T.E. HULME: POETRY AND POETIC THEORY

T.E. Hulme's poems were labelled as 'Imagiste' by Ezra Pound when he printed five of his poems as 'The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme,' at the end of his *Ripostes* in 1912. Pound had coined the name 'Imagisme' in the context of Hulme's poetry. But before being featured as a postscript in Pound's work, these poems by Hulme had already appeared in *The New Age* in January 1912. The interesting point is that by 1912, Hulme was reportedly concentrating on philosophical matters and trying to relate them to poetry. Therefore the five poems (except 'A City Sunset' and 'Trenches') had been already in print before Pound thought of including them. The draft of the poem 'A City Sunset' was found on the back of a hotel bill dated 26 May 1908. In 1909, 'Autumn' was published in *For Christmas MDCCCCVIII*, a small book of verse taken out by the Poet's Club. The same year, 'Mana Aboda' was written and F.S. Flint was sent a copy. Therefore, in all probability, Hulme wrote most of his poems during this period though they were not put together in print before 1912.

Karen Csengeri suggests that Hulme's ideas on poetry were already in circulation by 1909, because 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' was 'delivered in 1908 or 1909,' the article on Haldane was published in *The New Age* on August 19, 1909 and 'the review of Trancrede de Visan's *L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain* was published in *The New Age* on August 24, 1911. Csengeri also says that 'Romanticism and Classicism,' thought to contain the most significant views of Hulme, was 'delivered as a lecture about 1912.'
The poems of T.E. Hulme and the salient features of his poetic theory were therefore simultaneous developments. Hulme's poetry, designated as 'Imagiste' by Pound could be considered as illustrations of the earliest type of the new poetry begun by the Imagist movement. The movement, as such, did not gain distinct shape or thrust, until around 1912.

'The formation of Imagism is recorded as the beginning in the autumn of 1912, as Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington, a English poet, met each other in various London teashops and discussed poetry'.

Stanley Coffman corroborates this from Aldington's autobiography Life for Life's Sake.

F.S. Flint, an associate of Hulme recorded the first stirrings of Imagism in an article entitled 'History of Imagism' in the Egoist, May 1, 1915. He recalled Hulme's formation of a new group consisting of Flint himself, Francis Tancred, Edward Storer, Florence Farr, Joseph Campbell and Ezra Pound, in the year 1909. Hulme had been previously a member of the Poet's Club. This club had published two of his poems. The article by Flint clearly stated that Hulme was the 'ring leader' and concentrated all his efforts in replacing 'verbiage' and 'inexactness' in poetry. Coffman says that 'although his poetic theory had only a limited circulation, it is hardly possible that at least two of the Imagists, Flint and Pound should have failed to become familiar with it. 'Imagism could have had its source in Hulme.'
Ford Madox Ford was credited with the origin of Imagism in ‘This Hulme Business’ by Ezra Pound. As Coffman has recorded, Imagism had its share of quarrels. Pound was extremely dissatisfied with the activities of Amy Lowell, whom he believed to be a usurper of his own position. The factionalism split the Imagist movement and Pound joined Wyndham Lewis to launch a sequel to Imagism. Vorticism was primarily an art movement. Vorticism rejected naturalistic art; it was an art form that did not imitate nature but ‘became her’. Orage wrote in *The New Age*, 17, 1915 that the Vorticist picture was about ‘form never yet seen in nature, but made of the stuff of which natural forms are made; determined by the same natural energy, but directed by artistic intelligence instead of by nature.’

Imagism was formalized and publicized by Ezra Pound. The three main doctrines of Imagism were issued as:

1. Direct treatment of the ‘thing’ whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

These guidelines were printed in *Poetry* in 1913 and were included in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, A Retrospect*. The definition of image by Pound was that it presented ‘an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.’ Pound also believed that the presentation of ‘such a complex’ gave a sense of ‘sudden liberations; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.’
T.E. Hulme also developed the concept of Image as an integral part of the poetic impulse. In the ‘Notes on Language and Style’ he stated that ‘each word must be an image seen, not a counter.’ The Notes contain more staccato sentences such as follows:

(1) A man cannot write without seeing at the same time a visual signification before his eyes. (2) It is this image which precedes the writings and makes it firm. (3) Creative effort means new images. (4) Poetry is neither more nor less than a mosaic of words, so great exactness is required for each one.

In ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry,’ Hulme systematically outlines the emerging style and form of poetry. He made the observations quite accurately and these can be read as pronouncements that help us to understand modern poetry and its essential features.

The article on De Gaultier deals with philosophy as an art and independent discipline. Hulme notes with pleasure Gaultier’s effort in establishing philosophy as a scientific discipline. Wallace Martin cites a possibility that Hulme may have been influenced by Gaultier in his formulation of the concept of the image. He says, ‘the application of the psychological theory of images to language as a medium of communication is discussed in Gaultier’s Le Bovarysme. In aesthetics and stylistics, the concept of the image was as pervasive as it was in psychology and philosophy.’ This view is based on Hulme’s discussion of Gaultier in Further Speculations.
Karen Csengeri also names Gaultier as one of the possible sources of Hulme’s ‘French Borrowing.’ She writes, ‘Whether Hulme read anything besides Gaultier’s philosophical works is uncertain. If he did he may have come across Gaultier’s distinction between the language of poetry and the language of prose.’

Csengeri quotes a passage from the article on Haldane to show that Hulme was influenced by Gaultier’s distinction of poetic and prose language. However, the distinction between poetic and prose language also occurred in the ‘Notes on Language and Style.’ The same occurs in ‘Romanticism and Classicism,’ published in *Speculations.* Natan Zach thought “Hulme’s January ‘Modern Art’ lecture is as important a landmark in the history of English modernism in the fine arts, as his ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ is in that of poetry.”

