had been translated into little dropping rhythms, unrhymed. To the poet who can catch and render, like these Japanese, the brief fragments of his soul's music, the future lies open. The day of the lengthy poem is over- at least for this troubled age' ((Flint, 1974 : 51) written in July 11 1908). This was the beginning of a whole new way of looking at poetry, one that stressed looser forms, ignored the conventions of the typical English poem of the time, and, most importantly, concentrated on short poems, 'fragments' as opposed to the epic.

Flint was employed by the magazine's editor A.R. Orage at least partly because he believed in free verse, a position Orage had arrived at at least 12 years previously (Orage, 1974). He therefore used his reviews to propound his new viewpoint, and when he reviewed a book of poetry by

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Edward Storer he realised he had found a kindred spirit. Storer had independently (strongly influenced by the French Symbolists) worked his way to a position where brevity and free verse were seen as being the essence of poetry.He also talked of poetry as expressing the 'image': a concept he had adapted from Symbolist aesthetics (Coffman, 1972 : 104-106). He contacted Storer, and together, they began to formulate a new philosophy of poetry.

The aesthetic system they began to develop was very much a reaction against what was then the literary establishment. Until 1908, the most famous figures associated with *The New Age* were George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, all socialists, prose writers, and 'realists'. However, Wells and Shaw stopped contributing articles in 1907 (Bennett continued until 1911 (Ferrall, 1992 : 660-661)), and it was round about this time that interest began to pick up in Symbolism, the great literary enemy of 'realism' and 'naturalism'. Classic Symbolist texts began to come back into print after having been neglected for years (Symons' collected poems were republished in 1906 and *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* in 1908 (Martin, 1967 : 167)). Moreover, editorials written by Orage at this time began to attack the aesthetic position of writers such as Shaw and Bennett, and to insist that that the way forward for English Literature was to look to the Symbolists rather than the Naturalists. Quotes from Flint and Storer made at the time show that they very much considered themselves as trying to finish an unfinished revolution, the introduction of French (Symbolist) influences into English

poetry (Martin, 1967 : 168-174) (some of them (Hulme included) had a native model very much in mind as well: W.E. Henley. He was admired not just for his tough matter of fact attitude to poetry, but also for his use of free verse (Hulme 1994 : 50)). And so, by 1908, these new attitudes were very much in the air.

As I have already stated, Hulme arrived back in London just as this sea change in English literary culture was beginning. It is not surprising that he wished to join in the ongoing debate, and so, early in 1908 he joined the 'Poets' Club', a society dedicated to the discussion and public recital of poetry, and quickly became Secretary (Harmer 1975 : 18). The Poets' Club was not in any way *avant-garde* or innovative, but it gave Hulme the first chance to propound his own poetic theories. In 1908, he made a speech at the Poets' Club in which he publicly propounded his poetic credo for the first time. His views may have been original, but it is more likely that he had already begun to read *The New Age* where he had been exposed to the early theories of Flint and Storer. His article is therefore an attempt to merge his own 'Cinders' philosophy with what he had learned from the French and the English Symbolism of the older men. However, he was also using what he was reading about contemporary French Symbolist theory (The main sources for his thought at this time seem to have been Gustave Kahn, de Gourmont, Guyau, de Gaultier, Beaunier, and Ribot (Harmer, 1975 : 115-119)). After about 1900, Symbolists referred less and less to 'une idée' as the poetic source of inspiration, but to 'une image' (Martin, 1967 : 174). Hulme adapted this

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concept of the image to his own theory of 'emotional vision'. So, for Hulme, this 'image' was now to be the basis of modern poetry (for a discussion of the Symbolist, and therefore, he argues, basically Romantic basis for Hulme's Imagism, cf. Kermode's *Romantic Image*).

We must remember, in reading this paper, that Hulme was only 25 when he wrote it, and some of the things he says (such as 'I am of course in favour of the complete destruction of all verse more than twenty years old' are undoubtedly meant to shock the 'older generation' he would have been reading to, and are in any case directly contradicted by things he wrote for his own private notebooks. Hulme therefore accentuates the aspects of his aesthetic that are materialistic and anti-idealist (in both senses). However the basic premise of the article in undoubtedly genuine: Hulme was arguing that the English poetry had stagnated, and that only by the importation of French Symbolist techniques, specifically *vers libre*, could it be improved. He begins by stating a position very close to that he propounded two years earlier in 'Cinders'. He argues that poetry is simply a means of expression and should not be discussed with the use of abstract metaphysical phraseology. He then goes on to claim that 'there is an intimate connection between the verse form and the state of poetry at any period' and continues 'it must be admitted that verse forms like manners and like individuals develop and die' (Hulme 1994 : 50). He goes on 'The latter stages of the decay of an art form are very interesting and worth study because they are peculiarly applicably to the state of poetry at the present day' (Hulme, 1994 : 51) (Hulme's

argument here is translated directly from Gustave Kahn in his book *Premiers Poèmes*. Kahn was one of the premier French propagandists for free verse at this time (1897)(Hulme, 1994) 'The new technique was first definitely stated by Kahn. It consisted in a denial of a regular number of syllables as the basis of versification. The length of the line is long and short, oscillating with the images used by the poet: it follows the contours of his thoughts and is free rather than regular: to use a rough analogy, it is clothes made to order, rather than ready made clothes' (rather strangely, Hulme continues: 'The kind of verse I advocate is not the same as *vers libre*, I merely use the French as an example of the extraordinary effect that an emancipation of verse can have on poetic activity' (Hulme, 1994 : 52). Since Hulme never defines what he does advocate, and since his own poetry fits Kahn's description exactly, I think that all Hulme is trying to say is that his view does not imply that poetry will become completely unstructured, merely that it will no longer rely on regular metre).

Hulme then argues that the reason free verse is necessary is that the philosophical underpinning that underlay the old metric have been knocked away: 'The ancients were perfectly aware of the fluidity of the world and of its impermanence: there was a Greek theory that the whole world was a flux. But while they recognised it they feared it and endeavoured to evade it, to construct things of permanence which would stand fast in the universal flux which frightened them [...] Living in a dynamic world they wished to create a static fixity where their should

might rest [...] They wished to embody in a few lines a perfection of thought. Of the thousand and one ways in which a thought might roughly be conveyed to a hearer there was one way which was the perfect way, which was destined to embody that thought to all eternity, hence the fixity of the form of the poem and the elaborate rules of regular metre' However 'Now the whole trend of the modern spirit is away from that, philosophers no longer believe in absolute truth. We no longer believe in perfection, either in verse or in thought, we frankly acknowledge the relative. We shall no longer strive to attain the absolutely perfect form in poetry [...] (the modern poem) no longer deals with heroic action, it has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phrases in the poet's mind' (Hulme, 1994 : 52-53) (Hulme probably developed these ideas after reading Guyau, but we have seen similar arguments in Pater. The concentration on smaller forms echoes Flint, and in any case fits in well with Hulme's relativistic viewpoint (Csengeri, 1982)).

When Hulme continues 'What has found expression in painting as Impressionism will soon find expression in poetry in free verse' (Hulme, 1994 : 53) it becomes obvious that he is simply trying to import the Symbolist techniques of the 1880's and 1890's into contemporary English poetry. He then restates views that we have already come across in his private notebook; prose is the language of dead metaphors, only the poet can 'make it new'; poetry is to be read not sung or chanted (therefore rhythm is not so important; Robinson argues that this is an attack on

Yeats' view of rhythm) the day of the long poem is over (cf. Flint). He concludes 'That is my objection to metre, that it enables people to write verse with no poetic inspiration, and whose mind is not stored with new images' (Hulme, 1994 : 55).

The question remains, to what extent did Hulme believe these views himself? As we have seen he was terrified of the idea of the flux and had a longing for fixity, an attitude that is seemingly contradicted by his public statements. The answer is, I think, that though Hulme had read Bergson at this point, he did not see that the metaphysics of the Frenchman would give him a way out of the materialist-relativist maze. It was therefore safer to hold a materialistic view in public, and attempt to form a poetic from that, than to posit an objectivist theory which may have had no validity. However, the fact remains that in 1908 Hulme was a relativist, a materialist, and an innovator ('I have no reverence for tradition' (Hulme, 1994 : 56)), even though, as with Pater, *at the very same time as he was propounding this viewpoint* he was beginning to develop opposing ideas.

It was only when the Poets' Club published its first anthology in January 1909 that Hulme came to the attention of Flint. This book, *For Christmas MDCCCCVIII* was savagely attacked by Flint in *The New Age* for being dilettantish, provincial and old fashioned (Harmer 1975 : 19-21). Hulme replied to defend the club, but after meeting Flint his opinions changed. Flint had a deep knowledge of contemporary French poetry: moreover he was friends with Orage and could introduce Hulme to poets who were

working along the same lines as him. In March 1909, therefore, Hulme founded the Secession Club, which met regularly in 'The Eiffel Tower' a Soho Restaurant (the name of this club was, as Harmer puts it 'at least a side-glance' at the Sezession painters in Germany, who anticipated the Expressionists (Harmer, 1975 : 22)). This was the beginning of Imagism proper, and the people who attended these meetings made up the 'Forgotten School' of 1909. They were: Edward Storer, Joseph Campbell, Francis Tancred, Florence Farr (the occultist and friend of Yeats), Flint and Hulme himself (Ernest Radford and Ernest Rhys may also have attended). Ezra Pound began to attend their meetings slightly afterwards: being introduced to the group by Elkin Matthews, a bookseller closely associated with the Aesthetes of the 1890s (Schuchard, 1984 : 215). Hulme became the unofficial leader of the movement because he was the most interested in creating a new theory of poetry. Martin argues strongly that most of the members of the Secession Club were poets first and theorists afterwards, and that their most pressing interest was to 'achieve a reintegration of form and content' (Martin, 1967 : 164). Hulme on the other hand was more interested in the reasons why they were doing this and why such a task had become necessary at the present time.

What, then, were the views of these poets and theorists, who were later to become known as the first, 'forgotten' school of Imagism? Firstly I think we have to make a distinction between Flint, Storer, Hulme, and the rest of the group. Flint and Storer were of course the two poets who

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decided they had most in common, and it was their separate discovery of Symbolist techniques that led to the formation of the school. Hulme followed and became an immediate acolyte. However, from his own reading of Symbolism (more the theory than the poetry itself) he had, by the start of 1909 evolved a style of poetry that looked remarkably like theirs.

Then there are Farr, Tancred, Campbell and the others (including, at this stage, Ezra Pound). They were less interested than Flint in creating a new kind of poetry, and less interested than Hulme in creating a new aesthetic. Instead, they were content, on the whole to use more conventional forms, but they wished to tighten these up: and to eliminate verbiage (Martin, 1967). They wished mainly for a group where intelligent conversation about poetry could take place, and where their own poems could face intelligent criticism.

The dominant figure in the beginning was undoubtedly Flint (Pondrom, 1974). Flint probably knew as much about contemporary French poetry as anyone in Britain. He knew not only about the Symbolist masters (Baudelaire, Rimbaud etc.) but also about the post-Symbolist or 'çenacle' Symbolists: those poets who began writing after Symbolism had been established as a movement in 1886. These included not only the theorist Gustave Kahn (who Hulme had already read, as we have seen) but also poets like Verhaeren, Régnier, and de Gourmont. These poets were included in an anthology *Poètes de Aujourd'hui* which rapidly became the bible of the Imagist group (Pondrom, 1974).

What sort of poetry did the Imagists write? According to Flint, the ideas they were interested in were 'vers libre [...] the Japanese tonka and haiku [...] the sacred Hebrew form [...].and [...] rhymeless poems. There was also a lot of talk and practice among us, Storer leading it chiefly, of what we called the Image. We were very much influenced by modern French Symbolist theory' (Flint, 1974 : 301). To see what this looked like in practice, take this early poem by Hulme.

Above the Dock

Above the quiet dock in mid-night,
Tangled in the tall mast's corded height,
Hangs the moon.   What seemed so far away
Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.
(Hulme, 1994 : 3)

The purpose of this poem is to express this visual image of the moon. However, every aspect of the poem is designed to downplay any mystical or ecstatic possibilities this vision might have had. Instead the imagery is homely: 'forgotten after play'. The moon is portrayed as being 'Tangled' in the (man made) ship. This moon, which at one point (either at first glance, or in the past) 'seemed so far away' is, by use of the imagery made to seem childish, vaguely absurd. This sets the pattern for Hulme's poetry, which usually consists of the poet observing nature. However whereas in the past this may well have prompted ideas of the union of Man and Nature or some sort of mystical illumination, here the imagery

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is always kept commonplace: down to earth.

The poem 'Autumn' which was the poem that attracted Flint to Hulme in early 1909, is more revealing in this respect (it is partly based on Henley's Midsummer Night Skies' (Martin, 1967).

Autumn

A touch of cold in the Autumn night-
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
 Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.
(Hulme, 1994 :3)

Here regular metre and rhyme has been abandoned altogether. Instead, enjambement and the length of the line is used to downplay any pantheistic or mystical significance of the moment and concentrate the readers mind on the two images. Notice especially how the short third fourth line downplays the usual emotional implications of the image of the red moon (which might more normally represent anger or the wrath of God or something of that sort).

Again, if we compare this poem to a High Romantic lyric like 'Tintern Abbey' we can see that the emotional implications of the experience have been toned down. Whereas Wordsworth's vision led him to reconsider his whole life: all the poet here does is 'nod'. This is all part of Hulme's Post-
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Romantic project: to recast the visionary and colloquial aspects of Romanticism for the needs of a materialist and relativist era.

However, when we look at other poems written at the same time, the matter is not so simple. The untitled poem

Oh Lady full of mystery
Is that blue sea, beyond your knee.

My dreaming languorous voyage

To where the same blue sea doth breaking
cambric surf all framed with lace
On white strands far from this dull place.

(Jones, 1960 : 179)

Here there is again the same concentration on the Image: this time the dress, which is metaphorically seen to resemble the sea. But this time there is an emotional interaction: because the Image represents the theme of escape that Hulme was later to represent as the essence of Romanticism. Moreover, a dreamy eroticism hangs over the whole poem that recalls the fin de siécle. Rather than a sharp break with Symbolist aesthetics, then, Hulme's practice at this time might well be said to be more concerned with moving the emphasis in his poetry from the ecstatic or mystical sense of communion with the Image that had (he claimed) characterised Romantic aesthetics, to purifying his diction, and

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expressing visual impressions in a way that emphasised the empirical nature of the experience.

The other poets in the group were less interested in undercutting the 'Romantic Moment' and more in portraying the Image itself with the minimum of excess material. Surprisingly enough at this point Flint was one of the least successful at doing this. His best poetry was not written until Ezra Pound's Imagiste anthology of 1912. However we can see what he was groping towards if we look at the first section of the poem 'He Meets Her in a Wood at Night' from his first anthology *In the Net of the Stars* (1909). This is the most 'modern' poem of the anthology.

This is a rose of burning wine-
This is a star.

This is a rose that grew on a star-
This is a star in a battle line
Of whirring worlds
Chanting a hymn of flight
In the fight
With Night-
This is a rose of burning wine-
Our love
(Flint, 1909 : 53).

This is not a good poem (Hughes calls it 'an amateurish mixture of infelicitous music and inexcusable imagery' (Hughes, 1960 :155), but the way it points forward to more successful poems is clear. Firstly regular

metre has been abandoned. It has been replaced by repetition (as in the Bible) alliteration and unusual rhyme schemes to give a sense of unity. Flint attempts to concentrate attention on the image, but unfortunately the image is too complicated. It is actually three images: the rose, the star, and the burning wine. However, they do not illuminate each other. The images themselves are symbols for what the poem is really about: his love. However, this is too readily stated, and merely seems bathetic at the end of the poem. Nevertheless, a start has been made: all that is necessary is for the poet to clarify his diction, and concentrate more fully on simpler images which speak for themselves: and this is in fact what Flint went on to do. At this stage however, he was more important to the Imagists for his knowledge of French poetry than as a poetic example.

A poet who had more success at concentrating on the image was Joseph Campbell ('Seosamh MacCathmhaoil'). One of his poems collected in his 1909 collection *The Mountainy Singer* contains a poem, 'The Dawn Whiteness', that exemplifies much of the practice of early Imagism.

'A dawn whiteness.

A bank of slate-grey cloud hanging heavily

 over it.

The moon, like a hunted thing, dropping

into a cloud'

(Campbell, 1981 : 45). Campbell's project at this time was simply to present visual images: an aim which led him to consider eliminating verbs from his poetry altogether (Martin, 1967 : 160). In pursuing this aim, Campbell had managed to eliminate cliches or archaisms from his poetry to a greater extent than all the other Imagists with the exception of Hulme: moreover, he was doing it earlier than any of the others (he was writing free verse by 1906) (Harmer, 1975 : 26).

Campbell leads us to another hidden influence on the 'Forgotten School': Impressionism. Three years later, Impressionism would have been repudiated by the Imagists and Imagistes, but in 1909 Storer wrote about Impressionism in a highly favourable way, explaining that it was the only coherent aesthetic for the twentieth century. He then went on to link Impressionism to the development of free verse (Storer, 1909 : 40).

A distinct odd man out when we regard what Imagism meant three years later, was Francis Tancred.Whereas the other poets were influenced by contemporary French poetry, Tancred went back to the rhyming couplets of Pope:

'The sex enchants me, and I like to view
Their knacks and laces, or run through
The silks in folio, and brocades
Unfurled to show their glistening shades' (Harmer, 1975 : 23).

And so forth. Despite the apparent dissimilarities between their poetry Hulme was friendly with Tancred and they often worked together (Pondrom, 1974 : 301). What they shared was a concern for using exactly the right word, and a dislike for vagueness in their poetry. Martin speculates that Hulme may have got the idea of a 'Neo-Classical' revival from studying the works of Tancred.

Whereas in retrospect the ideals of Imagism may have seemed self evident, therefore, at the time the project seemed a lot less clear cut. The original Imagists were interested in French Symbolist and Post-Symbolist theory, Impressionism, Neo-Classicism, Bergson, Japanese poetry, the Bible and an indigenous free verse tradition stemming from Henley. All they had in common was a feeling that *fin de siécle* poetry was too sloppy and needed to be tightened up, and an interest in any other kind of poetry that might help them to achieve this.

Possibly the most interesting theorist of the movement apart from Hulme and Flint, was Edward Storer. The first poem in his 1909 collection *Mirrors of Illusion* is actually entitled 'Image', and shows the 'Forgotten School's' use of free verse, compression and concision.

'Forsaken lovers,

Burning to a chaste white moon,

Upon strange pyres of loveliness and drought' (Storer, 1909 : 2)

More important than his poetry, however, is the fact that his 'Essay'

published in November 1908, was the first 'coherent argument for free verse produced by any writer in English' (Harmer, 1975 : 26). Not only is this 'in some ways a blueprint for subsequent Imagist formulation' it was written before Storer had come into contact with Hulme or Flint (it is reprinted in *Mirrors of Illusion*). Interestingly, Storer sees free verse developing out of Impressionism, not Symbolism. He stresses the need for brevity, and the use of visual 'impressions' as the backbone of modern poetry. (Coffmann, 1972 : 104-106) (Storer was also to develop a political theory that in some ways resembles Hulme's: see below).

Of course the most famous member of this forgotten school was Ezra Pound. However his relationship to the rest of the Imagists was ambiguous. Pound first attended the club about a month after it has started to meet. Moreover, according to Harmer 'he had very little to offer the discussions, and certainly went out of his way to deny that he had learned anything' (Harmer, 1975 : 30-31). The attitude of the other Imagists was ambiguous.

Flint approved of Pound's use of looser forms, but disapproved of his (very un-Imagist) use of foreign words and phrases (what I have called Pound's allusive method) (Homberger, 1972 : 47). Hulme held Pound in some contempt. (Jones, 1960 : 33).[3] Pound himself had little interest in any French philosophy ('DAMN Bergson and frog diarrhoea' he once

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[3] Pound wrote later 'The critical LIGHT during those years immediately pre-war in London shone not from Hulme, but from Ford (Madox etc.) in so far as it fell on any writing at all' ('This Hulme Business' reprinted in Kenner, 1951 : 307).This confirms the small influence of Hulme on Pound, but would seem to contradict my argument that the most influential creative forces working at this time were Yeats on one hand, and the school of Hulme on the other. However, although Ford was influential on Pound in terms of diction, and certainly in terms of Pound's prose, fundamentally his impressionistic aesthetic was antipathetic to Pound's mystical Symbolism. (Longenbach 1988 : 39 - 40).See below.

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wrote (Carpenter, 1988 : 114)), nor, at this point, in contemporary French poetry (Flint wrote later,'He could not be made to believer that there was any French poetry after Ronsard' (Flint, 1974 : 302)). Carpenter's comment that 'he brought comparatively little to the Hulme group, and for the moment learnt almost nothing from it that advanced his poetry' seems justified (Carpenter, 1988 : 117). Certainly, the volume he was writing at the time of his association with them, *Exultations* (1909) showed no sign of their influence.

The reason that 1909 was a turning point in Pound's life was not due to Hulme or Flint but because he had finally met Yeats. As he said himself 'I went to London because I thought Yeats knew more about poetry than anybody else' (Paris Review 1962 : 36). Pound was still obsessed with the *fin de siécle*, and he thought that by meeting Yeats, not only would Yeats help him to improve his own poetry, but Yeats would act as a conduit to the living tradition of the past.

Despite the fact that the Forgotten School were, in many ways, the beginning of modern English poetry, the group began to disintegrate in the Autumn of 1909 (Hughes, 1960). One of the main reasons was that Hulme, who had become the mainspring of the group, became less and less interested in poetry. As we have seen, he had just been introduced to the thought of Bergson, and when he retired briefly from public life in 1910, it was to assimilate Bergsonian philosophy, and see to what extent it could be adapted for his own purposes.

Why did Hulme find Bergson's philosophy so congenial? Firstly, they

had the same intellectual roots. Bergson knew the Associationist viewpoint well, and when he referred to their work, is was more often than not the work of Ribot to which he referred (the middle chapters of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* are devoted to a rebuttal of Associationist views). Bergson argued against the Associationists, but he also developed and used many of their initial concepts, and it was these thinkers that Hulme had used to develop his own early philosophy (Rae, 1989).

Moreover in terms of art, Bergson's views developed out of Associationism. We have already seen that both of them used the word 'image' frequently to describe the purpose of art. Both Bergson, the Associationists, and Hulme were steeped in Symbolist aesthetics. Again, Bergson refers to the abstract qualities of language obscuring our sense of the real: again, this is quite close to Hulme's 'counter language' to which he contrasted the living, visual, language of art. However, despite these similarities, Bergson and the Associationists were very different. And it was for this reason that Hulme valued him. For whilst Bergson accepted the Associationist viewpoint *qua* science, he rejected their view that reality could be reduced to scientific materialism.And this was precisely why Hulme wished to reject Associationism, although before he read Bergson, he lacked the philosophical equipment to do so.

Hulme first mentions Bergson in an article dated 1st July 1909 (the Forgotten School meetings began on the 25th March, and ended sometime in the Autumn of that year: it is therefore unlikely that, as is too often stated, Hulme's earliest poetic production was produced under

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the influence of Bergson), and for the next two years, he was to come increasingly under the influence of the French philosopher.

Bergson was born in 1859 and had taught at various lycées before being offered a job at the Collége de France in 1900 (Burwick and Douglass, 1992). By this time he had published *Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience* (translated as *Time and Free Will*(first published 1889), *Matter and Memory* (first published 1896) and *Laughter* (first published 1900). His reputation was really established, however, by *Creative Evolution* which was published in 1907. For reasons we will examine later, Hulme was uninterested in this later book, and a study of its contents was the beginning of his disillusionment with Bergsonian philosophy. When he discusses Bergson, then, it is these first three books (and a short essay, 'Introduction to Metaphysics' which he translated) which he has in mind.

In his first book, Bergson begins by discussing the idea of intensity and duration (Bergson, 1910 : 1-50). He remarks upon the fact that while it makes sense to state that one number is greater than another it is not clear that one may make the same sort of statement about mental states, although this is often done. He goes on to demonstrate, to his own satisfaction at least, that emotional states and feelings are not amenable to this analysis, because, unlike number, (and physical phenomena), emotions cannot be dissected. On the contrary, they are fundamentally indivisible. It is meaningful to say that four is twice as big a number as two, but not that someone's feeling of pain is twice the amount of

someone else's. 'We shall not compare a pain of increasing intensity to a note which grows louder and louder, but rather to a symphony, in which an increasing number of instruments make themselves heard' (Bergson, 1910 : 35). Assuming to be the case, it points to a fundamental distinction between (some) mental phenomena and physical phenomena. How, then, has the confusion arisen between mental phenomena and physical phenomena? It arose, says Bergson, because of a fundamental confusion between space and time. Time, for Bergson, is associated with sensations and space with the material world. 'When we speak of material objects, we refer to the possibility of seeing and touching them: we localise them in space' (Bergson, 1910 : 85). However, 'states of consciousness' cannot 'be regarded as numerical without the help of some symbolic representation, in which a necessary element is space' (Bergson, 1910 : 87).

When we discuss our emotions, our inner life, then, we discuss them using symbols, symbols which are moreover, reconceptualised in terms of space (which implies divisibility, the material world and so on: for Bergson, number is a spatial phenomenon (Bergson, 1910 : 79)). However, this reconceptualisation, whilst useful, misses a crucial point about our inner states of consciousness: that they exist not in space but in time, a time, moreover, which is not analogous to number (Bergson, 1910 : 105). This inner state of time, Bergson here calls inner duration, the 'melting of states of consciousness into each other' (Bergson, 1910 : 107).

Now, Bergson goes on to argue that motion is susceptible to the same analysis. We generally state that motion occurs in space. However, 'we see that the successive positions of the moving body really do occupy space, but that the process by which it passes from one position to the other [...] eludes space' (Bergson, 1910 : 111). Therefore 'science cannot deal with time and motion except on condition of eliminating the essential and qualitative element - of time, durations and of motion, mobility' (Bergson, 1910 : 115). This 'mobility' as we have already seen, Bergson associates with the 'inner life' of the emotions. There are, therefore, two ways of looking at reality, from the point of view of mechanism (with its associations of number, divisibility, matter, and space) and dynamism (indivisibility, fluidity, consciousness, and time) (Bergson, 1910 : 141). However, Bergson points out that because of the structure of language and thought, we often lose sight of this 'dynamism' and delude ourselves that 'mechanism' is the only way of looking at the world. (Bergson, 1910 : 128).

