Amy Lowell's initiative in bringing John Gould Fletcher into Imagist movement succeeded when he joined the same and actively participated coming up with his own creativity and individual contribution for making the movement a success. Fletcher's peculiar nature has proved him a controversial poet in the American literary scene. His Imagist verse produced various antithetical and contradictory views regarding his involvement as a poet and the characteristic style of his poetry. Pound in one of his letters to Harriet Monroe described him as an Impressionist.\(^1\) Fletcher has also been considered by some critics a Symbolist\(^2\) because his earlier work shows considerable influence of the French Symbolists. His characteristic style of making a poem with a variety of shades of colours and his oriental musical experiments in image-making have projected him to be a pictorialist, rhythmist, symbolist and mystic poet of the Imagist movement. To evaluate his Imagist patterns one has to put due attention to all these aspects which in a way create the sketch of Fletcher as a poet.
His poetry, notwithstanding all these characteristics goes by Imagist tenets. When there are haikus for conciseness and complex imagery of exactness and suggestiveness, there are symphonies for musical dimensions of images. His manipulations of cadences of subtle variations, his imagery, distinctly original of his perception evolving structural variations, have effected his patterns of expressions.

John Gould Fletcher was born in Little Rock Arkansas on January 3, 1886. His father was of Scotch-Irish ancestry. Fletcher finished his schooling in the year 1902 and went to Phillips Academy, Andover to prepare for the admission in Harvard. Studying at Harvard for three years from 1904 to 1907 he left the university without taking a degree. This brief introduction of Fletcher is made here because we should note that his learning French at Harvard subsequently developed a zeal and passion in him for French poetry. His Imagist patterns have lot of French in them. German Danish ancestral inheritances get pronounced in his "... love of fantastic, a sort of allegorical elfin quality which links him to these Northern Teutonic nations." 3

When Fletcher was four years old his family shifted to a large square house which is to be considered as the background of the poet's childhood. The impressions of their mansion were manifold and deep-rooted and the poet's poetic images exemplify and picturize them in a number of reminiscences in
the poems in "Ghosts Of An Old House". These poems build up supernatural imagery.

Fletcher's musical initiations began at home. His mother who was the daughter of a Danish father and a German mother had interests in art and music. Her musical bent of mind is responsible for Fletcher's bias for music. She was also a lover of buying books. Naturally, Fletcher in his childhood itself was encouraged in forming a habit of reading. His Harvard stay intensified and gave a turn to this habit and he went ahead to read the works of Gautier and Baudelaire which changed and influenced his thoughts and made him aware of the minute details of the French language.

Fletcher's trip to Europe in the year 1905 gets prominent in his Arizona poems which show his attachment to Europe and its influences. In the August 1908 he sailed to Venice which brought him newer images. From Venice he went to Rome where he studied the European history. His visits to the European countries produced his perceptual varieties of nature and its colours. In this stay he read Shelley and Browning. In May 1909 he went to London and settled there by October 1909. In London, living alone he read voraciously. During this time French poetry and Whitman attracted him much. The poems he wrote during this period and those that he wrote earlier were collected and published by him in 1913. These poems appeared in five separate volumes. Most of these poems were written in
imitation of the traditional poetic forms in English. The poems do not show any kind of originality and they are mainly in a melancholic and melodramatic mould. These volumes were *Fire and Wine* of fictitious love affairs, *Fool's Gold* of his personal depression and disillusionment, *The Book Of Nature* reflecting the Georgian influences, *The Dominant City* showing the influences of Charles Baudelaire and Emile Verhaeren, and the last, *Visions Of The Evening* exemplifying the influence of the French Symbolists. The reviewers reacted either ways from sarcasm to eulogy. True to note, everyone of them recognized his subtle poetic talents. As his Imagist involvement started later we would just go through a few comments of the reviewers. According to the reviewer of the *New Age* some of the poems have "... suggestions of truer moods..." in *Fire And Wine*. The reviewer of *Academy* wrote: "It is sultry and filled often with lighting flashes". But the most derogatory criticism written by Ezra Pound appeared in the *New Freewoman*. He writes:

