

Pound's 'The Garden' as Modernist Imitation: Samain, Lowell, H.D.

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Translation, for Ezra Pound before the First World War, was transference of energy. As was poetry: in an infamously cumbersome simile, Pound argued, in 1911, that words in a language were like steel cones charged with the electricity of cultural energy:

Let us imagine that words are like great hollow cones of steel of different dullness and acuteness; I say great because I want them not too easy to move; they must be of different sizes. Let us imagine them charged with a force like electricity, or, rather, radiating a force from their apexes – some radiating, some sucking in. We must have a greater variety of activity than with electricity – not merely positive and negative; but let us say +, –, ×, ÷, +a, –a, ×a, ÷a, etc. Some of these kinds of force neutralise each other, some augment; but the only way any two cones can be got to act without waste is for them to be so placed that their apexes and a line of surface meet exactly . . . This peculiar energy which fills the cones is the power of tradition, of centuries of race consciousness, of agreement, of association.¹

Pound seems to be drawing on a semi-Futurist analogy for this crazy sci-fi machine, but he is partly using nineteenth-century technology to generate his model: the electric arc lamp. In the words of the 1911 *Nelson's Encyclopaedia*:

If a break be made in a conductor forming part of a circuit through which an electric current is passing, and the gap be not too great, the energy continues to pass. As it does so, some of the particles are torn away or disrupted from one of the ends and carried towards the other. Intense heat is produced, and owing to this some of the particles are vaporized and rendered incandescent, thereby producing a luminous glow between the ends of the conductor. If the transference of energy across the gap is continuous, so is this glow, which is called the 'arc', because it was first

¹ 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1911), quoted from *Selected Prose 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson (London, 1973), p. 34.

observed between the two ends of a horizontal conductor, and appeared arched upwards.²

The negatively charged carbon end of arc lamps is cone-shaped, giving Pound the cone he refers to when thinking about the energy-collecting power of words. Words in a poem are charged by the battery cells or dynamos of tradition and association. The poet places the highly charged conic word close to its neighbour, both in touch across the 'line of surface' of the page, and switches on the current of cultural energy. The current flows between the words at incandescent heat, partly vaporizing the word, creating the 'glow' of the poem as illuminating power.

The incandescence produced is in proportion to the power of cultural energy being drawn upon, and that power is considerably increased if the cone-words are arranged to express what Pound was wont to call 'Luminous Details', precise and telling interpretative points from the past that illuminate the source culture. These details are what Pound sought to capture in his translations, and they form the principal force-field from which his poetry drew its power: 'These facts are hard to find. They are swift and easy of transmission. They govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit' (*Selected Prose*, p. 23). The cone-words act as a powerful control mechanism for the transmission of the power of a foreign tradition, governing the energies latent in a source culture's knowledge system.

Pound's analogy is useful in three ways if we want to think about modernist imitations. First, it intimates the correspondence, in Pound's mind, between writing a poem in one's mother tongue and imitating foreign energies in translation: both rely on a broken circuit, a gap, and an incandescent, vaporizing transfer of energy. In the poem written in one's native language, the poet is thinking about the textual space between words as the essential circuit-breaking gap where the glow of energy-transference takes place – it is the line of surface of the white page which acts as the space between. In the imitation, the gap is linguistic and spatio-temporal, the energy drawn from the source culture separated from the target culture by language, time, and space.

Secondly, Pound's insistence that the relations between the energized words can take a variety of different forms is crucial when trying to deal with the *range* of differing translation strategies in modernism: 'We must have a greater variety of activity than with electricity – not merely positive and negative; but let us say +, –, ×, ÷, +a, –a, ×a, ÷a, etc.' Translation theory has too often assumed that a binary simplicity governs the relations between source and target culture in

² *Nelson's Encyclopaedia* (London, 1911), s.v. 'Electric Lamps'.

the transactions of translation. To paraphrase Pound, we can argue that modernist translation has no simple model for the cultural work it is doing on both source and target cultures: the translation may augment, diminish, multiply, or divide the source text's verbal energies; or use the source text to augment, diminish, multiply, and divide the target culture's power of tradition (taken as 'a' in the set of equations).

Thirdly, the analogy might prove useful in showing how far-fetched local theories of translation have to be to enable the articulation of the complex transferences that take place between languages and cultures in modernism, but also how such theories obscure the very real difficulty at the heart of modernist translation practice. This difficulty turns on the very 'energy' that could be said to flow in any modernist poem. If Pound identifies the electrical charge with tradition, cultural memory, and word associations, then this sounds close to what Pound identified as the untranslatable in poetry, *logopoeia*: 'which takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we *expect* to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play'.

Logopoeia does not translate; though the attitude of mind it expresses may pass through a paraphrase. Or one might say, you can *not* translate it 'locally', but having determined the original author's state of mind, you may or may not be able to find a derivative or an equivalent.³

If energy in poetry is defined as the 'power' of connotations, contexts, and ironical play sparking or arching across and between words, then power is *logopoeia*. Since *logopoeia* is untranslatable, translation is reduced to the simulation of incandescent transference in order to mimic a vague 'attitude of mind'.

Pound's way round this was to make *logopoeia* happen anyway, in the target text, by way of imitation. The trick was to allude freely to the work of an author, drawing energy not from a specific source text, but from a paraphrasable set of texts, which could then work as the raw material for one commentary poem. The commentary poem would act as a switchboard governing the incoming energy of the source texts and culture. The technique resembles a cross between pastiche and parody, the energy of the source texts pastiched to suit the strategic view of the imitator as to what is deemed appropriate as necessary new energy in the target culture; parodied since the imitation is also charged *against* the source texts, the satire working to filter out any undesirable practices in the source culture.

³ 'How to Read', quoted from *Polite Essays* (London, 1937), pp. 170–1.

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An example is Pound's 'The Garden', first published in 1913, from the 1916 *Lustra* collection:

THE GARDEN

En robe de parade.

Samain

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,
And she is dying piece-meal
of a sort of emotional anaemia.

And round about there is a rabble
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.
She would like some one to speak to her,
And is almost afraid that I
will commit that indiscretion.⁴

The epigraph alerts us to the poem's status as imitation, the title therefore alluding to the symbolist Albert Samain's collection *Au Jardin de l'Infante*. The quotation is from the opening and equally the final lines of 'Mon âme est une infante':

Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade,
Dont l'exil se reflète, éternel et royal,
Aux grands miroirs déserts d'un vieil Escorial,
Ainsi qu'une galère oubliée en la rade.

Aux pieds de son fauteuil, allongés noblement,
Deux lévriers d'Écosse aux yeux mélancoliques
Chassent, quand il lui plaît, les bêtes symboliques
Dans la forêt du Rêve et de l'Enchantement.

Son page favori, qui s'appelle Naguère,
Lui lit d'ensorcelants poèmes à mi-voix,
Cependant qu'immobile, une tulipe aux doigts,
Elle écoute mourir en elle leur mystère . . .