The reason these arguments are important is explained in the last chapter of *Time and Free Will* when Bergson writes that 'Physical determinism, in its latest form, is closely bound up with mechanical or rather kinetic theories of matter' (Bergson, 1910 : 143). As we have already seen, Hulme thought the same, and Bergson makes it clear that the theories he is aiming at are the same Associationists that Hulme had been reading (Bergson, 1910 : 148). However, determinism only holds insofar as the mechanical theory of matter is true. Bergson argues that it

is not true (or at least not the whole truth), and that 'attentive consciousness' shows us that 'inner dynamism' is a 'fact' (Bergson, 1910 : 172). Since the 'inner duration' is not mechanical, and moreover, is incapable of division into discrete units, it cannot be understood by the laws of cause and effect (Bergson, 1910 : 210-215) (which presuppose discrete units acting with forces upon each other). Moreover, 'inner causality is purely dynamic, and has no analogy with the relation of two external phenomena which condition one another. For, as the latter are capable of recurring in a homogeneous space, their relation can be expressed in terms of a law, whereas deep-seated psychic states occur once in consciousness and will never occur again' (Bergson, 1910 : 219). Because our will is a process, not a thing, it cannot be adequately scientifically analysed. To conclude: 'Freedom is therefore a fact' (Bergson, 1910 : 221).

Starting with an analysis of time, Bergson has developed a frankly dualistic viewpoint. In *Matter and Memory* he develops this view by positing that reality is perceived in terms of 'images'. Images are a sort of halfway point between the Idealist's 'representation' and the Realist's 'thing' (Bergson, 1991 : 9). By contrasting the spatial/material world with the temporal/spiritual world, Bergson can, moreover, introduce the concept of 'intuition'. Intuition can see the temporal/continuous world in a way that is denied to our other senses. 'Pure intuition [...] is that of undivided continuity. (Bergson, 1991 : 183). Our rational senses, by ignoring this continuity, have left us with the sense that 'all knowledge is

relative, and the ultimate nature of things to be inaccessible to the mind' (Bergson, 1991 : 184). However, by using intuition, 'we may restore to intuition its original purity and so recover contact with the real' (Bergson, 1991 :185).

This 'real' would be perceived in the form of 'memory-images' which Bergson contrasts with mere mechanical memory of events.They come and go independently of our will, which is why we must develop rote memory, but Bergson makes clear that 'memory' of 'spontaneous images' are the only way to contact the real 'durée' which is at the heart of reality.

In *Laughter* Bergson develops this theory to apply it to artistic endeavour. He posits the idea that language, by dealing in generalities, helps to shield us from the particular, which is the real world of 'duration' (Bergson, 1956 : 153) what he calls the 'individuality of things' (Bergson, 1956 :152). Artists, however, can penetrate beneath this veil of language, (which is the expression of a 'spatialised' consciousness), and 'bring us face to face with reality itself' which is the world of duration (Bergson, 1956 : 158).

Now these concepts clearly have something in common with Idealism. It is possible that Bergson developed his ideas directly from the German Idealist tradition, but more likely that he came into contact with them through French adaptions of these theories, by men such as Ravaisson and Guyau (Scharfstein, 1943 : 22-32). However, the there are two main differences. Firstly Bergson was less of a 'pure' philosopher than the

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Germans and was always careful to back up what he was saying with the latest discoveries of science. Secondly, and more importantly, whereas, since Plato, the metaphysical reality that lay behind the concepts of the mind, was always perceived as being static, Bergson postulated a dynamic metaphysical reality ('In a reversal of virtually all Western metaphysics' (Dasenbrock, 1985 : 49))(It is only fair to state that Patricia Rae (1989) denies that the early Bergson is a metaphysical thinker. This is to a certain extent true, but I think that the problem lies with Bergson's own ambiguity. Certainly, he is loath to define his *durée* in metaphysical terms, but he also states that he is frankly a dualist, and that he believes in spirit (Bergson, 1991). I cannot therefore agree with Rae that he does not believe in any kind of Universal Spirit).

We have seen what Bergson said: but from the articles that Hulme wrote at this time, we can see what Bergson meant to Hulme. The first articles that Hulme ever published were reviews of current philosophy books, and Hulme used this as an excuse to compare and contrast Bergson with various other thinkers of the time.

From the first article that Hulme ever published (a review of James' *A Pluralistic Universe*) we can see that the most important aspect of Bergson's' philosophy at the time was that he was (according to Hulme) an anti-rationalist. 'Others have attacked Rationalism, but his is the only radical attack, the only attack which concedes nothing '(Hulme, 1994 : 86) he writes. This fitted in well with the direction Hulme's own thought was going in. Hulme had begun by attacking the worldview of science,

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but when, he stated that the logical (and therefore rational) language of science was incapable of grasping the flux of reality, he was clearly showing that he believed that it was the rational attitude that lay behind science that was responsible for the growing acceptance of soulless materialism, as opposed to the world of values.

Then Hulme goes on to relate Bergsonian philosophy to the 'Cinders' document. The Bergsonian flux of durée (or duration, Bergsonian time), Hulme relates to his own 'chaotic cinder heap': the rational intellect he relates to his own 'chess board' model of language (Hulme, 1994 : 86).

Hulme was prepared to be very radical in his support of Bergson at this time. He followed Nietzsche in saying that the decay of Western culture started with Plato, and for much that same reason: Plato was the beginning of Western Rationalism (Hulme, 1994 : 86). Moreover Hulme was prepared to state (in a way that he would certainly not do two years later) that Bergson's achievement consisted of his 'extreme originality' (Hulme, 1994 : 87) (Moreover he states correctly that 'this (i.e. Bergson's metaphysics) is the exact antithesis of the Platonic metaphysics, where the changing flux is dismissed as appearances and reality is found in the stable concepts of the intellect' ((Hulme, 1994 : 88)). His originality consisted in being the most advanced thinker of the general trend of European thought at the time, which he saw as being 'anti-intellectualist'. Nietzsche, Hulme thought, was a profound thinker, but because he was an earlier thinker he could only express in an obscure fashion what Bergson could say clearly (Hulme, 1994 : 86).

(Hulme therefore thinks that Nietzsche was a metaphysical thinker (Hulme, 1994 : 86)).

Hulme is attacking what he previously attacked, but by 1909 was far more convinced that the trend of European thought was on his side. His task is still to attack the claims of Materialism and Idealism whilst retaining the old ideals of free will and aesthetic and moral value. Thus he echoes Bergson's belief that in evolution 'the stable order of concepts' grew up 'in evolution [...] as an annex to action, destined specially to deal with matter'. The intellect, which thinks spatially, attempts to capture 'the intertwined unseizable flux'. However, this is doomed to failure, because the flux cannot be contained in static representations. This proves that 'reality is non-rational in its constitution' and that logic can never grasp reality (Hulme, 1994 : 87). It is unsurprising that Hulme has only contempt for those who either think that philosophy should model itself on science or that science could replace philosophy. The essence of philosophy is that it is an 'art and not a science' (Hulme, 1994 : 101). Again, this is an idea that Hulme was prepared to take very far, and shows that he was still a thorough going subjectivist. There is, Hulme claims, no answer to the question of whether Bergson's (or anyone else's) philosophy is 'true'. It makes more sense to judge a philosophy on aesthetic, rather than rationalist, grounds 'One must judge [...] philosophy as one judges a landscape' (Hulme, 1994 : 103).

There is a great deal of debate over whether Bergson was an irrationalist. (The French critic Julian Benda (later to be influential on

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Wyndham Lewis) was a chief critic of the 'irrationalist' Bergson. (Pilkington, 1976)). However, there is no doubt that Hulme's Bergson is a thoroughgoing irrationalist. Hulme pays lipservice to the idea that the philosopher has to have some knowledge of science. But he makes no bones about the fact that logic, mathematics, science and reason itself are definitely inferior as ways of describing reality to Bergson's idea of 'intuition', for 'By intuition one can identify oneself with the flux' (Hulme, 1994 : 91). And so, by denigrating science, one helps to refute the deterministic (and value free) world of materialism. And then Hulme goes on to explicitly link this to his philosophy of art.

In a review of a book by Haldane, Hulme discusses his theory of art as propounded in 'Notes on Language and Style' and attempts to link it to Bergson's ideas. He talks about his idea of the difference between a 'counter' philosopher and a 'visual' philosopher. Poetry, he states is 'not a counter language, but a visual concrete one [...] it always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process' (Hulme, 1994 : 95). The opposite of this 'abstract process' is the concrete, visual and (now) Bergsonian visual intuition-the image: 'Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language' (Hulme, 1994 : 95).

Hulme elaborates on these ideas in his two main treatises on the positive aspects of Bergson's philosophy: 'The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds' and 'Bergson's Theory of Art' (he also wrote 'Notes on

Bergson' at around the same time, but these are more concerned with the psychological reasons he felt attracted to Bergsonism, rather than actually explicating his philosophy). In 'The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds', Hulme gives a thoroughgoing and, indeed, very accurate account of Bergson's three main books. He therefore explains the aspects of Bergson's philosophy that we have already looked at: the difference between time and space, the reality of Time, the existence of free will and so on. What is interesting is that for most of his Modernist contemporaries (D.H. Lawrence, George Bernard Shaw and so forth) Bergson's really interesting book was *Creative Evolution* and his really important idea was that of the '*Élan Vital*' (Lehan, 1992 : 316). Though Hulme mentions this book, and makes clear that he believes in the 'Life Force', he is less interested in this than in the idea that Bergson is an enemy of Rationalism, and all that this leads to (especially materialism and reductivism) (Hulme, 1994 : 119 -121).

For, as we have seen, Hulme thought that materialistic philosophy led to a state of 'nightmare'. And so, merely to describe Hulme's discovery of Bergsonian concepts as a purely intellectual development is to miss much of the point of what Bergson meant to Hulme. Hulme talks repeatedly of his discovery of Bergsonism as being similar to a religious conversion. Bergson meant that it was now intellectually respectable to reject materialism.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Hulme began, at this point, to become interested in religion itself.This may seem a strange attitude for

someone who had stressed so strongly that he disapproved of Idealism, but Hulme valued religion not so much as a system that made truth statements about the world, but instead as a *culture.* 'Hoffding had, indeed defined religion as a "belief" in the conservation of values, and the definition is as accurate as definitions of such indefinable things can be' (Hulme, 1994 : 143) he says.

And to be the conserver of values was now to become one of the main ambitions of Hulme's programme. For Hulme, therefore, religion had a similar function to Bergsonian philosophy: both were a bulwark against the nihilism that he felt was a consequence of materialism.

Moreover, Bergson helped to clarify Hulme's thought as to what was wrong with contemporary philosophy. Hulme believed that the general direction of western culture was towards what one might call the scientific viewpoint. However, science, for Hulme, implied materialism (and therefore the non-existence of free will, relativism, and so on). Therefore, from this point on, Hulme increasingly begins to react not just against science, but against the very idea of 'newness' itself. As Hulme himself writes 'There is a tremendous consolation in the idea of fixity and sameness' and continues, talking about the soul 'If the various possible ideas about the soul at the present moment are represented by certain struggling factions in the marketplace, then my own opinion in this flux and varying contests seems, if I confine myself to the present, to be a very thin and fragile thing. But if I find that a certain proportion of the men of every generation of recorded history have believed in it in

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substantially the sane form that I myself hold it, then it gains a sudden thickness and solidity' (Hulme, 1994 : 135). In other words, Hulme saw looking to the past as a way of grounding his own beliefs. It gave his views stability, and banished the threat that some 'new' philosophy would come along and destroy the wisdom and culture of the past. And so he begins (from 1911 onwards) to stress that Bergson is in no way a break from the grand tradition of Western thought, but that he is merely stating old beliefs in a new way (Hulme, 1994) (In the same way, three years later, he would attempt to show that the breakthrough of abstract art was not in fact anything new at all, but was instead a return to the non representational art of the Byzantine Empire).

And so he starts to emphasise the links between Bergsonian philosophy and earlier traditions of Western thought. Looking at for example at Bergson's philosophy of art, Hulme describes the new Bergsonian view in language that smacks of conventional (Kantian) Metaphysics. He writes of 'reality as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect' (Hulme, 1994 :193) (Of course, as we have seen, there were links between Bergson and older forms of Idealism, but up until this point Hulme had stressed the differences between the two systems, not the similarities). Because of the spatial intellect we are unable to come into contact with this flux. Action has created a 'veil': 'If we could break through the veil which action interposes, if we could come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary'. But we can't. Only artists can do that. They

'dive down into the inner flux, comes back with a new shape which he endeavours to fix. He cannot be said to have created it but to have discovered it, because when he has definitely expressed it we recognise it as true' (Hulme, 1994 : 194). And if we recognise it as true, and it represents the real, then it has value. Bergson, having refuted determinism, is also, according to Hulme, some way towards refuting aesthetic relativism.

He continues, 'This makes it easier to see clearly what one means by an individual way of looking at things. It does not mean something which is peculiar to an individual, for in that case it would be quite valueless. It means that a certain individual artist was able to break through the conventional ways of looking at things which veil reality from us at a certain point, was able to pick out one element which is really in all of us, but which before he had disentangled it, we were unable to perceive' (Hulme, 1994 : 195). Whether this is what Bergson actually said is a moot point, but by claiming that he does, Hulme can claim that there is nothing very 'new' about Bergsonism. For, if it was to turn out that Bergsonian thought *was* innovative, this would clash with his increasing desire to deny novelty, and to conserve traditional Western values.

However there is no question at this point of his abandoning Bergsonism. Hulme's thoughts and concepts are still all taken from Bergsonian ideas, and he is still trying to adapt Bergson's ideas to his 'Cinders' philosophy.

Chapter Seven : Imagisme

As we have seen, by late 1912, Pound was beginning to take an interest, for the first time, in contemporary French Literature. His knowledge of of it was not as great as it was to become over the next two years, but he knew that they tended to form schools of poetry, and it is significant that it is at this point that he began to talk about a new poetic movement he called 'Imagisme', a name which he obviously took from the Forgotten School's 'Imagism' (It is likely that he added the 'e' to Imagist to make it sound more French). Pound's first use of this word was in his volume of 1912 *Ripostes* when he wrote 'As for the future, *Les Imagistes,* the descendants of the forgotten school of 1909, have that in their keeping' (Pound, 1971 : 251). At this time, however, there *was* no such movement. Why, then, did Pound pretend there was? A contemporary's guess is significant "My own belief is that the name took Ezra's fancy, and that he kept it in petto for the right occasion. If there were no Imagistes, they would have to be invented' (Aldington, 1941 : 135). As Martin Kayman puts it, 'Imagisme is not so much *avant la lettre,* as *avant la chose.* ' (cf. Kayman, 1986 for a discussion of the non-existence of Imagisme as an organised movement. I do not agree, however, that this proves that it was a break from Symbolist techniques and attitudes).

Far from being a well thought out artistic movement, with clear aesthetic goals, therefore, Imagisme was an essentially *ad hoc* arrangement, its name coined before any meaning was attached to that name; described as a

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movement when in fact the only member was Pound himself. Pound's efforts over the next few months were fundamentally practical; to attract more people to his 'movement' and to publicise it, rather than to work out a well thought out aesthetic manifesto. This is not to say that Imagisme had no meaning; merely that because (as Aldington suggests) it was formed more for the sake of forming a movement rather than from overriding aesthetic imperatives, we should be suspicious of theorising that postulates Imagisme as constituting a sharp break from Pound's earlier aesthetic position.

Early in 1912, Pound was introduced to Richard Aldington (Carpenter, 1988). When he looked at Aldington's poetry he was impressed by what he saw. Like Pound, Aldington had gone back to previous forms of poetry (in his case the ancient Greek) to cast off the Rossettian diction which dominated English verse at this time, developing his own version of free verse from studying Euripides (Carpenter, 1988). Here at last was a young poet who shared Pound's ideas. By examining this early poem of Aldington's we can see why Pound may have thought that Aldington deserved the title of Imagiste.

Amalfi

We will come down to you,
O very deep sea,
And drift upon your pale green waves
Like scattered petals.
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We will come down to you from the hills,

From the scented lemon-groves,

From the hot sun

We will come down,

O Thalassa,

And drift upon

Your pale green waves

Like petals (Jones, 1972 : 54).

Absolutely the first thing one notices about this poem is the complete absence of Georgianism about it. There is no poetic diction to speak of, nor periphrases, nor inversions. All, in other words, the identifying marks that previously marked out a poem as being 'poetic' have been dispensed with. Secondly, regular strophes have also been dispensed with, though, of course, this is very far from being free verse in the sense that Whitman or D. H. Lawrence was to use it. Instead, the poet constantly alludes to established verse forms whilst always being prepared to break them in the pursuit of what he has to say. The normal 'flow' of an English poem of this time is being perpetually thwarted, by, for example, the trochaic beginnings of lines five, six, seven and eight. There would, moreover, have been nothing to stop Aldington running the last three lines together to create a perfectly regular line of iambic pentameter (with a feminine ending). However, it his desire to thwart the metrical expectations of the reader, to

break down the structure of the poem further than iambic pentameter would allow, into smaller phrases that can more accurately 'catch the moment'.

The theme of the poem, however, is clearly influenced by Aldington's reading of the Greek, and is animated by an almost pantheistic regard for nature that one suspects Pound would have approved of. It is a hymn of praise to the sea ('O Thalassa'), and, as the use of phrases such as 'scented lemon groves' and 'hot sun' make clear, Aldington is by no means limiting himself to a modern urban environment as a setting for his poetry. Instead he has evolved a diction that can evoke the mystical pantheistic religious sense of the Greeks (we may notice as well that the use of imagery is similar to Pound's, in the superimposition of the description of the sea, and then the metaphor of the 'petals').

If one compares Flint's poem

London

London, my beautiful,
it is not the sunset
nor the pale green sky
 shimmering through the curtain

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of the silver birch,

nor the quietness;

it is not the hopping

of birds

upon the lawn,

nor the darkness

stealing over all things

that moves me.

But as the moon creeps slowly

over the tree-tops

among the stars,

I think of her

and the glow her passing

sheds on men.

London, my beautiful,

I will climb

into the branches

to the moonlit tree-tops,

that my blood may be cooled

by the wind (Jones, 1972 : 75).

Here the theme and the language are modern. The setting is specifically urban, unlike the dreamy archaic environment of Aldington's poem. Moreover, unlike Aldington's poem (which among other things, uses non-English words ('Thalassa')) this poems contains little that is remote from

ordinary speech. However, in its freer approach to metrics, it resembles the approach of Pound's school; iambic trimeters are perpetually alluded to but rarely given in their 'correct' form; instead, they are used as a springboard from which the poet may depart if necessitated by the demands of the 'images'. For, if one looks at the structure of the poem, one can see that, instead of a 'logical' argument, the poem progresses by means of images. The first stanza simply describes the sunset, and then the darkness, the second the moon. Aldington's poem contains much less of this, except in the second stanza, where it has more mystical connotations. This is not to say that Flint's poem is somehow more Imagist that Aldington's, merely that the Poundian and the Hulmean conceptions of Imagism were very different, as was shown by their different names.

Pound and Aldington became friends, and Pound introduced Aldington to Hilda Doolittle (later to be known as H. D.), a friend/lover of Pound's from his schooldays in America (she moved to America in an attempt to make Pound marry her; she later married Aldington). The threesome even went on holiday together. These three were to become the backbone of Imagisme. However, at the time, Pound was less interested in establishing Imagisme as a movement, than exploiting his new friendships with Harriet Monroe and Rabindranath Tagore (Carpenter, 1972 : 186).

Harriet Monroe was an American poet, who, at the age of fifty two, was finding it increasingly difficult to get published. She therefore decided to start her own poetry magazine, *Poetry*, and sought out Pound as a possible

contributor. Pound not only agreed to write for her, but saw that here was a chance to publish his friends and himself without editorial interference. Thus, he appointed himself Foreign Correspondent. The magazine could, he thought, be the springboard for a new artistic Renaissance. Yeats (and now, as we have seen, Hulme) believed a change was coming in Western thought; Pound followed them in this, but, again, he was far more optimistic. The new Renaissance 'will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot!' he wrote (Pound, 1951 : 44).

Pound had already decided, therefore, that there was to be a movement called Imagisme, that its approach to poetry would presage, (or constitute) a new artistic Renaissance, and that *Poetry* might be a means to get the new poetry published, before there were any Imagiste poets, or any idea what the aesthetic tenets of the movement might consist of. Pound's activities over the next year were, to reiterate, practical; he had to find poets who would be amenable to being considered Imagistes. As we have seen, Aldington was already friends with Pound, and their approach to free verse and diction were vaguely similar. Pound may well have considered Aldington to be a possible Imagiste from the first time he saw Aldington's poetry. However, he made another discovery, when, late in 1912, (that is to say, just as the *Ripostes* volume was being published) H. D. showed him some of her poetry. Pound was impressed, and scrawled 'H. D. Imagiste' underneath it. He then turned to Aldington and announced that they were both Imagistes. (Doolittle 1980 : 18) This was the first time either of them had

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heard the word. To look at a contemporaneous poem of hers, 'Sea Rose' (1915) it is possible to see why he made such a statement.

Rose, harsh rose,
  marred and with stint of petals,
  meagre flower, thin,
  sparse of leaf,

more precious
  than a wet rose,
  single on the stem-
  you are caught in the drift.

Stunted with small leaf,
  you are flung on the sand,
  you are lifted
  in the crisp sand
  that drives in the wind.

Can the spice-rose
  drip such acrid fragrance
  hardened in a leaf?   (Jones, 1972 : 67)

As well as using the rose as an image (which Pound would have liked for its Yeatsian connotations), the most obviously impressive aspect of this poem is that Georgian diction has been entirely abandoned (we will be

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reminded of Aldington here). With the possible exception of the word 'stint' in line two, there is no use of euphuisms, periphrases, or of the whole elaborate and unreal diction of Georgian/Victorian poetry. All of the words used in this poem are, as Pound once wrote: 'nothing you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say' (Jones, 1972 :141). Moreover, regular metre has been abandoned; the gain that this gives is that extraneous material that might have been used to 'pad out' the poem can be omitted, giving a 'pared down' feel. This fits in well with (on the one hand) Ford Madox Ford's insistence of the language of modern English, and Pound's 'mystical precision' on the other. The language of the poem is hard, tough, bare.

The poem itself describes a rose cast up on the beach; the rose is 'marred', 'meagre', 'stunted'. Despite the fact that it is a 'sea-rose', the harsh salt water has left it bereft of the usual attributes of beauty; it is 'sparse of leaf' and 'stint of petals'. However, the poem then goes on, in stanza two, to state that this rose is 'more precious | than a wet rose, | single on the stem'. All the usual metaphors of desirability in Western poetry; something wet, something alive 'single on a stem' are here inverted. The sea-rose is here praised precisely because it is 'harsh' with an 'acrid fragrance'. The wetness of the sea has, paradoxically, purified it of the superfluous attributes of life, leaving it to be 'lifted' on the 'crisp sand'. Perhaps it is the last line (which praises the roses hardness) that is the most significance; the hardness and toughness of beauty were themes that Pound

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would soon begin to stress.

In this poem, therefore, the traditional attributes of Western beauty are reversed. Moreover, there is a praise of hardness, and (implicitly) deadness, that fit in well with the harder, tougher aesthetic Pound was developing.

But again, we should be wary of assuming, therefore, that H. D was a materialist. Pound knew well that she had her mystical side, (alluded to in *End To Torment*) and much of her poetry alludes to Greek mythology, frequently dealing with subjects such as mortals' visions of the Gods. These were things that Pound's own poetry did. Pound therefore now knew that Aldington and H. D. were working on similar lines to him. This was enough to base a movement on, and now he had the ability to get them both published. But his main interest remained Yeats, and, now, Yeats's new protege, Rabindranath Tagore.

To understand why Pound was so influenced by Yeats at this time, we must understand what he looked for in poetry, in a Renaissance, and in Yeatsian philosophy. As we have seen, Pound was an elitist in the strictest sense of the word; that is, that he believed that elites had been the driving force behind world history, and that minorities always dominated the majority. Not that he objected to this state of affairs. On the contrary, he thought that elitism might be the only bulwark against industrial Capitalism's tendency to destroy the values of the past. In 1913 Pound wrote 'I have longed for some order more humane than the Benedictines who should preserve even the vestiges of our present light against that single force whereof the 'ha'penny'

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press and our present university and educational systems are but the symptoms of surface' (note the use of the word light, indicating that it is a mystical tradition that Pound is discussing here). This hypothetical 'unfounded order' he called the 'Brothers Minor' (Longenbach, 1988 : 26). Hence his desire to become friends with Yeats, to work with him, to share his ideas. In July 1911 he wrote that he and Yeats were 'in one movement with aims more or less identical' (Longenbach. 1988 : 18). He wished to create the Brothers Minor, a mystical (and secret) brotherhood with Pound and Yeats at the head. The importance of Yeats to Pound is shown by the fact that Pound lobbied hard for Yeats to receive the first annual 'Guarantor's Prize' in *Poetry*. Since we have seen that Pound considered that *Poetry* might become the launch pad for his new Renaissance, and that he was at the time making clear that he wished Yeats to have this first prize as a statement of aesthetic intent, the significance of this gesture becomes apparent (Longenbach 1988).

And so, between 1912 and 1914, Yeats and Pound worked together, wrote together, and, for some of the time, lived together (at Stone Cottage, in Ireland). And between June 1912 (when Yeats and Pound met him in the home of William Rothenstein) until August 1913, when he sailed home to India, Rabindranath Tagore was to be the most influential poet on both Pound and Yeats (Hurwitz 1964). Yeats (who had heard of Tagore first, and introduced him to Pound) was quick to call him 'greater than any of us (and to proclaim that 'I know of no man in my time who has done anything in the

English language to equal (his) lyrics' (Hurwitz, 1964 : 57)). He helped Tagore to work on the English translations of his poetry and wrote the introduction to the resulting volume (Hurwitz, 1964). It is necessary to study the affect of Tagore on The Brothers Minor at this point to see how their idea of a Renaissance developed.

Yeats had been interested in Indian mysticism from the time of the *Crossways* volume, and now Tagore revealed to him 'a world I have dreamed of all my life long' (Tagore, 1917 : xiii). Tagore appealed to Yeats because he seemed to embody all the social ideas he had formulated up until this point. Tagore was aristocratic, a mystic and a 'great man', possessing the essential 'childishness' that, since reading Nietzsche, Yeats associated with the Übermensch (Tagore, 1917). Moreover the Indian society he came from was similar to the unified folk culture Yeats had posited as a model for Ireland. Instead of being concerned with making money or politics, India was 'content to discover the soul' and 'surrender' to 'spontaneity' (Tagore, 1917 : xx). Tagore's poetry was the work of a 'supreme culture' yet appeared to be 'as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble' (Tagore, 1917 : xiv). These are ideas that would have appealed to Pound as well; he thought that Tagore was as great a poet as Dante and in September wrote that Tagore's poetry was going to be

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'*the* sensation of the Winter' (Pound, 1951 : 44). But he was also looking forward to his Renaissance; and in Indian he thought he might have found something that would inspire it, in the same way Greek literature had inspired the first Renaissance (Longenbach, 1988).