If we date ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ in 1912, it would appear that Hulme was gradually moving towards philosophical questions and their relation to poetry, by that time. Therefore, he must have started reading philosophy between 1909 and 1912, as is evident from his articles on Haldane and Gaultier that were written in 1909. In this interim period, Hulme is said to have reviewed Tancrede de Visans *L’Attitude du lyrisme contemporain* in *The New Age* in 1911. The important point that is worth noting is to scrutinize the development of Hulme’s poetic principles to an aesthetic based on philosophical and ethical concerns.

(1) The subordination of man to absolute values has been defined as classicism by Hulme. This classicism is visible in modern poetry in the form of restraint, ‘a holding back, a reservation.’

(2) Romanticism that had dominated the literary and artistic scene since the Renaissance was definitely coming to a close.
Romanticism was 'split religion', its intrusion in poetry had ushered in emotional excesses. The classical revival in poetry would use visual and concrete language, 'fancy would be the necessary weapon' subject did not matter much, what was important was to have 'an actually realized visual object' before the mind's eye.

These observations and statements have been selected from 'Romanticism and Classicism,' Speculations. At the end of the essay, Hulme mentions Bergsonian 'intensive manifolds' which he wanted to combine with precise, hard images to do away with vague, inaccurate description. Hulme translated Henri Bergson's Introduction à la Métaphysique in 1913. Bergson's work showed a way of synthesizing diverse images through intuition to a point of heightened intensity.

A representation taken for a certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols, will always remain imperfect in comparison with the object of which a view has been taken, or which the symbols seek to express. But the absolute which is the object and not the representation, the original and not its translation, is perfect, by being perfectly what it is.

By intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. 22

The first passage may be cited as a principle of the image and the latter as the psychological moment of grasping the inexpressible. The image, according to
Hulme, was thus only a representation, a substitute for the original or as the 'Notes on Language and Style' express, 'All literature and poetry is life seen in a mirror, it must be absolutely removed from reality, never to be attained.' The image then is something more and less than the original. The creative impulse bestows the image with something more and it is something less because the actual object remains always as the absolute.

While we are considering the image to be an artistic creative absolute as removed from the actual absolute, it would be worthwhile to mention Allen Tate’s views on this aspect. In his consideration of the absolute, Tate had concentrated on the absolute in poetry. Absolute poetry is a perfectly realized artistic equivalent of experience.

A serious poet is preoccupied with the writing of poems that fuse an intensely felt ordinary experience, an intense moral situation, into an intensely realized art.23

The relation between art and experience is absolute. If the perception of an experience is translated into the poem in its correct and exact realization, the poem will succeed in creating an identical experience in the reader, too. Allen Tate’s idea of poetic absolute was the endeavour to attain ‘a signification of experience that becomes absolute, within the dimension of the poem. This signification, this absolute, is creativeness, the unique quality of all good art.’24

However, Tate thought Hulme ‘misunderstood the aims of poetry.’25 Hulme, according to Tate, thought perception to be supreme in the creative urge. Further, Hulme had doubted that moral situations could be transformed into art.
Though, it is true that Hulme was skeptical about ‘infinite’ subject matters, he had not called for a severance of perception and expression. The creative effort, according to Hulme, was essentially the realization of an experience into a presentation. Poetry, to Hulme, was the capture of finite things which he considered to be appropriate for expression. At the same time, there is no dispute between the absolute that Tate wanted poetry to be and the substance of Hulme’s poetic theory. A poem was an enclosed art form, it was autonomous. Hulme as well as Tate believed that a poem should match the intensity of experience, or in other words transport the experience into an absolute, complete art. Hulme’s perception had to be realized through art; the value of poetry would be realized only in such a way.

The image was central to Hulme’s poetic theory, as is evident from a survey of his writings that were primarily concerned with expression. There has been argument about the image and its sources. Frank Kermode thought Hulme had transferred the image from symbolist aesthetic.

Hulme hands over to the English tradition a modernized, but essentially traditional aesthetic of symbolism.²⁶

Graham Hough considered Imagism to be ‘a by blow from Symbolism.’²⁷ At the same time, Hough distinguished the two. Symbolism, according to him, took the help of an intermediary, an object that reflected the experience. The object served a purpose in the poem: it suggested that there was a greater truth underlining it. Imagism, on the other hand, was ‘Symbolism without the magic.’²⁸ Hence, Imagism did not deal with essences but hard objects. It did not make the image a mediator of human experience. It differed from Symbolism because it
focused on the object and not on the enormous possibilities arising out of it. Hough maintained that Imagism was essentially a way of introducing a new poetic diction as it took to replace 'automatism, clichés of feeling and expression.'

Ezra Pound had been vehement in distinguishing Imagism from Symbolism.

Imagism is not symbolism. The symbolists dealt in 'association', that is a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word. They made it a form of metonymy.... Symbolism has usually been associated with mushy technique. On the other hand, Imagism is not Impressionism, though one borrows, or could borrow, much from the impressionist method of presentation. A image, in our sense is real... it is our affair to render the image as we have perceived or conceived it.

Pound had directly stated that 'the natural object is always the adequate symbol.' He was against symbolism because he did not want the 'symbolic function' to intrude upon the meaning of the poem. This bears affinity with Hulme's contention that poetry was 'accurate, precise and definite description.' The task of poet was 'to see things as they really are' and grasp the perception while realizing it in the poem.

Pound had explained in 'Vorticism' that the image could not be a simple picture of something. It was something more, provoking development of contexts as it proceeded along the poem. The organic nature of the image was thereby put...
across through the definition. As Hulme had believed that the metaphor was not a mere decorative device, Pound too, considered the image 'as a seed capable of germinating and developing into another organism.'

Herbert Read had suggested that Hulme had been greatly influenced by Remy de Gourmount's *Le Problem du Style* (1902), in the introduction to the 'Notes on Language and Style.' Wallace Martin in 'The Sources of Imagist Aesthetic,' pointed out that in 1929, five years after the *Speculation* was published, René Taupin in *L'Influence du symbolism francais sur la poesie americaine* also reiterated that Hulme was influenced by symbolism. Alun R. Jones in *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme* believed that Flint had a large hand in introducing Hulme to French poetry, particularly 'vers libre.' French poetry had a definite impact on imagism. F.S. Flint, one of the members of the Poets Club of 1909, wrote in favour of the 'free rhythmic forms and the rarity of rhyme' in *The New Age* in January 1909.