Le parc alentour d'elle étend ses frondaisons,
Ses marbres, ses bassins, ses rampes à balustres;
Et, grave, elle s'enivre à ces songes illustres
Que recèlent pour nous les nobles horizons.

⁴ First published as part of the 'Contemporania' sequence in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, 2.i (April 1913), then in *Lustra* (London, 1916), p. 12, the version used here. The 1913 version has two minor differences: 'anemia' rather than 'anaemia'; a verse paragraph break between 'excessive' and 'She would like'.

Elle est là résignée, et douce, et sans surprise,
Sachant trop pour lutter comme tout est fatal,
Et se sentant, malgré quelque dédain natal,
Sensible à la pitié comme l'onde à la brise.

Elle est là résignée, et douce en ses sanglots,
Plus sombre seulement quand elle évoque en songe
Quelque Armada sombrée à l'éternel mensonge,
Et tant de beaux espoirs endormis sous les flots.

Des soirs trop lourds de pourpre où sa fierté soupire,
Les portraits de Van Dyck aux beaux doigts longs et purs,
Pâles en velours noir sur l'or vieilli des murs,
En leurs grands airs défunts la font rêver d'empire.

Les vieux mirages d'or ont dissipé son deuil,
Et, dans les visions où son ennui s'échappe,
Soudain - gloire ou soleil - un rayon qui la frappe
Allume en elle tous les rubis de l'orgueil.

Mais d'un sourire triste elle apaise ces fièvres;
El, redoutant la foule aux tumultes de fer,
Elle écoute la vie - au loin - comme la mer ...
Et le secret se lit plus profond sur ses lèvres.

Rien n'émeut d'un frisson l'eau pâle de ses yeux,
Où s'est assis l'Esprit voilé des Villes mortes;
El par les salles, où sans bruit tournent les portes,
Elle va, s'enchantant de mots mystérieux.

L'eau vaine des jets d'eau là-bas tombe en cascade,
Et, pâle à la croisée, une tulipe aux doigts,
Elle est là, reflétée aux miroirs d'autrefois,
Ainsi qu'une galère oubliée en la rade.

Mon Ame est une infante en robe de parade.⁵

Little remains of Samain's long, self-indulgent poem. The woman is stripped of her identity as the poet's soul. Gone too is the soul's 'Spanish' nostalgia for past imperial glory, the faintly ridiculous swooning-dandy parade of melancholia. The epigraph remains elusively allusive, merely making a harsh connection between Pound's imagist stripped-down representation of an impossibly snobbish *grande dame* and Samain's portrait of his own post-romantic soul.

⁵ Albert Samain, 'Mon âme est une infante', *Au Jardin de l'Infante* (Paris, 1912), pp. 7-10. Written 1888, published in *Au Jardin de l'Infante* in 1893. The poem is placed at the opening of the collection and has epigraphic status; as such, it was printed in italics.

Albert Samain's own biography may help in fleshing out the curious subject position of the persona in 'Mon âme est une infante'. Born in Lille in 1858, son of a wine merchant of Spanish extraction, he worked in sugar 'courtage' for a bank till 1880 when he moved to Paris with hopes of a literary career. He wrote articles for *Le Figaro* and *Gil Blas* whilst holding a post at the Hôtel de Ville as clerk or 'expéditionnaire' from 1881. He was a quiet and reserved member of many of the ephemeral literary *cénacles* of the 1880s, the *Nous autres* group, the societies meeting at the *Chat Noir* and *Scapin*. He was co-founder of the *Mercur de France* in 1889, and his own career was launched when François Coppée praised his 1893 collection *Au Jardin de l'Infante* and he became prominent in *symboliste* circles. A new edition of *Au Jardin de l'Infante* won the Archon-Despérouses prize, and he became friendly with writers such as Montesquiou, Schwob, Jammes, Jarry, Heredia, and Brunetière, which secured him an *entrée* into the powerful *Revue des deux mondes*. Throughout the period, he continued working long hours as bureaucrat for the Education department at the Préfecture de la Seine. The toll of this tough double life as poor pen-pusher and symbolist poet began to tell, and he suffered from ill health during the composition of the 1898 *Aux flancs du vase*. He was forced into protracted convalescence for stomach disease in 1899, spending time in the south and in Spain while writing his symbolist drama *Polyphème*. He retired to his family home in Lille in 1900, then back to Paris, and finally to Magny-Les Hameaux where he died in August 1900. A collection of late verse, *Le Chariot d'or*, was published posthumously in 1901, short stories in 1902, and *Polyphème* in 1906, which was put on at the Comédie française in 1904. Samain lived a double life, sickly government hack during the day, dreamy, bitter, 'Spanish' *symboliste* by night. Pound's imitation, with its finicky male voice intent on regarding a self-parading 'Spanish' aristocrat, remembers this double life, with interesting sidelights forward to the double careers of Eliot and Stevens.

'The Garden' does not allude simply to 'Mon âme est une infante'. It also alludes to Samain's whole collection, in the complex allusive manner Pound was to theorize in his 1931 letter to the editor of the *English Journal*, discussing his *Homage to Sextus Propertius*: 'I certainly omitted no means of definition [of the poem's relation to life] that I saw open to me, including shortenings, cross cuts, implications derivable from other writings of Propertius.'⁶ 'The Garden' derives implications

⁶ Letter to the *English Journal*, 1931, quoted from *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, edited by D. D. Paige (London, 1950), p. 230.

from the other poems in Samain's collection, *Au Jardin de l'Infante*, as part of its imitation strategy, particularly drawing energy from 'Orgueil':

ORGUEIL

J'ai secoué du rêve avec ma chevelure.
Aux foules où j'allais, un long frisson vivant
Me suivait, comme un bruit de feuilles dans le vent;
Et ma beauté jetait des feux comme une armure.

Au large devant moi les cœurs fumaient d'amour;
Froide, je traversais les désirs et les fièvres;
Tout, drame ou comédie, avait lieu sur mes lèvres;
Mon orgueil éternel demeurait sur la tour.

Du remords imbécile et lâche je n'ai cure,
Et n'ai cure non plus des fadasses pitiés.
Les larmes et le sang, je m'y lave les pieds!
Et je passe, fatale ainsi que la nature.

Je suis sans défaillance, et n'ai point d'abandons.
Ma chair n'est point esclave au vieux marché des villes.
Et l'homme, qui fait peur aux amantes serviles,
Sent que son maître est là quand nous nous regardons.

J'ai des jardins profonds dans mes yeux d'émeraude,
Des labyrinthes fous, d'où l'on ne revient point.
De qui me croit tout près je suis toujours si loin,
Et qui m'a possédée a possédé la Fraude.

Mes sens, ce sont des chiens qu'au doigt je fais coucher,
Je les dresse à forcer la proie en ses asiles;
Puis, l'ayant étranglée, ils attendent, dociles,
Que mes yeux souverains leur disent d'y toucher.

Je voudrais tous les cœurs avec toutes les âmes!
Je voudrais, chasseresse aux féroces ardeurs,
Entasser à mes pieds des cœurs, encor des cœurs . . .
Et je distribuerais mon butin rouge aux femmes!