As well as this, Pound was fascinated by the Bengali verse forms themselves, which he compared to those of ancient Provence. Pound was fascinated (and intrigued) by the fact that, despite the intricate verse forms he used, Tagore still attempted to use as simple a diction as possible (Hurwitz, 1964). Pound went so far as to attempt to learn Bengali and was decided that in Bengali one could have real precision since you could 'have a specific word for everything' (Schneidau, 1965 : 230). Tagore, therefore (according to Pound) possessed the linguistic precision that for Pound now constituted the essence of poetry.

And yet, despite this linguistic purity, Tagore was saturated in the religious philosophy of the Indian tradition, and Pound hoped that his poetry would have a spiritually enlightening effect on the materialistic world of literary London (Hurwitz, 1964). In other words, he thought he had found a contemporary poet, who, like the Troubadours, had combined precision and plain diction with mysticism.

Pound's relations with Yeats and Tagore dominate his thought at this time. With regards to the Imagistes, Pound's attitudes to his fellow poets is significant. By the Winter of 1912, he had christened H. D. and Aldington 'Imagistes' but had still not told them what the word meant. Moreover it
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was made very clear that compared to the Brothers Minor (Yeats, Pound, and now, Tagore) they were of lesser interest. As Aldington puts it 'Another trying time was when the inner group of London literati tried to put over Tagore. Of course he hit Yeats bang in the Blavatsky. Ezra, too, had a streak of superstition [...] I wasn't allowed to see Tagore, as being too profane, but I could always tell when Ezra had been seeing him, because he was so infernally smug' (Aldington, 1941 : 108-109). This fits in well with the statement that Pound treated his fellow Imagistes like his 'pet dogs' (Carpenter, 1988 : 179).

At the same time as Pound was getting interested in Tagore he was writing the *Lustra* poems. The more modern sounding poems of *Lustra* were still inspired by his theory of 'mystical precision'. However, he was beginning to broaden his knowledge of French Symbolism and, as we have seen, catch up with the discoveries of the Forgotten School (especially as regards Japanese poetry). His work in early 1913 is an attempt to synthesise all these new influences as well as to launch his mysterious new movement of 'Imagisme'.

By March 1913, public interest had become interested in Imagisme to the extent that Flint decided to publish an 'Interview with an Imagiste' in *Poetry*. This interview took Flint's name, but was in actual fact almost entirely written by Pound. It took the form of an 'interview' with an anonymous 'imagiste' (Pound) followed by five pages of injunctions written by Pound under his own name. As we have seen, there was no radical 'break' with *fin de siécle* poetics by Pound. Instead, he grew ever more precise in defining
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his own poetics, but always developing from his initial Romantic beliefs, which he had stated by 1907. 'The Imagistes admitted that they were contemporaries of the Post Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had *nothing* in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto. *The were not a revolutionary school*; their only endeavour was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found it in the best writers of all time. -in Sappho, Catullus, Villon [...] They had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only [...] They were;

1: Direct treatment of the 'thing', whether subjective of objective.

2: To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3: As regarding rhythm to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome [...] They also held a certain 'Doctrine of the Image', which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and it would provoke useless discussion' (My italics (Jones, 1972 : 129)).[1]

This 'manifesto' represents the end result of six years of thinking about and writing poetry. It shows that Pound viewed this process as one of 'circling in' on what was truly important in the poetic tradition. He had begun with a highly stylised Rossettian/Yeatsian kind of verse, but had slowly come to see that the poetic diction (and the Romantic metres) he had been using was superfluous to his needs. Instead of the looseness of

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[1] As we shall see, this manifesto demonstrates how little Pound had in common with the mainstream of the European *avant-garde*, which at this time meant the Futurists. Pound wished to conserve the tradition, not destroy it.

these forms, he had decided that concentration was to be the essence of poetry.

To see why this was the case we must backtrack a little and return to Pater, who, as we have seen was such an influence of Yeats. But he was also an influence on Pound (Witemeyer, 1969 : 110). As we have seen, Pater saw the essence of poetry as the capturing of the fleeting moment. Pound himself saw the essence of poetry as the capturing of the 'vision' a phrase that, for him, usually had mystical connotations. From his very earliest days, he had been interested in times when (usually in a sexual context) the veil of normality fell away and one saw beyond to the timeless Platonic world that lay beyond our own. Pound had already begun to concentrate more and more exclusively on describing these states precisely. Imagisme, was not therefore primarily a visual aesthetic. Instead it dealt with an artist's *inner* vision which *might* be cast 'upon the visual imagination' (Pound, 1954 : 25). But there was something else noteworthy about these visions. Not only were they precise and real, they were also fleeting. The vision arose only in particular times under conditions of great emotion. Then the veil fell down again. Thus he praised in Provence poetry, 'The exalted moment, the vision unsought, or at least the vision gained without machination' (Pound, 1952 : 97). This notion of 'the exalted moment' clearly fitted in with Pater's ideas of capturing the fleeting moment. And so Pound, in attempting to get to the essence of poetry, to clear away all the inessentials, began to see that the clearest possible description of the 'exalted moment' was to be the task of
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his poetry. As he writes later on in the same essay 'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' (Jones 1972, : 130). We have already seen, again in Pater, the desire to get beyond the scientific antitheses of the 'intellectual' (i.e. rational thought) and the 'emotional' (or artistic). Pound's Image, like Pater's, would unify these two aspects of the mind that had become separated. Pound therefore places himself, as Kermode has seen (in *Romantic Image*), in the Romantic mainstream. And when Pound writes of the 'thing' (i.e. 'image') which is either subjective or objective, it might be best to gloss this as saying that the image is both subjective *and* objective ('An image, in our sense, is real because we know it directly (Pound 1960 : 86)). It is subjective in that it is seen with 'the mind's eye' but but it is objective in that it represents the 'real' Platonic world behind the world of mere appearances. So in his formulation of Imagisme, Pound had pared poetry down until he had found what he thought was the essence of genuine poetry. Remember that his statements about the 'thing' etc. are singular. At this point, Pound was not interested in more complex visions. Instead, he was interested in simply the one fleeting moment or vision, of timelessness. Pound's poetry is static, deliberately so.

Before we examine a typical Imagist poem by Pound, it would be well to look briefly at the influence of Japanese poetry on Pound's work, for Japanese forms influence his most famous Imagiste poem. Pound became interested in Japanese poetry in 1913, that is, as he was formulating his

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philosophy of 'Imagisme' and just as he was becoming disillusioned with Rabindranath Tagore (Hurwitz, 1964). He seems to have been influenced by a British translator named Chamberlain, who had published an essay on Japanese poetry in 1902; this was republished with some translations of this poetry in 1911 (Harmer, 1975). What Pound was particularly interested in was the Japanese Haiku (or Hokku as he called it) short three line poems. Though Pound was influenced by the brevity of this form, he had no great interest in Japanese poetry as such, and it is interesting mostly because it was the Japanese tradition that seems to have led him to China, and the Fenellosa manuscripts. In any case, 'In the Station at the Metro' is not a proper Haiku; that is, it does not follow the strict metrical patterns of a genuine Japanese Haiku (Harmer, 1975) (However, Pound remained interested in Oriental art in general. See below).

To give an practical example of Pound's Imagisme, we should look at how Pound came to write one his most famous Imagiste poems; 'In the Metro' which he was writing at about the same time as this manifesto. Pound tells us

Three years ago in Paris, I got out of a 'metro' train at La Concorde, and was suddenly struck by a beautiful face, and then another, and then 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. 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 [...] The Japanese have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing. A Chinaman said long ago that if a man can't say what he has to say in twelve lines he had better keep quiet. The Japanese have evolved the still shorter form of the hokku [...] The 'one image poem' (or hokku) is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work 'of second intensity'. Six months later I made a poem of half that length; a year later I made the following hokku like sentence;-

'The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals, on a wet, black, bough'

I dare say it is meaningless, unless one has drifted into a certain vein of thought. In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective (Pound, 1960 : 87-89).[2]

The impulse that lay behind this poem, then, was an image or vision Pound had of faces in a metro station. But unlike the Impressionists, Pound is not interested in representing this vision pictorially (immediately after this passage, Pound explicitly states that he is not interested in Impressionist representation; as we will recall, many of the Forgotten School *were*

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[2] Longenbach (1988) shows the links between this method of 'superimposition' (which Pound claimed to have invented) and earlier Symbolist and Romantic techniques.

influenced by the Impressionists. This is the main difference between them and Pound; Pound follows the post-Symbolist road to the theory of the Image). Instead he wishes to capture the emotional significance of his vision. For this he must create an emotional substitute for the original vision. This substitute Pound calls an 'equation'.

To understand Pound's strange use here of the language of mathematics, we must look at the passage where he explains the philosophy of Imagisme. Pound begins by explaining that 'there are four different intensities of mathematical expression [...] One can write, in ascending order: 3x3 + 4x4 = 5x5. Or one can write 3^2 plus $4^2 = 5^2$. However by increasing the level of abstraction, one can the create a rule that $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ or finally $(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2$. This,' says Pound, 'governs the circle. It is the circle. It is not any particular circle it is any circle and all circles [...] It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is the universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time' (Pound, 1960 : 91). Pound then goes on to state that 'Great works of art contain this fourth sort of equation [...] By the "image" I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about a, b, or c, [...] but about sea, cliffs, night, having something to do with mood' (Pound, 1960 : 92). Pound was fond of using scientific or mathematical analogies to illustrate his theories (as was Allen Upward), but the reference to the 'universal' gives the game away; Pound is here talking about the Platonic form of the circle, which exists outside time

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and space. When he says he was looking for the 'equation' for his image, he is therefore saying that he was looking for the Platonic equivalent for his emotional vision. In the same way that Platonic forms do not represent (say) any particular table, but all tables, so Pound's representations will represent, not the precise emotional details of what it was like to stand in the metro at that time, but the universal aspect of that experience. It is the representation of a thing that is both subjective and objective; the Platonic equivalent of an emotional vision; discernible through intuition. Pound was later on to go to some length to dissociate this poetic from Symbolism but this is disingenuous. He claimed that 'symbolist's symbols have a fixed value like the numbers in arithmetic, like 1,2, or 7. The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs, a,b, or x, in algebra' (Pound, 1960 : 90-91). This is not, in fact what the symbolists did at all (in fact, a Symbolist such as Valéry could use an almost identical example of the equation as a definition of *symbolism* (Wilson, 1967 : 59-60)).[3] However, Pound's

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[3] Pound explains 'Imagism is not symbolism. The symbolists dealt in "association", that is, in a sort of allusion, *almost of allegory* [...] one can be grossly "symbolic" for example by using the word "cross" to mean "trial". (Pound, 1960 : 84 (my italics)) (one may note that Pound's example is indeed of allegory). Compare Yeats on the difference between allegory and symbol; 'There had been allegorists and teachers of allegory in plenty, but the symbolic imagination, or, as Blake preferred to call it "vision" is not allegory, being "a representation of what actually exists really and unchangeably". A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, or familiar principle, and belongs to fancy and not imagination; the one is revelation, the other, an amusement' (Yeats, 1961 : 116). When we remember that Pound associates symbolism with allegory then we see that Yeats's definition of allegory (a 'familiar principle'), is the same as Pound's 'fixed meaning' (that is, what Pound's definition of literary Symbolism), and Yeats's symbol (which consists of 'vision' and 'revelation') is the same as Pound's algebraic principle of Imagisme (which is a vision 'free of space and time'). Pound's Imagisme, is, therefore, Yeatsian Symbolism by another name. What Yeatsian Symbolism is precisely, and how it differs from the mainstream of literary Symbolism, will be discussed below.
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arguments here are practical and polemical; he wishes to dissociate his own 'school' from any other school that it may be confused with; in other words, in setting out his stall in the literary market, he is trying to show that his product is unique, and owes nothing to its commercial rivals. A more accurate reason for dissociating himself from Symbolism is that 'One does not wish to be *called* a symbolist, because symbolism has usually been associated with mushy technique' (my italics) (Pound, 1960 : 84). That is to say, Symbolism had been brought into disrepute by the failed experiments of the Decadents. However, in a very important passage immediately before this, Pound writes:

I said in the preface to my *Guido Cavalcanti* that I believed in an absolute rhythm. I belief that every emotion and every phase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it.

(This belief leads to *vers libre* and to experiments in quantitative verse).

To hold a like belief in a sort of permanent metaphor is, as I understand it, 'symbolism' in its profounder sense. It is not necessarily a belief in a permanent world, but it is a belief in that direction (Pound, 1960 : 84).

Firstly this demonstrates that it was Pound's studies of Cavalcanti that first led him to free up his metre. Secondly, we will remember the links between Pound's 'absolute rhythm' and similar ideas being propounded by Farr and Yeats. Therefore, Pound's use of free verse was developed under the influence of Farr and Yeats (and not Ford Madox Ford, or the Forgotten

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School).

Thirdly, as a concomitant of his belief in an 'absolute rhythm', Pound goes on to state that he believes in 'permanent metaphor'. And, slightly later, he explains that 'The Return' and 'Heather' (discussed below) are 'impersonal', which therefore means that they use 'absolute metaphor. They are Imagisme' (Pound, 1960 : 85). But Pound has just stated that 'permanent metaphor' is the same as '"Symbolism" in its profounder sense'. Therefore, Pound makes a distinction; between 'Symbolism' (which he dissociates himself from), and 'Symbolism in its profounder sense', which is Imagisme. What is this Symbolism in its profounder sense? Pound is quite clear it leads to a belief in a 'permanent world'; that is, a metaphysical world.

I will discuss further what Pound meant by 'symbolism in its profounder sense', when explicating his poem 'Heather', but for now it should be clear that Pound's repudiation of symbolism is, as stated before, highly disingenuous. As is, for that matter, his repudiation of Imagisme's Romantic roots. For those who were brought up on the myth of Neo-Classicism, it is well to remember that whereas Pound was perfectly capable of attacking Romanticism for polemical reasons, and to fit in with the prevailing Zeitgeist, the Romantic origins of Imagisme were something that he never denied. We have seen how he openly acknowledged that his élitism had romantic roots. He was, moreover, fond of reminding his critics that their beloved Romantics (for example, Keats and Shelley), had also been attacked for being obscene and obscure, just as he was (Pound also admired Byron's
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poetry, to the extent of writing a poetic sequence, 'L'homme Moyen Sensuel' an attempt to write a modern 'Don Juan' (Bornstein, 1977 : 27)). And we have seen his early praise of Coleridge. But the most impressive evidence for a link is his statement that 'Wordsworth had an unquestioned genius [...] for Imagisme' (Pound, 1955 : 277). The general context is in which Wordsworth is being discussed here is unfavourable, but his calling Wordsworth an Imagiste is still startling. The context merely goes to show that Pound believed the Romantics had seen their images but had then gone wrong and lost them in a sea of poetic diction and conventional forms.

But the most important link with this tradition was still Yeats. Given Pound's view of the Brothers Minor, and his attitude towards the Imagistes, it would be strange if Yeats had had no influence on Imagisme. It should come as nor surprise, then, to find Pound reviewing Yeats's new volume *Responsibilities* 1914) thus; 'Is Mister Yeats an Imagiste? No, Mr. Yeats is a Symbolist, but he has written Des Images as have many good poets before him' (Longenbach 1988 : 32). Yeats was, therefore, for Pound, a poet like Wordsworth, who sometimes went astray, but who still had the capacity to form and represent the images that were the essence of poetry. It is possible, Pound makes clear, to create 'Images' (which, we will remember, are but symbols 'in a profounder sense') whilst not belonging to the school of 'Imagisme' (and when we remember that one may doubt whether such a school existed, this stricture becomes even less severe). But his kinship with Yeats went further than this. The poem Pound used to show that Yeats
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had created 'Images' was one of the most obviously occult poems of the volume;

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,
In their still, painted clothes. the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
 And all their helms of silver hovering side by side (Yeats, 1957 : 318).

This is a poem about what the poet experiences in 'the mind's eye', in other words, it is a visionary poem. The poet experiences this visionary state, not just in a moment but 'at all times', demonstrating that this visionary insight is part of his permanent consciousness, illuminating all the other spheres of his life. For Pound, therefore, this is the desideratum, the state of mind of the real Imagiste. The key point about it, that would have led Pound to count this as a poems containing 'Imagisme' is that the vision is left to stand on its own; it is not explained. The vision is accurately delineated, and it is self sufficient. It is not in free verse, and it uses conventional poetic forms, so it is not *technically* an Imagiste poem, but it is certainly an Imagiste poem in Pound's 'profounder' sense. (This poem incidentally follows in the tradition of Yeatsian Apocalyptic poetry, and presages 'The Second Coming' in its prophecy of a 'bestial' future).

This brings us to the last point of Pound's manifesto, that there is a 'secret doctrine' of the Image. This doctrine not even nominal members of the

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Imagistes such as Flint or Aldington were told about. These were men who knew about the technical aspects of Imagisme, but knew nothing of the visionary impulse that lay behind it. This was a truth known only to Pound and Yeats. But that is not to say that Pound did not reveal it. In December 1913 Pound wrote a short prose poem for the magazine *The Cerebralist*. Longenbach argues convincingly that this is as close to the 'secret doctrine of the image' as we will ever get.

It is in art the highest business to create the beautiful image; to create order and profusion of images that we may furnish the life of our minds with a noble surrounding. And if- as some say, the soul survives the body; if our consciousness is not an intermittent melody of strings that relapse between whiles into silence, then more than ever should we put forth the images of beauty, that going out into tenantless spaces we have with us all that is needful- an abundance of sounds and patterns to entertain us in that long dreaming; to strew our path to Valhalla; to give us rich gifts by the way (Pound and Shakespeare, 1985 : 277-278).

Images are therefore, a creation that comfort the immortal soul on its path to eternity. The mysticism inherent in Imagisme could not possibly be made any clearer. And not only the content, but the language of this piece is strongly Yeatsian; the Yeats of the fin *fin de siécle* essays such as 'Symbolism'. Pound's conception of Imagist poetics will be made cleared by examining a slightly less cryptic poem than the 'Metro', 'Ortus', published at the same time, and in a context that shows that this, too, was intended to

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be a Imagiste poem.

How have I laboured?

How have I not laboured

To bring her soul to birth,

To give these elements a name and a centre!

She is beautiful as the sunlight and as fluid.

She has no name, and no place.

 How have I laboured to bring her soul into

    separation;

To give her a name and her being!

Surely you are bound and entwined,

You are mingled with the elements unborn;

I have loved a stream and a shadow.

I beseech you enter your life.

I beseech you learn to say "I,"

When I question you;

For you are no part, but a whole,

No portion, but a being (Pound, 1984 : 84).

In the context of Pound's oeuvre we can easily identify this as one of
Pound's erotic/mystical poems. This is the culmination of Pound's first
phase of mystical poetry, his quest for mystical precision. This poem uses
no neologisms, or poetic diction. It does not use the allusive method. It is
written in limpid free verse, and contains little that 'one could, under some

circumstances, actually say'. And yet this is still a profoundly mystical poem. It deals with a visionary experience of a woman surrounded by 'light' this particular kind of visionary sunlight, is as we have seen, is always associated with the supernatural in Pound's poetry. Pound tells us she has no name and no place; i.e. no corporeal existence. The poems is about Pound's attempt to separate her; i.e. to separate her from reality and make her an object 'outside time and space'. When she achieves this 'pure form' she will truly come to existence both as vision and work of art, for this poem is also a poem about creating poetry, because for Pound the visionary and the poetic impulses are the same (Ruthven, 1969 : 187). Pound was fascinated by his new technique and experimented with it in some of the short poetry he wrote at this time. By looking at this, rather than some of his other, better known poems, we can see how Pound's version of Imagisme worked.

April

>   *Nympharum membra disjecta*

Three spirits came to me
 And drew me apart
 To where the olive boughs
 Lay stripped upon the ground:

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Pale carnage beneath bright mist (Pound 1984 : 92).

(N.B. this is how the poem was originally published (Ruthven, 1969 : 39))

More obviously than some of his other poetry, this shows how Imagisme created mystical poetry. The three spirits are taken from Dante (as well as being allusions to some Pound's own 'The Tomb at Akr Çaar' (Ruthven, 1969 : 39). The poem details how the poet is transported and taken away from temporal reality. Immediately afterwards, we are given the image. There is no logical or chronological link between the two parts, because we are meant to concentrate on them both at the same time; only by the fusion of the two events can we get a sense of the timelessness of the affair. Another poem of the time gives the same idea.

Gentildonna

She passed and left no quiver in the veins, who
   now
Moving among the trees, and clinging
                         in the air she severed,
 Fanning the grass she walked on then, endures:

Grey olive leaves beneath a rain-cold sky (Pound, 1984 : 92).

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This woman (if she is a mortal woman) 'endures' she is both corporeal and noncorporeal, a dichotomy which is caught by comparing her to both 'grey' olive leaves (metaphysical reality) and the 'rain-cold' sky (corporeal reality).

These poems of late 1913 and early 1914, express the high point of Pound's Imagiste practice. However, no sooner had he perfected his technique of catching the moment, than he ran into difficulties with it. Since he had started writing poetry he had been attempting to hone in on what he felt was really important. His poems had become masterpieces of concision, and his poetry was now supreme at capturing the fleeting mystical moment, and rendering it in precise language. They manifested this technique as the essence of poetry. The problem was that Pound himself did not actually believe that this *was* the essence of poetry. Since he was a teenager, he thought that the highest form of literature was the epic poem, and that he himself would be the Homer of a new age. As he said himself in the Paris Review interview, he had been working on the 'form' for an epic poem, since about 1904/1905. But his new technique for rendering the moment was, by definition, *particularly* bad at narrative and development; all the things that were absolutely necessary if one wished to write a long poem. As we have seen, Pound had continually been working at this problem, first by creating poetic sequences,and secondly by structuring his volumes of poetry. But since *Canzoni*, Pound had increasingly emphasised

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the *timeless*; aspect of the 'exalted moment' the extent to which one could access eternity through the moment.

But how could one work with an aesthetic principle that denied time, or tried to surmount it, and still work within a chronological framework, which, by definition, invoked time more than any other? In previous chapters, I have argued that Pound adapted a view of history, and historical knowledge, from Browning and Yeats, a view I have termed (following Jameson) Existential Historicism. In an important passage, Longenbach comments, 'Like the existential historians, Pound and Eliot proceed from the assumption that knowledge does not lie on the surface of events, waiting to be collected by an impartial observer, but lurks within them. To uncover that knowledge, the interpreter must penetrate that surface- and such an effort demands the investment of the interpreter's own experience into his work. The "poems including history" written out of these presuppositions about the nature of historical knowledge consequently take the form of a "palimpset" rather than a chronological schema. *The Cantos* [...] display a present that is woven from the past in a complex tissue of allusions' (Longenbach, 1987 :27-28). As we have seen, for Pound (and Yeats) it was their positing of a timeless Idealist reality that 'does not lie on the surface of events' but 'lurks beneath them' that forced them to posit an empathetic theory of historical understanding; claiming that the poet could grasp this reality as a gestalt, all at once, through the visionary moment. In the *Canzoni* volume, Pound had experimented with unifying his poetic sequence
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with a chronological schema. However, Pound's increasing antipathy to chronology (his increasing preference for the values of space over time), meant that from now on, only an anti-chronological patterning would be acceptable (we will remember that this was a position Yeats had reached fifteen years earlier, in *The Wind Among the Reeds*). And it is this belief, that chronology is, in a sense, a deception, that led to the use of the 'palimpset' or, rather, a spatial, rather than temporal, organisation of poetic material.[4] The question was, how was this material to be organised? What new form could give unity to what might otherwise simply lead to random collections of heterogeneous material? Pound's work from this point on was an attempt to solve this problem of form.

And so at the very same time as Pound worked on presenting timeless visionary moment of Imagisme, he was also trying to organise these moments to create order from the chaos (Fogelman, 1992 : 53-60). From

[4] This is an allusion to Joseph Frank's classic essay 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in which he correctly noted that many works in the tradition of Anglo-American Modernism have a spatial, rather than a temporal aesthetic. However, there are two extra points he glosses over. Firstly, just because there is no *chronological* structure in these works, that does not mean that there is no structure *at all* (as I will hopefully demonstrate in the following pages)(Dasenbrock 1985 :142-147). And secondly, he does not discuss the metaphysical, Neo-Platonic beliefs that lie behind the move towards the spatial (although he does allude to them whilst discussing Proust). However his view that the Modernist's intermingling of past and present, and their interest in myth, was associated with this spatial urge (and therefore Neo-Platonism) is basically correct (Frank, 1963)(Of course, the spatial approach was pioneered by Yeats, as was the interest in a mythic structure).

And as Longenbach also points out, a concentration on spatial forms was not the only consequence of this denial of time. I have noted that part of the purpose of what I have called 'the allusive method', which originated with Pound, but had its roots in Yeats's practice in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, was to preserve the language and thought of his poetry, to ensure that true comprehension of its metaphysical tenets would remain the preserve of the initiated few. However, this is not to deny that it had other purposes as well. The constant use and reuse of the texts of the past in one's own work helps to stress that that one's own poetic project is an engagement with that past, and that the present is perpetually engaged with, and is the sum of, that past. It is a way of announcing that there is a tradition of poetic succession which one is a part of, and that by alluding to it (in other word, by preserving it in one's own work), that one preserves it and makes it live. (Longenbach, 1988 : 91-92)

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now on, in Pound's work, the reader was to be offered 'fragments' that would build up to create a poetic whole that would contain the essence of what Pound wanted to say. It has, unfortunately, become difficult to track the development of this procedure, because when Pound republished his poetry of this period, in the *Lustra* volume (1916), he had an entirely different sequence in mind, and omitted part of the poetry that now seemed superfluous to his needs (Fogelman, 1992). In order to see what Pound was attempting to do in the poetry he wrote immediately before World War One, therefore, it is important to see them as they were first published.

Pound's first attempt at creating an ordered sequence of poetic fragments that was not, however, chronological, was the short sequence he called 'Xenia' (published December 1913 (Ruthven, 1969)). Like *Canzoni*, this was patterned on an older poetic sequence; this time Goethe and Schiller's 'Xenien' or 'Epigrams' (published in 1796). As I say, the original sequence of poetry has been obscured, but in the original it looked like this.

Xenia

: The Song of the Degrees.

1;   THE STREET IN SOHO

Out of the overhanging gray mist
There came an ugly little man
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Carrying beautiful flowers.