The French connection in Hulme's aesthetic is supposed to have originated in André Beaunier's *La Possie Nouvelle.* However, Csengeri says that Beaunier's discussion of French poets revealed that "they favoured the 'symbole' rather than direct expression and vers libre rather than regular metre."

Wallace Martin and Karen Csengeri have attempted to show that the concept of the image was based on the psychological theories of Hippolyte Taine and Théodule Ribot. Ribot was included in Hulme's 'Plan for a Book' in the *Speculations.*
Martin says that "Hulme's debt to the psychological tradition presented by Taine is quite obvious: Hulme refers to Taine's writings on psychology, and two of 'notes' employ examples also used by Taine." The examples that Martin mentioned were:

Regard each word as a picture, then a succession of pictures.

Only the dead skeleton remains. We cut the leaves off when the tree becomes a mast, the leaves become unnecessary.

(*Further Speculations*, p. 83)

The other example is the attempt to recollect the characteristics of picture seen in a gallery. The recollection is ultimately reduced to words. As Hulme had observed in the 'Notes on Language and Style' that thought is the primary and first step in the process of progressing from idea to image. Thought presents a picture and language too constructs a picture which may not be identical to the first. Therefore, in reality, there are two images presented to the mind. The fusion of these two images is reduced to one abstraction in the form of a word.

Martin asserted that 'although the argument that Hulme read Taine's *De l'intelligence* is largely inferential, there is indisputable evidence that he read the works of Theodule Ribot, a French psychologist and philosopher who was, like Taine, a product of the empiricist tradition.' Wallace Martin also provides the information that Remy de Gourmont had drawn extensively from Ribot's *La Philosophie de Schopenhauer* in *Le Problem du Style*. This clears the position of T.E. Hulme who, many believe, had borrowed from Remy de Gourmont after Herbert Read's remark. Hulme had, we believe, extensively read French
philosophy and psychology to absorb ideas to consolidate his own aesthetic position. His writings were in the form of notes and jottings. Therefore, they never acquired the complete shape in his lifetime. It would be thus unjust to treat them as the final ideas of Hulme. Ribot’s idea of the image was the integration of divergent images into one generic image. Both Martin and Csengeri believe that Hulme was greatly indebted to this view. Seailles, Csengeri says, ‘describes the image as the central element in artistic creation.’ Seailles had regarded art as the transaction of emotion into images.

The French debt of T.E. Hulme is obvious from his own discussions of Bergson’s theory of art in the Speculations; Ribot and Seailles featuring in his outline of a prospective book. Therefore, Read’s suggestion of Gourmont’s influence on Hulme, though accepted by a number of people, is unsupported by any evidence. In fact, Alun R. Jones in The Life and Opinion of T.E. Hulme had expressed the idea that Flint had introduced Hulme to French poetry.

The Egoist carried articles on French poetry and F.S. Flint ‘continued to be the best informed exponent of the French.’ F.S. Flint was sincerely engaged in spreading knowledge about French poetry. His reviews and essays identified the common interests of Imagism and French poetry. The economy of words, verse experimentation, the abandonment of rhyme, the suggestion of traditional verse behind the successive rhythmic units of irregular lengths were some of the aspects that could be seen in Imagist poetry and French poetry. Flint had written in The New Age in 1909 on Gourmont’s Le Livre des Masques. Csengeri informs us that the association with The New Age may have provided Hulme with ideas of
Gourmont's poetic theory. Hulme is reported to have copied two passages from the preface of *Le Livre des masques*.

The two passages in Hulme's hand are at the University of Hull, Library, England.47

Theodule Ribot is said to have 'contributed significantly to Hulme's defiantly antimystical representation of the experience of the poet.'48 Ribot accounted for the image as a construct existing as a nebulous in the mind of the artist, poet or any thinker and its gradual metamorphosis through a process of separation from precepts and a process of unification by analogy.

Associationism between images was one of the aspects of the creative act. It was determined by the mental ability in the grasp of the objective resemblances between things. The mental faculty of seeing objective resemblances is also known as the eidetic faculty, not much dependent on logic as it is on the pictorial or the visual. Steven Foster observed that the eidetic perception is 'determined by the ability of the poet's state of mind, his sense of observation... Eidetic perception is a possible, anti-rational process of apprehending objects and phenomena.'49 The psychological recovery of abstract experiences and thoughts without the transcendental quality ensured the concreteness in representation. However, like Ribot, Hulme believed that one had to lodge within the moment in order to locate stable analogies between images.

When we concentrate on the purely poetic theory of T.E. Hulme, based on the passages selected and the previous pages; we find Hulme was occupied with new expression. He emphasized effect, incorporation of the image as distinct yet as
a unified presentation, use of visual language, reliance on solid, concrete, actual images and abandoning a rigid, regular metre. The most important thing was: 'The world in its concreteness, evident to the senses: the physical phenomena. The poet seizes these, finds their verbal equivalence, and the rest - beauty, significance, metaphysical reverberation - is there as an intrinsic grace.'

The image to Hulme, presented a whorl of possibilities. It was a visual concrete medium, a real and actual method of getting closest to the object itself. It did not require long winding linguistic excursions to present the object. Since the image had to be presented through language and fundamentally poetic language, it had to provide freshness similar to the suddenness of discovery in order to escape from the great structure of established meanings associated with each word. Irregular metre was to be a feature of the new poetry as it enhanced the general effort. Regularity of syllables meant falling upon traditional verse pattern. The image, to Hulme, was a complex of extracting from experience a concrete presentation. Ordinary, everyday matters and observations could be turned into vivid impression by the very act of creation. The creative effort was the continuous sensation of the object, physically.