Je traîne, magnifique, un lourd manteau d'ennui,
Où s'étouffe le bruit des sanglots et des râles.
Les flammes qu'en passant j'allume aux yeux des mâles,
Sont des torches de fête en mon cœur plein de nuit.

La haine me plaît mieux, étant moins puérile.
Mère, épouse, non pas: ni femelle vraiment!
Je veux que mon corps, vierge ainsi qu'un diamant,
A jamais comme lui soit splendide et stérile.

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Mon orgueil est ma vie, et mon royal trésor;
Et jusque sur le marbre, où je m'étendrai froide,
Je veux garder, farouche, aux plis du linceul roide,
Une bouche scellée, et qui dit non encor.⁷

Pound's malicious jokes draw their incandescent energy from a vapourizing destruction of Samain's two poems. The imitation brings 'Orgueil' and 'Mon âme est une infante' together, like electrified cones, sparking satirical energy. The infanta turns into a failed infanticide, preferring self-destructive ultra-snobbish isolation to the spectacle of a democratic twentieth century. The cruel disdain of Samain's proud virgin, a Diana killing off her prey with the savage dogs of her senses, a militant Amazon sacrificing lovers to her cannibal female entourage, is reduced by Pound's ferocious whittling paraphrase to a hopelessly compromised aristocratic contempt, mixed in with the secret nostalgia for male power intimated in 'Mon âme est une infante'. The poem draws comic energy too from Samain, in the line 'In her is the end of breeding.' What in the English might simply mean 'excessively well-bred' becomes re-energized with the spark of allusion to the self-imposed chastity of the figure in 'Orgueil': she is deliberately putting an end to her whole class. She will no longer sexually reproduce, having no peer to mate with. If she cannot kill the children of the poor, what she can do is make sure she will bear none of her own.

Just as the infanta-infanticide joke and the pun on breeding only work once we trace Pound's poem back to the whole collection, so Pound's satirical purging of Samain's work is only readable once we bring both poems into the field of fire of the *logopoeia* of 'The Garden'. Samain's infanta-soul appeases her feverish 'orgueil' and 'dédain natal' with pity and sad smiles. Pound will have none of it, crosses her with the fanatical man-killer of 'Orgueil', stripping the infanta of her falsely mawkish consolations and bitter-sweet nostalgia for power once possessed. The soul's 'robe de parade' is no longer a sentimental pose signifying resignation and retrospect, but is now worn as a bitter satirical taunt to the children of the park, a flaunting of unapproachable wealth. 'La haine me plaît mieux, étant moins puérile', Pound's imitation argues too.

Pound has taken Samain's prissy alexandrines and shaken new music from them, writing free verse with energy from a poet who never practiced *vers libre*. But the silky sound of the old music of the alexandrine persists in the six beats of each line, a regularity reinforced

⁷ *Au Jardin de l'Infante*, pp. 111–13.

by hints of rhyme:

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,
And she is dying piece-meal
of a sort of emotional anaemia.

The old music is there but hard to hear in the modern city, fluid and fleeting like silk against the surface of urban speech.

Pound is also imitating by way of Edgar Allan Poe. Samain had placed as epigraph to *Au Jardin de l'Infante* (thus immediately preceding 'Mon âme') a quotation from Poe's 'To Helen', which appeared as follows (including the rogue punctuation):

Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight
Was it not Fate (Whose name, is also sorrow)
That bade me pause before that garden-gate
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses?
.....
.....
(Ah bear in mind this garden was enchanted!)
EDGAR ALLAN POE⁸

Pound, drawn to the Poe, would have recalled other lines from the 1849 'To Helen', a poem Poe based on his love affair with the poet Sarah Helen Power Whitman:

There fell a silvery-silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness, and slumber,
Upon the upturned faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,
...
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous soul in an ecstatic death.⁹

The 'silvery-silken veil of light' reappears as the 'skein of loose silk'. And it is 'To Helen' which gives Pound the licence to introduce a male observer into the enchanted garden. Poe's drama of unrequited poet and muse locked into relationship within a garden, both set against

⁸ *Au Jardin de l'Infante*, p. 5. The Poe poem should read '(whose name is also Sorrow,); there should be a comma after 'garden-gate' and after 'Ah'.

⁹ *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Thomas Ollive Mabboff, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1969), Vol. 1: *Poems*, p. 445.

the 'hated world', is alluded to in 'The Garden', as though Pound were bringing Samain into English by merging 'Mon âme' and 'Orgueil' with the American poem which inspired the whole collection.

Pound was partly drawn to Samain by Edmund Gosse's influential *French Portraits*, collected in 1905, gathering together articles written from the late 1880s on French literature. The piece on Samain dates from 1904 and discusses the poet as a true Baudelairean, editing out Baudelaire's disagreeably 'vulgar' and 'absurd' 'Satanic dandyism' whilst preserving his true power:

What was really powerful in Baudelaire, and what his horrors at first concealed, was the extreme intensity of his sense of beauty, or, to be more precise, his noble gift of subduing to the service of poetry the voluptuous visions awakened by perfume and music and light.¹⁰

This double act – preservation of Baudelaire's 'prominent qualities' ('a lofty, if somewhat vaporous dignity; a rich, if somewhat indefinable severity of taste'), censorship of his 'detestable "*manie d'étonner*"' and 'crawling corruption' – rhymes well with Pound's tactics with Samain. There are, for Gosse, poems of 'a melancholy and chaste sensuousness in terms of the most tender and impassioned symbolism' (p. 323), impressively instanced by 'Mon âme est une infante'. Gosse comments on the poem in ways which energize mischievously with Pound's imitative choices, particularly the naive identification of the *grande dame* with Samain:

Everywhere the evidence of a sumptuous and enchanted past, everywhere the purity of silence and the radiance of royal waters at sunset, everywhere the incense of roses that were planted for the pleasure of queens long dead and gone, and Albert Samain pursuing his solitary way along those deserted paths and up the marble of those crumbling staircases.

(p. 322)

These melancholy and chaste poems perform the fleeting, airy insubstantiality Pound collapses into his skein of loose silk: 'vague and faint emotions which pass over the soul like a breeze' (p. 323).

And there is another kind of Samain poem, of 'a certain marmoreal severity' (p. 323), instanced for Gosse by Samain's sonnet 'Cléopâtre'. The poem, however, is indistinguishable from those of the first type, and one is left wondering what the severity might be in the poem that is said to differ so markedly from 'Mon âme est une infante'. One of the jobs one could argue Pound's imitation does is to provide a real

¹⁰ 'Albert Samain', *French Profiles* (London, 1905), pp. 318–24 (p. 319); *ibid.* for the quoted phrases preceding and following.

alternative to the poems of melancholy and chaste sensuousness, a real proto-modernist poem of marmoreal severity which Pound glimpsed in the energies of 'Orgueil', a trace element in Samain's poetic which had not entirely censored the Satanic dandyism of Baudelaire's influence, identifying it with the 'lofty, if somewhat vaporous dignity'. The imitation looks back at Gosse's article and defines in suitably concrete terms the 'indefinable severity of taste': exactly what *fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian criticism had prudishly edited out of the Baudelairean prehistory of modernism.