> Mr. Fletcher's music is more comparable to that made by a truck-load of iron rails crossing a cobbled pavement than to the wailful sound of violins. Mr. Fletcher has not the faults of the mellifluous versifier, of the great horde of publishing authors whose product reminds me one more of perfumed suet than of any other nameable commodity. Mr. Fletcher has a fine crop of faults -- mostly his own. He has such distinction as belongs to a man who dares to have his own faults, who prefers his own to those of anyone else.

The intentions of Pound are obvious. But, however Fletcher's
Book of Nature shows the Shelleyan imagery in abundance. He draws his imagery out of fountains, domes, clouds, chariots and the wind. The poems "Lines Written At Taormina" of Fletcher and "To A Skylark" of Shelley have similar thematic character. Wordsworthian and Byronic influences can be noted in the poem "Pantheist's Wish". In the poems Fletcher has used a variety of verse forms. His Visions Of The Evening and The Dominant City exemplify the influence of the French Symbolists. In The Dominant City there is the Baudelairean manner of exposing the city. The poem "The Vision Of The Midnight" has the familiar Baudelairean image of the dead. His famous poem "Voyelles" rendered in colour symbolism and vowel — colour analogy finds its title from Rimbaud's poem. Some of these poems are characteristic of Oriental mysticism.

Fletcher's Imagery for their Electrical Swiftness

Fletcher agreed to become a member of Amy Lowell's Imagist group in the summer 1914 though earlier he discarded Pound's invitation. Amy Lowell has included his poem "The Skaters" in her Tendencies in Modern American Poetry as an example of his Imagist pattern. The same poem also appeared in the Imagist anthology Some Imagist Poets of 1916.

Black swallows swooping or gliding
In a flurry of entangled loops and curves,
The skaters skim on the frozen river
And the gränding click of their skates as they impinge upon the surface
Is like the brushing together of thin wing-tips of silver.
The poem is a beautiful assemblage of two images: the 'swallows swooping or gliding' and the skaters 'skim(ing) on the frozen river'. In the last two lines there is an arbitrary resemblance found between the 'grinding click of the skaters' and the 'thin wing-tips of silver' of the swallows. It is in inventing this resemblance that Fletcher strikes the first great note of Imagist poetry. Both the images are significant for their electrical swiftness, the swallows on the sky and the skaters on the frozen river very poignantly draw the reader's attention to the sky and the river as the canvas backgrounds for the beautiful idyllic pictures. Again the resemblance between the wings and the skates as the real moving forces contributes a rare living quality of the image presented. This kind of poetic fabrication of life in the moving naturalistic phenomena and inventing resemblances therein is one of the foremost poetic qualities of Walt Whitman.

Influence of Whitman on Fletcher

We have already noted the fact that Fletcher did a close study of Whitman's poetry. Somehow Amy Lowell does not find Whitmanean influences in his poetry. According to her, Whitman is "... One poet who seems never to have affected his work in the slightest degree". Amy Lowell's finding is somehow a hasty affirmation. By way of further substantiating Whitmanean influence upon Fletcher the poem "Orange Symphony" of his collection Preludes And Symphonies is considered here:
I am the wanderer of the world --
No one can hold me:
Not the cannon assembled for battle,
Nor the gloomy grain of the hollow
Nor the house where I long time slumbered,
Nor the hilltop where roads are straggling
My feet must march to the wind.