**Above the Dock**

Above the quiet dock in midnight,

Tangled in the mast's corded height,

Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away

Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.
It directs attention on the moon, fixing an impression it has in the mind of the poet. The orb appears to be suspended like a child’s balloon in the air and its statuesque countenance is momentarily marred by the intrusion of the ship’s main mast. The image presented here or rather the two images emerge from a single object, the moon and its first entanglement with the shipscorded mast; it retrieves itself to occupy a solitary position in the vast night sky. The image of the moon as a child’s forgotten toy brings to mind homely reference and its connection to the actual. The flitting moment has been captured in a refreshing way; the moment, of course, may not be confined to a single impression, but be a braided one. The braided effect also emphasizes a paradox: the singular construct of the clustered images. Pound had said in ‘Vorticism’ that “the ‘one image poem’ is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another...”51 Michael Roberts had strangely referred to Above the Dock to illustrate his argument that Hulme had blurred his own criteria that sensations should be handed over physically.52 He (Roberts) felt that Hulme had failed in conveying the concrete by ushering in an infinite subject. But, as the poem displays, we do not encounter any infinite or mysterious subject. The ‘mysterious’ has been transferred into the familiar. It is the ability of remaining within the object under description that the representation is an objective contemplation. The moon’s unknown quality has been given another touch by the word ‘hang.’ It serves a dual purpose: it gives the impression of stillness and also has familiar association through the reference of ‘a balloon.’ This poem does rhyme as aa, bb, though the stress pattern is unusual. There is no common rhythm arising out of a neat arrangement of syllables.
There appears to be an effect of harsh stress syllables, distorting the rhythm arising out of a regular beat. But, the distortion is only a suggestion because as the lines above show, they do have a regularity in pattern.

**Embankment**

*(Fantasia of a Fallen Gentleman on a Cold Bitter Night)*

Once, in finesse of fiddles found I ecstasy

In a flash of gold heels on the hard pavement

Now see I

That warmth's the stuff of poesy.

Oh, God, make small

The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,

That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie

T.S. Eliot had noticed the sway of suggested metrical composition. He particularly admired the control and ability to hover over the edge of metre, neither using it totally nor avoiding it absolutely. The mastery over rhythm is also the mastery over language, for e.g. ‘finesse of fiddles found I,’ ‘flash of gold heels,’ ‘hard pavement.’ The image of a moth eaten blanket with that of ‘old star – eaten blanket’ is vivid and captures the physical appearance of a punctured blanket. The absence of rhyme and obvious rhythm was characteristic of Imagist poetry. This feature, if handled by an inexperienced hand, would straightaway have the effect of prose. But, prose and poetry are two separate genres requiring different linguistic
manoeuvres. The direct dealing with expression strongly implied the suggestion that there was resemblance to prose. However, the directness advocated by Hulme and the Imagists, like Pound, was aimed at clarity and not the suggestive mysterious quality of symbolism.

**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.

Apart from the use of vivid images / metaphors, the word ‘and’ has been repeated as if to join thoughts as they occurred to the poet. ‘And’ used at the beginning of a line definitely reflects the use in prose. ‘Autumn’ has blank verse or rather a scheme of verse where there is no rhyme. Hulme had talked of new poetry with a kind of versification not quite identical to ‘vers libre.’ While discarding traditional verse pattern is easier said than done, the prospect of falling into prose language appeared to be a reality. Therefore, Hulme had wanted poetry to be suggestive, to give snatches of impression. Prose, he considered to be counter language, while poetic language was intuitive. ‘Autumn’ also conforms to modern poetic treatment; keeping close to living speech or a conversational tone.

Ezra Pound had wanted poetry to ‘correspond exactly to the emotion, or shade of emotion to be expressed.’ Symmetry had its uses but there were a vast
number of subjects which could not be ‘rendered in symmetrical’ form. This view
led Pound to construct his poems in such a way that they gave the impression of
short prose pieces.

**From: Homage to Sextus Properties**

> When, when, when, and whenever death closes our eyelids,
> Moving naked over Acheron
> Upon the one raft, victor and conquered together,
> Marius and Jugurtha together, one tangle of shadows.
> Caeser plots against India,
> Tigris and Euphrates shall, from now on, flow at his bidding.
> Tibet shall be full of Roman policeman,
> The Parthians shall get used to our statuary and acquire a Roman religion;
> One raft on the veiled flood of Acheron,
> Marius and Jugurtha together.

The above poem has a difficult organization. Graham Hough was of the opinion
that Pound practised the third variety of free verse. He avoided the iambic metre,
‘employed quantitative effects, verbal and rhythmic parallels.'55 The stress pattern
is the unusual trochaic dactylic; only a master craftsman like Pound would sustain
it through the poem.

Another kind of Imagist poetry which was Pound’s forte was his rendering
of brief impressions, compact and crisp. In this aspect, Pound was influenced by
the Chinese ideogram and the Japanese Haiku. The fixation and concentration in
the following is acknowledged:
In a station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd,

Petals on a wet, blank bough.

Pound is reported to have written the original ‘Metro’ poem in 1911 consisting of thirty lines. But, he destroyed it and re-wrote it after a year and half, recreating the condensed experience of simultaneous and instantaneous images. An interesting point mentioned by Hakutani is that Flint and Hulme had learnt about the hokku and the tanka through French translators and Pound’s familiarity with it was through them. The quick and crisp capture of one single impression of ‘faces’ as ‘petals’ can be matched with Hulme’s ‘wistful stars’ with white faces like town children and the ‘star-eaten sky blanket’ of ‘Embankment.’

Metaphor or image had to be intricately woven with language. Language, according Hulme, particularly poetic language had to modify itself in order to accommodate metaphors. In the process, the syntax would undergo unconventional changes and be placed in new arrangements.

Mana Aboda

Mana Aboda, whose bent form

The sky in arched circle is,

Seems ever for an unknown grief to mourn.