Working this way with a *fin-de-siècle* French poem is imitation as 'antiseptic method', 'sound surgical treatment' of the 'amorphous thought, rhetoric, bombast' the French were cursed with, according to Remy de Gourmont. By analogy, the imitation is to do the same kind of work in Kensington and environs, levelled against equivalent curses in the target culture, 'stale Victoriana, stale Miltoniana, etc.'¹¹ As Cyrena Pondrom demonstrated in *The Road From Paris*, it was primarily F. S. Flint's article in *The Poetry Review* in August 1912, 'Contemporary French Poetry', which created the impetus behind the Imagist revolution in English poetry. It was Flint who introduced Pound not only to Remy de Gourmont but also to Samain, in the early months of 1912:

At about the turn of the year [1912] Aldington met Pound, H.D. and Flint, and the discussions that led to imagism began. One of the important catalysts of this group was Flint's knowledge of current French poetry – which, with the possible exception of Aldington, the others knew little about. In a letter to his mother on 21 February 1912, Pound said Flint had introduced him to 'some very good contemporary French stuff: Remy de Gourmont, de Régnier, etc'. And on the same day Pound thanked Flint for lending him some of the work of Albert Samain, and scheduled a meeting – to include H.D. as well – for later in the same week. Within about two months, all of the group but Flint had gone to Paris for a few weeks, and Pound was actively involved with the *Mercur* crowd.¹²

Flint's 'Contemporary French Poetry' gives us an indication why Pound may have been inspired to ask him for some of the work of Samain. Flint quotes the following lines from Samain's 'Le Chariot d'or' in the context of a discussion of Jean Thogorma's 1912 rhythmical theory of

¹¹ Pound, 'Remy de Gourmont', first published *Fortnightly Review*, 1915; *Selected Prose 1909–1965* (n. 1), p. 386.

¹² Cyrena N. Pondrom, *The Road From Paris: French Influence on English Poetry 1900–1920* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 19.

free verse in *Lettres sur la Poésie*:

Derrière nous – au fond d’une antique poterne —
S’ouvre – nue et déserte – une cour de caserne
Immense – avec de vieux boulets ronds – dans un coin.¹³

Flint then analyses the extract:

This is a rhythmic duration of thirty-six syllables, comprising eight unequal moments of four, eight, two, four, eight, seven, three syllables. By the free use of the *enjambement*, M. Thogorma claims that his technique gives a traditionalist poet infinite liberties. But he does not seem to see that these liberties really break up the traditional alexandrine, and form *vers libre*.

(pp. 129–30)

Samain’s alexandrines were being used as basic ‘traditionalist’ material to break up the alexandrine. Pound’s imitation does similar work on Samain’s poems, bringing out the rhythmic units implicit in free alexandrine writing and forming *vers libre* in English. Thogorma had analysed the rhythmic units of poetry as comprising ‘silent’, ‘sonorous’, and ‘double sonorous’ beats – respectively defined as follows: (1) ‘the rest of the voice between two rhythmic moments’, the stressed syllable, and ‘the pause of the voice on the rhyme, which is placed at the end or *in the course of* certain rhythmic moments’; (2) the ‘rhythmic moment’ – a succession of stressed syllables ‘pronounced without any appreciable rest in the voice’; (3) ‘rhythmic duration’ – meaning the succession of rhythmic moments leading to a definite ‘stoppage of the voice and of the sense’ (Flint, p. 129). The definitions of these terms, Flint argues, ‘imply the *vers libre*’ (p. 130).

Pound’s ‘The Garden’ – within the sequence ‘Contemporania’ in allusion to Flint’s ‘Contemporary French Poets’ – is an exercise in Thogorma’s rhythmic duration as *vers libre*, counterpointing syllabic against stress-based parsing of the lines and verse paragraphs. Its first verse paragraph, read as syllabics, has a rhythmic duration of forty-four syllables, comprising four ‘unequal moments’ of eleven, fifteen, seven, eleven syllables, hinting at an eleven-syllable line rhythm, cocking a snook at the twelve of the alexandrine. As a succession of rhythmic moments (series of stressed syllables), it can be read as a block of eighteen stresses, breaking 6-6-3-3, reinventing the traditional six-syllable hemistich of the alexandrine as free voice rhythm. Samain’s alexandrines can be heard blown against the wall of *vers libre* technique, their traditionalist liberties prised open to reveal their emotional

¹³ Quoted Pondrom, p. 129.

anaemia when compared to the flinty, aggressive, complex double rhythms of contemporary life.

It was also Flint who had recommended Remy de Gourmont's *Deux Livres des masques* in the March 1913 section of his influential 'French Chronicle' series in *Poetry and Drama*. De Gourmont had written about Samain in the first of the *Masques*, *Le Livre des masques: portraits symbolistes*, published in 1908. Its preface contains the famous definition of symbolism as 'l'expression de l'individualisme dans l'art'.¹⁴ Since 'The Garden' is a conscious attempt to write free verse in post-symbolist mode, de Gourmont's definition is apposite as its negative, as it were:

individualisme en littérature, liberté de l'art, abandon des formules enseignées, tendances vers ce qui est nouveau, étrange et même bizarre; cela peut vouloir dire aussi: idéalisme, dédain de l'anecdote sociale, antinaturalisme, tendance à ne prendre dans la vie que le détail caractéristique, à ne prêter attention qu'à l'acte par lequel un homme se distingue d'un autre homme, à ne vouloir réaliser que des résultats, que l'essentiel; enfin, pour les poètes, le symbolisme semble lié au vers libre, c'est-à-dire démaillotté, et dont le jeune corps peut s'ébattre à l'aise, sorti de l'embarras des langes et des liens.

(*Livre des masques*, p. 8)

As Kenneth Cornell has argued, the French post-Symbolists opposed Mallarmé's hermetic individualism; they were seeking to move away from 'the confession of individual emotion to a conscious consideration of man as a social being'.¹⁵ 'The Garden' insists the social anecdote constitutes the 'détail caractéristique' of the image, preferring to play with, then abandon, the 'formules enseignées' to create the free verse. If post-Symbolism is in part a return to appreciation of the pre-symbolist poetry of the Parnassians, we can see how Samain is perfect material. For Remy de Gourmont, Samain is primarily a delicate, pure, and tender Verlaine romantic, but has this other Parnassian side to his writing:

ce poète qui n'aimerait que la nuance, la nuance verlainienne, a pu, certains jours, être un violent coloriste ou un vigoureux tailleur de marbre. Cet autre Samain, plus ancien et non moins véritable, se révèle en les parties de son recueil appelées *Évocations*; c'est un Samain parnassien.

(*Masques*, pp. 67–8)

¹⁴ Remy de Gourmont, *Le Livre des masques: portraits symbolistes* (Paris, 1908), p. 13.