We note the throbbing rhetorical abundance of Whitman's poetry here. There we feel the similar kind of energy, force and strength that we find in Whitman's renderings. Incidentally, the poem also exemplifies the Imagist credentials of Fletcher. The expressions 'cannon assembled for battle', 'the gloomy grain of the hollow', 'the house where I long time slumbered', 'the hilltops where the roads are straggling' are clear-cut, graphic and solid images. Leaving aside the symbolistic worth of the reminiscences from the wanderer's experience of the world, the above images themselves provide the best possible directions for re-duplicating out of them beautiful paintings. The pictures also suggest about the far-diffused associations of the poet with the life particulars, suddenly shooting to the surface of his memory in very clear dimensions. The poet ardently claims for himself the prerogative of the 'wanderer of the world'. The unpremeditated etching of the three or four solid images stand for everything in the world that would possibly withhold the poet from his passion to travel round the world. But the poet is determined to wander aloft. The determination and the conviction of the poet is very strongly worded. Equally significant and beautiful are the images of the world.
French Influence on Fletcher

Fletcher's interest in contemporary French literature, art, painting and music are of far-reaching importance in moulding the Imagist interests in him. In fact the contemporary French cultural scene could have easily dragged him to the symbolistic-surrealistic directions. But Amy Lowell and Pound personally prevailing upon him rightly made him direct his interests towards their newly established Imagist movement. As a cumulative result of all these influencing forces Fletcher could fulfil the Imagist manifesto with prominent French subtleties:

... the passing of the wind
Upon the pale terraces of my dream
Is like the crinkling of the wet grey robes
Of the hours that came to him over the urn
Of the day and spill its rainy dream.10

Charles Baudelaire once said:

My soul floats on perfumes as...
the souls of the other men on music.11

The same can be said of Fletcher by way of substituting the 'perfumes' to 'dream(s)'. But his are musical dreams; or, say dreams that take shapes and paces of music. Schopenhauer once supposed to have said that everything in the universe aimed at attaining the status of music. None else than Fletcher incorporated this spirit more prominently. Just as in A Dream Of Paris of Baudelaire we have here 'the pale terraces', 'the crinkling of the wet grey robes' and 'the urn of the day'
prominently flashing as a sort of unique imagery. The musical part of the poem is readily comparable to Rimbaud's.

Fletcher's Passion for Creating Something New

Fletcher's first mature work *Irradiations* and *Sand Spray* got published in 1915 under Amy Lowell's sponsorship. Glenn Hughes reflects on the poems of his volume as follows:

They were refreshing, vigorous, filled with new imagery, and surprising in their variety of musical effects. In brief, they overflowed with creative energy.12

The true reading of the poems reveals their subtle creative force which Fletcher has produced through lyrical profusion. The creative force manifests in itself beauty in its sensitive and imaginative dimensions. This is not merely the product of his consciousness but it is the outcome of the subtle variations in the mood of the poet's contemplative spirit that instantly and keenly designs the varied and graphic pictures of beauty through lyrical articulations absorbing and transposing subtleties and intricacies of the beauty of the image.

In the preface to this volume Fletcher clarifies his interest and inclination for joining the Imagist movement. Says Fletcher:

It is the time to create something new. It is time to strip poetry of meaningless tatters of form and to clothe her in new, suitable garments.... Never was life lived more richly, more fully, with more terrible blind intensity than
it is being lived at this instant. Never was the noble language which is ours sur-
passed either in richness or in concision. We have the material with which to work, and the tools to do the work with. It is America's opportunity to lay the foundations for a new flowering of English verse, and to lay them as broad as they are strong.13

Fletcher's passion to create something new, and something altogether distinctly different from its earlier phases is prominently evident here. The urgency with which he utters the above lines speaks of the courage and authenticity of the author about his conviction to produce something new and something lasting.