Yet on a day I heard her cry:

“I weary of the roses and the singing poets –

Josephs all, not tall enough to try.”
Let us take the second line: it ends with 'is' – a verb that goes against the laws of grammar in this particular context. The word 'ever for' is an interchanged combination that has added to the meaning of the original 'forever.' This new application of the word 'forever' was essential for the rhythm of the poem. The rhythm arises out of such arrangements rather than from the incantory appeal. The two images of Māna Aboda, the bent form like the arch of the sky and the bent form indicating a timeless expression of grief. The two images could not have been successfully brought forward, without breaking the syntactical order. The coalescence of two images into an autonomous one did not reduce the individual sensation generated by them. Imagism, as practised by Hulme and Pound demonstrated the skillful handling of the coalition of images to intensify the other.

Hilda Doolittle's poetry incorporated Imagist ideals like hard, dry images, brief compositions and dramatic presentation by building up images on the original.

OREAD

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

The outstanding feature in 'Oread' is the image of the stormy sea. The reference to pines and fir bring about a picture of a green forest. The two merge within the context of the poem, accentuating the impression of high waves, tall as the pines
breaking over the rocks. H.D.’s ‘Garden’ also contains hard pictures such as ‘O Rose cut in rock / hard as the descent of hail,’ ‘scrape the colour/ from the petals / like spilt dye from a rock.’

Repetitions such as ‘If I could break / I could break a tree / If I could stir / I could break a tree / I could break you’ emphasize the static but intense energy throbbing within it. The immobility of the rose has not spoilt the perfection, it has been fixed like the ‘hard as the descent of hail.’ H.D.’s poems are similar to Hulme and Pound, where the aim to present impressions was the primary task. Other Imagists such as F.S. Flint and Richard Aldington could not completely succeed in presenting the image as crisply as Hulme, Pound and H.D.

Flint followed the French in describing the urban situation, in arranging the line lengths, completely discarding a rhymed verse pattern. The affinities between imagistic poetry and French poetry written during that period have not been missed.58

EAU FORTE

On black bare tree a stale cream moon
Hangs dead, and sours the unborn buds.
Two gaunt old hacks, knees bent, heads low,
Tug, tired and spent, an old horse tram.
Damp smoke, sank mist fill the dark square
And round the bend sic bullocks come.
A hobbling, dirt grimed drover guides
Their clattering feet —

Their clattering feet!
to the slaughter house.

(F.S. Flint)
A row of eyes,
Eyes of greed of pitiful blankness, of plethoric complacency,
Immobile,
Gaze, stare at one point,
At my eyes
Antagonism,
Disgust,
Immediate antipathy,
Cut my brain, as a sharp dry reed
Cuts a finger.
I surprise the same thought
In the brasslike eyes

‘What right have you to live?’

(R. Aldington).

Both poems describe an urban situation. The indifference and hostility relies on words such as: ‘Tug, tired and spent’, ‘stale moon hangs dead’, ‘A hobbling, dirt grimed drover... to the slaughter house’ in ‘Eau Forte.’ Aldington’s description is direct, terse utterances: ‘Antagonism, disgust, antipathy,’ they cut into his mind as sharply as a dry reed slits a finger. The malevolence is apparent in ‘the brasslike eyes.’

Hulme’s poetic theory emphasized a psychological hold over the moment and the material. The relation of the idea and the image formed the crucial part of the creative impulse. Hulme’s idea was that a poem reflected the control over the psychological moment. He thought that the idea that prompted a sensation is
virtually insignificant, compared to the dual tasks of holding on to the idea and the transportation of the idea on to words. Both the tasks were arduous and the creative urge was a constant struggle to keep up the psychological grip over material. The poem was therefore an amalgamation of two kinds of realization; one was composed of the flitting scraps of impressions of the object, experience or sensation and the other was the rendered impression which was but, only a image of the original.

Hulme had published 'A City Sunset' in *For Christmas MDCCCC VIII, 1909*, published by the Poet's Club. There are two more brief pieces on the sunset, titled as 'The Sunset' and 'Sunset II' by A.R. Jones in *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme*. 'Sunset II' has a version (included by Jones) that appears to be a draft. Hulme was engaged in working towards finding a suitable form of rhythm and effect, as is obvious from the footnotes. There are stress marks by his hand, reflecting the deliberate weighing of words. The final version is shorter:

**Sunset II**

I love not the Sunset

That Flaunts like a scarlet sore

O'er half a sick sky

That calls aloud for all to gape

As its beauty

Like a wanton.

But Sunset when the sun comes home.

Like a ship from the sea.
With its round red sail
Shadowed against a clear sky,
Silent, in a cool harbour
At eve,

After labour

'A City Sunset' had dwelt on the playfulness of the setting sun. The flash of orange that spreads over sky disturbs the people. The softness, the seductive power of the sun conjures up images of the beautiful lady Castlemaine. The sensation of the sun's alluring powers arouses a succession of impressions:

A frolic of crimson
is the spreading glory of the sky
heaven's jocund maid
flaunting a trailed red robe
along the fretted city roofs
about the time of homeward going crowds
- a vain maid, lingering, loth to go....

As the sunrays recede, the action described as the 'trail' of a 'red robe' retreating over the roof-tops, the description lights up the vividity of the action. The sun, as 'heaven's jocund maid' rejoices in creating a flutter in the heart's of men; a succeeding picture adds to the character of the sun: the vain maid who dallies her departure as if relishing the power over men.

The seductive power of the sunset has been treated in 'Sunset II' and 'The Sunset.' The poet discards the 'wanton' image of the sun in the first paragraph of
‘Sunset II.’ The second paragraph begins with a comparative ‘but’ that describes another characteristic of the sun. The silence and grandeur of the sea merges with the clear sky in the horizon. The sun appears to be like a solitary ship with its red sail aloft, resting quietly in the harbour. The striking image of the sunset has been woven almost like a painting with the merging of the sea, the sky and the ship in the harbour. It gives the impression of a sweeping landscape or rather seascape, accentuating the beauty of the sun setting.