¹⁵ Kenneth Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period* (New Haven, 1958), p. 49.

Adam Piette/Pound, Samain, Lowell, H.D.

Verlainean and Parnassian, syrupy nostalgic and hard-headed marmorealist, 'The Garden' stages this two-headed monster as the woman in the Kensington Gardens, silky and anaemic as well as child-hating and chilly, last surviving Parnassian symbolist in a post-symbolist world.

Scott Hamilton, in *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance*, wonders whether the epigraph to the poem might be ironic, in the light of Pound's 1918 comment in 'The Hard and Soft in French Poetry' that Samain 'begins to go "soft", there is just a suggestion of muzziness':¹⁶

Whereas Samain sets forth a metaphorical comparison which conveys a more or less interiorized, subjective state ('Mon âme est une infante'), Pound prefers to evoke only the external, social codes pertaining to dress: 'en robe de parade.' Thus, we can see that Pound's quest for an 'objective', imagistic presentation or social portrait amounts to a desire to repress the subjective core of Samain's poem.

(Hamilton, p. 52)

Hamilton accepts K. K. Ruthven's reading of the poem as 'interested mainly in the relation of aesthetics to social realities',¹⁷ but argues that this does not account for the speaker's position in the poem:

the poet is in a very tenuous position: like the woman, who is incapable of adapting to the emerging political and social position of the working classes, Pound is incapable of anything more than a naturalistic description of mere externals: 'filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants'. On the other hand, Pound is capable of entering into the woman's mind and of understanding the conventions of her world. Thus, in addition to the poet's criticism of the woman's isolation from social realities, we can detect a hint of nostalgia for an age that is slowly dying.

(Hamilton, p. 54)

Hamilton concludes that Pound could not decide 'whether to privilege a satirical presentation over a decadent one' (Hamilton, p. 54), arguing that the early poems are steps towards the more overtly satirical modernism of the middle period.

With 'Orgeuil' as complementary intertext, however, Pound's imitation is a boastfully satirical poem, revelling in the representation of speaker and woman as locked in rival sexual spheres, in absolute

¹⁶ 'The Hard and Soft in French Poetry' (1918), *Literary Essay of Ezra Pound*, edited by T. S. Eliot (London, 1954), p. 285; subsequent references by page number only. Scott Hamilton, *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance* (Princeton, 1992), p. 52.

¹⁷ Hamilton, p. 53. See K. K. Ruthven's *A Guide to Ezra Pound's 'Personae'* (Berkeley, 1969), p. 76.

rivalry over the idea of power and generation. Samain's *Pride* mocks all possible mates: 'Et l'homme, qui fait peur aux amantes serviles, / Sent que son maître est là quand nous nous regardons.' Pound's speaker replies to this challenge with a knowing and insolent interpretation of her *froideur* as secretly lonely and fearful: 'She would like some one to speak to her, / And is almost afraid that I / will commit that indiscretion.'

Pound is reintroducing into the arena of post-symbolist poetry Baudelaire's savage misogyny, which Samain's biographer, Léon Bocquet, sees as central to the *Évocations* section of *Au Jardin de l'Infante*:

La conception de la femme ennemie de l'homme, vampire des cerveaux, créature de fraude, de ruses et d'impudeur sanglante, le désenchantement morbide et l'ennui solennel de tétararque luxurieux et blasé, compassé dans ses poses hiératiques, sont des thèmes baudelairiens.¹⁸

The vampire enemy is resuscitated through imitation of Samain, only to be rebuked by the speaker's wry and mock-Jamesian response. If there is poise in the speaker's attitude to the woman, it is not because he cannot decide whether to criticize her isolation or feel nostalgia for her age; it is because she becomes available both as a fleeting persona to be inhabited by the poet, and as a sexual rival in an ancient war.

The woman is a possible modernist persona, not a symbolist figure for the soul: this must be one of the senses of Pound's omission of the first half of Samain's opening line. As de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* implies, the work of previous poets is useful as a compendium of individual voices which provides readers with possible masks for provisional identities. The process involved in the entertainment of a possible persona is being enacted in 'The Garden': the reader of Samain's poems about women as either noble melancholic infantas or cold vampiric aristocrats is dramatized as first entertaining the idea of the two roles fused into one, then rejecting the persona as outdated, potentially lonely, a haughty dead end. But Pound admits that the rejection of the persona is a function of sexual politics. The speaker rejects the mask because written into the role is the new subject position of the sexually autonomous woman.

We can get closer to Pound's poem by looking at the work of Amy Lowell, who was translating Samain very soon after the publication of 'Contemporania'. Her *Six French Poets*, written between the summer and October of 1914, examines the life and work of Emile Verhaeren,

¹⁸ Léon Bocquet, *Albert Samain: sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris, 1921; first published 1905), p. 121.

Remy de Gourmont, Henri de Régnier, Francis Jammes, Paul Fort, and Samain. The book is based on lectures she gave in Boston in the Spring of 1914, after her summer in London in 1913. Her lectures are clearly indebted to those Imagist discussions, as she acknowledges in her introduction. She thanks Flint, 'whose wide reading and critical articles on modern French poetry in "Poetry and Drama" have been of great service to me, for lists of books and expert knowledge'.¹⁹ The books on her list for Samain include Léon Bocquet's biography – the source for the biographical material in the article – and Gosse's *French Portraits* (here she mentions the Samain section and adds that it contains 'no biographic material', p. vii). Lowell's sense of Samain is partly useful as an indication of the coterie view of Samain in 1913. *Au Jardin de l'Infante* has, she observes, 'nothing very new' to interest poets experimenting in *vers libre*: 'the metre was the classic alexandrine, for the most part, varied by lighter, gayer rhythms equally well sanctioned' (p. 72). She is struck, as were Gosse and de Gourmont, by the poet's 'shy, delicate personality', 'sumptuous imaginings', and 'haunting sadness' (p. 72). As an American poet, she is pleased with the epigraph to Poe, which she gives in full, calling it a 'motto' (p. 72). She gives 'Mon âme est une infante' in full, and wonders why Samain 'figures his soul under the guise of a Spanish Infanta', speculating that it might have something to do with Samain's Spanish ancestry:

This poem seems almost a complete epitome of Samain's soul. An old, magnificent splendour is here, all about his seated, quiescent Infanta ... Yes, Samain has paraphrased himself in this poem – the haughty, noble, anachronistic self, hidden under the appearance of an insignificant government employee.

(p. 75)

She contextualizes the poem within the parameters of the whole collection, telling us that it appears in italics as 'a sort of dedication to the book' (p. 73), the figure of the Infanta accompanying readers as they read through it: 'the poet himself, kind, patient, sad, is always by our side assuring us that it is only his soul, "en robe de parade"' (p. 82). And like Gosse and de Gourmont, Lowell recognizes another side to Samain: there are 'sterner poems in this collection' (p. 82).