2;

The cool fingers of science delight me;
For they are cool with sympathy,
There is nothing of fever about them.

3;

Rest me with Chinese colours,
For I think the glass is evil.

4;

The wind moves above the wheat-
With a silver crashing,
A thin war of metal.

I have known the golden disc,
I have seen it melting above me.
I have known the stone-bright place,
    The hall of clear colours.

5;

O glass subtly evil, O confusion of colours!
O light bound and bent in, O soul of the captive,
 Why am I warned? Why am I sent away?

Why is your glitter full of curious mistrust?

O glass subtle and cunning, O powdery gold!

O filaments of amber, two faced iridescence!

ITÉ

Go, my songs, seek your praise from the young
    and from the intolerant,
  Move among the lovers of perfection alone.
  Seek ever to stand in the hard Sophoclean light
  And take your wounds from it gladly.

Dum Capitolium Scandet

  How many will come after me
    singing as well as I sing, none better;
  Telling the heart of their truth
    as I have taught them to tell it;
Fruit of my seed,
  O my unnameable children.
  Know then that I loved you from afore-time,
Clear speakers, naked in the sun, untrammelled

(Ruthven, 1969 : 224 and Pound, 1984 : 95-96).

    The theme of this sequence is the story of Pound's own poetic and

spiritual development, obviously a theme close to his heart at his point.

However, instead of the comparatively crude devise of of having the form of

the poetry mirror its position in the chronology, the form of this sequence

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is best compared to the techniques used by pointillist painters. What Pound chose to do in these poems was to arrange a number of Imagist fragments in an order that explicated how Pound's own consciousness (and, therefore, poetic practice) was illuminated 'by degrees'. The order that he chose to do this was complex.

The poem begins proleptically, by recapitulating the whole of the poem in the first three lines. The grey 'overhanging grey mist' represents the atmosphere of the fin de siécle. The ugly little man is Pound as he first came to London. However, he is carrying 'beautiful flowers'. This, then, is Pound's view of his earlier poetry;the content (the flowers) was good, but the form he chose to express it in (*fin de siécle* diction) was wrong and 'ugly'. This announces the sequence is to be about Pound's struggle to remake his poetry (Incidentally, this is clearly an example of a symbol having a 'fixed value' in the way Pound claimed that Imagistes did not do).

The second section states that Pound is delighted by 'the cool fingers' of science as opposed to 'fever'. But science is cool with 'sympathy'. As opposed, then, to a poet who would wildly throw himself into the Bergsonian flux, or would succumb to Decadent hysteria, Pound wishes to balance his 'sympathy' for the poetic object, with analytic 'coolness'. This is clearly a description of Imagisme, where the technique used by the poet controls the emotions expressed in the poem.

The enigmatic third section becomes clearer when one understands that the 'glass' or mirror, is evil because it reflects the ravages of time (Ruthven, 287

1969). Pound counterpoints the 'rest' of China (I will discuss the growing influence of the Orient on Pound below) to the flux of time. This clearly fits in with Pound's anti-temporal Platonism.

The first paragraph of the fourth section is pure Imagisme. We are given an Image, and then a subjective interpretation of it. This last refers us back to Pound's own 'The Alchemist' (line 15). 'The Alchemist' is, as one might expect from the title, an occult poem, and contains the information that the Philosopher's Stone contains a mixture of male and female principles, or symbolically, gold and silver, the sun and the moon (line 25/26). When Pound mentions the sun in the next paragraph, initiates (that is, those familiar with alchemical thought), would therefore see that he is stating that the highest form of poetic vision would be achieved by this union of the sun and the moon; that is to say, of the union of the male and female principles (which ties in, of course, with Pound's sexual mysticism). 'I have seen it melting above me' is a statement of Pound's belief in his own occult, visionary powers, backed up by the reference to his own 'The House of Splendour' in the last line (another poem proclaiming his visionary powers). The 'it' is the mystical vision engendered by the mystical state discussed above. The 'thin war' is Pound's attempt to contain this vision in a durable, tight, 'metallic' form (as opposed to *fin de siécle* rhetoric and prolixity).

Stanza four is therefore a restatement of the 'Secret Doctrine' of Imagisme; visionary content in the most unadorned possible form. Having stated this, Pound then goes on to express the torment this gives to the

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poet, forever trying to find the pure Platonic forms, scattered throughout the false world of Time.

However, despite this torment, Pound ends with a hortatory statement of belief in his own mission. In 'Ité' he praises the quality of 'hard [...] light' in his poetry, and expresses his faith that his poems will find an audience. The last poem shows his belief that his own practice will begin a poetic renaissance that will lead to many poets like himself coming after him.

This poetic sequence therefore uses techniques ranging from Imagisme to allusions to his own poems, to tell a 'story', the story of how Pound 'modernised' his poetry. However, it does not 'tell' this story in narrative form. Instead it offers us a series of significant points or illuminations that will guide initiates along the path of understanding what he had to go through. And, most importantly, the form chosen to express this is not temporal. For example, the first section of the poem does not make sense until one has read all the rest. This sequence is structured spatially, not temporally.

By using techniques such as these, Pound had found forms,that, he hoped, he could use to build up longer poems. The problem of describing process, however, still remained. In 'A Song of the Degrees' (the degrees are of course the degrees by which Pound modernised his poetry) we are merely given significant points along the road of Pound's development. We get no real sense of the *process* of Pound's change as a poet.

It was to solve this problem, I will contend, that led Pound to become

interested in 'Vorticist' aesthetics. Firstly however, we must look at the new influences on Pound; Ford Madox Ford, Oriental poetry, and the Neo-Classicism of T. E. Hulme.

Chapter Eight: Yeats, Pound and 'Neo-Classicism'.

Before continuing, we should briefly look at the influence of Ford Madox Ford on the early work of Pound. It is often claimed that Ford, and not Yeats, is the major influence on Pound's Imagisme (cf. Grieve, 1997 : 39-40). However, most of the evidence for this is taken from texts written by Pound as much as twenty years after the events they described, in a period, moreover, when Yeats and Pound were no longer friends (Carpenter, 1988 : 503-505). To see these statements in context, we should look at what Pound said at the time.

To begin with, we should remember that Pound's earliest insistence on simplicity, eschewing poetic diction and so on, are contained in *The Spirit of Romance*, written at a time when Pound stated that he disagreed 'diametrically' with Ford about almost everything (Schneidau, 1969 : 12). Pound made that statement in 1911, at the same time as he published his *Canzoni* volume, which contained Pound's earliest experiments in his 'later' style (in the Heine translations and the 'Und Drang' sequence). Pound's move towards clarity and freer verse forms began when Pound rejected Ford and everything he stood for.

However, it was Ford's reaction to the earlier (more Rossettian) poems in that volume that seems to have prompted Pound to change his mind. Famously he wrote later 'He (i.e. Ford) felt the errors of contemporary style to the point of rolling [...] on the floor of his temporary quarters in Giessen when my third volume displayed me trapped [...] in a jejune provincial effort to learn [...] the stilted language that then passed for

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"good English"; [...] that roll saved me two years, maybe more' (Pound, 1973 : 431 -432). There are three major points to be made about this statement which are frequently passed over in discussions of Pound's 'Modernism'. Firstly, as we have seen, not all the poems in *Canzoni* were written in 'stilted language'. Secondly (and related to this first point), Pound wrote this piece in 1939, after Yeats had attacked the *Cantos* in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse,* and the two had grown apart (Carpenter, 1988 : 503-505). Pound, was, therefore, keen to emphasise Ford's influence as opposed to that of Yeats, as the context makes clear; the paragraph immediately preceding this praises Ford at Yeats's expense. Pound therefore glosses over the fact that his initial impulse towards simplicity and purity of diction came when he was still under Yeats's influence. (Pound wrote 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' immediately after he returned from Giessen; in this he specifically denies that poetry should be based on ordinary speech, the essence of Ford's approach (Pound, 1973 : 41)). Thirdly, (and most importantly), all that Pound is claiming here is that Ford saved him some time. There is no suggestion that Ford sent Pound off on a radically new path. Pound was purifying his diction anyway.

Ford's real accomplishment at this time at this time was to introduce Pound to the French prose tradition, specifically Stendhal and Flaubert; the Realists (Hermans, 1982 : 91-92). This gave Pound a new benchmark with which to judge the new poetry, and from now on he begins to insist that his task is 'to bring poetry up to the level of prose' (Pound, 1960 :

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83). However, this does not mean he was converted to Ford's aesthetic, which was described by Ford himself as Impressionism (Ford, 1964 : 34-35) ('Imagisme is not Impressionism, although one borrows, or could borrow, much from the impressionistic method of presentation' (Pound, 1960 : 85)). In 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' Pound goes out of his way to attack Ford's poetry (without naming him), making clear that Ford was not an Imagiste. Ford was never one of the Brothers Minor (Longenbach, 1988).

In 1913 Pound spent his first Winter with Yeats in Stone Cottage. Despite having worshipped Yeats from afar, Pound had spent little time with the older poet on his own, and he was understandably anxious that their friendship might become strained. But his fears were not born out. Yeats, who had until recently worried about his poetic vocation, was reassured that the most interesting of the younger generation looked up to him as the greatest living poet. And Pound felt that he had finally created 'The Brothers Minor'; two aristocratic poets working on great art far from the rabble. Yeats encouraged him in this belief (Longenbach, 1988). Yeats was at this time working on the poems that went into the *Responsibilities* volume (published 1914), and this was a volume that not only turned its back permanently on the nostalgic *fin de siécle* tone that had still occasionally surfaced in his poetry; it also reaffirmed his dislike of both democracy and rhetoric. Poems such as 'To A Wealthy Man Who Promised A Second Subscription To The Dublin Municipal Gallery If It Were Proved The People Wanted Pictures', as well as confirming him in

his practice of a newer, harder, diction, also affirmed his dislike of that 'blind and ignorant town' (Dublin) (Yeats, 1957 : 287), and showed a hankering for an idealised view of the Renaissance in which noble aristocrats gave money in an disinterested fashion to the arts. The poem stresses that literary values were preserved by this aristocracy because they had no concern for the thought of the common people ('What cared Duke Ercole, that bid I His mummers to the market-place, I What the onion sellers thought or did?' (Yeats, 1957 : 287). This is something Yeats would, from now on, attempt to emulate.

A poem like 'September 1913' showed an even sharper disillusionment. With its refrain of 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, I it's with O'Leary in the grave' the poem is a despairing cry of anguish that the noble Ireland of the past had been betrayed by those who 'But fumble in a greasy till'; i.e. the Bourgeoisie (Yeats, 1957 : 289). Up until now, as we have seen, however élitist, Yeats had had faith that in Ireland at least, enough of the old ways existed to counteract the new forces of capitalist democracy. After the 'Playboy' furore, however, and the fiasco over the Municipal Art Gallery in 1912 (in which modern painting meant for Ireland paintings ended up going to America amid widespread public apathy), Yeats began to lose faith in Ireland, and, more importantly, the mass of the Irish people itself.[1] It is no coincidence that at the very same

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[1] This poem seems, at first sight, to be about the betrayal of the Irish Republican Brotherhood by spineless middle class pacifism, but a closer look at the context reveals that, yet again, Yeats was more concerned with the values of art, and the antipathy of the Bourgeoisie to those values. The difference is that whereas before, Yeats thought that these values were being menaced by soulless materialism, now he was beginning to suspect that irreparable damage had been done, and that an artistic renaissance may not be possible (Brown, 1972).

time as he was arriving at this self consciously aristocratic political position, he was also committing himself fully to eliminating poetic diction and rhetoric from his poetry. In 'A Coat' he wrote

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked (Yeats 1957 : 320).

This poem is, in a sense, a counterpart to the 'Xenia' sequence discussed above. More traditional than Pound, Yeats was still writing about the same experience, that of the changed tone of his poetry; the new way he had chosen to treat the new century. And it is clear that, for Yeats, the problem with his earlier poetry was that, far from being too difficult, it had proved not to be difficult enough. Instead of limiting his audience, as it had been intended to do, the euphuistic Pre-Raphaelite diction had become a style, readily parodied and copied. The 'fools' (who one may infer were the masses, the middle classes, journalists), had 'caught' this style, and the dreamy Pre-Raphaelite phraseology he had pioneered was now the essence of what the middlebrow public expected

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of a poem. Now, however, he would devote himself to writing plainly, 'walking naked'. This was not, of course, any move in the direction of egalitarianism or democracy. Instead as with Pound, the form would become cleaner, harder, more 'metallic', less 'poetic'; it would not flatter the Bourgeois with their sentimental ideas of poetry.

These are all ideas that Pound found deeply sympathetic. His own poetry was moving in the same direction.[2]

When Pound arrived at Stone Cottage, he found Yeats beginning to take an interest in the Japanese Noh Drama. Only five years previously, Yeats had attempted to create a genuinely popular drama that would speak to the people in their own language. The 'Playboy' fiasco, and the death of Synge,

had, however, persuaded him that popular theatre was simply impossible; in the future any artist who wished to write drama would have to choose an aristocratic form.

Hence the attraction of the Noh. It was written for the aristocracy, and would as Miner put it 'give [...] expression in all the beauty which art and intelligence can provide, instead of vulgarising them to the standards of taste and the notions of the ignorant' (1958 : 255). Speaking of his own imitation of the Noh, 'Three Plays For Dancers' Yeats wrote 'I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and

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2 In his review of *Responsibilities*, Pound makes a number of statements that show that he had finally (May 1914) caught up with the innovations of Yeats. As we have seen, he praises Yeats for his Imageistic tendencies (he calls 'The Magi' 'a passage of *imagisme*', for his 'prose directness' (the new definition of quality he developed under the influence of Ford) and for his 'hard light'.

  Moreover, for the first time, he acknowledges that Yeats's poetry has changed, that this change was detectable as far back as 'No Second Troy' (as we have seen, actually one could argue that it dates back to 'Adam's Curse'), and that 'The Coat' discusses this change. In terms of poetic value, Pound is unequivocal; Yeats is 'the best poet in England' (Pound 1954 : 378).

having no need of mob, or press to pay its way - an aristocratic form'
(Yeats, 1961 : 221).

Now, of course, Pound, too, was interested in Oriental art and
philosophy. As we have seen, for his most famous Imagiste poem 'In A
Station At The Metro' he had chosen the form of the Haiku, (which he
had, of course, been introduced to in the days of the Forgotten School),
and in the 'Xenia' sequence he had praised the coolness of the Chinese as
a counterbalance to Occidental hysteria.[3] Partly this was just an interest
in artists in other cultures who had faced similar problems to himself,
but there were deeper reasons as well. As we have seen, Pound was still
looking forward to his artistic Renaissance, and was looking for a culture
that would have the same place in his Renaissance as Greece and Rome
had in the earlier one. He thought he had found it in Indian culture and
the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, but since Tagore had left for India
that Summer, his interest had waned (Carpenter, 1988 : 186). Now
however, his attention turned to Japan and, then, to China. However,
what he was looking for in these cultures remained the same.

As with India, Pound thought that Chinese and Japanese culture had
been 'aristocratic' and static (Longenbach, 1988 : 44-46). He, too,
became interested in the Noh. With Yeats he read Confucius and works
such as Brinkley's *Japan and China; Their Arts History and Literature.*
From this last, Pound mistranslated an ideogram describing the activities

[3] As usual we must be careful of our chronology here. It is significant in terms of the development
of Pound's thought that his very next project after the 'Xenia' sequence was yet another sequence
with almost the same title; the 'Zenia' sequence. It was not until February 1914 that Pound
published the first of his Chinese poems; that is to say, after he had been exposed to Yeats's
Orientalism.

of Japanese nobles, to get the phrase 'listening to incense' (Longenbach, 1988 : 44). He explained: 'For "listening to incense" the company was divided into two parties, and some arbiter burn many kinds [...] of perfume, and the game was not merely to know which was which, but to give each of them a beautiful and allusive name, to recall by the title some strange event of history, or some passage of romance or legend. It was a refinement in barbaric times, comparable to the art of polyphonic rhyme, developed in feudal Provence' (Pound, 1953 : 214). As well as showing how highly he regarded this form of art by comparing it to his beloved Provençal poetry, it also showed why he identified with it; he, too, was attempting to achieve 'refinement' in 'barbarous times'.

However, there were technical reasons Pound was interested in the Noh, as well. As he wrote: 'The art of allusion, or this love of allusion in art, is at the root of the Noh. These plays [...] were made only for the few, for the nobles, for those trained to catch the allusion' (Pound, 1953 : 214). Pound's own poetry, which was, of course, allusive in the extreme, and becoming more so, was also aimed at the 'few'; initiates, who one might term spiritual nobles. As well as the other functions described above, therefore, Pound was quite clear that one of the purposes of his allusive method was to keep the profane from understanding his mystical doctrines. His poems were obscure to 'the masses' and were meant to be.

Moreover, Pound was undoubtedly under the impression that studying the Noh would help him with his problem of how to structure a long poem. In *Gaudier-Brzeska* he wrote: 'I am often asked whether there can

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be a long Imagiste or Vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the hokku, evolved also the Noh play. In the best 'Noh' the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image, enforced by movement and music. I see nothing against a long Vorticist poem' (Pound, 1960 : 94). As well as showing the synonymity of the terms Imagiste and Vorticist in Pound's mind, this also demonstrates that Pound was hoping to use the technical aspects of the Noh to help him structure a long poem without losing the concentration on the image that his poetry now depended on.

The next sequence of poems that Pound wrote were adaptions from the Chinese, and it is clear that he discovered Chinese poetry through his experience of Japanese poetry. Moreover, it is also clear that he became interested in Chinese poetry for the same reasons he had been interested in Japanese and Indian poetry; that is, for technical reasons (i.e. the precision of their diction, and their solutions to the problems of form) and for sociological and mystical reasons (that is, whether their societies seemed to be better orientated towards the production of poetry and occult thinking than our own). It is significant in this respect that it was the occultist Allen Upward who first introduced Pound to Oriental poetry (Carpenter, 1988 : 218).

Pound began his exploration of Chinese poetry under the impression that Chinese ideograms were pictorial, or to be more precise, that Chinese was a language that had the precise correlation between expression and sensation he now sought in his own work. Pound thought

that each ideogram would correspond to a sensation undergone, and not to a sound, as in English (Miner, 1958 : 128-131) (He had previously been under this misapprehension about Tagore's Bengali, as we have seen).

Moreover, Chinese poetry, like Imagiste poetry, concentrated on exact description, rather than explanation. The average Chinese and Japanese lyric poetry leaves the reader to infer what is being said from presentation of the image. As Pound put it, 'Chinese poetry has certain qualities of vivid presentation; and it is because certain Chinese poets have been content to set forth their matter without moralising and without comment that one labours to make a translation' (Yip, 1969 : 34).

To see what Pound meant, we should look at 'The Jewel Stairs' Grievance' by the Chinese poet Li Po (Pound used the Japanese version of his name; Rihaku). Here is a rough English translation of the Chinese:

Jade steps grow white dew (s)

Night late : soak gauze stockings (s)

Let(s) down the crystal blind

(To) see, glass clear, the autumn moon (Yip, 1969 : 68).

All that happens here is we are given various visual images. There is no comment. There is not even a poetic 'I'; we are given the images impersonally. And yet, as Pound points out, we are given these images

because they stand for emotional states. Pound translated this as follows

The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,

It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,

And I let down the crystal curtain

And watch the moon through the clear autumn.

and writes; 'Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore he has no excuse on account of the weather. also she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stairs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach' (Pound, 1970 : 194).

This is, again, a poem where not only are the images simply presented as plainly as possible, (even more plainly in the original Chinese, than in the

English translation above) and not only do these stand as (as it were) an equation for an emotional state (reproach), but where the work is more or less incomprehensible unless one knows the conventions of Chinese court poetry, which, for once, Pound explains for us. It has, as he writes 'great vigour and clarity' but at the same time 'require the reader to puzzle over it' and 'play Conan Doyle' (Yip, 1969 : 36). This demonstrates that 'Pound had never been a precisionist in the sense that

he eschewed the suggestive mode' a suggestive mode that has been most frequently been linked with Symbolism (Yip, 1969 : 37).

Moreover, this presentation of images without comment, and without a specified poetic 'I' gives the reader, as Yip writes, a feeling as if 'all these occur dramatically before 'the reader's eyes - time and space become meaningless' (Yip, 1969 : 68). This last phrase has mystical implications, and leads us back to another reason Pound found Oriental poetry intriguing.

For both Pound and Yeats discovered the Chinese and Japanese poetry were filled with occult lore. Pound wrote of the Noh, that 'These plays are full of ghosts, and the ghost psychology is amazing. The parallels with the Western spiritist doctrines are very curious' (Pound, 1970 : 222). He also described how Yeats spent a whole Winter correlating the data he had acquired from Irish folklore, with the 'data' of the 'occult writers', and explained that the 'world of the Noh' is that of the priest eager to see a vision (Pound, 1970 : 236-237). This was an insight that Yeats was to make use of in his essay *Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places.* These parallels convinced both men they were on the right track to study the Orient more closely. Pound at this point was beginning to read occult literature systematically, rather than in the dilettante way he had done up until now, and his work became increasing mystical (Longenbach, 1988). Take, for example, 'Heather' which he wrote at Stone Cottage.

The black panther treads at my side,

 And above my fingers

There float the petal-like flames.

The milk-white girls

Unbend from the holly-trees,

 And their snow-white leopard

Watches to follow our trace.[4]

The flames (we will remember the significance of light) do not burn,

and girls cannot unbend out of trees. This is a mystical poem, which does

not advertise its mysticism (like 'The Magi'). However, it is also a 'high'

Imagiste lyric, in which we are simply presented with images, which are

left to stand on their own, with no extraneous 'explanation'.

What then, was its meaning? This brings us back to what Pound meant

by symbolism. As we have seen, Pound's denial that Imagisme was

Symbolism is disingenuous. However, his denial that this is the case is

made clearer when we remember that in the 'Vorticism' essay, he made a

distinction between 'Symbolism' and 'Symbolism in its profounder

sense'; and denied only that Imagisme the former. What, then, did he

mean by 'Symbolism in its profounder sense'? As we have seen, he stated

that it was a belief in 'permanent metaphor', and that it was a move

towards a belief in a 'permanent world'. In a private letter of 1913, he

could be more direct:

What *do* you mean by symbolism? Do you mean real symbolism, Cabala, genesis of

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4 'Heather' was published in March 1914. Apart from the *Blast* poems (which will be discussed in
the next chapter) Pound was to publish only seven more poems (in the August edition of *Poetry*)
before the start of World War One.

symbols, rise of picture language, etc. or the aesthetic (symbology) symbolism of Villiers de L'isle Adam, and that Arthur Symons wrote a book about the literwary(sic) movement? [...] There's a dictionary of symbols but I think it's immoral [...] a symbol appearing in a vision has a certain richness and power of energising joy - whereas if the supposed meaning of a symbol is familiar it has no more force [...] than a synonym (Pound and Shakespeare 1985 : 302).

Here Pound makes a distinction between *real symbolism* ('symbolism in its profounder sense') and the merely 'literwary' movement. (Just what Pound means by 'a dictionary of symbols' may be explained by his statement that 'to use a symbol *with an ascribed or intended meaning* is, usually, to produce very bad art' (Pound 1960: 86)). A symbol with an easily elucidated meaning, using one word to mean another, 'a synonym', is, as we have seen, what Pound elsewhere called an 'allegory', and this is what Yeats, too, railed against (although Pound, ironically, thought that Yeats was occasionally guilty of just this crime (Yip 1969)). Just as Yeats did, Pound thought that the 'literwary' movement was ultimately of lesser interest than 'Symbolism in its profounder sense' - symbols which are perceived with 'vision' - symbols which lead to a belief in a 'permanent world'. 'Fixed' values (or merely 'literwary' values) for symbols were immoral, because the image had to come straight from what Yeats called 'Spiritus Mundi', without any alteration by the conscious mind. Anything less would be a betrayal of the mystical poet's art. Pound's Imagisme was not Symbolism in the literary sense, because in his Imagiste works Pound was attempting to be a Yeatsian Symbolist; the Yeats who, as we have seen, stated flatly that magic and poetry were the same thing. Pound's

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arguments for Imagisme (despite the different vocabulary) recapitulate Yeats's arguments for mystical symbolism almost exactly.

And as Pound became a 'Vorticist' his belief in the mystical power of symbols became stronger, not weaker. 'Vorticism' is a more mystical essay than the Imagiste manifesto (Longenbach, 1988). In the same year, Pound, writing to a Christian, defended his own polytheistic mysticism 'I have some religion [...] I count myself much more priest than I do some sceptic [...] I can not find any trace of Christ's having spoken against the Greek gods' (Pound and Shakespeare, 1985 : 307).

To see how Pound's visionary symbolism worked in practice, we should return to 'Heather', and we should look for the occult realities which the images presented represent. Oderman (1986), for example, is on the right path when he speculates that the black panther and the white leopard symbolise the male and female principles, and that this is an erotic/mystical poem describing the visionary possibilities of the sexual act. This is quite possibly true, or part of the truth, but it underestimates the extent to which Pound viewed himself as being, literally, a visionary. What is fascinating, reading the letters to Dorothy Shakespeare, is seeing how precisely Pound transferred his visions into poetry. When Pound stayed in Stone Cottage, Shakespeare occasionally wrote to him as 'Beloved of the Black Panther', and the context shows that both of them believed in the existence of both the panther and the leopard as real beings, with their own spiritual existence. For example, on the 6th of December 1913, Dorothy wrote: 'Perhaps the panther was away from me

for a minute this afternoon? Tell me more about the snow leopard [...] have either of them names?' (Pound and Shakespeare, 1985 : 286) to which Pound replies: 'No. They have not names. From careful perusal of my works you might learn that the snow leopard sits on his tale and observe's one's departure. The panther has been awa'. I daresay you had him' (Pound and Shakespeare, 1985 : 287). In her next letter, Shakespeare wrote: 'I saw the Bl. Panther lying on my hearth rug one night when I was wakeful with the most alarming distinctiveness. He was stretched out on his side with his long tail round his hind ankles. I was quite alarmed! And another night I felt him sitting stiff up by the fire. Fortunately I am not in the room I usually have (which is undoubtedly haunted) or else I should have had to ask if I might borrow Him every night' (Pound and Shakespeare, 1985 : 288).

The poem, 'Heather', then, is a Symbolist poem in Pound's 'profounder' sense. The figures in it do not correspond to ideas and emotions in the 'real' world, because they are mystical, occult beings in their own right, with no need of justification, or explanation. The 'purpose' of this poem, is, purely and simply, to be a record of real, lived, visionary experience, presented as clearly as possible.