‘The Sunset’ is a poem consisting of only five lines, yet competent to capture the last visible face of the sun, before it completely disappears. Here the allusion is to the stage, and to the performer. The vanity of the performer comes in conflict with the reality of the end of the show.

The Sunset

A Coryphee, covetous of applause,

Loth to leave the stage,

With final diaberie, poises high her toe,

Displays scarlet lingerie of carmin’d clouds,

Amid the hostile murmurs of the stalls.

As in the ‘Sunset II,’ the picture presented here is of the opera. The applause of the audience assumes all important necessity for the ‘coryphee’ ...she hesitates leaving it behind, wanting to revel in it and attempts to remain longer by deliberate temptuous behaviour. By such reference, the sun’s slow and seemingly reluctant disappearance has been heightened. The striking common factor in all the three poems on the sunset, is that the languor and the beauty of the sun has been
variously described with the help of analogies. The allusions have the effect of building up of effect, just as the bricks that make up a wall. The image of the sun's languorous beauty is the original sensation. However, it is extremely difficult to translate the same sensation into words that make up a poem. The draft of 'Sunset II' bears evidence that Hulme was experimenting with words and their place in sentences. Unlike prose that describes as it proceeds along, poetry has to latch on to a single vivid sensation that stands out from the rest of the accompanying sensations.

The single vivid sensation becomes markedly pronounced as successive pieces of pictures that either relate to the original or occupy an opposite meaning, are added to the lines. The result of such dense framework resembles a scaffolding propping up a unified impression. This is the 'plastic' image.\(^{59}\) In the 'Notes on Language and Style,' Hulme had maintained that, 'Literature like memory, selects only the vivid patches of life. If literature (realistic) did really resemble life, it would be interminable, dreary, commonplaces, eating and dressing, buttoning, with here and there a patch of vividness.\(^{60}\) In 'The Man in the Crow's Nest,' the strange, irrational fear that grips one in a windy night is presented. Fear, itself is a concrete experience but the concreteness is difficult to accomplish through art. Hulme achieves the concrete by adding juxtaposed images:

\begin{quote}
Strange to me, sounds the wind that blows
By the masthead, in the lonely night
Maybe' tis the sea whistling - feigning joy
To hide its fright
Like a village boy
That trembling past the churchyard goes.
\end{quote}
The projection of the strange feeling comes through the ‘rope of letters.’ The meaning is not dragged along, it stands up immediately. The whistle of the sea like that of a boy who pretends bravado while walking past a churchyard is quickly placed together to achieve a compact effect.

Hulme was aware that any sensation or idea behind a poem was the concrete experience. Yet the concrete idea was secondary in a sense. It depended on the successful handling of expression. Without the representation, the idea by itself could not manage to manouvre a poem. Though the idea is part of life, it has to be separated from it. It has to be detached from reality in such a manner that it reflects reality even more profoundly, lending a fresh insight. A poem is the presentation of the real through the means of a careful ‘mirror image.’ The image rested on concrete experience, at the same time, it reached beyond the experience.

In ‘Conversion,’ the experience is complete in its impact. The indefinable feeling has been given a solid effect through a series of feelings that work on the incident. The moment of conversion reminds the poet of the strange conflict between the lure of temptation and the urge to resist it. A ‘light-hearted’ venture into the wood brought the poet to confront ‘beauty.’ The ‘beauty’ overpowered him and the poem concentrates on describing the succumbing to it. The last two lines describe a situation that is far removed from the heightened sensation of conversion.

Light-hearted I walked into the valley wood
In the time of the hyacinths,
Till beauty like a scented cloth
Cast over; stifled me, I was bound
Motionless and faint of breath.
By loveliness that is her own eunuch.
Now pass I to the final river
Ignominiously, in a sack, without sound
As any peeping turk to the Bosphorus.

Hulme's dictum that 'Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images' differentiates between the two images: the original and the impression extracted from the original. A poem is an artefact, an externalized objectification of feeling. It retains the essential features of the feeling or experience but presents a dramatized version. This increases the feeling itself and adds new insights to the original. Poetry is the dramatized presentation of the plastic image. The plastic image offers a clue to the emotional stirring that had occurred at the sight of an object or scene.

In a sense, all ideas must be divorced, torn away from the reality where we found them and put on a stage. They must appear separate and far from all dirt and laughter at their low and common relations. They must be posed and moved grammatically, and above all, their gestures must express their emotions. This is the art of literature, the making of the other world.

In 'A Sudden Secret,' the cove of Budley assumes a dramatic dimension through the references to the 'Lady of Ave' and the 'faint hearted waves' that
creep towards the sand. The whole scene is taken to another level in the process of presenting a dramatic description.

A sudden secret cove by Budley
Waveless water, cliff enclosed.
A stilled budoir of the sea, which
In the noon-heat lolls in to sleep.

Velvet sand, smooth as the rounded thigh
Of the lady of Ave, as asleep she lay.
Vibrant noon-heat, trembling at the view.
Oh eager page! Oh velvet sand!
Tremulous faint — hearted waves creep up
Diffident — ah, how wondering!
Trembling and drawing back.

Be hold-the Abbé blesses — 'tis only feigned sleep
On smooth round thigh! ...
A rough wind rises, dark cliffs stare down
Sour faced Calvin — art thou whining still?

The actual is the quick, terse remark, 'Waveless water,' 'cliff enclosed.' The 'stilled budoir' of the sea transforms it into a solid mass at high tide. The intense heat of the sun does seem to vibrate the vision and 'vibrant noon-heat, trembling at the view' captures the sensation exactly by a method of transferring the actual to the fictitious. By the solid reference of the view of the velvet sand, the idea gains
definiteness. There are a succession of images built one upon the other: 'velvet sand, smooth as the rounded thigh of the Lady of Ave' who is asleep. The noon-heat is like the tremulous 'page' looking at the beautiful 'Lady Ave.' The waves that advance towards the coastline appear shy and hesitant as they continuously retreat.