Lowell is drawn to Samain because his texts are so close to free verse, as Thogorma and Flint had intimated. She quotes 'Nocturne provincial' as an example of writing which is 'modern – yes, modern, as we to-day understand the term – in subject, in treatment, even in

¹⁹ Amy Lowell, *Six French Poets* (New York, 1915), p. ix.

its changing rhythms' (p. 99), and it is this modern note that she hopes to capture in her accompanying translations. Lowell provides prose translations in an appendix at the end of the volume, choosing prose because 'verse translations must always depart somewhat from the original, on account of the exigencies of rhyme and metre . . . By reading them, and then turning to the original and reading it aloud in French, those least versed in the tongue will get an idea of the music of the poem, while at the same time understanding it' (p. vii). There are exceptions to the rule:

A few of the translations are in *vers libre*, because the feeling of those particular poems seemed to evaporate in prose; and three of the translations are in metre, because the originals appeared to me to require such a rendering.

(p. 327)

'Mon âme est une infante' is translated into prose paragraphs, as here with the opening stanza:

My soul is an Infanta in robes of state, whose exile, eternal, monarchical, is reflected in the great, empty mirrors of some old Escorial, like a galley forgotten at its anchorage.

(p. 344)

The germ of the Poundian idea is there – that Samain, whose poetry trembles on the edge of *vers libre*, could be rendered in free verse. The poem she quotes which is most 'modern', 'Nocturne provincial', is translated into polyphonic prose, but with strong regular rhythm, a form she was to use herself in *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*, reproducing Samain's three-beat, free-ish hexameters and hint of rhyme, as the opening lines demonstrate:

La petite ville sans bruit
Dort profondément dans la nuit.

Aux vieux réverbères à branches
Agonise un gaz indigent;
Mais soudain la lune émergeant
Fait tout au long des maisons blanches
Resplendir des vitres d'argent.

Lowell's translation runs:

The little, noiseless town [/] sleeps soundly in the **night**.

In the old branching street lamps, [/] the feeble gas is dying; [/] but
suddenly the moon comes **out**, [/] and along the whole **line** of **white**
houses [/] the windows **shine** with silver.

(pp. 99, 364; my markings)

The form recalls Lowell's own work, such as the 'Bath' section of 'Spring Day', set as polyphonic prose paragraphs of regular phrase-unit rhythm, four-beat returns reinforced by full rhyme:

The sunshine pours in at the bath-room window [/] and bores through
the water in the bath-tub [/] in lathes and planes of greenish-**white**. [/
It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, [/] and cracks it to **bright**
light .²⁰

Pound did not appreciate Lowell's efforts, having suffered the Imagist anthology controversies and the subsequent rivalry over anthologies of French poetry, and wrote to Margaret Anderson that he could not get through *Six French Poets*.²¹ The repetitive rhythm of the translations would have confirmed his anti-Lowell prejudice: 'Amy's bloody ten cent repetitive gramophone'.²² He felt Lowell had hijacked Imagism and turned it into something loose, diluted, repetitive in rhythm, badly influencing the work of, for instance, H.D.:

I don't think any of these people [H.D., Aldington, W. C. Williams, Amy Lowell] have gone on; have invented much since the first 'Des Imagistes' anthology. H.D. has done work as good. She has also (under I suppose the flow-contaminations of Amy and Fletcher), let loose dilutions and repetitions.²³

²⁰ *Men, Women, and Ghosts* (New York, 1916): my markings.

²¹ Letter to Margaret Anderson, 17 November 1917, Pound/'*The Little Review*': *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson* (London, 1988), p. 154. For Pound's sense of rivalry between his 'A Study in French Poets' (published in *The Little Review* in February 1918) and Lowell's book, see his letter to Anderson, 13 September 1917 (p. 122).

²² Letter to Margaret Anderson, 22 February 1918, Pound/'*The Little Review*', p. 190.

²³ Letter to Margaret Anderson, 17 July 1917, Pound/'*The Little Review*', p. 92.

Underscoring his technical distaste, however, is his inability to contemplate a woman writing free verse in a spirit of optimism and equality:

And then there is Amy. Is there any life into which the personal Amy would not bring rays of sunshine? Is there anyone who would not delight in Amy's companionship? Alas! and alas, only, that the price i.e. equal sufferage [sic] in a republic of poesy; a recognition of artistic equality, should come between us.²⁴

The renderings of Samain's 'Mon âme est une infante' and her commentary would have convinced him that she had sentimentalized Samain with her 'rays of sunshine', over-personalizing the poem with her discussion of Samain's choice of the Infanta as paraphrase and figure for the anachronistic poetic self. There is an indication of this in a sour comment on Louis Gilmore's poem 'Improvisations', which turns on a repetition of the phrase 'My thoughts are':

I am tired of people saying "my thoughts are" this that and the other. "My mind is" that and the other. "My mind to me a kingdom is". "Mon âme est une paysage choisi". "Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade." All these have been good. But a little art might be expected in finding a variant on that particular phrasing.²⁵

Another reason for cutting Samain's line in half is indicated here: impatience with the idea of poetry as repetitive litany of metaphorical descriptions of the poet's soul or mind.

Nevertheless, Lowell's practice in *Six French Poets* does give some clues as to the prewar Imagist coterie's interest in Samain. Flint remembered the inception of Lowell's *Six Poets* project in the *Egoist* in January 1916:

When, in the summer of 1914, she told me of her intention to write this book and of the names of the poets she had chosen, I objected to Samain. Samain, I said, was exquisite, but not important; and he could only be read a few pages at a time without weariness. Stuart Merrill and Francis Vielé-Griffin, I went on, are both more considerable poets; both are Americans, and the public to which you make your first appeal is American; if you will not have them, Rimbaud and Laforgue are immensely more important than Samain; and since you insist on including Remy de Gourmont as one of your poets, you might increase

²⁴ Letter to Margaret Anderson, July 17 1917, *Pound/The Little Review*, p. 92.

²⁵ Letter to Margaret Anderson, August 7 1917, *Pound/The Little Review*, p. 109.

your number to seven, in many ways an appropriate number where poets are concerned; and so on. But she would hear nothing of it.²⁶

Flint's disdain for Samain's exquisite yet second-rate poetry has something to do with his anxiety about Lowell's own recruitment and propaganda drive for the movement he and Pound had founded. In a sense he is going against the uses of Samain which the coterie had theorized in 1913, for Samain's poetry had provided Imagism with a potential model for the handling of personae as figures for the poet's soul, in a language designed to represent and foster the tension between anachronistic aristocratic identities and modern, prosaic, metropolitan frame ('the haughty, noble, anachronistic self, hidden under the appearance of an insignificant government employee'). That tension is borne out at the level of rhythm and sound repetition: strophes that look like traditional alexandrines turn out to have the 'modern' cadential regularity of *vers libre*. Pound's fear that Samain 'begins to go "soft"' coincides with his break with Imagism, and must have something to do with Flint's own anxieties about Lowell's mistaken recruitment of the 'exquisite' Samain as figure for the movement; for Pound really breaks with Lowell's form of Imagism as polyphonic-prosy, chanting, sing-song hymnody to the poet's soul. 'The Garden' had anticipated the full form of the break, forestalling the Whitmanian-sentimental, self-ecstatic imagism which Lowell was to intuit in Samain, replacing *avant la lettre* its republican optimism with a grimly sardonic portrait of a woman disdaining all identifications, in nauseous retreat from the contacts of democracy.