The objectives of Imagism were quite clear to Fletcher. It was for him a laboratory of creating newer modes of expressions. It gave him a creative freedom. It had its tools, instruments and materials invented by Pound, Lowell and others but his creative method is his own. The movement also meant for him a wide opportunity for enriching American poetry. In the same preface Fletcher argued in favour of vers libre which he found more flexible and more malleable to express and compress images in their district contours. Writes Fletcher:

I maintain that poetry is capable of as many gradation in cadence as music is in time. We can have a rapid group of syllables -- what is called a line -- succeeded by a slow heavy one; like the swift scurrying of the wave and the sullen dragging of itself away.14
It is important to note here that the image and pictures of Fletcher are distinctly demarcated with "... what in music is called development, reversal of roles and return." Fletcher stresses on the rhythm value of poetry. His poetic performance has to be judged through his handling of several voices of poetry viz., rhyme, rhythm, return, refrain, alliteration, assonance, tone and syntactical variations.

**Fletcher's Imagery of Nature Like Movements of a Song**

Fletcher's poems in *Irradiations* have an organic quality. They are moods expressed in terms of the nature of images. The nature of images is directly borrowed from the accelerating movements of nature attuned to the quick variations of attention in his poetic imagination. In his poems of this volume we note the object-subject correlations balanced through perceptions and attunings. Fletcher talks at length about his 'unrelated method' of experiencing things of nature. His poetic method establishes a prominent association of the agglomerated images with the passionate and sustained moods of the poet. If there is one thing that unites the discordant and the disconnected images in Fletcher it is to be found in the manner of handling the moods and variations. In Hilda Doolittle the variations and discordances in pictures are united through the kinaesthetic imagined dance body movements. But the same is stretched by Fletcher to a bodyless abstract movement of tonal variations of song. They have some inner
cord and harmony of images and their impulses. For example, the poem "VII" in Irradiations is a graphic development of the poet's mood in its steady musical variations.

VII

Flickering of incessant rain
On flashing pavements;
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.

The winds come clanging and clattering
From Long white highroads whipping
in ribbons up summits:
They strew upon the city gusty
wafts of apple-blossom,
And the rustling of innumerable
transluscent leaves.
Uneven tinking, the lazy rain
Dripping from the leaves.16

The passage aims at depicting a cityscape in a moment of 'the lazy rain dripping from the leaves'. The poet has blended here proportionately the sound and sense qualities. The sense creates the image and the sound creates the movement of the image. The image gets clearer and progresses with rhythmic variations. The image finds its rhythm from the impulses that it creates in the mind of the poet and also it throws up many possibilities to the reader to find his own rhythmic variations. The assemblage of olfactory and kinetic images of rain and wind is expressed through a complex pattern of alliteration ('sudden scurry', 'clanging and clattering'), assonance ('sudden scurry of umbrellas', 'clanging and clattering', 'tinking', 'dripping'), onomatopoeia ('clanging', 'clattering', 'rustling', 'tinking'). The rain, its feel, its smell and its colours get
more vivid and connotative with the nasal sounds. The 'flickering rain', on the pavements, shining 'umbrellas', echoes of the winds produced through fl and tl consonant clusters, the light imagery of 'flickering' and 'flashing', the kinetic imagery of 'rustling' and 'whipping' produce the necessary effect in the mind of the reader. And the ending elliptical couplet where there is a contrast of short and long vowel sounds the musical effect is dulcet. The technique unfolds the imagery and the imagery subsequently produces imaginative impulses.

The treatment of nature reaches its intense suggestiveness and thus it produces the expressive depth of the Poet's mind.

Again the poem "V" depicts a beautiful scene of a habitation.

V

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds
Like horses the shadows charge down the street
Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins
swaying and balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions against the
jade balustrades.
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies
in the light:
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun brodered upon the rain
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down
the street.17

The colours in 'purple and gold' whirlpools, 'vermilion
pavilions', 'jade balustrades', 'silver filaments', 'golden flakes' vividly suggest the exulting experience of visualizing a rain. The first two lines presenting the association of two images suggest the haiku like formula. 'Whirlpools', 'winds', 'mountain cinnebar', 'palanquin swaying', 'glittering wings of dragon-flies', 'broidered' sun and 'rustling' rain create the background of the image of 'clouds'. The anapaest along with internal rhyming builds up the galloping clouds like horses. The 'shadows of clouds' get an oriental connotative imagery ('palanquins swaying', 'vermillion pavilion'). The repetition of the first two lines at the end of the poem fulfils the animated manner in which the author is moved to the symphonic grandeur of the rain. It is noteworthy here that these two lines provide the main lead image of the poem, which further gets gradually appended with innumerable concerting images. The assemblage of the images here is in the manner of a finale.