In 'A Prayer to the Moon to Smile,' the solemnity has been placed in the context of the 'Queen' riding across with her whole retinue. The moon's impassive face does not register any emotion as the clouds, the dusky cavalry rides past' in 'mad manouvres.' The clouds momentarily obliterate the moon, as they 'ride' past her. The 'master' of this presentation is the wind. It directs the whole show; the movement of the clouds for the amusement of the moon. But the moon is unmoved. The second paragraph poses a question to the moon: why is the moon sad inspite of the attempts to entertain her? The 'poor versemaker' wonders if she disapproves of his freedom to walk unresisted in the court to 'steal' a look at her.

The non-spatial description of an object, accumulates concentration around the original sensation. The poem while presenting the plastic image, never, quite reaches the original but at the same time, never recedes from it. It is an urge towards fixation; to capture the static stillness of the object. The essence of Hulme's doctrine and practise of poetry was that the presentation was, movement in and towards concrete object. At the same time there was a quality of movement in two opposite directions; two sensations seemed to be both in the forward and the backward movement. He had explained in 'Romanticism and Classicism' that the counter movement was like that of the snake's body giving the impression of both
coiling and uncoiling at the same time. Poetry is 'fixing' the psychological moment.

Fixation through the image is not imitating the original, natural, actual object. The image has to be rendered in words, therefore, it implies that the meaning carried by a word as well as the meaning wished to be conveyed need to be handled properly. The cautious move is from the 'eye' to the 'voice.' The plastic image has to gain primacy over the natural or original object.

**Susan Ann and Immortality**

Her head hung down
Gazed at earth, fixedly keen,
As the rabbit at the stoat
Till the earth was sky,
Sky that was green,
And brown clouds past,

Like chestnut leaves arching the ground.

The final moment, the transfixation of gaze in death is carried further and reinforced by the reference of the 'rabbit' in the grip of the stoat. The final breath whirls the earth to the sky.

Art is the creation of beauty, even natural beauty is placed in a different perspective, enhancing the quality of the natural. Literature projects only the vivid; it avoids the realistic in so far as naturalistic presentation is concerned. It resembles life but it does not reproduce its desultory effects. It creates by presenting perspectives of the idea. The perspective thus presented is more clear, precise and
definite than the idea. In this way, the image becomes more important than the idea.

The image cannot exist on the flat. In other words, it cannot be descriptively spread out. It has to build up a close compressed effect by forcing all elements towards a point. The intercontextual use of the image makes the poem move inwards till it merges and integrates on a single point. Logical description cannot achieve the compressed effect. Even the irrational can work to explain or depict truth.

Real but irrational fear of the dark assumes greater proportions at night. Every object has a different signification: a dead tree resembles the ‘iron hook’ of ‘pitiless Mara’ branding the clouds like cattle. In ‘At Night’ a single object: tree, is provided layers of references, emphasizing ‘fear.’ The dead tree’s silhouette appears like the ‘diseased veins’ of the ‘dead white’ sky. It also looks like a hook of ‘Mara’ used to punish the disobedient. The clouds wafting past the dead branch are branded like the cattle of the prairies.

_Trenches: St Eloi_

Over the flat slope of St Eloi

A wide wall of sand bags.

Night,

In the silence desultory men

Pottering over small fires, cleaning their mess tins:

To and fro from the lines,

Men walk as on Piccadilly,

Making paths in the dark,
Through scattered dead horses,
Over a dead Belgian's belly.

The German have rockets. The English have no rockets.

Behind the line, cannon, lying back miles.

Before the line chaos:

My mind is a corridor. The minds about me are corridors.

Nothing suggest itself.

There is nothing to do out keep on.

'Trenches' had been printed in the Catholic Anthology by Pound in 1915. The poem was inscribed as T E H poem 'abbreviated from the conversation of Mr. T E H.' Whether it was actually an abridged version given a poetic form by Pound cannot be definitely claimed. But we know, the compulsion behind Hulme joining the war and his actual indifference to the war. There was a contradiction since he supported the war as a means of establishing English culture and resisting German hegemony and at the same time the poem reveals an indifferent account of the war. Whatever the contradictions, this particular poem unquestionably establishes Hulme as an independent observer of war at close quarters and also as a unique participant from the better known Rupert Brooke. It is evident that this poem chronicles the fleeting thoughts of the war that Hulme joined with fervour and belief. This poem is quite different than the others, here, there are no tightly wounded metaphorical movements. It represents a picture of the war at St Eloi that is quite dull and removed from the profound questions surrounding the necessity of
war. Hulme shows that when there is no action, the activities can be repetitive and listless. It appears as if the men are taking a stroll in Piccadilly in the absence of action. The detached voice is clear in the description of men walking over dead horses and a dead man's body. The dull scene of men cleaning their mess tins is in contrast to the chaotic movements of fighting in the lines. The last two lines suggests that the mind is like a passage through which one may keep going but there is no end in sight.

The vague and the indefinable is objectified. Words have to work in collaboration with the intention. The poet's job is to make his writing firm without letting go of the object or experience before his 'eyes.' Hulme thought, '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.' The poet has to absorb all experience and sensation or feeling and turn them into solid objects. Hulme had written a poem to illustrate the task of the poet:

Over a large table, smooth, he leaned in ecstasies,
In a dream.
He had been to woods, and talked and walked with trees.
Had left the world.
And brought back round globes and stone images
Of gems, colours, hard and definite.
With these he played, in a dream,
On the smooth table.