Yeats left for New York in January 1914, and left Pound hardened in his occult beliefs and aristocratic outlook. This was an attitude in which he would have been encouraged in holding by the concurrent speculations of T.E. Hulme, who was formulating his doctrine of 'Neo-Classicism'. This is not to say that Pound was directly influenced by Neo-

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Classical thought (though he *was* influenced by Hulme's Anti-Humanistic theorising as we shall see), but it is symptomatic for two reasons, firstly because it shows the anti-democratic thinking that was becoming increasingly fashionable at this time, and secondly because it paves the way for the introduction of Wyndham Lewis (and therefore Vorticism) to the story, who definitely *was* influenced by Hulme's speculations.

Firstly, however, we must backtrack to 1912, when Hulme was still an orthodox Bergsonian. While Hulme was still spreading the gospel of Bergson in *The New Age,* he was began to write a series of political articles for *The Commentator,* a Tory periodical, under the pseudonym of Thomas Gratton. These articles first started to be published in February the 22nd, though it was not until the next year that Hulme published 'A Tory Philosophy' which contains his famous polemics against Romanticism.

In these early articles Hulme used the thought of Bergson and Nietzsche to formulate his own political position. As we have seen, Hulme saw Bergson as an anti-intellectualist and this is the aspect of his thought he stresses. Hulme emphasises that man has 'generally irrational vital instincts' (Hulme, 1994 : 208) and that therefore the view that politics consists of the discussion of rational arguments must be erroneous (Hulme, 1994). This applies to the 'intellectual' as much as the 'masses'; we may be under the delusion that we are deciding a question from purely rational motives, but this is a fallacy. Even the detached analyst of the phenomena is himself subject to the law.

Conversion is always emotional and non-rational' (Hulme, 1994 : 209).
This is important because, according to Hulme, society is hierarchical,
whether we admit it or not. The intellectual's views eventually trickle
down and influence those of the masses. Therefore, the best way to
influence the political debate in the long run is to capture the minds of
the intellectual élite. This will not be easy, and involves a willingness to
rely on nonrational means of persuasion; 'we are not concerned with
truth, but with success [...] They (i.e. the intellectuals) must be
converted exactly as everyone else is- by hitching on your propaganda to
one of their centres of prejudice and emotion' (Hulme, 1994 : 210).

Hulme adapted his irrationalism from Bergsonian thought, but by the
time he wrote this document, he had found a new intellectual ally; Sorel
(Hulme's first reference to Sorel is in an article dated 9 November 1911.
It is not clear when he wrote 'Romanticism and Classicism', but a date of
late 1911, early 1912, seems the best guess: cf. Csengeri's Introduction
to Hulme's *Collected Works* (1994)). Sorel was a French Marxist writer,
who had begun to argue (from about 1900 onwards) that Marxism was
not so much a 'scientific' or 'rational' statement about Capitalism, but
instead a 'myth'. This was not, however, intended as a derogatory
statement. Instead, Sorel went on to argue that it was only myths, which
appealed to man's irrational side, that drove history, and that rational
thought was, therefore, of less consequence. Sorel went on to attack
Bourgeois society, which, he claimed, lacked 'mythic values'. Society
could only be rejuvenated by rejecting Bourgeois values, and, of course,

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Bourgeois democracy, in favour of the myth of the 'General Strike' (Hulme would have found Sorel's theories easy to assimilate, not least because of their common intellectual background; for Sorel, too, was strongly influenced by both Bergson and Nietzsche (Gregor, 1969 : 61)).

Having proved, to his own satisfaction at least, that political thought is necessarily irrational, Hulme then reintroduces the perspectivism which we first saw formulated in the 'Cinders' document, influenced by Nietzsche; 'Truths don't exist until we invent them' (Hulme, 1994 : 20). Since what we bring to phenomena is largely influenced by nonrational criteria, this obviously calls into question the notion of 'objective truth'. This is particularly true for political questions. For example 'All national histories are partisan, and designed to give us a good conceit of ourselves' (Hulme, 1994 : 212) for 'No history can be a faithful mirror [...] It must be a selection and, being a selection, must inevitably be biased' (Hulme, 1994 : 213). Hulme is not mentioning this to deplore it. On the contrary he goes out of his way to state how much he likes it (In other words he stresses that history is not, and can never be, science. Again, there are parallels with Pound and Yeats, cf. Longenbach, 1987 : 22-25).

However the upshot of this view is that most of what we take as political discourse is simply meaningless. Since Man is not rational, rational argument is futile, and since there is no such thing as a value free view of reality, appeal to 'the facts' is futile as well. To influence one's opponents one must appeal to their emotions and prejudices. The

problem with the present day Conservative party, Hulme thought, was not that they had lost the argument (which was simply irrelevant) but that they no longer appealed to the emotions of the intellectuals. And this is for exactly the same reasons that Hulme thought that poetry had decayed; their discourse had degenerated into cliché; it no longer had any emotional force behind it. As he puts it himself 'I am firmly convinced that just at the present moment Conservative thought has come to an important crisis. The old set of catch words in which its philosophy embodied itself are now absolutely worn out' (Hulme, 1994, 215). Fascinatingly, Hulme uses the language of Bergson to explain why this is so: 'The phrases feel dead in exactly the same way as clichés in bad poetry do. It is only by a certain unexpectedness of phrasing that a certain feeling of conviction is carried over, and you feel that the man was actually describing something real, that he had seen something at first hand [...] the point is, that any image or metaphor in time becomes conventionalised, and so ceases to convey any concrete meaning. The result of this is that you must have freshness and unexpectedness in any art, not just because there is anything desirable in freshness *per se*, but because, owing to this law which I have just sketched out- that of the inevitable decay of metaphors-it is only be means of freshness that one can be convincing. This makes my position clear in regard to the dead phrases by which Conservatism expresses itself. I don't object to them because they are old [...] but because I realise most intensely, both from my own experience and from conversation with the type of intellectual I

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have been discussing, that these phrases now carry no conviction. They must be restated in order to appear real at all' (Hulme, 1994 : 217). Hulme saw his work in poetry and his political writings as both doing the same thing; rejuvenating the language by reattaching it to emotional reality. And the view of language he has is firmly Bergsonian.

This shows that Hulme's earliest political philosophy has Bergsonian roots. What it doesn't explain is why Hulme chose to become a Tory in the first place. This question has two answers.

The first is related to Hulme's deepest emotional convictions. As we have seen, Hulme was always influenced by *fin de siécle* pessimism. He was terrified that the rise of science and rationality would destroy the world of values. This led him to an extreme distrust of Modernity *per se*. As we have seen, he always counterpointed the uncertainty and flux of the modern world with the sense of reassurance he got from contemplating the past, and the sense of tradition. Liberalism and Socialism seemed to Hulme to proclaim that there was such a thing as 'progress', which denied the validity of this tradition. He turned to Bergson because this seemed like a way of finding a new language to express metaphysical (or at least quasi-metaphysical) truths, and a way of combating intellectualism (which had produced the scientific worldview). As his later articles make clear, it is precisely because Socialism and Liberalism appeared to be rational that he opposed them.

There is another reason that Hulme opposed these philosophies; what he saw as their egalitarianism. Again, to understand this, we must go

back to his earliest thought. In the world of modernity Hulme had argued that one must stress the concrete over the abstract, what could be sensuously experienced over intellectual constructions. Therefore words such as 'society' and 'community' were abstractions. And it was in response to this thinking that he was led to posit an egoistic philosophy, strongly indebted to Nietzsche. But there were, according to Hulme, always going to be those who realised this and had the 'desire for strong arms, desire to kill, resolution to shake off social convention and to do it' and those who did not. This distinction Hulme called 'The knife order' (Hulme, 1994 : 11). Therefore, he argued, egalitarianism was fallacious; society would always be stratified. The weak would always be dominated by the strong. And political theories that ignored these 'facts' could only lead to disaster.

But this still doesn't answer the question of why Hulme became politically active *at this time*. The answer lies in the current political situation. After twenty years of Conservative rule, the world of politics had been shocked by the Liberal landslide of 1906. However for the next five years the Liberal reforms were blocked by the Tory dominated House of Lords.In 1907, four reformist Land bills were rejected or wrecked by the Lords. For the next two years the stalemate continued, until in 1909 Lloyd George attempted to pass the reforming Finance Bill. It was passed by the Commons but rejected by the Lords, and Asquith immediately dissolved Parliament and called a new General Election. The Liberals won (in alliance with other parties they had a working majority) but the

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conflict continued. The Liberals introduced a Reform bill which would restrict the power of the House of Lords; and of course it was blocked by the Lords. Another General Election was called. This time the major issue was Parliamentary reform; and the Liberals won again.The reform bill was reintroduced on 21st February 1911 (the day before Hulme's first article for the *Commentator*), and, after bitter political infighting, was passed in August (Aikin, 1972).

For the previous four years, then, the Conservative party had faced nothing but defeat. Increasingly it looked as if the future might belong solely to the Liberals and the Labour party. As Hulme makes clear in his article 'Progress and Democracy' he was afraid of the increasing contempt that was being shown towards the House of Lords. He was afraid, moreover, that this was symptomatic of a general trend, that the move towards 'pure' democracy (or single chamber government) would result in a victory for simple minded egalitarianism, and would therefore run the risk of the 'tyranny of the masses'.[5] Morcover, abolishing institutions of the past would again implicitly acknowledge that political systems could progress, with all that that that implied. Looking for

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[5] Hulme's political position here is closest, not to orthodox Conservatism, but to that group of 'radical aristocrats' that Gregory Philips calls the 'Diehards'. Certainly, his description of their beliefs recalls Hulme's own opinions 'The Diehards did believe that they were living through a time of national and and international crisis [...] there was a strong desire to preserve as much of the old order as possible' (Philips, 1979 : 111). They, too, became politically active when the House of Lords was threatened, which they believed would lead to disaster. And like Hulme, (and unlike democratic Conservatives), they had an instinctive dislike of democracy *per se*. However, as with Hulme, the Diehards were not just straightforward reactionaries; instead, they were prepared to be innovative, even radical in defence of what they saw as British traditions. It was the Diehards who were behind much of the Unionist agitation that Dangerfield saw as being part of the death of English Liberalism, in *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. If this analysis is correct, it is not inconceivable that a hidden reason Hulme would have dislike the Left is for their anti-imperialism; given Yeats's Nationalist past, it may throw light on why he opposed Yeats's aesthetic as well (Philips, 1979).

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evidence that pure democracy had always led to catastrophe Hulme was led to read such writers as Flinders Petrie, whose book *Revolutions of Civilisation* contained the Spenglerian idea that all civilisations 'pass from archaic simplicity through the perfection of the best period to their final decay' (Hulme, 1994 : 224) (this book was also influential on Yeats). This decay is of course associated with democracy.

Hulme was by no means alone in holding these views. The editor of *The New Age* himself, A. R. Orage, was writing articles at the same time that are strikingly similar to Hulme's. These articles were written to examine the philosophies of Liberalism and Socialism. He concluded that progress was a myth and that 'man is a fixed species' (Martin, 1967 : 215). Orage uses a touchstone that Hulme was to use, that of political 'sanity', to argue that the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity 'have done more harm and less good than any trinity ever invented. The world will never be sane till it forgets them' (Martin, 1967 : 217). Against these secular, materialistic ideas, Orage asserts the religious. Like Hulme, Orage was terrified that morality and aesthetics would collapse if a materialist viewpoint was ever generally adopted; he therefore stresses that adoption of a 'fixed' religious set of standards must be accepted before rational discussion of politics and morality could take place. Against all the 'cross purposes' of liberalism Orage counterpoints 'the very oldest idea of all, the theory of the Fall and Redemption' (Martin, 1967 : 216).

He was not the first to do so. As early as 1908, G. K. Chesterton had written in praise of Original Sin in *The New Age*, and this aspect of his

thought was shortly to be taken over by Hulme. All that remained was to diagnose where the illness that denied The Fall had originated. This Pound's friend Allen Upward achieved in 1910 (in *The New Age*), when he stated: "'the Superstition set up by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the Eighteenth Century is generally known as the Religion of Humanity [...] t is simply a worship, with no more reason in it than the worship of cats [...] The theory of Rousseau and Volney, of Paine and Shelley is that man was born without sin, and that he has been deliberately enslaved and degraded by kings and priests'" (Martin, 1967 : 217). Thus Upward made the first link between Rousseauism and Romanticism, linking them as symptoms of the same disease, the denial of Religion (especially the doctrine of Original Sin).[6]

At the same time as these ideas were being formulated in England, Nietzsche became increasingly popular in the intellectual circles in which Hulme moved (Thatcher, 1970). Orage himself had gone through a Nietzschean phase (his first books had been adaptions of Nietzsche (Mairet, 1966)). Nietzsche was also particularly influential on J. M. Kennedy, A. M. Ludovici, Oscar Levy (colleagues of Hulme's on *The New Age*) and Edward Storer (who we have already met). These writers used their misunderstandings of Nietzsche to identify 'Liberalism, materialism, Idealism, Romanticism, and atheism as a complex of ideas often associated with one another' (Martin, 1967 : 222) and oppose all of

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[6] Of course, it is debatable to what extent Rousseau was a Romantic at all, but it is only by understanding that for Orage, Hulme and others, Rousseau was the Romantic *par excellence*, that one can understand why they proclaimed their dislike of the movement so vociferously.

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them.[7] For example in works like *Tory Democracy* (1906) Kennedy uses the hostility to Romanticism expressed in *The Twilight of the Idols* and Nietzsche's dislike of Democracy in order to support the House of Lords, and argue in favour of the retention of the Christian aristocracy that Kennedy believed was being threatened by the rise of the middle and working classes (Martin, 1967)

All these writers used Nietzsche's anti-Romanticism and his anti-democratic philosophy (such as his praise of aristocracy and the doctrine of the superman) and ignored or distorted his materialism and fundamental optimism. A writer like Edward Storer simply used the German philosopher to provide support for his own support of the Tory party. It was Storer who probably introduced Hulme to the thought of Action Française.

'Action Française' was a movement that was the brain child of the Frenchman Charles Maurras. Disillusioned by what he saw as a decadent and declining France (symbolised by the humiliating defeat of 1870), Maurras was also appalled by the relativism and anarchy that ruled the literary scene. As Maurras saw it, these were two sides of the same coin. Only be restoring sanity to society could literature be rejuvenated (Weber, 1962). Taking his cues from that aspect of Symbolist thought that opposed the excesses of the worst sort of Romanticism by

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[7] It must be noted that Hulme despised these men, and went out of his way to deprecate them (Hulme, 1994). However, their work was symptomatic of the way the political philosophy of *The New Age* was developing, including the thought of men such as Orage, who Hulme definitely did admire. For example, Orage dropped the word Socialist from the magazine's mast head in 1907, and the Socialist political commentators who had written for the paper were gradually replaced by more right wing Nietzscheans from about 1909 onwards (Carswell, 1977).

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emphasising hardness and precision, Maurras was led to espouse a new literature of 'Neo-Classicism' (this side of Symbolism also, of course, inspired Pound (Hughes 1960)).[8] .Literature had gone wrong, Maurras thought, by taking too much notice of foreign influences, and by neglecting the great tradition of French literature in favour of a juvenile quest for novelty. A critic has summed up their ideas thus 'There could be no beauty without order, no order without a hierarchy of values, no hierarchy without authority both to define and endorse it' (Weber, 1962 : 9). Maurras therefore moved towards a political philosophy that emphasised religion, Royalism, authority and reaction, and that disapproved of materialism, democracy, and 'progressive' ideas generally.

Hulme was first introduced to the ideas of Action Française by reading 'Le Romantisme Francais' (1907) by the literary editor of the Action Française newspaper, Pierre Lasserre. This book contained many ideas already current in The New Age circle. In it Lasserre, (strongly influenced by Nietzsche) argues that Romanticism had corrupted Europe by its gospel of the individual, and that only by accepting hierarchy could society be reformed. As opposed to the Romantic's deification of Humanity, Neo-Classicists accepted the reality of Original Sin. Given that this was the case, it followed that Utopian ideas were by definition unrealistic, and that progressive ideas could only lead to disaster (Robinson, 1985 : 109-111). The only hope for France was for a return

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[8] As well as its links with Symbolism, the school of French reactionary thought that gave birth to the Action Française was by no means unimplicated in Romanticism proper (Asher, 1995).

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to traditional values.

So far, we can see why Hulme would have found the movement attractive; these ideas strongly resembled his own. However, there is one aspect of this line of thinking he found disturbing; Lasserre's attack on Bergson. For in his book, Lasserre had argued that Bergsonian philosophy was just the latest manifestation of Romanticism.

In this he was in the mainstream of French right wing thought. Until 1907, Bergson was regarded mainly as a thinker of the right, for what were seen as his attacks on rationalism, materialism and determinism (in other words for exactly the reasons that Hulme had become a Bergsonian) (Schwartz, 1992). His right wing supporters had, however, begun to feel uneasy after the publication of *Creative Evolution* (1907). This book developed the concept of 'inner duration' far beyond what had been posited in the earlier books. Moving from psychology to biology, Bergson now saw the 'inner duration' as being the force behind life itself; 'life and consciousness are this very ascension [...] a simple flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming' (Bergson, 1911 : 390). Moreover this 'becoming' might be the driving force behind evolution itself, forcing life into ever more complex forms (Bergson, 1911 : 192) This life force was continually pushing material life upwards in a ceaseless attempt for self realisation. The end result of this process could not be predicted except insofar as it would result in greater complexity (Bergson, 1911).

There were two problems this idea posed for the reactionary right. Firstly, if the *élan vital* was always moving forwards, this seemed to give

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support to the idea of progress. And secondly, if the actions of the life force could not be predicted, then the reactionary doctrine that 'there is no new thing under the sun' would come under threat. One of the main arguments used by the anti-democratic right (frequently used by Hulme) was that since all previous democratic experiments had resulted in 'disaster', then it was by definition true that all democratic experiments in the future would meet the same fate. And this followed from the right-wing rejection of 'novelty' and 'progress'. According to the right, the future would always be like the past, and genuine novelty was impossible.

If, however, the future could *not* be predicted, if Bergson's 'life force' was to be accepted, then perhaps novelty *was* possible. If it was true that Bergson believed this, then he could be seen to defend Progress, which, as we have already seen, Hulme now associated with Romanticism. The democrats could then argue that while it was true that democracy had failed in the past, that was no reason to argue that it could not succeed in the future.

Hulme was so disturbed by these ideas that he went to visit Lasserre in April 1911 to discuss the matter. Even after these discussions, he was not yet prepared to abandon his allegiance to Bergson. However, he admits that if it was demonstrated to him that Bergson was a Romantic this would call into question the validity of Bergsonian philosophy (Hulme, 1994 : 164-165). For the period immediately after his encounter with the thought of Action Française, he compromised by accepting that the *élan vital* was a valid concept for the individual, but not for the race (Hulme,

1994 : 165). However, from now on, Hulme begins to adopt an increasingly ambiguous attitude to Bergson. He begins to write (as we have seen) under the pseudonym 'Thomas Gratton' and express anti-Bergsonian views using this *nom dé plume*, whilst at the same time as writing pro-Bergson articles under his own name.

It is important to note that there is no point at which Hulme repudiates Bergson. As late as 1913 he published his translation of 'Introduction to Metaphysics'. However, by October 1911 he can write that is beginning to come to the conclusion that Bergson was wrong (Hulme, 1994). And the articles that he writes in 1912, that state what he is now openly calling his 'Neo-Classicism', make less and less reference to the Frenchman. These essays state for the first time that Hulme believed a change was coming in Western thought (this idea is strangely reminiscent of Yeats).

It is as a result of these ideas and experiences that Hulme wrote his two most famous essays; 'A Tory Philosophy' (published early in 1912) and 'Romanticism and Classicism'. These are the first essays that state what would become known as the 'Neo-Classical' position, which would be so influential on T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis. I will concentrate here on showing the continuities between Hulme's previous positions and his 'Neo- Classicism'.

Hulme begins by restating that rationality is impossible and objective

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truth does not exist (Hulme, 1994 : 233).[9] He approvingly quotes Nietzsche's aphorism 'Philosophy is Autobiography' and acknowledges that there is no chance that his essays will change anyone's mind, since people are not swayed by rational argument (Hulme, 1994 : 233). Instead he is simply going to define two ways of looking at the world; 'Romantic' and 'Classical', and hope he can make people realise that the second is the more emotionally satisfying. The idea that there are two basic attitudes to life; Romantic and Classical was a staple of the thought of Action Française, and, following Lasserre, Hulme goes on to claim that Romanticism was invented by Rousseau (since Hulme continues at times to speak approvingly of Coleridge and Keats, he makes it clear that what he really objects to is not so much literary Romanticism as Rousseau's optimism).

Hulme then defines his two attitudes. He states that the essential difference between the two is that Romantics are optimists and Classicists are pessimists. For the Romantic (says Hulme) the increase of liberty is a good thing, because Man is naturally good and it is only laws that prevent him from acting on his good impulses. As we have seen, however, Hulme is immensely sceptical about ideas that posit the innate goodness of Man. The Classicist, for Hulme, is someone who believes that Man is, if anything, innately evil (or, as Hulme puts it, cursed with original sin) and that only traditional rules and values keep him from

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[9] We should notice in passing, not only that this is a belief that Hulme has held for some time, but that anti-rationalism is more normally associated with Romanticism than Neo-Classicism (see chapter one). Moreover, when Hulme comes to espouse Antihumanism some years later, his anti-rationalism remains in place.

destroying himself (Hulme, 1994, 234-235).

Hulme then brings in two concepts that we will remember from the 'Cinders' document. The first is his disbelief in progress, and the second is his intense distrust of Idealist metaphysics. Hulme restates his belief (first stated in 'Cinders') that in the relativistic universe the only thing that stays constant is human nature. It follows, therefore, that progress is a myth, because regardless of the arrangements of society, human nature is static (Hulme, 1994 : 235).

Following from his empirical point of view, Hulme disbelieved in Idealism (we must remember that Bergson had attempted to formulate a viewpoint that was neither Idealist nor materialist). It followed that what he saw as the Romantic 'escapist' view point was ridiculous. The Romantic, Hulme thought, posited a world of pure spirit, free of the confines of the material world. It was this world that they attempted to escape to. However, there was no such world. As he puts it, Romanticism gives you 'a kind of exhilaration you get from a sudden sense of release from weight, the sense of lightness and exhilaration you would get from rarer air' (Hulme, 1994 : 237). Hulme tries to show that this emotional sense is an illusion. You cannot be 'released' you cannot 'escape', because there is nowhere to go. (Hulme is caught here, because he wants a set of values that are objective and religious, and yet not, in some mysterious way, metaphysical. At this time Hulme deals with this problem by being extremely cagey as to whether he is using his religious terms, such as 'original sin' literally or just as metaphors. Later he

thought he had found a way out of this dilemma when he discovered the philosophy of G.E. Moore and Husserl, which, he thought, affirmed objectivism within an anti-Idealist philosophical framework (Levenson, 1984)).

To sum up, Hulme writes, 'The Tory side, I assert, depends on the conviction that the nature of man is absolutely fixed and unalterable, and that any scheme of social regeneration which presupposes that he can alter is doomed to bring about nothing but disaster' (Hulme, 1994 : 241).

In 'Romanticism and Classicism' he attempts to apply his 'Tory Philosophy' to literature. The remarkable thing about this essay is that it shows just how little his view of literature has really changed; in other words just how much continuity there is between his earlier, 'materialist' and 'relativist' position and his 'Neo-Classicism'. Hulme restates that he dislikes rhetoric, and that poetry should use the language of ordinary speech as much as possible. Poetry should avoid metaphysical abstractions and focus on the concrete; 'The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description' (Hulme, 1994 : 68). Hulme repeats his belief that the 'counter' language of poetry has run dry, and that what is necessary is to reconnect language to the emotions by the use of Images. The intellect cannot grasp these images; only the emotional side of man understands them (Hulme quotes Bergson to back up his point) (Hulme, 1994 : 69-70).

Hulme's case in summary is, therefore, much more limited than it

appears to be. What he is really arguing is that Rousseau's optimism will no longer do for the modern age. Whereas before, Man looked to the future with optimism and hope, now all he sees is the rise of Godless materialism and the concomitant destruction of aesthetic and moral values. In this nightmare (paradoxically) the only worthwhile activity is art. The rhetoric of Romanticism, however, has become worn out. Henceforth poets must stick much more strictly to the Image than they have done before.

Behind all these ideas (and we might say the same about Yeats's) lies a grinding pessimism; about Man, art and the future in general. And as we have seen, this pessimism was widely held by British intellectuals (and not just amongst writers for *The New Age*. We find an almost exact parallel of Hulme's ideas, in, for example Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1961)). In some countries (Italy for example, as we will see) the rise of industrial capitalism and the new century generally was a cause for hope and celebration.

However, in Britain, the mood of the intellectuals, and the country in general, could be described thus; 'In spite of the infusion of new ideas, there was little expressed optimism, and little sense of anticipation evident in the nation. The dominant mood was rather a mixed one; nostalgia in those who looked backward, apprehension in those who looked towards the future' (Hynes, 1968 : 348).

This, then, was the 'New Classicism'.

Chapter Nine :Wyndham Lewis

and Vorticism

It was in the beginning of 1914 that Pound began to describe himself as a 'Vorticist'. In order to explain what he meant by this, we must now turn to the early career of Wyndham Lewis.

Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) was an Anglo-Canadian painter and writer, who was to become a decisive influence on the last pre-war phase of Anglo- American Modernism. Lewis had gone abroad early in the century, and had travelled throughout France and Spain. In France he had become acquainted with the philosophy of Bergson, and just as with Hulme, this was to be the dominant force on the early part of his writing career (up until about 1912. This is the period of the early short stories, the early paintings, and the very first drafts of his novel *Tarr*). Lewis attended lectures by Bergson, and associated with Prince Kropotkin the Marxist/Anarchist, and Augustus John, as the older English painter produced his most Romantic paintings (Meyers, 1980 : 12-25).

In Lewis, we find someone, who, at the beginning at least, had little concern with the problems we have discussed up until this point. As a painter, and prose writer, he had little concern with the lyric poet's quest to access eternity through the moment, nor (at the beginning, as I stress), did he have much concern with the problem of relativism. Instead, his primary motivation seemed to be dislike of bourgeois complacency, a self-conscious interest in outcasts from that Bourgeoisie and a fascination with Vitalist philosophy, especially, it need hardly be said, Nietzsche and Bergson (all this, of course, was par for the course for a young artist growing up in the first decade of the century).

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However, when he moved to England, he became aware of the aesthetic debates that were being carried on there, and by the Summer of 1914 his aesthetic concerns (if not his actual position) owed much to the interests of Pound, Yeats and Hulme.