Intellectually, then, 'The Garden' anticipates and annuls a Lowellian co-opting and marketing of Imagism by dissolving, in the acid 'hard'-Samain tones of its imitation, the 'soft' Samain of self-entranced female modernism. And not only the female modernism of Amy Lowell: targeted both thematically and technically is H.D.. Lowell's *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (written 1917, first published 1921) has a fine section praising H.D.'s work, in particular the poem 'Sheltered Garden' from the 1916 collection *Sea Garden*. Indeed, gardens are key tropes in Lowell's own practice too: her 'In a Garden' had been written before leaving for America and was included by Pound in the *Des Imagistes* anthology. In H.D.'s 'Sheltered Garden', the woman poet renounces the flowered space of the garden in favour of the 'new beauty' of harsh free life in 'some terrible / wind-tortured place'. The beauties of

²⁶ Quoted in Glenn Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry* (London, 1960), pp. 204-5.

the garden, figures for the constraints of nineteenth-century domestic ideology on women, are suffocating:

For this beauty,
beauty without strength,
chokes out life.
I want wind to break,
scatter these pink-stalks,
snap off their spiced heads,
fling them about with dead leaves²⁷

This is Alice turning into the Queen of Hearts ('Entasser à mes pieds des cœurs, encor des cœurs ...'), taking her revenge on the flowers, guardians and types of her chaste and cultivated imagination. The angry energy is turned against the tidy garden of English poetry: H.D. is breaking metrical verse down into cadential time units in a bid for freedom from the domesticities and conventions of a domain which governs voice and breath ('chokes out life'). H.D. is also focusing venomous energy against the Victorian home and its zones of surveillance, particularly the cultivated zone of the garden, where women are encouraged to grow figures for themselves, organic forms which are decorative, without strength, meek and slavish sexual trophies ('pink-stalks', 'spiced heads') for the owner of the house.

The poem acts as an accompaniment to the archetypal imagist poem, H.D.'s 'Garden', collected in the first imagist anthology, where the Poundian image is defined as a stone rose, a garden stifled by heat. Just as Pound's 'Garden' is an imagist poem which seeks to kill off Amygism *avant la lettre*, so H.D.'s two garden poems denounce the marmoreal severity of his imagist doctrines, interpreting them as constructs designed to 'cultivate' female energies and generative creativity within the rigid and formulaic male surveillance zones of metropolitan modernism.

Most of the poems in Pound's *Contemporania* sequence were written, it seems clear enough now, in the period immediately following his reading of H.D.'s poems, months in which he was negotiating the publication of her *imagiste* 'Priapus', 'Hermes of the Ways', and 'Epigram' in *Poetry*. Cyrena N. Podrom calculated that the three *Contemporania* pieces sent to Harriet Monroe in October 1912 – written before the encounter with H.D.'s poems in the British Library in August 1912 – 'The Epilogue', 'Dance Figure', and 'A Pact', were not

²⁷ Published in *Sea Garden* (Boston, 1916); quoted here from *Collected Poems of H.D.* (New York, 1925), pp. 25–7.

particularly imagist, whereas the nine other poems sent in a batch and published, on Pound's instructions, only after publication of H.D. and Aldington, are a mixed bag.²⁸ They include poems that are self-consciously imagist ('Salutation the Second') and poems which are harshly satirical, like 'The Garden'. Pondrom, as part of the feminist H.D. backlash against Pound in the 1970s and 1980s, is keen to prove that H.D. was setting the standard for imagist poetry for Pound, and implies that it is only the satirical poems in the second nine-poem batch 'which cannot be linked to H.D.'s models at all'.²⁹ If Pound's quintessential imagist work 'A Station of the Metro' was written, not only under H.D.'s influence (as he admitted) but, as per Pondrom's calculations, 'in the two months after he had sent H.D.'s poems to *Poetry*' (Pondrom, p. 103), then it is at least arguable that imagism was H.D.'s baby, and that the best Pound could do was to *imitate her*. The satirical work, precisely because it strikes Pondrom as least like H.D.'s, is the place to go to gauge her real impact on Pound. In 'The Garden', Pound specifically targets H.D. territory: gardens, killable children-flowers, Samain-style withdrawal and muse-virginity.

Difficult as it might be to argue that Pound may have intuited the development of H.D.'s poetry towards the revolt against the Venusberg garden in 'Sheltered Garden', it is still possible to guess at the kinds of manuscript poems H.D. may have been showing alongside the three stamped '*imagiste*' in late 1912. The revolt against the garden is implicit in 'Orion Dead', entitled 'Incantation' when published in the first number of *The Egoist* (February 1914) with a subheading 'Artemis over the body of Orion', and it seems likely that it had been around a long time, if the stories of H.D. badgering Pound to get more of her poems into print are true. In the poem, Artemis vows to kill all child-flowers to force nature into deathly sympathy with the corpse of Orion: 'I will tear the full flowers / and the little heads / of the grape hyacinths.'³⁰ It is also clear that from the date of her earliest literary contacts in London she was known as a flower poet, which must mean that poems like 'Sea Rose', 'Sea Violet', and 'Sea Iris' were written before late 1912. The three poems chosen by Pound, tellingly, are poems obsessed with

²⁸ The nine poems were 'Tenzone', 'The Condolence', 'The Garrett', 'The Garden', 'Ortus', 'Salutation', 'Salutation the Second', 'Pax Saturni', and 'Commission'. 'Pax Saturni' was not published until the 1960s, under the title 'Reflection and Advice'. After the April 1913 publication in *Poetry*, *Contemporaria* was again published 15 August 1913 in the *New Freewoman* with an essay by Rebecca West – the four further poems omitted were 'A Pact', 'The Condolence', 'Ortus', and 'Commission', which Pondrom describes as the least imagist.

²⁹ Cyrena N. Pondrom, 'H.D. and the Origins of Imagism', in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, edited by Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis (London, 1991), pp. 85–109 (p. 103).