Therefore, the poet had to 'play' with the vague but turn them into 'hard and definite' in the poem. The idea has to be dislocated through concrete and objective
representation. The psychological integration and absorption of juxtaposed thoughts could be displayed to reach the exactness while conveying an experience or thought. Hulme's insistence on the visual, therefore, went only as far as it was necessary to ensure an accurate, concrete representation. It was the reference point, a guiding force that controlled a poem from falling into vagueness of effect. Art lay in the correct depiction of the moment of inspiration. It was the contemplation of the idea in its objectivity and fixation of the sensation or object. A poem was a look at the object as it existed in itself without the surrounding affecting its existence in any way. Hulme showed, through his poetry, the achievement of the transfixation of an object or experience. A poem performed multiple tasks and aroused equal responses by its dense contexts. It not only described the isolated object, it created a heightened, dramatized version by leaving out the context and yet paradoxically constructing a context. The movement towards and in opposite direction work simultaneously. It was therefore no mean task on Hulme's part to achieve the density of concrete minutae through his poetry.
Notes:

1. Pound recalled, “I made the word on a Hulme basis – and carefully made a name that was not and never had been used in France... specifically to distinguish ‘us’ from any of the French groups catalogued by Flint in the Poetry Review of August 1912” in his communication with Margaret Anderson on 17th November 1917.


7. Imagism, 51.


9. Pound and Flint reportedly had heated arguments after the special Imagist number of The Egoist in May 1915. Hilda Doolittle wrote to Flint to remain silent regarding Ezra Pound. She wrote that ‘Silence is the best for us, I think, and surely the simplest policy.’ A Commentary on the Imagist period, Selected letters from H.D. to F.S. Flint by Cyrena N. Pondrom, Contemporary Literature, 10(4): 562, 1969, special no. on H.D.: A Reconsideration.


16. We are a number of modern people, and verse must be justified as a means of expression for us.

There is an intimate connection between the verse form and the state of poetry at any period.

The new technique was first definitely stated by Kahn. It constituted 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. 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 emancipation of verse can have on poetic activity.

The old poetry 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 poem and the elaborate rules.

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. Instead of these minute perfections of phrase and words, the tendency will be rather towards the production of a general effect, this of course takes away the predominance of metre and regular number of syllables as the element of perfection in words.

The old poetry dealt essentially with big things, the expression of epic subjects leads naturally to the anatomical matter and regular verse. But the modern is the exact opposite of this, it no longer deals with heroic action, it has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind.

The tentative and half-shy manner of looking at things cannot be put in regular metre. The poet has to select images which, put in juxtaposition in separate lines serve to suggest and evoke the state he feels. To this piling up and juxtaposition of distinct images in different lines, one can find a fanciful analogy in music. Two
visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both.

The effect of rhythm, like that of music, is to produce a kind of hypnotic state, during which suggestion's of grief or ecstasy are easily and powerfully effective, just as when we are drunk all jokes seem funny. This is for the art of chanting, but the procedure of the new visual art is just the contrary. It depends for its effect not on a kind of half, sleep produced, but on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of visual images should exhaust one.

This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music, it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic effect of rhythm.

Karen Csengeri was of the view that the ‘Lecture on Modern Poetry’ was delivered in 1908 or 1909. The articles that Hulme wrote for *The New Age* in 1909 entitled ‘Searchers after Reality’ had included Bax, Haldane and Gaultier. These articles are under the section: Philosophical Essays in *Further Speculations*. They also provide certain noteworthy passages relating to literary expression:

I am prepared to admit that my mind is compelled to “think” the world according to a system of concepts, but Mr. Haldane and the Hegelians here attribute some transcendental value to the word “think.” Thinking might be, and probably is, a method of distorting Reality.

Poetry, in one aspect at any rate, can be considered to be an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. Nowadays, when one says the hill is “clothed” with trees, the word suggests no physical comparison. To get the original visual effect one would have to say “ruffled” or use some new metaphor. Images in verse are not mere decoration but the very essence of an intuitive language.
The root of metaphor and intuition must rise into the light of abstraction to complete itself, but it should not be allowed to run to seed there.

The best way to sum up Mr. Haldane is to say that he believes in the ultimate reality of language. He speaks with contempt for the "thing I itself" as a notion which cannot be expressed in words.

(Searchers after Reality: Haldane, Further Speculations, p. 9, 10 and 12 respectively)


21. Martin and Csengeri have supplied the information in their essays, and both have tried to place the French influence on Hulme's poetic theory.


23. Tate, Allen. 'Poetry and the Absolute,' Sewanee Review, 35: 45, 1927.

24. Tate, 46.

25. Tate, 49-50.


34. 'Romanticism and Classicism,' 133.


40. Hulme’s plan for a book has been included in the *Speculations* and the names of Taine and Ribot can be found in the same. *Speculations*, 263, 1954.


42. Wallace, 199.


44. If, as Martin shows Gourmont had borrowed from Ribot, the source of imagist aesthetic could be traced to the same sources. Hulme had included Bergson in *Speculations*, Ribot and Gabriel Seailles in the ‘Plan for a Book.’ *Speculations*, 263.


57. ‘What is the use of logical syntax in poetry?’ Flint questioned in ‘The French Chronicle’ in *Poetry and Drama*, 1: September 1, 1913.


61. 'Notes on language and style,' The Criterion, a quarterly review, 486-7.

62. 'Notes on Language and Style,' 488.

63. 'Notes on Language and Style,' 487.

64. 'Notes on Language and Style,' 489.

65. 'Notes on Language and Style,' 487.

66. On the confusion over the authorship of this particular poem, A.R. Jones writes 'it is probable that Ezra Pound actually wrote the poem on the basis of one of Hulme's conversations during the period 1914-15 and credited Hulme with the authorship in his Catholic Anthology.' The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme,' London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 151, 1960.

Ronald Schuchard refers to Pound's own statement in the preface to Hulme's poems in Umbra.

'Hulme's five poems were published as his Complete Poetical Works at the end of Ripostes in 1912; there is, and now can be no further addition, unless my abbreviation of some of his talk made when he came home with his first wound in 1915 may be half counted among them.' 'Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Towards a Revaluation of Eliot's Critical and Spiritual Development.' PMLA, 88(5): 1093, October 1973.

67. 'Notes on Language and Style,' 486.