And as with those three writers, it is important, in order to understand Lewis's development, to remember the chronology of his work and thought. The most important point to remember at this stage, is that, when he returned to Britain in early 1910, he was a self-proclaimed Bergsonian. Moreover, he manifested, at this stage, traits that, were he any other person, one would not hesitate to call Romantic. He was, that is to say, attracted to what he saw a outcasts of bourgeois society; tramps, outlaws and criminals. As he wrote himself: 'During those days (i.e. of his European career) I began to get a philosophy [...] Like all philosophies, it was built up around the will-as primitive houses are built up against a hill, or propped up upon a bog. As a timely expression of personal impulses it took the form of a reaction against civilised values. It was *militantly Vitalist*' (Lewis, 1984 : 125) (my italics). His early stories, most of which were published in *The New Age*, expressed the struggle of Nietzschean Übermensch en to express their individuality against the constraining effect of 'civilised values'. He explicitly counterpointed the vitality and 'authenticity' of his protagonists with what he saw as the emotional deadness of the Bourgeoisie.[1] In his essay of 1910, 'Our Wild Body' he complains that in Britain, the vital forces of

[1] Lewis wrote ' The snobbishness [...] of the English middle class, their cold Philistinism, perpetual silly sports, all violently repudiated by me, were the constant object of comparison with anything that stimulated and amused as did these scenes [i.e. of Breton life]' (Lewis, 1984 : 125).

the body are tamed and controlled in the artificial cult of 'the game'. As Bergson does in his book *Laughter* (1913) he argues that habit and stereotypical forms of behaviour conspire to repress the Vitalist sense of individuality possessed by us all. Moreover, he argues that the artist in particular should be in touch with these Vitalist 'life forces' (Lewis, 1982 : 254).[2]

As mentioned before, we must be careful not to read these early stories in the light of Lewis's later obsessions. Given Lewis's later reputation, it might well be thought that these early stories are in some sense 'satirical' but that is not the case. Instead, Lewis rewrote the stories after World War One (when he had become a 'Neo-Classicist' and had decided to write satire) to make them more satirical. This was part of Lewis's project at the time; to rewrite almost all of his pre-war writings, and therefore expunge all trace of Bergsonism, which, partly (as I will show) under the influence of Hulme, had now become an embarrassment (Michel, 1994 : 15-16).

However, in their original forms these stories are not satirical but comic, and their sense of the comic derives directly from Bergson; especially the Bergson of *Laughter*. At this time, Lewis, was, as he said, a

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[2] To understand the dichotomy at the heart of Lewis's earliest philosophy of art, one must remember that he was reading Nietzsche at the same time as he encountered the thought of Bergson, and that he accepted the early Nietzsche's high valuation of the purpose of art (and, consequently, the artist). Moreover, (possibly influenced by his friend, the ultra-Romantic Augustus John), he seems to have accepted the Romantic view of the artist as being a visionary, or a seer (the similiarities between this view and the early thought of Pound and Yeats do not need to be commented on). There is, therefore, a conflict between the Bergsonian strand of his thinking (which stresses *mass* action, and an identification with the crowd), and the more élitist, Nietzschean strand in his thought, which tended towards withdrawing from society, and standing aloof. Lewis's early theorising is an attempt to see if a synthesis of these two world views was possible (Normand, 1992 : 12-13).

Vitalist, a Vitalist, moreover, under the influence of Rousseau (showing the differences between his own views and those of *The New Age* circle). 'The human personality, I thought, should be left alone, just as it is, in its pristine freshness; something like a wild garden-full, naturally, of starlight and nightingales, or sunflowers and the sun' (Lewis, 1984 : 125). And so the people he wrote about; 'primitives', were people who still possessed this 'pristine freshness' whose energies had not yet been deadened by contact with civilisation. 'The characters I chose to celebrate - Bestre, the Carnac and his wife, Brotcotnaz, le père François - were all primitive creatures immersed in life, as much as birds or big, obsessed, sun-drunk insects' (Lewis, 1984 : 251)) This can be seen by analysing the descriptions of one of the characters of one of his earliest stories 'Brobdingnag'. One might expect from the title that this might be a Swiftian attack on the eponymous character. But this is not the case, because Lewis, to repeat, was not at this stage a satirist. Instead Brobdingnag is admired for his vitality: 'He is a glorious and unique creature [...] his eyes [...] are great, tender, wise, mocking eyes [...] (he) walks softly, with a supple giving of the knees at each step. This probably comes from his excessive fondness for the dance [...] in which he was so rapid, expert, and resourceful in his youth' (Lewis, 1982 : 292). Brobdingnag's one moral failing is that he beats his wife. But even this is seen as the flip side of his vitality; 'the amenity and "sourire" of his nature' (Lewis, 1982 : 292) and his flaws are seen as the two sides of the same coin. He is a Nietzschean figure; beyond good and evil, yet always

exuberantly *alive*. This zest for life is implicitly contrasted with the living death, and sterile morality of the Bourgeoisie. And as the critic Walter Michel (1994) shows, the rest of these early stories are marked by empathy with the characters; an empathy that has a Vitalist base.

Lewis spent the next three years of his life working in London on his painting, and attempting to assimilate the new ideas he encountered there. He had already encountered Cubism in France, and his earliest work in England already shows Cubist influences. The work of the first period of his work (until about 1912) shows him attempting to portray his Bergsonian philosophy in Cubist terms. In early paintings, such as *Man and Woman* and *Two Figures* he portrays 'animal life' held back and constrained by the corporeal facts of the body. 'With their faces inclined upward, and their bewildered expressions, these figures show animal life struggling toward consciousness, aspiring out of the inertia of the plastic vessel' (Kush, 1981 : 46). However, in March 1912, the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters' arrived in the Sackville Gallery in London, and Lewis's work soon began to register Futurist influences.

To understand what Futurism was, and why Lewis was attracted to it, one must understand the position of the artist in Italy at this time. Italy had only been a united country since 1861, and in art, 'provincialism' was the rule, as opposed to any idea of a truly Italian art (Tisdall, 1977). Until recently this was how Italy had remained; provincial and backward. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, Italy had begun to industrialise at an astonishing rate (Forgacs, 1990). To a young Italian

intellectual, stuck in what he might well have seen as a European backwater that had produced little in literature and nothing in pictorial art for about four hundred years the industrial revolution he saw taking place before his very eyes seemed the best chance to shake Italy out of its torpor. 'In the eyes of other countries, Italy is still a land of the dead, a vast Pompeii, white with sepulchres. But Italy is being reborn. Its political resurgence will be followed by a cultural resurgence. In the land inhabited by the illiterate peasant, schools will be set up; in the land where doing nothing in the sun was the only available profession millions of machines are already roaring,' as the 'Manifesto of Futurist Painters' of 1910 puts it (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 25). Thus the 'triumphant progress of science' is to be welcomed because it destroys the 'docile slaves of past tradition' and creates 'free moderns, who are confident in the radiant splendour of our future' (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 24-25). All the new technologies were therefore to be embraced and all the new ideas that went with them. Futurism was to be a mass movement (as opposed to old fashioned patrician authoritarianism). It would attempt to reach out to as wide an audience as possible (as opposed to both Symbolist élitism, and the patrician attitudes of the (again, old fashioned) Catholic Church) and would use every technique; including shock, to shake Italians out of their torpor (Tisdall, 1977). The aggressiveness of some of these tactics should not obscure the fact that Futurism aspired to be a mass movement; it would turn its back on the élitism of the previous century (especially, of course, the ivory tower élitism of the aesthetes)

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(As Berghaus puts it 'The *Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism* implied that an aesthetic revolution could only be realised in conjunction with a total overhaul of society. Hence, his (i.e. Marinetti's) exaltation of the masses and the world of industrial labour' (Berghaus, 1996 : 47) and, later, 'Marinetti believed that theatre as a form of "cultural combat" would lead the artists out of their ivory towers and give them a chance "to participate, like the workers or soldiers, in the battle for world progress"' (Berghaus, 1996 : 73)).

The concomitant of this was that anything associated with the past would have to be destroyed. Futurists would 'Destroy the cult of the past, the obsession with the ancients, pedantry and academic formalism', and 'elevate all attempts at originality, however daring, however violent' (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 26) (the reasons for this, in a country practically created of the architecture and art of the Renaissance and the Romans, hardly needs to be stated). And so all philosophers, especially modern philosophers, that emphasised dynamic sensation were to be embraced. These included Nietzsche, Sorel, Bakunin, and, above all, Bergson (Tisdall, 1977).[3]

In his 'Futurist Dynamism and French Painting', Boccioni argues that attempts to show that Cubism was a Bergsonian art form were doomed to failure, because Cubism is ultimately the art of 'the static, tradition française, pure objectivity etc.' (Boccioni, 1973 : 109) (a charge that was to be repeated by the Vorticists). Instead only Futurist art could truly

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[3] The Futurist's hatred of the past, was, in fact, the least Bergsonian part of their programme. However, like Lewis, they were almost as profoundly influenced by Nietzsche, and they could have discovered similar views in works such as Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History* (Kern, 1983].

portray the fact that 'all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing' (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 27). Boccioni explicitly distances himself from other arts, such as the cinema, that one might have thought were attempting to do the same thing. 'Any accusations that we are merely being "cinematographic" make us laugh-they are just verbal idiocies. We are not trying to split each individual image-we are looking for a symbol, or better, a single form, to replace these old concepts of division with new concepts of continuity' (Boccioni, 1973 : 89): and he quotes Bergson to back him up (one should compare these statements with similar, Vorticist, polemics against the cinema). What Futurist painters were trying to do therefore, was to find a dynamic symbol that would portray the inner '*élan vital*' of an object. And Boccioni makes it clear that it is this use of Bergsonian thought that differentiates Futurism from Impressionism (Boccioni, 1973 : 89(see also Dasenbrock, 1985 : 49-50). These Bergsonian ideas show that 'Our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies. The motor bus rushes into the houses which it passes, and in their turn, the houses throw themselves upon the motor bus and are blended with it' (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 28). All categories of thought which people have built up over the centuries are now useless. The distinction between the spectator who looks at the art and the artist who produces it no longer exists. 'The construction of pictures has hitherto been foolishly traditional. Painters have shown us the objects and the people placed before us. We shall henceforth put the spectator in the centre of the picture,' And therefore

the distinction between the work of art itself and the 'reality' it is meant to portray has also broken down. 'We would at any price reenter into life. Victorious science has nowadays disowned its past in order the better to serve the material needs of our time; we would that art, disowning its past, were able to serve at last the intellectual needs which are within us' (Boccioni et al., 1973 : 28).

It is obvious why the Bergsonian Lewis would have found Bergsonian Futurism exciting. But Lewis was now living in London, and the intellectual scene was very different from that of Italy. As we have seen, the British intellectual *avant-garde* based around *The New Age* was dominated by men like Hulme and Orage; men who were terrified of the very 'flux' that the Futurists embraced. Lewis came under the influence of the Futurists in 1912, but shortly afterwards he became exposed to the anti-Bergsonian ideas of Hulme, and the pre-Bergsonian ideas of Pound. His work over the next two years might be seen as being an attempt to merge all their philosophies. For example his paintings of 'Timon of Athens' are amongst the first of his paintings to be done in a Futurist influenced style. And yet, the subject matter is something no Futurist would have chosen. For the Futurist the past was dead; but Lewis was already detached and contemplative where the Futurists were not. Lewis used Futurism as a method to analyse what interested him; and he would not be held back if he became interested in the past (Wagner points out, that, while it is true Lewis did not become interested in Hulme's thought until slightly later, he would have had access to the same Neo-Classical

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and anti-Bergsonian writers in Paris under whose influence Hulme created his own philosophy. This possibly explains why, right from the beginning of his exposure to the movement, Lewis kept a slight distance from the more messianic of its statements (Wagner, 1957 : 7-12)).

To analyse further Lewis's reliance on Bergson in his early work, it is necessary to reiterate that he began as a comic writer. He was thus most interested in Bergson's theory of the comic, as stated in his book *Laughter*. This made him unusual amongst his contemporaries. Most of the artists interested in Bergson were not comic writers and artists, and were therefore more interested in the thinking of *Creative Evolution*, or indeed, the last chapter of *Laughter* where Bergson describes his own theory of art, which he then compares to his theory of the comic, which he views as a different kind of art. Lewis started off, of course, by counterpointing the spontaneity of outcasts (criminals, peasants, and, implicitly, the artist) with the rigidity of the Bourgeoisie (Norman, 1992 : 20-23). This can be interpreted in Bergsonian terms, if one remembers that Bergson contrasting the spontaneous *élan vital* with the rigid world of the intellect. For Lewis, these people, who were in a sense outside society, represented the spontaneous flowing of the emotions, that is to say, people who were genuinely free from Bourgeois constrictions.The Bourgeoisie represent the ossified world of habit. Lewis at this point went out of the way to identify himself as an artist who was himself outside (and, one might infer, superior to) society; he was at this point very much the Vitalist Romantic rebel, with leanings towards anarchistic

egoism.[4] And this attitude of artistic superiority would make Bergson's theory of the comic immediately attractive. Bergson, as we have seen, contrasted the inner, turbulent, unpredictable, *élan vital* (a metaphysical notion) with the outer static, dead, and therefore predictable world of matter. The *élan vital* is the real inner life of an organism. It follows, then, that the matter of the body is 'something mechanical encrusted on something living' (Bergson, 1913 : 57) 'When did the comic come from in this case?' he asks. 'It came from the fact that the [...] living body ought to be the perfection of suppleness, the ever-alert activity of a principle at work [...] When we see only gracefulness and suppleness in a living body, it is because we disregard in it the elements of weight, of resistance, and in a word, of matter; we forget its materiality, and think only of its vitality, a vitality which we regard as derived from the very principle of intellectual and moral life. Let us suppose however, that our attention is drawn to this material side of the body' Then 'the body is no more in our eyes than a heavy and cumbersome vesture, a kind of irksome ballast which holds down to earth a soul eager to rise aloft' (Bergson, 1913 : 49-50). One can therefore view a human being in two ways. We can focus on the inner spontaneous essence, or the soul. Or one can concentrate on the outer, hard, immobile material body. This last approach is the comic viewpoint. And it follows that 'The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact

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[4] Brown writes 'They (i.e. Lewis's stories) depend on a lively narrative, filtered through the medium of a curious, generalising antagonist-raconteur, and the Vitalist self-expressiveness of the anti-heroic protagonists whose behavioural singularities are the centre of interest' (Brown,1990 : 34-35).

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proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine' (Bergson, 1913 : 2); in other words a creature of mere matter, with no animating soul. As we have seen earlier, Bergson thought that only the *élan vital* could be genuinely unpredictable; matter was subject to deterministic physics. It follows then that the body is inclined towards habit or automatism; only the soul is free. Humans are therefore, permanently at war with themselves, between the part of them that wishes freedom (the soul) and the part that does not (the body). This is where the comic artist comes in. Bergson takes the example of a man who stumbles and falls. Why do we laugh? We laugh, says Bergson, because there is an 'involuntary element in this change- clumsiness in fact [...] Through lack of elasticity[...] .as a result, in fact, of rigidity' (Bergson, 1913 : 9). In other words, when his mind should have compensated for his changed circumstances 'He did nothing of the sort, but continued like a machine in the same straight line' (Bergson, 1913 : 10). This, then is the essence of the comic, when mechanistic determined behaviour overwhelms spontaneous spiritual behaviour. The role of the comic artist, says Bergson, is to notice this, and laugh at it. What we must fear is 'that each one of us, content with paying attention to what affects the essentials of life, give way to the easy automatism of acquired habits' (Bergson, 1913 : 19) [...] 'This rigidity is the comic, and laughter is its corrective' (Bergson, 1913 : 21). To be a true Bergsonian comic, one must, paradoxically, become less Bergsonian. The Bergsonian artist usually attempts to empathise with the inner Bergsonian flux of a person. But

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this is precisely what the comic artist does *not* do. Instead he concentrates solely on the body, in order to laugh at its absurdities, its rigidity, its predictability; all so that the object of the laughter, chastened, will change his ways, and become more human. Thus there is a certain 'absence of feeling which usually accompanies laughter [...] laughter has no greater foe than emotion' The comic artist's most characteristic emotion is to 'look upon life as a disinterested spectator' (Bergson, 1913 : 5) *This*, and not the empathetic aesthetic, is the side of Bergson's thought that Lewis seized upon.

At the same time as he was writing about the freedom of Breton peasants, Lewis was also painting pictures like *The Celibate*. As the name suggests, this is a picture of someone who has stifled their inner life. Their face has become a 'geometric mask, cold and dehumanised' (Cork, 1976 :12). Lewis uses his discovery of Cubism to use geometrical forms to suggest inner deadness. Throughout 1911 and 1912, this linear side of his painting became more pronounced. As we have seen, by this time, Lewis had been exposed to both Futurism and Cubism. Lewis was interested in the Cubist's technique, but only insofar as it helped him express his geometrical tendencies. He was far more interested in Futurism. Futurism was bold, iconoclastic, and violent; moreover it expressed itself in Bergsonian terms, which Lewis would have approved of at this time. However, Lewis of course, was a comic Bergsonian, as opposed the empathetic Bergsonism that inspired the Futurists. Lewis had no intention of identifying with the flux. Moreover, he had also been

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introduced to T.E.Hulme. Hulme was influential on Lewis insofar as he introduced the ideas of 'Neo-Classicism' to him, and also for his enthusiasm for modern art in general. What appealed to Lewis about Neo-Classicism was its pessimism and from 1912 until 1914 he was to increasingly emphasise the abstract and geometrical character of his painting (Lewis, 1937).

His acceptance of (some) of Hulme's philosophy springs from an increasingly pessimistic conception of modernity. Lewis began to see the rational and organised nature of mass society as threatening the spontaneous inner being. This new organisation took the form of cities, science, and mankind's increasing enslavement to machines. However, whereas someone like D.H. Lawrence, in response to the same threat, emphasised the empathetic aspect of Bergsonism, and glorified the flux, Lewis's response was to grow increasingly sophisticated in portraying these new, static, dehumanising forms of life, in order to make people realise that this was what they were becoming (For Lewis, as for Bergson, comedy was an essentially moral form of art; there is therefore a thin line between Bergsonian comedy and satire, one that Lewis himself was to blur after the war).

The other main reason that Lewis kept at least some distance from Futurism right from the beginning, is that the artistic *avant garde* in England was strongly opposed to the movement. In 1913 A.R. Orage, the editor of the New Age had written: 'I received an invitation to the dinner hastily scratched up in honour of Signor Marinetti the Futurist by a

London committee, but I should as soon think of accepting it as accepting an invitation to dine with Barnum's freaks' (Orage, 1974 : 202). This was typical of the reaction of the time. Pound himself was antipathetic to Futurism, as was Hulme. The English *avant-garde* was more pessimistic, less forward looking, more in love with tradition than the Italians. Certainly the Italian urgings to break with tradition and abolish the past found no converts in London. As Lewis became increasingly involved with the Hulme and Pound circle, he became more influenced by them.[5]

But there is a deeper reason Lewis may have begun to feel increasingly wary of Futurism from about 1912 onwards. As we have seen the Futurists, following Bergson in their urge to break down barriers, wished to abolish the difference between 'art' and 'life'. This meant that the privileged Neo-Platonic metaphysical realm of art (posited by both Yeats and Pound) was to be abolished. Instead the task would become for the artist to aestheticise life. But if this was the case then a number of events would follow, and Futurists were beginning to follow the logic of their own arguments (Rainey, 1998 : 31-33). For if art was to integrate itself with life, then 'the concept of art will have to be enormously widened [...] There is no reason why every activity must of necessity be confined to one or other of those ridiculous limitations which we call music, literature, painting etc. [...] THEREFORE EVERY ARTIST WILL BE ABLE TO

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[5] See, for example, the statement Lewis made in 1915: 'A point to insist on is that the latest movement in the arts is, as well, as a great attempt to find the necessary formulas for our time, directed to *reverting to ancient standards of taste* ' (my italics), a statement that he would certainly not have made five years earlier. This phrase can not but remind us of Pater's similar statements (Lewis, 1969 : 97).

INVENT A NEW FORM OF ART' (Corradini and Settimelli, 1973 : 146) as a Futurist Manifesto of 1913 puts it. And so the *fin de siécle* idea of the artist as a 'social outcast' would be abolished . Instead, the artist would have to become reintegrated with society, even if that society was still a capitalist marketplace: 'THE PRODUCER OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY MUST JOIN THE COMMERCIAL ORGANISATION WHICH IS THE MUSCLE OF MODERN LIFE. MONEY IS ONE OF THE MOST FORMIDABLY AND BRUTALLY SOLID POINTS OF REALITY IN WHICH WE LIVE. IT IS ENOUGH TO TURN TO IT TO ELIMINATE ALL POSSIBILITIES OF ERROR AND UNPUNISHED JUSTICE' (Corradini and Settimelli, 1973 : 149).

And this, of course, is where we came in. For it was in response to the capitalist valuation of the work of art that Romantic Neo-Platonic aesthetics were formulated. Now, however, under the influence of Bergson, the privileged metaphysical world of art and the artist were to be abolished. And this brought back the spectre of relativism with a vengeance, for, according to the Futurists: 'THE KIND OF WORK HAS IN ITSELF NO VALUE: IT MAY ACQUIRE A VALUE THROUGH THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH IT IS PRODUCED' (Corradini and Settimelli, 1973 : 149). This is fundamentally to treat the work of art as a commodity; the fear of which, as we have seen, motivated the Romantics and all who followed them. The Romantics, of course (and Yeats and Pound), posited a metaphysical realm to give a foundationalist defence of aesthetic and moral value. This, however, is what the most advanced Futurists were attacking. The idea of an 'objective' set of metaphysical values becomes meaningless

when you have destroyed the metaphysics from which it derives. Nor is the aestheticisation of life as unambiguously positive as it might sound. For if everything is art then nothing is art, and who is to tell the difference? The spectre of relativism raises its head again.[6] Lewis would have become aware of these problems through his conversations with Pound and Hulme. Both of these men were of course desperately worried that aesthetic and moral values were under attack from the new materialism, and from about 1912 onwards, Lewis began to think that unrestrained Bergsonism, such as the Futurist's, would help this state of affairs to come about. He consequently began to modify his adherence to Futurism's praise of the blurring of boundaries. Only by keeping life and art firmly separated (as they had been kept by the Symbolists, and of course, Pound and Yeats) could art be safeguarded. And so Lewis began to revert to a Platonistic approach to metaphysics. Instead of the flowing *élan vital* it was more coherent for an artist to posit a static metaphysical world (and therefore set of values). Thus when Marinetti attempted to convert Lewis to Futurism in 1913 the following conversation ensued (Lewis claimed later):

'Why don't you announce you are a Futurist!' he (Marinetti) asked me squarely.
'Because I am not one', I answered, just as point blank and to the point.

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[6] Which would lead to the possibility of the redundancy of art. 'What is the use of taking all the useful Gods and Goddesses away, and leaving the artist with no role in the social machine, except that of entertainer or businessman?' (Cork, 1985 : 245) he asked after the war. This, of course, is the theme of all the writers I have deal with in this thesis. In the new 'social machine' the artist would have no role except that of entertainer (what I have earlier called 'creator of playthings for the Bourgeoisie') or businessman (the role the Futurists aped, but could never achieve). Compare Yeats earlier on the 'arts have failed' and Pound: 'The art of letters will come to an end before A.D. 2000' (Carpenter, 1988 : 913).

'Yes. But what's it matter!' said he with great impatience.

'It's most important,' I replied rather coldly.

'Not at all!' said he. 'Futurism is good. It is all right'

'Not too bad,' said I. 'It has its points. But you Wops insist too much on the machine. You're always driving on about these driving-belts, you are always exploding about internal combustion. We've had machines here in England for donkey's years. They're no novelty to us.'

'You have never understood your machines! You have never known the *ivresse* of travelling at a kilometre a minute. Have you ever travelled at a kilometre a minute?'

'Never.' I shook my head energetically. 'Never. I loathe anything that goes too quickly. If it goes too quickly, it is not there'

'It is not there!' he thundered for this had touched him on the raw. 'It is only when it goes quickly that it is there!'

'That is nonsense', I said. 'I cannot see a thing that is going too quickly.'

'See it - see it! Why should you want to see?' he exclaimed. 'But you do see it. You see it multiplied a thousand times. You see a thousand things instead of one thing' [...]

'That's just what I don't want to see. I am not a futurist.' I said. 'I prefer one thing.'

'There is no such thing as one thing.'

'There is if I wish to have it so. And I wish to have it so.'

'You are a monist!' he said at this, with a contemptuous glance, curling his lip.

'All right. I am not a futurist anyway. *Je hais le mouvement qui deplace les lignes.*'

At this quotation he broke into a hundred angry pieces. 'And you "never weep" - I know I know. Ah *zut alors!* What a thing to be an Englishman!' (Lewis, 1937 : 103)

This conversation illustrates that Lewis had two main objections to Futurism; firstly the worship of the machine. He states, accurately, that Britain had had a century of industrialisation; the notion of the machine was not new, (and therefore not liberating) in the same way as it was for a comparatively 'backward' country like Italy. Secondly, by 1913, Lewis

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was (he said) falling out of love with Bergsonism. By quoting Baudelaire he admitted that he was moving backwards to a pre-Bergsonian Neo-Platonic position; even admitting that he was a Monist.

However, one must remember that these statements were uttered during an argument; moreover, an argument that Lewis was remembering in 1937; twenty five years after it happened, and at the height of his anti-Bergsonism. At the time it is doubtful that he would have expressed such openly anti-Bergsonian sentiments; certainly, as I will show, an analysis of *Blast* (written in 1914) shows that it was still steeped in Futurist and Bergsonian thought. But it *does* show that, by 1913, Lewis was beginning to become uneasy with the implications of Marinetti's movement. This feeling intensified in the run up to the First World War.

Between 1910 and 1912, Lewis had concentrated on his stories and his early, Cubist influenced, paintings. However, in 1912 he was introduced to Roger Fry; at this point the leading Bloomsbury theorist of the *avant-garde*. It was as a result of Fry's influence that Lewis's work was placed alongside paintings by Picasso, Matisse and Braque in the 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition' in the October of that year (Cork, 1976 : 48). Despite Lewis's later repudiation of Bloomsbury, he must have been flattered to have been specially chosen by England's leading artistic theorist (Hulme had not begun to write about art at this time) and the feeling was mutual. Fry went out of his way to praise Lewis's efforts. Lewis's next task was a commission for a series of paintings to illustrate a special edition of Shakespeare's 'Timon of Athens'. As I have said,

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accepting such a commission shows that while Lewis was technically a Futurist at this point, he was far from slavishly adhering to Futurist dogma. No genuine Futurist would have contemplated illustrating a play that was not contemporary, or dealt with a contemporary theme. Moreover, it is possible to infer that Lewis was also moving away from the Futurist idea of the artist reinventing himself as simply a kind of engineer, with as fixed a place in society. The theme of Timon is of a 'nobleman turned misanthrope who is driven into the wilderness by an alien and totally materialist society' (Cork, 1976 : 45), and this might well be taken as a symbol for Lewis's own position as an artist.