³⁰ H.D., *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, edited by Louis L. Martz (Manchester, 1984), p. 56.

a male god, and one has to agree with Janice Robinson, despite the overemphasis of her argument, that H.D. may have felt a measure of panic in Pound's assumption that the god was himself.³¹ Later poems such as 'Eurydice' could be interpreted in the light of the chilling memory in *End to Torment* that 'Ezra would have destroyed me': that the very espousal of H.D. as imagist beacon was also a veiled attempt to bury her, to steal her flowers, to force her to acknowledge his power to name, create, and empty her as a poet: 'I have lost the earth', Eurydice laments, 'and the flowers of the earth', but then, defiantly, 'At least I have the flowers of myself / and my thoughts, no god / can take that.'³² It is possible, even, to read 'Priapus' (or 'Orchard' as it became) as mischievously about Pound. Robinson does:

H.D. assumes the pose of a courtesan grown old and in her 'Priapus' dedicates the gifts of her trade, 'her womanly charms.' She offers 'pomegranates already broken, / And shrunken fig, / And quinces untouched,' which we immediately recognize as traditional symbols of feminine sexuality.³³

Pound's 'The Garden' marshals Samain's hard energies to isolate, polarize, and satirically blast the implications of H.D.'s revolt within the cultivated space of the Kensington imagist coterie. The poem interprets H.D.'s disgust with the horticultural manipulation of male modernism as fear of reproduction.

As such it forestalls later poems by H.D., parodying *avant la lettre* a poem like 'Cities', which imagines a city-builder creating hideous new urban life-forms: 'And in these dark cells, / packed street after street, / souls live, hideous yet.' The I-voice of 'Cities' fears the new life-forms will seek to 'displace our old cells – / thin rare gold'. Pound's garden poem mischievously interprets H.D.'s romantic anti-metropolitan bias as fear of the working class, but cuts deeper by implying that they are not only the flowers of urban networks but also figures for the children the female poet will no longer have once she has withdrawn from modern reproductive relations. The 'emotional anaemia' is due to a lack of male iron-rich blood in her system. What is implied is that the H.D. of the *Sea Garden* poems Pound would have been reading in London in 1913, 'poet of flowers' as Amy Lowell put it in *Tendencies*, 1917,³⁴ will end up starving her own 'flowers' or poems of this

³¹ Janice S. Robinson, *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (Boston, MA, 1982), p. 31.

³² 'Eurydice', *Collected Poems*, pp. 51–5 (pp. 53, 55).

³³ Robinson, p. 31.

³⁴ Amy Lowell, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (New York, 1970), p. 270.

life-giving force through the feminist-boosted self-imposed chastity of a misplaced anti-metropolitan romanticism. The Alice/Red Queen will snap off the heads of the upturned faces of the thousand roses of Poe's 'To Helen'.

The Samain polarities of hard and soft, which Pound uses to discriminate between a Gautierian Parnassianism and the emotional slither of late romanticism, are sexual polarities. Or rather they resemble the polarities of male sexual arousal in any encounter with the love object. We can hear these *double entendres* in the article 'The Hard and Soft in French Poetry':

If the Parnassians were following Gautier they fell short of his merit. Heredia is perhaps the best of them. He tries to make his individual statements more 'poetic'; his whole, for all this, becomes frigid. Samain follows him and begins to go 'soft', there is just a suggestion of muzziness.

(p. 285)

If 'Heredia and Samain have been hard decreasingly' (p. 288), it is because they have allowed themselves to renounce sexual arousal, going soft, becoming frigid as a woman who has vowed never to reproduce again. The only hope of retrieving Gautier's power is through satire: 'Tailhade is hard in his satire' (p. 288). 'The Garden' is a tight little condensation of these concerns, typifying female modernism (as the practice of poets like Lowell and H.D. was to exemplify for him) as self-destructively solitary and asexual, and warning male poets that their example will have the dangerous effect of softening them up: they will go 'hard decreasingly'. Only the satirical point of view, as with Tailhade's 'rough strokes' drawing 'the people he sees daily in Paris' (p. 282), will save the male energy in the modern city.

The imitation of Samain sparks with energy across the Channel, energy created by Pound's sense of the resemblance between Samain's double-natured poetry about women and new environments and the debates about Imagism he was to be embroiled in with Lowell and H.D. Both sides of the equation were to do with the relation of poetry to sexual energy. The model Pound used to develop his own theory of poetic production and imitation, the hollow cones of steel charged with a force like electricity, was a sexual metaphor, as the article 'Psychology and Troubadours' (first published 1916) proves.³⁵ There Pound reflects

³⁵ 'Psychology and Troubadours', Ch. 6 of *The Spirit of Romance* (London, 1952), pp. 87-100; the following quotation is from pp. 93-4. Pound tells us the chapter was first published not in the 1910 first edition of *Spiriti*, but 'in G. R. S. Mead's *The Quest*, about 1916' (note p. 87). *The Quest* was the quarterly journal of the theosophical Quest Society, under whose auspices Pound first delivered the paper in 1912.

on what he calls the 'germinal universe', a universe of 'fluid force', of germinating energy surrounding the human mechanism, a mechanism 'rather like an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc.':

our handiest illustrations are drawn from physics: 1st, the common electric machine, the glass disc and rotary brushes; 2nd, the wireless telegraph receiver. In the first we generate a current, or if you like, split up a static condition of things and produce a tension. This is focussed on two brass knobs or 'poles'. These are first in contact, and after the current is generated we can gradually widen the distance between them, and a spark will leap across it, the wider the stronger, until with the ordinary sized laboratory appliance it will leap over or around a large obstacle or pierce a heavy book cover. In the telegraph we have a charged surface – produced in a cognate manner – attracting to it, or registering movements in the invisible aether . . .

In the first the monk or whoever he may be, develops, at infinite trouble and expense, the secondary pole within himself, produces his charged surface which registers the beauties, celestial or otherwise, by 'contemplation'. In the second, which I must say seems more in accord with 'mens sana in corpore sano' the charged surface is produced between the predominant natural poles of two human mechanisms. Sex is, that is to say, of a double function and purpose, reproductive and educational; or, as we see in the realm of fluid force, one sort of vibration produces at different intensities, heat and light.

The machine that produces the incandescent energy of the poem mimics the relations between the human body and its environment of fluid forces. In both cases, the current generated is a sexual energy. What threatens poetry is that it might degenerate into chaste monk-like contemplation, a self-communing, self-generated energy, product of emotional anaemia, like Samain's timid alexandrines about weeping women, Lowell's immersion in the warm bath of repetitive rhythmical flow, H.D.'s frigid flight from the sexual city, or Imagism as fabrication of mere personae of the poet's soul.

What poetry needs, 'The Garden' argues, is telegraphic writing generated by the transcendent 'philo-progenitive instinct', sparking as though across the germinal gap between man and woman. Resistance to the union is necessary – 'The electric current gives light where it meets resistance.'³⁶ The woman in Kensington Gardens is fruit and flower of the resisted union between Pound and Samain: the satirical modernist imitation. She is also generated by the differences between male modernist metropolitan satire and the flowering imagism of

³⁶ *The Spirit of Romance*, pp. 94, 97.

Adam Piette/Pound, Samain, Lowell, H.D.

Lowell and H.D, representing the self-withdrawing female modernist faced by the sexually charged gaze of the Poundian observer. As H.D. was to remember many years later in *End to Torment*, 'perhaps there was always a challenge in his creative power. Perhaps, even ... there was unconscious – really unconscious – rivalry.'³⁷

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³⁷ H.D., *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound*, edited by Norman Holmes Pearson and Michael King (Manchester, 1980), p. 41.

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