Early in 1913 Fry formed the Omega workshops; and attempt to bring together the cream of British 'progressive' painters in order to create such 'practical' things as bedspreads, cushion covers etc. But by this time friction was showing between him and Lewis. The Omega project was a clear descendant of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement, whereas Lewis, given his knowledge of the Continental *avant-garde*, was already pushing towards something more revolutionary. Moreover there were personal differences between the two men, which manifested themselves in bickering about money. Underlying all these differences, however, was a more fundamental difference in temperament between Lewis and Bloomsbury. For example, the Bloomsbury circle remained implacably hostile to Futurism, whereas Lewis was impressed by the Marinetti's belligerence (though dubious about some parts of his programme) (Cork, 1976). Moreover, what Lewis saw as sentimental Bloomsbury

optimism was beginning to grate; Lewis had, as we have seen, begun to read Hulme, and become influenced by the pessimism of his 'Neo-Classicism'. The simmering hostility finally exploded in July, when, after yet another fight about money, Lewis cut himself loose from the Omega. He took with him three other artists furious with Fry's tightfistedness; Etchells, Hamilton and Wadsworth; all artists he had met through the Omega (they were to become the backbone of English Vorticism). It was at this time, too that he began to think about writing an English Futurist Manifesto, to explain clearly the difference between his aesthetic and Bloomsbury's. Marinetti apparently heard of these disputes, and hurried back to England for another lecture tour; whereas before he had been greeted with derision, it now seemed that there was a group of English painters who were working along Futurist lines. He therefore returned in November 1913. It is worth bearing in mind, (given his later repudiation of the movement) that Lewis was amongst those who organised a banquet in Marinetti's honour (Cork, 1976).

However, it was at this very same banquet that Marinetti fatally offended Lewis's pride by paying too much attention to the young English Futurist painter Nevinson. He compounded his error by addressing a letter written the next day to Nevinson, as though Nevinson was the leader of the English Futurists. This was probably decisive in distancing Lewis from Futurism. In his notes to the 'Cubist Room' exhibition of late 1913, for the first time he began to criticise the movement (Cork, 1976) (this is assuming, as seems highly likely, that his conversation with

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Marinetti, reprinted earlier, did not take place in the way that Lewis chose to remember it). However, there was no question, as of yet, of breaking with the Futurist aesthetic. Instead, Lewis's next plan was simply to bring English artists together, to create a new 'establishment' to rival Bloomsbury. This new grouping was to become the London Group; a non-partisan association of *avant-garde* English painters. Though technically under Bloomsbury dominion (Sickert) it was in fact far more radical than anything Bloomsbury was normally able to countenance. Though it had no ostensible aesthetic, it marked the increasing influence of the more aggressive theories of Hulme over those of Sickert and Fry. Hulme had by now formed his 'Anti-Humanist' philosophy (see below), and was now writing frequent reviews of London Group painters. He also started to socialise with them, and it was at this point, in early 1914, that, under Hulme's influence, Lewis probably first began to have doubts about Bergsonism (it is very difficult to say, because Lewis published few articles between 1912 and Summer 1914).

In early 1914 yet another fight occurred; this time between Sickert and Lewis. Lewis broke with the London Group, and again he took the most uncompromising of his contemporaries with him. This time there was to

be no turning back. Lewis and his friends had broken completely with all the artistic establishments in London at this time, and, to press home the point, the first task he set himself was to set up an alternative and rival to the Omega Workshops, to be called the Rebel Art Centre. It should

again be noted that one of the first things the centre did was to ask Marinetti to give yet another talk, which he did in the Spring of 1914. A list of the people who associated with the Centre is a summary of the people who have been discussed so far; Pound, Ford Madox Ford, Hulme, Lewis, the English painters. Gaudier-Brzeska (a French sculptor and painter, who was first discovered by Pound), had also become associated with the group (Cork, 1976).

The Rebel Art Centre was on the very 'cutting edge' of British *avant-garde* painting. Yet there was still no talk of a dissociating themselves from the broader movements of Continental Modernism, let alone forming a separate movement. Lewis sometimes asked people to make out cheques to 'The Cubist Art Centre', and as the talks of Marinetti show, there was still no official distancing of themselves from Futurism. The name by which they were known was still considered irrelevant, and they seemed as happy to be called Cubists or Futurists as anything else (Cork, 1976). However, this does not mean that Lewis, Gaudier et al. (let alone Pound) *were* Futurists. For a start, a new influence was starting to make itself felt; Expressionism (which at this time mainly meant Kandinsky). The English found Kandinsky's (essentially metaphysical) notion of 'Pure Form' particularly attractive, in that it acted as a balance to the Bergsonism of Futurism (In 1913, Boccioni had said that "In sculpture, therefore, we are not necessarily looking for *pure form*, but for *pure plastic rhythm*' i.e. a moving metaphysical object as opposed to a static metaphysical object which was, essentially,what Kandinsky's

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theories argued in favour of) (Boccioni, 1973 : 93). Moreover, by 1914 Lewis (and many of the others) were beginning to have doubts about the Bergsonism that, as they saw it, underlay Futurism (see below).

Nevinson, (mentioned earlier), on the other hand, was far more unambiguously attracted to the Italian movement. and after Marinetti had failed to convince Lewis that he should openly state his allegiance to the movement (in the conversation quoted earlier) he approached Nevinson. And so, on June 7 1914, the 'VITAL ENGLISH ART FUTURIST MANIFESTO' was published in The Observer, The Times and the Daily Mail. This followed the, by now, standard Futurist format ('HURRAH for motors! HURRAH for speed! HURRAH for lightning' it went in part) (Cork, 1976 : 228-229). However, the really controversial part of the manifesto was the last paragraph, when Marinetti and Nevinson claimed that 'ATKINSON, BOMBERG, EPSTEIN, ETCHELLS, HAMILTON, NEVINSON, ROBERTS, WADSWORTH, WYNDHAM LEWIS' (Cork, 1976 : 230) were all Futurists. This was a list of practically everyone who was associated with the Rebel Art Centre, and Marinetti had no right to make any such statement. The artists, who before had not really cared how they were referred to, were outraged that Marinetti had so arrogantly annexed them to his own movement. This, finally, was the chance Lewis had been looking for. He had been planning a Futurist Manifesto of his own since the Winter of 1913, and he had been writing it, on and off, since that point. Now however, Marinetti's arrogance had polarised the English artists. It would no longer be enough to simply label themselves as

Futurists. They had to distance themselves from the movement. A new name would have to be found. Pound came up with the word 'Vorticist' (Lewis, 1937), which he had been using, in his own sense, for the previous seven years; and the movement was born (naturally enough, the word had occult and mystical overtones (Carpenter, 1988 : 247)). Thus, *Blast*, which was published a month later, was no longer simply an English Futurist manifesto. Instead, it had now become the journal of 'Vorticism'.

Thus, unlike Futurism, (but like Imagisme) Vorticism was not a movement with agreed upon goals and ideas. Instead, it was an *ad hoc* movement, created as a response and as a challenge to Cubism, Expressionism and (mainly) Futurism. As regards *Blast*, the original plan had been for the magazine to be co-written with Nevinson, the one confirmed Futurist, and it was Nevinson who had actually thought of naming the magazine *Blast* (Wees, 1972 : 159). The articles in the magazine itself had been written at various points over the previous six months. Some of them express allegiance to Futurist ideas, some of them,(written later) repudiate the movement. Moreover, its creation was essentially polemical, to distance the English from the overbearing arrogance of Marinetti. If Marinetti had not published his English Futurist Manifesto, there is no doubt that *Blast* would have been published, but as a Futurist, not a Vorticist, Manifesto.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Vorticism is a meaningless concept. For, as we have seen, despite the fact that Lewis was basically a Futurist, he had major differences with the Italian movement,

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differences, which were, moreover, getting wider. And so, *Blast* is significant not just in itself, but as a harbinger of the changes that were going to take place in Lewis's own aesthetic after the war (In this chapter I will be discussing mainly the manifestos published in *Blast*. I should add that there was also a Vorticist play 'The Enemy of the Stars' which was, again, clearly influenced by German Expressionism. As it does not deal specifically with the themes I am dealing with here, however, discussion of it is outwith the scope of this dissertation. See Materer, 1976 and Dasenbrock, 1985).

Vorticism is, therefore, Lewis's attempt to take what he views as important out of Futurism and balance it with the new discovery of Expressionism (which, to repeat, at this point meant Kandinsky). Surprisingly, Lewis (even though Vorticism ostensibly consisted of a wide variety of artists, only Lewis, Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska actually wrote manifestos. Pound's section will be deal with later, but Lewis wrote by far the majority of *Blast* : it is therefore reasonable to view the movement in his terms) rarely mentions Cubism. Cubism was a movement he had not really been interested in since 1912, and it was moreover, not a metaphysical movement (as Expressionism and Futurism certainly were). Cubism therefore had little interest for Lewis, and is little discussed in *Blast's* first issue (In *Blast's* second, and final, issue, he wrote 'the whole of the modern movement, is, we maintain, under a cloud. That cloud is the exquisite, and accomplished, but discouraged and sentimental, and inactive, personality of Picasso. We must disinculpate ourselves of Picasso

at once' and continues 'We applaud the vivacity and high-spirits of the Italian Futurists' (Lewis, 1967 : 41)).[7]

However, despite all this, Lewis still had a number of objections to Futurism. Firstly there was its machine worship (or its 'Automobilism' as he calls it (Lewis, 1989 : 33-34)). Lewis echoes Pound in accusing Futurism of being mainly 'Impressionism up to date' i.e. a basically realist movement (Lewis, 1967 : 143), one which, moreover, is guilty of sentimentally worshipping 'progress'. 'Futurism [...] is in its narrow sense and in the history of modern painting, is a picturesque, superficial, and romantic rebellion of young Milanese painters against the Academicism that surrounded them' (Lewis, 1967 : 143). He therefore sees that Futurism is a reaction to Italy's backwardness, and the speed of its industrialisation. But note this is in its narrower sense; Lewis is aware that there is more to it than this. His deeper objection is to their optimism. Lewis himself, in 'The New Egos' portrays a bleaker view of the future than the fundamentally naive vision of the Italians. Because of the new mass culture that is arising, Lewis argued, humanity begins to lose its respect for the individual, and, instead, value the idea of the group; 'We are all today (possibly with a coldness reminiscent of the insect world) in each other's vitals-overlap, intersect, and are Siamese to any extent'. This does not mean that modern men are less egotistical than men of the past, merely that their 'egoism takes a different form'. Moreover, because of the exigencies of organising people in a mass

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[7] And see Lewis's vigorous defence of Futurism in July 1914, *after the* publication of *Blast* Issue One, in an essay entitled (significantly) 'A Futurist's Reply to Mr G.K. Chesterton' (Lewis, 1989).

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society, society becomes rationalised (Lewis's thought seems to have affinities with Weber here) 'such separating things as love, friendship, hatred, are superseded by a more realistic and logical passion'. Thus in the modern world, rationality takes the place of emotion, the mass takes the place of the individual, and therefore, 'Dehumanisation is the diagnostic of the modern world' (Lewis, 1967 : 141). Looking into the future, Lewis foresees a state in which individuality will be extinguished by a rationalised (and omnipresent) state apparatus: 'We all foresee [...] in a century or so men and women being put to be at 7 o'clock by a state nurse (separate beds, of course!)' (Lewis, 1967 : 144).

Now the language of this passage is strongly reminiscent of Bergson's language in *Laughter* (Cf. Bergson, 1913 : 20-21).[8] The difference is that Bergson optimistically portrayed society as attempting to encourage individuality; in other words the comedian (who does the same thing) was, in Bergson's view, incorporated into society and working *for* society. Lewis is, however, more pessimistic. For him it is modern society *itself* that is the problem. Instead of encouraging individuality, but being held back by the the persistent few who insist on acting in the stereotyped attitudes of the slave, Lewis, instead, sees modern society as a whole as being intent on exterminating individuality. The comic artist is therefore outside of society laughing not at individuals, (or not just at individuals) but at society *en masse*. The Futurists had welcomed the new and looked forward to a brighter future. Lewis, however, anticipated a future in which genuine individuality would be exterminated, because the

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8 As well as Bergson, there are clear echoes of Nietzsche in *Blast* (Bridgewater, 1972).

élan vital that created an individual's freedom would have become completely suppressed by the oppressive forces of the new machine civilisation. (there is of course no precedent for this belief in Bergson's own theories.) 'Human insanity has never flowered so colossally' as he puts it (Lewis, 1967 : 145).

Whether Lewis had moved away from Bergson in other respects is not clear. Since, as a comic artist, Lewis was less interested in the interior of a person and more interested in the exterior, he rarely discusses the empathetic aesthetic which is the basis of conventional Bergsonism. Nevertheless, at times his language is strongly Bergsonian[9] and it is clear that he views art as a metaphysical and internal capability and one that is under threat by the increasing materialism of the modern age. As we have seen, Lewis had begun to see (no matter that he remained a Bergsonian in other ways) that the Bergsonian emphasis on blurring boundaries might lead to relativism. Much of *Blast* is therefore an attempt to argue against this part of the Futurist programme. When he writes 'Our vortex insists on water tight compartments' (Lewis, 1967 : 147) he is stating the most profound difference between Futurism and Vorticism. Futurism of course, wanted to blur every distinction, especially the distinction between art and life. However, if there is one thing Lewis insists on over and over again, it is that art and life must be kept firmly separated. On a deeper level than merely that they were realists, this is his major objection to the Impressionists and the

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9 For example, compare 'Comedy lies midway between art and life' (Bergson, 1913 : 170) and 'It is all a matter of the most delicate adjustment between the voracity of Art and digestive quality of Life' (Lewis, 1967 : 134). There are numerous other examples.

Futurists. His essay '"Life is the Important thing!"' (the title is of course ironic) is an attempt to show that Impressionism posited Life and Nature as being the same thing. Therefore, by concentrating on painting Nature, they were inadvertently promoting the myth that only Nature (and therefore Life) is of any consequence, and that art is parasitic upon it. Lewis is uncompromising. 'For those men who look to Nature for support, she does not care. "Life" is a hospital for the weak and incompetent. "Life" is a retreat for the defeated [...] There is only one thing better than life [...] and that is something very abstruse and splendid, in no way directly dependent on "Life". It is no EQUIVALENT for life, but ANOTHER life, as necessary to existence as the former' (Lewis, 1967 : 136). This other 'thing' is, of course, the metaphysical world of art. And so, in the same way, the Futurists do the same thing. The difference is that the Impressionists *inadvertently* blurred the distinction between art and life, whereas the Futurists did it explicitly; on the contrary, they proclaimed it. In his long essay 'Futurism, Magic and Life', Lewis argues that the main problem with Futurism is that 'Everywhere LIFE is said instead of ART' and that 'In Northern Europe, for the last half century the intellectual world has developed savagely in one direction-that of Life' (Lewis, 1967 : 132).

But why did Lewis oppose this trend so vehemently? One reason is that he identified the increasing dehumanising effect of mass culture as part of a trend of blurring distinctions between life and art, the individuals and the mass. And the result of this was that the artist, who previously

had a specified role in society, finds himself in a more and more ambiguous situation. And this lets in the spectre of relativism; the ghost that had terrified Yeats, Pound and Hulme. In 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work', Lewis discusses Picasso's sculpture, and it is obvious that what worries him about it is that it blurs the distinction between sculpture and engineering. 'They (i.e. the sculptures) imitate like children the large, unconscious, serious machines and contrivances of modern life [...] Most of Picasso's work (on canvas as well) is a kind of machinery. Yet these machines neither propel nor make any known thing; they are machines without a purpose' (Lewis, 1967 : 140). What Lewis is saying here, is that in an advanced capitalist industrial society, the people with the real power are businessmen and the men who build the machines which enable capital to function; engineers. It is therefore, natural for the artist, whose position is jeopardised by the industrial process which businessmen control (and the cultural effects of this process; the title of the essay is significant here), to don, as it were, the robes of the powerful in an attempt to justify their own existence. And so, (says Lewis), artists increasingly pretend to be businessmen or engineers.[10] What Lewis points out is that this approach is doomed to failure. Picasso's sculptures pretend to be machines; i.e. to be useful in a utilitarian way; but of course it is a bluff; they are not really useful in this

[10] Lewis would have become aware of this new attitude simply by studying the Futurists. 'One notes, for example, that the Futurists' image of themselves as artists, their attitudes towards society and their methods differed markedly from those who preceded them [...] Rather than accepting and propagating the comfortable clichés about the artist as a dishevelled but proud escapist loner, they were fashionably dressed and appeared easy-going; their projected image was that of energetic and powerful world leaders or industrialists [...] the Futurists faced the fact that in order to put their creative views across they had to employ the methods (and some of the attitudes) of the controlling sectors of society' (Martin, 1973: 19).

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sense at all. 'A work of art could not start from such a purpose as the manufacture of nibs or nails'. Picasso's sculptures, says Lewis, are caught between two stools; they are of no use as machines, yet because of their *faux* utilitarian uses, they cannot be art either. And so Picasso's art merely makes us ask 'In the experiments of modern art we come face to face with the question of the *raison d'être* of Art more acutely than before, and the answer comes more clearly and unexpectedly' (Lewis, 1967 : 140). As the title of the essay implies Lewis's worry was that in the modern world art would be shown to have *no raison d'être*; that the system of values that had upheld Western art since the dawn of the Christian era would be destroyed by relativistic philosophy and the repressive trend of twentieth century culture (his reasons for the rise of relativism are, therefore, slightly different from Yeats's, but the end result is the same). Picasso's sculpture, by blurring the distinction between art (sculpture) and life (machinery) could help create a state of affairs where this could become possible.

In affirming (in defiance of Bergson) that boundaries must not be blurred, Lewis was led to question the deepest assumption of Bergsonism; that the real metaphysical world behind the world of appearances was one of flux. It was because of this assumption that the Futurists had ended up along a course, that, Lewis thought, might end up in a world of (as he put it later) *Men Without Art*. Now, Lewis had become influenced by Hulme's theories of original sin and by his concern for the future of value, and it might well be thought that he might have gone along the

route of Hulme; that is, attempting to find an objectivist, but non-metaphysical basis for moral and aesthetic standards (as Hulme was to find, around 1915, in the work of Husserl and Moore). But he did not do this.[11] Instead, he began to reconsider his support for the metaphysical 'flux', which, Bergson had claimed underlay reality. Given that, when taken to its logical conclusion, it seemed to lead to undesirable consequences, might it not be better to revert to the older view (which his close friend Pound already held) that metaphysical reality consisted of stasis and not flux? He would have been helped along this road by his discovery, early in 1914, of the Expressionists; specifically Kandinsky. Edward Wadsworth, a fellow painter, had written an essay, 'Inner Necessity' for *Blast*, that quoted extensively from Kandinsky's 'On the Spiritual In Art' and Pound especially found Kandinsky's theories to be congenial (In his 'Vortex', he wrote 'Picasso and Kandinsky, father and mother of the movement (i.e. Vorticism) (Pound, 1967 : 154)).

Kandinsky had written, in a manifesto published in *Blast*, that the basic force of art was Inner Necessity, which he defined as: 'The inevitable desire to express the objective [...] which extracts ONE universal form from the subjective' and that the development of art is 'a progressive expression of the eternally objective within the temporarily subjective' (Wadsworth, 1967 : 120). This concentration on the metaphysically objective and eternal fitted in well with Pound's Neo-Platonism, as did his emphasis on mystical form (this seems to have been the inspiration for

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11 Because he was a metaphysical thinker; moreover, an idealist (to the point of praising Bishop Berkeley, in which he was preceded, of course, by Yeats) (Materer, 1979).

Lewis's essay on 'Feng-Shui and Contemporary Form'). It seemed to act as a counter to Futurist subjectivism, flux, and formlessness (The Futurists themselves seemed to recognise this, with Carra attacking 'Contemplative Idealism' which he claimed was 'contaminating the pictorial constructions of the Expressionists' (Carra, 1973 : 111)). And when Lewis claims that 'The Vorticist is at his maximum point of energy when stillest' (in an essay which was one of the last to be written), he is positing a metaphysical position that is closer to Kandinsky's (and Pound's) than the Futurists (Lewis, 1967 : 145).[12]

But this does not mean that Lewis was simply distancing himself from Futurism in order to proclaim himself a convert to Expressionism. Lewis's objection to Kandinsky were twofold. Firstly, Kandinsky used his theory of Pure Form to justify abstraction. But Lewis was not an abstractionist. He writes 'The finest Art is not pure Abstraction, nor is it unorganised life' (Lewis, 1967 : 134). As Cork (1976) makes clear, most of Vorticist paintings that look abstract, are, in actual fact, fundamentally representational; in fact it is doubtful if *any* of the Vorticists ever produced genuinely abstract paintings. To deal solely with the metaphysical world of pure form would be to go too far, as Lewis implies; the Vorticist was to stay outside life, but still in contact with it (cf. Dasenbrock (1985) for a discussion of the extent to which the Vorticists wished to stay apart from, but in contact with life). Secondly Kandinsky was, like the Futurists, too optimistic; 'there are fields of discord untouched' (Lewis, 1967 : 142) as Lewis writes.

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12 For further links between Vorticism and Expressionism, see Weisstein, 1973.

In conclusion, then, Lewis began as a convinced Bergsonian Futurist, but, under the influence of Hulme and Pound, began to worry that abolishing the metaphysical distinction between Art and Life would let in relativism, and endanger the position of the artist (the dilemma that faced Pater at the beginning of this thesis). To ask whether *Blast* is fundamentally a Futurist magazine or not, is therefore, futile; the magazine (written over quite a long period of time) shows Lewis in the process of moving away from Bergson, a process that would not be complete until after the war. His Vorticism, as he sums it up at the end, is edging towards Neo-Platonism: 'Life is the Past and the Future; the Present is Art' he concludes 'the Past and the Future are the Prostitutes Nature has provided. Art is periodic escapes from this Brothel' (Lewis, 1967 : 148). Art is therefore posited as being a timeless metaphysical world; an escape from 'reality'. And this is where Lewis's views agree with those of Pound.

Chapter Ten: Ezra Pound and Vorticism.

We have seen, then, that Lewis saw Vorticism as a way to take on board the innovations of Futurism, whilst at the same time avoiding their 'Romantic' exaltation of the machine, and safeguarding the position of art. However, Pound was also associated with the movement, and yet he came from a very different background from Lewis. What, then, did Pound mean by the word Vorticism?

Before we can discuss this, we must return to the thought of T.E.Hulme. As we have seen, by 1912, Hulme had evolved a theory of 'Neo-Classicism'. However, in 1913 he discovered Byzantine art, and the theories of Wilhelm Worringer and it was under the influence of these two that Hulme's Neo-Classicism became 'Anti-Humanism'. In his book *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer had argued that there were two basic artistic urges, Empathy (or which manifested itself in terms of Realism) and Abstraction. Worringer argued that the initial artistic impulse in humanity had been towards abstraction, not representation. This was because 'the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world; in a religious sense it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions' (Worringer, 1953 : 15). Primitive people were terrified of relativism and the flux of reality, and thus had 'an immense need for tranquillity' (Worringer, 1953 : 16). Therefore: 'The primitive artistic impulse has nothing to do with the rendering of nature. It seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture, and creates out of itself, with instinctive necessity, geometric abstraction. It is the consummate

expression, and the only expression of which man can conceive, of emancipation from all the contingency and temporality of the world-picture [...] he wishes to purify it (i.e. the artistic object) of life and temporality'. The best form of art to do this, for Worringer is the 'crystalline-geometric' (Worringer, 1953 : 44). Primitive man, for Worringer, was terrified of the flux of reality, and hankered after metaphysical certainties. Worringer can therefore argue that ancient peoples were, in a sense, primitive Kantians, desperate to perceive the 'thing in itself' (Worringer, 1953 : 18). The timelessness of this *'Ding an Sich'* would be represented by regularity and its 'antihuman' metaphysical nature, by the use of geometrical, 'inorganic' forms (Worringer, 1953 : 42). The religious form this will tend to take will be of monotheistic objectivism (or Neo-Platonism).

As Man develops, however, he 'masters' nature, by means of technology. He will begin to feel that he is 'at home in the world' (Worringer, 1953 : 45) and that life is good. He will no longer have the need for redemption from the world of appearances. Instead, he will start to trust his senses. He will cease to believe in the 'real' metaphysical world that lies behind the world of the senses. 'It is men of this earthly world who find satisfaction in [...] naturalism' (Worringer, 1953 : 48). He will anthropomorphise the world, and see his own vitality reflected in it; his 'artistic volition inclines towards the truth of organic life, that is, towards naturalism' (Worringer, 1953 : 14). Worringer uses the language of Bergson here to make it clear that he views this attitude, which he calls the 'Classical' attitude (by which

he means Classicism as understood by the artists of the Renaissance) as being Vitalist. Thus, realist artists support temporality as opposed to timelessness, the world of the senses as opposed to metaphysics, optimism as opposed to the desire for redemption, life as opposed to death. Worringer therefore views the history of Humanity as being one of Bergsonian vitalism versus Kantian (or Platonic) metaphysics. This was a view of the world that appealed to Hulme, and it is obvious that following Worringer, Hulme now began to think that realist art itself was associated with the 'progressive' 'relativist' world view he despised and feared. At the same time as he was reading Worringer, he saw Byzantine abstract art for the first time, as was obviously impressed by what he saw as their superiority to the tradition of 'Western' Renaissance realism (Hulme, 1994).

And so, as he had done with Bergson, Hulme cannibalised Worringer's philosophy to get what he wanted out of it. He stopped using the phrase Neo-Classical (mainly because Worringer had used that phrase to mean the Renaissance; cf. Levenson) and substituted the new phrase 'Anti-Humanist' (Humanism, of course, being associated with the Renaissance). The major change he makes in his appropriation is that while Worringer's theories were purely descriptive, Hulme's were prescriptive. Hulme states openly that he prefers the 'Abstract' worldview, which Worringer never does (although one might infer it from his general presentation). As we have seen, Hulme had already decided what he calls the 'Renaissance attitude' (secularism, relativism, rationality) was breaking up, and that it would be

replaced by its opposite; a new sociopolitical arrangement that would be objectivist in ethics and aesthetics. And so, when Hulme saw Cubist and Futurist paintings for the first time, he immediately decided that this was a sign that Western Art was returning to abstraction. He then made the even bigger assumption that because this was the case, the metaphysical outlook that inspired older abstract art (such as the Byzantine) would also return. As he says himself: 'I recognised this geometrical character reemerging in modern art' (Hulme, 1994 : 271). This seemed to confirm that a 'Neo-Classical' or 'Anti-Humanist' worldview would soon envelop the world. Hulme's philosophy of art therefore develops out of his 'Neo-Classical' dislike of 'the Renaissance attitude' (cf. Levenson, (1984) for a discussion of this. Levenson emphasises the difference between Hulme's Neo-Classicism and his Anti-Humanism more than I do, but the basic points we make are the same).

When he begins to discuss his 'new' philosophy we will therefore not be surprised to discover that the continuity of his position is much more striking than any changes. He is keen, as before, to state that just because he is championing modern art, this does not mean that he in any way approves of 'novelty' (Hulme, 1994 : 263). On the contrary, just as with Neo-Classicism, this new kind of art is in actual fact a return to the values of the past; specifically the non-representational art of ancient Egypt and Byzantium. Hulme has created a theory and then argues back to look at the actual art that he believes exemplifies it. He is not, therefore, interested in all modern art; merely the art that confirms his own beliefs. He therefore

divides Modern Art into three main groups; 'Post Impressionism, analytical Cubism and a new constructive geometrical art' (Hulme, 1994 : 264) and makes it clear he will only talk about the third kind. As he writes: 'You get at the present moment in Europe a most extraordinary confusion in art [...] So confusing is it that most people lump it altogether as one movement and are unaware that it is in fact composed of a great many distinct and even contradictory elements [...] When I speak of a new complex geometrical art then, I am not thinking of the whole movement. I am speaking of one element which seems to be gradually hardening out, and separating itself from the others. I don't want anyone to suppose, for example, that I am speaking of Futurism which is, in its logical form, the exact opposite of the art I am describing, being the deification of the flux, the last efflorescence of impressionism [...] I also exclude [...] post-impressionism' (Hulme, 1994 : 277). (These are of course, almost exactly the words with which Pound condemned Futurism in *Gaudier-Brzeska* and Lewis condemned it in *Blast*). Hulme's criticism is more searching, however. As well as describing Futurism as 'impressionist' (i.e. a sort of kinetic realism) Hulme also, correctly, perceives that the Futurist vision owes a great deal to Bergson, and vitalist thought generally. And given his Action Française inspired dislike of Bergson, by the logic of his own position, once Hulme saw that Bergson inspired the Futurists, he then *had* to oppose Futurism. Hulme also goes out of his way to express his dislike of Cubism, except insofar as it inspires 'the new geometric art' (Hulme, 1994 : 281). Hulme views Cubism as a beginning, not an end, as an art form that presages 'geometrical art'

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but that has failed to achieve this end. Hulme saw the school that most closely approximated his own ideas as being what we now call Vorticism, and this is the only branch of Modern Art he writes of with approval.

In his only major essay on what he believes is happening to art, 'Modern art and Its Philosophy', Hulme gives what is basically a *précis* of Worringer's ideas. Primitive people, he writes, 'Live in a world whose lack of order and seeming arbitrariness must inspire them with a certain fear [...] In art this state of mind results in a desire to create certain abstract geometrical shapes, which, being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature' (Hulme, 1994 : 274). This 'fear of the flux' Hulme identified with the religious impulse, and of course it is paralleled by Hulme's own fear of relativism. This attitude came to be menaced by 'rationalism' (Hulme 1994 : 274) and 'relativism' (Hulme, 1994 : 275), which eventually led to the Renaissance, and the rise of realism. When Hulme talks about the Renaissance he makes clear that what he objects to in the Renaissance outlook is what he once objected to in Romanticism. 'In the Renaissance [...] you get the hint of an idea [...] which is the opposite of the idea of original sin; the belief that man as a part of nature was after all something satisfactory' (Hulme 1994 : 270). And so Hulme, in his writing on art, has merely expanded his 'Neo-Classical' ideas. The main difference is that, under the influence of Worringer, Hulme now sees realism itself as being part of the relativism-secularism-romanticism-democracy etc. complex of undesirable ideas. Worringer had shown (thought Hulme) that not only is the Neo-Classical idea the

preferable approach to life, it actually predates the Renaissance ideas that it was supposed to be a reaction to. Therefore, when the Renaissance attitude breaks up, it will not mean that any thing new has happened. On the contrary, it will merely mean that Man has returned to his oldest beliefs. The 'Anti-human' is a return to the most primitive view point of humanity, in which 'geometrical regularity' (Hulme 1994 : 274) is counterpointed to the 'optimistic rationalism' (Hulme 1994 : 275), which Hulme had spent his whole life arguing against. The stasis of 'dead crystalline forms' is the antithesis of the cult of 'progress' (Hulme 1994 : 274). The art of the future, which would be the art of the new 'Religious' attitude, would, therefore, be abstract, geometrical, and inorganic. It would, in other words, be much like the art of the distant past.

There would be one difference. Instead of patterns, the new art would probably model itself on machinery, because, according to Hulme, we now live in a world surrounded by machinery, and it is likely that contemporary artists will use them for aesthetic ends (Hulme, 1994). These arguments are important, because they were obviously a profound influence on Wyndham Lewis, and, to a lesser extent, Pound. As we have seen, when Lewis came to London he he was a convinced Romantic vitalist. However, by the time he came to write *Blast'* he was echoing Hulme in his emphasis on stasis, 'deadness' and geometry, and in opposing Bergson (the case is different with Pound: Pound was never a Bergsonian). And Pound himself, in his own idiosyncratic fashion, was soon to follow Hulme's move towards 'Anti-Humanism'.

On February the Sixteenth 1914 Pound attended the lecture where Hulme unveiled his new doctrine of 'Anti-Humanism'. Pound had little intellectual understanding of what was said, (he called the lecture 'unintelligible' (Pound, 1980 : 179), but he eagerly jumped on Hulme's ideas. Pound had just left Yeats at Stone Cottage, where, as we have seen, Yeats encouraged him in his élitist ideas. Now he returned to England and was pleased to see, as he saw it, an even more uncompromising élitism developing. Hulme meant Anti-Humanism to mean an anti-metaphysical defence of 'objectivism' in ethics and aesthetics, but for Pound the word meant exactly what it said; to be opposed to the majority of humanity. Moreover he immediately gave the word an occult and religious twist wholly alien to Hulme's ideas. 'The artist has for so long been a humanist!' he wrote immediately afterwards. 'He has had sense enough to know that humanity was unbearably stupid and that he must try to disagree with it. But he has also tried to lead and persuade it; to save it from itself [...] (but) [...] The introduction of djinn, tribal gods, fetishes, etc. into the arts is a happy presage [...] The artist has at last been aroused to the fact that the war between him and the world is a war without truce. That his only remedy is slaughter[...] He knows he is born to rule but he has no intention of trying to rule by general franchise [...] Modern civilisation has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits and we who are the heirs of the witch-doctor and the voodoo, we artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control' (Pound, 1980 : 180-182).

This last phrase gives the game away, of course. Modern society had cast

aside the artist, destroyed the patronage system and made the artist hawk his wares in the marketplace to the despised masses. Now however, a change was coming. A new tyranny would be established, and artists (such as, for example, Ezra Pound), would become the tyrants. Then the masses would be made to suffer as Pound and his friends had suffered. The artists would have their revenge.

As we will see, Pound disliked Futurism and had little good to say about the movement, but he was influenced by at least one aspect of Futurist rhetoric; Marinetti's tone. From now on Pound's statements will become increasingly belligerent, aggressive and contemptuous. The reasons behind his adoption of this tone, however, were very different from those of the Futurist. Futurism we will remember, was a mass movement, that attempted to use shock tactics to wake the populace out of their apathy. Pound however, explicitly dissociates himself from this approach. 'The old fashioned artist was like a gardener who should wish to turn all his garden into trees. The modern artist wishes dung to stay dung' (Pound, 1980, 180). For Pound, hatred and contempt did not lead to to the reform of society. They were an end in themselves.

This new 'Anti-Humanism' is one aspect of Pound's Vorticism, and accounts for the tone of poems such as 'Salutation the Third', first published in *Blast* One.

Let us deride the smugness of 'The Times':
GUFFAW!
So much the gagged reviewers,

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It will pay them when the worms are wriggling in

   their vitals;

These are they who objected to newness,

HERE are their tomb-stones.

   They supported the gag and the ring:

 A little BLACK BOX contains them.

    So shall you be,

You slut-bellied obstructionist,

You sworn foe to free speech and good letters,

 You fungus, you continuous gangrene' etc. (Pound, 1967 : 45).

But Vorticism was also, for Pound, a development of Imagiste aesthetics. Pound still wished for his Renaissance, and now he wished to have a vocabulary with which he could discuss all the arts. In 'Vortex Pound' he writes that the artist relies on the 'primary pigment of his art; nothing else' (Pound, 1980 : 151) and that 'Vorticism is the use of, or the belief in the use of, THE PRIMARY PIGMENT, straight through all of the arts' (Pound, 1980 : 6); and he makes it clear that whereas the poet may talk of the image ('the primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE' (Pound, 1980 : 152)) and the painter something else, the same idea runs through all the arts. Thus when Pound met the composer George Antheil six years later, he decided that he was to become a Vorticist composer. Vorticism was a way of unifying the arts; boiling them down to their basic content (Carpenter, 1988 : 431-436). Pound makes clear in *Blast* that behind all these 'primary pigments' lies the 'Vortex'. It was Pound who named the movement 'Vorticism' and as we have seen, he had been using the word almost from the beginning of his career. What did he mean by it?

In a negative sense, he meant it to oppose himself to Futurism and Impressionism. Wyndham Lewis was deeply influenced by Futurism, and as we have seen, for him, Vorticism was, when all was said and done, a variety of Futurism (though he may have changed his mind about this in the very last months before the war). However, this was not the case for Pound. There are few things he hammers home more strongly than that Futurism is not Vorticism. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, Pound believed, (wrongly) that Futurism was basically a mimetic art 'a sort of accelerated impressionism' (Pound, 1980 : 199) whereas Vorticism was not going to be mimetic, or at least not mimetic in this simplistic way (of course, the Futurists themselves had specifically denied that their art was mimetic in this way, in their polemics against the cinema). A Vorticist 'selects what actuality he wishes and excludes the rest '(Pound, 1980 : 156). But there was a more profound reason as well. Futurism insisted on a break with the past; and insisted that the artist must ignore tradition if he wished to truly represent modernity. Pound however, insisted that the artist must be a part of the tradition if he wished to create at all. 'All experience rushes into the vortex. All the energised past, all the past that is living and is worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us, RACE, RACE MEMORY, instinct charging the PLACID NON-ENERGISED PRESENT' (Pound, 1980 : 151). This is a restatement of Pound's belief that the true art work embodies the past of the race, or tradition. The present without this consciousness of the past is dead, 'non-energised'. In ignoring the past, therefore, the Futurist ignores everything that is really important. 'Impressionism, Futurism [...]

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DENY the Vortex' (Pound : 1980: 152) (Pound writes 'The Vorticist has not this curious tic for destroying past glories. I have no doubt that Italy needed Mister Marinetti, but he did not sit on the egg that hatched me, and *as I am wholly opposed to his aesthetic principles,* I see no reason why I, and various men who agree with me, should be expected to call ourselves Futurists. We do not desire to evade comparison with the past. We prefer that the comparison be made by some intelligent person whose idea of "the tradition" is not limited by the conventional taste of four or five centuries and one continent' (Pound, 1980 : 206) (my italics).

So what is the Vortex, then? In his First Vorticist Manifesto, published in *Blast* One, Pound makes clear that the idea of the Vortex developed out of the idea of the the Image, and in fact that the Image is the Poet's vortex. Vorticism is yet another attempt then to clarify Pound's own poetic. It concentrates specifically on the problem of form.[1] As we have seen, Imagisme had abandoned all outward metrical form, to describe the inner mystical form of the object. Pound was clearly worried that this would lead to slack technique and formlessness (and it was these concerns that eventually led him to abandon *vers libre*). Pound was also worried that his mystical philosophy might lead people to believe that he thought that the poet was merely a receiver for mystical impulses from beyond; and might therefore forget that the poet must always have conscious control over these states. This control manifests itself in the strict form that the poet will use to express his vision. And so he posits two types of mystical poet.

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[1] 'Vorticism [...] was an attempt to revive the sense of form' Pound stated in an interview later (Writers at Work, 1963 : 41).

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He explains that 'if you clap a strong magnet beneath a plateful of iron filings, the energies of the magnet will proceed the organise form'. In the same way, some poets organise form by expressing mystical forces 'The love of God, the "life force" [...] what you will' (Pound, 1980 : 7). This kind of poet expresses mystical forms in the same way the iron filings express the force of magnetism. And yet 'this is not Vorticism' And the reason is that the Vorticist (i.e. Pound) is not passive in receiving these mystical forces. He actively takes them and forces them into form. As Pound puts it 'The Vorticist is expressing his complex consciousness' (Pound, 1980 : 8). To see the difference we should examine one of Pound's 'Vorticist' poems, which he published in issue one of *Blast*.

Before   Sleep.

1

The lateral vibrations caress me,
They leap and caress me,
They work pathetically in my favour,
They seek my financial good.

She of the spear stands present.
The gods of the underworld attend my, O Annubis.
These are they of my company.
With a pathetic solicitude they attend me;
Undulant,
Their realm is the lateral courses.

Light! I am up to follow thee, Pallas.

Up and out of their caresses.

You were gone up as a rocket,

  Bending your passages from right to left and from

    left to right

In the flat projection of a spiral.

  The gods of drugged sleep attend me,

Wishing me well.

I am up to follow thee, Pallas (Pound, 1967 : 47).

This poem deals with the narrator drifting into sleep, when he becomes aware that he is surrounded by the gods of the dead (Annuis is the Egyptian God of the dead). These gods of the underworld are the gods that express themselves in an 'iron filing' way; i.e. passively. If he was to express their wisdom he would be financially rewarded (presumably because this is what people want to hear). But their realms are the 'lateral' realms; they are unable to break free of this world, and therefore they are 'pathetic'. Counterpointed against these gods is Pallas, the god of wisdom. That she is the Vorticist god is shown by her movement, she moves up ('as a rocket') 'from right to left and from left to right' i.e. in a gyre or vortex. Her realm, is in other words, vertical, as opposed to the horizontal realm of the 'gods of drugged sleep'. She enables the poet, in other words to be active rather than passive. The other gods wish him well, but they cannot follow; only the

Vorticist route can lead to real wisdom. Vorticism is, therefore, a redefinition of Imagiste poetics, stressing the concepts of form and activity that Pound believed he had neglected in his initial formulations.

But that is not quite all, because by the second edition of *Blast* in 1915, Pound had altered his meaning yet again. To see why, we must return to the problem of form. As we have seen, Pound wished to construct a giant epic of the modern world, and yet he was hamstrung by the problem of process, which Imagiste poetics had great difficulty dealing with. This was because of the 'pointillist' nature of Imagiste poetics. Imagism could only deal with the moment, and Pound had to work out a way to string these moments together in order to create form; without, however, using the obvious chronological links. Moreover, he would have to deal with this problem to write his poem which would include history. As Pound became more interested in Vorticism he began to think that it might hold the key to this problem of 'process'. Since Vorticism dealt with activity but in a, as it were, static fashion (given its concern with the spinning vortex which was, however, always viewed from a 'still point') possibly it might give Pound what he wanted; a way of dealing with change without compromising his Neo-Platonic philosophy. And so, by 1915, the definition of a vortex has subtly altered. It is now 'a radiant node or cluster, it is what I can and must perforce call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing' (Pound, 1980 : 207). Previously it was the past which was rushing into the vortex. The difference is now that Pound having set up his static vortex or image, now wishes to set it moving. He wishes to

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adapt his Imagiste aesthetic to deal with the problem of movement.
(Levenson catches this point (1984 : 127-128)). To illustrate this, we must
again analyse one of the poems Pound wrote for *Blast* Two.

DOGMATIC STATEMENT ON THE GAME AND PLAY OF CHESS

Red knights, brown bishops, bright queens,

Striking the board, falling in strong 'L''s of colour,

Reaching and striking in angles,

Holding lines of one colour;

This board is alive with light

These pieces are living in form,

Their moves break and reform the pattern;

 Luminous green from the rooks,

Clashing with 'x''s of queens,

Looped with the knight-leaps "Y" pawns, cleaving, embanking,

Whirl, centripetal, mate,

King down in the vortex;

 Clash, leaping of bands, straight strips of hard colour,

 Blocked lights working in, escapes, renewing of contest

(Pound, 1967 : 18).

As the present participle used throughout shows, this is an attempt to
present a chess game *as it is actually happening*, in other words, as a
process. Pound is not so much interested in the pieces themselves, because
the 'board is alive with light, These pieces are living in form'. The light
shows us that Pound is more interested in the Platonic reality, or the
Platonic processes that lie behind the game, than in the game itself. The
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phrase 'living in form' shows what he is trying to do; these pieces are represented by 'form' (i.e. pure form, which, as we know, Pound took from Kandinsky) and yet, unlike timeless (and therefore dead) Platonic realities they are 'living'. He is attempting, therefore, to set up a timeless Platonic realm and *make it move*. What he is trying to *avoid* is Bergsonian flux.

And so when Harriet Monroe claimed that this was a 'Futurist' poem, Pound rightly denied it: 'The pictures proposed in the verse are pure Vorticism [...] the two movements are not synonymous. Admitted there is a shade of dynamism in the proposition, to treat the pieces as light potentialities, still the concept arrangement is Vorticist' (Ruthven, 1969 : 75). Pound admits that there is a 'shade' of dynamism (i.e. Futurism), because like the Bergsonian he is more interested in the dynamic 'light potentialities' (i.e. the metaphysical reality of the pieces) than in the pieces themselves. Nevertheless, this interest in dynamism is balanced by the emphasis on static form in the poem. Phrases like 'holding lines in one colour', 'straight strips of hard colour' and 'reform the pattern', balance the inherent dynamism of the concept; in the same way as the literal 'strips of hard colour' balance the Bergsonianism in a painting by Lewis. With this poem, then, Pound believed he had found a solution to his two problems; the problem of form and the problem of process. This is not to say that the *Cantos* were to be a 'Vorticist' poem. Pound was, as he realised himself, still in the grip of *fin de siécle* aesthetics; albeit greatly modified. It was not until *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* that he waved a regretful goodbye to that view point. Mauberly, who was 'out of key with his time' is not of course Pound;

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but he is an element of Pound that Pound felt had to die; the aesthete. And the way that this would be achieved was to turn away from the mystical-aesthetic viewpoint he had held up until this point, and instead deal with the twentieth century on its own terms, and learn the new social sciences (such as, for example, economics), that would, he hoped, help to unlock its mysteries.

Conclusion

It has been argued in this thesis that there are two main strands of Anglo-American Modernist poetry. Firstly, there is the school associated with T.E.Hulme. This has its roots in French Associationist psychology, and Bergson. In English literature, perhaps the closest analogue is the the early works of Pater. Like Pater, Hulme began as a relativist, a materialist, and a sceptic, who nevertheless desperately wanted to affirm aesthetic and moral values and proclaim the existence of free will. Moreover, (again like Pater), Hulme was eclectic in the extreme, and was able to adapt thought from a huge variety of sources to bolster up his own theorising. Thus, whereas on the surface his thinking seemed to go through at least three distinct phases, on closer inspection there were far closer links between these philosophies than Hulme would, perhaps, been prepared to admit. As far as his links with Romanticism are concerned, one may note that at least some of his sources (Nietzsche, Bergson) have Romantic roots, and that his theories are, on the whole, amenable to a Romantic interpretation (especially in terms of his anti-rationalism).

Associated with Hulme are the poets of the Forgotten School of Imagism, especially F.S. Flint, Storer, and Campbell. Unlike Hulme, these men took little interest in metaphysical speculations, but instead concentrated on the practicalities of artistic creation and (when in a philosophical mood) political philosophy.

The other main school of British Modernist poetry is that of Yeatsian mystical Symbolism, the most famous practitioner of which, apart from

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Yeats himself, is Ezra Pound. It is only by considering the metaphysic behind this mystical or occult Symbolism that one can fully explain the problems of form and content that have exercised literary historians since the publication of these writer's canonical literary works.

There are two points that are extremely important to grasp here: first that Yeats and Pound predicated their work around an institutionalised élitism. That is to say, they aimed their works only towards the spiritual aristocracy who had rejected the vulgarities of materialism and bourgeois democracy. Secondly that their metaphysic was Neo-Platonic.

Only by remembering these facts can the questions of the purpose of the classic Modernist literary techniques be fully explained. For example, I have demonstrated that the 'allusive method' has two purposes in Pound's poetry. Firstly, it helps to create and preserve and extend the literary 'tradition', a tradition of literary élites, a tradition of which Pound believed himself and Yeats to be a part. By quoting from works of the past, one put them in different contexts, and made them live for new generations, at the same time as stressing the analogies between the writer's aesthetic problems and achievements and one's own.

Secondly, one uses the knowledge of these artist's work as a test, a way of eliminating those not in the tradition from the ranks of knowledgeable readers of the work in question. The allusions therefore exclude as much as they include; and this is a direct result of the

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élitism cited above.

The question of Neo-Platonism is, possibly, even more important, given that it is the Neo-Platonic assumption of metaphysical reality as being a spatial, and not a temporal phenomenon that leads, I have shown, to the very mechanics of form used in many canonical Modernist texts.

These then, are the conclusions of the thesis. However, in this afterword we may wish to continue and see whether this new paradigm of Anglo-American Modernism can illuminate other problems that, strictly speaking lie outside its scope (which is, to reiterate, up until the beginning of the First World War). For example it has frequently been noted that Ezra Pound began as a Neo-Romantic, and only later 'modernised' himself. When did this 'break' from Romantic aesthetics occur? There has been no shortage of answers. Dasenbrock in *The Literary Vorticism of Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound* (1985) suggests the *Homage to Sextius Propertius* sequence of 1916 (begun 1917). Noel Stock (in his book *Poet in Exile*, 1964 puts forward the *Ripostes* volume of 1912. Robinson suggest the *Canzoni* volume is the first hint of Pound's 'later' manner, in *Poetry, Painting and Ideas 1885-1914* (1985).

There are, I would suggest, three answers to this question. The first is that the question is facile, in that two of the key elements of Pound's Modernism (the allusive method, and the disjunctive, non-logical link between elements within the poem) can be clearly seen in various poems in his first volume *A Lume Spento*, written when he was still

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unequivocally a Neo-Romantic.[1]

There are, however, two more key elements that did not yet exist, and we must keep in mind that Pound's Modernism was not a disinterested attempt to formulate a modern aesthetic, but was, instead, *practical*. The reason why he altered his aesthetic was that he wished to write a modern epic, and all his efforts were undertaken with this ultimate goal in mind. He had two main obstacles to overcome: firstly to discover a language with which he could deal with twentieth century realities, and secondly to find a form. We can see, as I have shown, the first efforts towards modern diction in the last section of *Canzoni*, and a move towards a firmer sense of form, but, at that point, Pound had not abandoned the idea of chronological progression as structure. It was only when, increasingly under the sway of Neo-Platonism, he saw more fully the implications of this for his view of temporality, that Pound finally abandoned chronology (and, indeed, a temporal aesthetic), in the ''Xenia' sequence of 1913, and we see further developments in this direction in Pound's discussions of Vorticism.

However, this does not mean that Pound's development was over by the outbreak of World War One. As we have seen, one of the main distinctions between the *fin de siècle* aesthetic outlook, and the *avant-garde* approach (which meant, at this period, Futurism), was that whereas the Decadent writer was *out* of the world (in his 'ivory tower'), the Futurist was determined to be *in* the world. This was what

[1] See chapter four, footnotes five and six.

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Wyndham Lewis objected to when he claimed that Art was becoming confused with Life. He wished not only to keep these realms separate, but to ensure that the artist stayed in the realm of art.

And so, if one wished to see when Pound ended the process of 'modernisation' one would look for signs that he was moving away from Art for Art's sake Aestheticism and towards, instead, a way of making art useful, a way of bringing art into the world, a way of helping the artist to influence real events. Is it, therefore, a coincidence that after 1918 Pound turns away from mysticism and towards economics (Carpenter, 1988)? I think not, and I see Pound's increasing interest in politics from this point onwards as being part of this attempt to make art useful, to merge art and life, to make his epic not just an aesthetic artifact, but, instead, something that helped to make real events happen in the real world. By the end of World War One, therefore, Pound's apprenticeship was over, and it is, again, no coincidence that it is now that he begins to write The Cantos. (To what extent Pound ever really divested himself of his mystical beliefs is of course a moot point: Pound, 1973 : 70-71 might be illuminating in this respect.)[2]

In the case of Wyndham Lewis we have a slightly different problem. Between 1910 and 1914, I have argued, we find Lewis moving slowly

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[2] But even this landmark, the beginning of the Cantos, is more ambiguous than it seems. Pound actually began to write this 'poem of some length' in 1915 with the three (eventually scrapped) 'ur-Cantos', and made two further attempts in 1917 and 1918. Cantos IV,V,VI,VII, and ,VIII, were actually written before Pound rewrote the first three Cantos (in 1923), to give the beginning of the poem as we have it now. The first publication of this first section of the poem, of course, was in January 1925, with the publication of A DRAFT OF XVI CANTOS of EZRA POUND for the Beginning of a Poem of Some Length (Bush, 1976).

away from an aesthetic based on Bergsonian Becoming towards one predicated upon Neo-Platonic Being. By the outbreak of World War One, however, this process was by no means complete. Even at the end of the war in *The Caliph's Design* (1919), Lewis can espouse a view that still seems *avant-garde*. It is only by the mid nineteen-twenties that we find Lewis espousing his mature worldview, which opposes what he calls the 'time-cult' (Bergsonian relativism, which constitutes much of what we call European Modernism) with an undoubtedly Neo-Platonic objectivism, which even has, as Lewis freely admits, a connection with Thomism (see the chapter 'God as Reality' in *Time and Western Man*, first published 1927 (Lewis, 1993)).[3] It is only be examining the metaphysical beliefs of Lewis in this period (a task which lies outside the scope of this thesis) that one can fully understand Lewis's fiction and art of the time.

Like Pound and Yeats, therefore, Lewis was, fundamentally, a metaphysical, even a religious, writer and thinker (See Tomlin, 1980 : 40-43).

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[3] In other words, whereas Pound began as an Aesthete and moved in the direction of the *avant-garde*, Lewis began as an *avant-gardeist*, and moved back to an older Neo-Romantic tradition. To what extent either of them were succesful in their endeavours is, of course, a moot point.

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