Fletcher's Structural Compactness and Verbal Reflexes

According to Conrad Aiken:

... Mr. Fletcher has a very original sensitivity and it is also true that his initial stimulus sometimes comes from without, but whereas in the work of certain other poets these factors might be paramount, in the case of Mr. Fletcher the striking feature has always been his habit of surrendering himself, almost completely, to the power of these automatically unravelling verbal reflexes. In fact the poetry of Mr. Fletcher is as remarkable an illustration of this principle as one could find.
As Conrad Aiken rightly points out the initial stimulus which for most of the poets emerges out of some external cause of stimulus emerging out of the situation. But in the case of Fletcher this happens sometimes, only sometimes. Otherwise the stimulus of the poet is invariably provided by the subjective interior habit of 'surrendering himself almost completely, to the power of these automatically unravelling verbal reflexes'. Therefore, the essence of his poetry is to be found in these verbal reflexes, which are constantly played upon the poet in himself. This kind of habit of surrendering completely invariably produces an exciting situation, because of the simple fact that the situation itself is nothing but a careful manipulation of the verbal reflexes.

Referring to Fletcher's *Irradiations* Aiken has further to state as follows:

> We find him taking his first ecstatic plunge into improvisation -- formation is thrown to the winds, and with it much which for this poet perplexes and retards; and an amazingly rich treasure house of verbal reflexes, the gift of a temperament almost hyperaesthetic in its sensitiveness to colour, line and texture -- temperament in which some profound disharmony is most easily struck at and shaken through these senses...

Aiken wants to suggest that Fletcher is a unique poet for whom his subjectivity is most important or even all important. It appears, he neither celebrates nor characterizes the objective world. The world of his poetry is the world of his own. He is
the maker of the songs that he sings. In this context the following poem is important.

VII

The fountain blows its breathless spray
From me to you and back to me.

Whipped, tossed, curdled
Crashing, quivering:
I hurl kisses like blows upon your lips.
The dance of a bee drunken with sunlight:
Irradiant ecstesies, white and gold,
Sigh and relapse.

The fountain tosses behind pallid spray
Far in the sorrowful, silent sky. 20

Here we have the passionate magic of the verbal reflexes. The expressions 'The fountain blows', 'whipped, tossed, curdled, crashing, quivering', 'I hurl kisses', 'drunken with sunlight', 'sign and relapse', 'the fountain tosses' are the essential properties that create a massive and vigorous movement in the poem. The movement depicts the moving stance of the poet in the presence of the fountain. The image of fountain is developed very intricately showing the ecstasy of love. The passion of love as a 'breathless spray' continues till the last line. There is a gradual change of thought pattern. The colour variations develop the images of the interiority with subtle crispness.

Fletcher's Supernatural World

In April 1916 Fletcher's Goblins And Pagodas appeared.

This volume is a great development of Fletcher's Imanist pattern.
The collection is in two parts: the first one, "The Ghosts Of An Old House", the second one, "The Symphonies". About the first part of the collection Fletcher himself writes in the preface:

I have tried to evoke, out of the furniture and surroundings of a certain old house, definite emotions which I have had concerning them — I have tried to relate my child- ish terror concerning this house ... to the aspects that called it forth.21

As the very title indicates it belongs rather to a class of poetry which is generally called supernatural condescending to Gothic horror. But the creation of the supernatural is not the poet's intention. His concern is exclusively with the extreme psychological reactions of a child in the given situation of loneliness and dark. Again the initial stimulus of the poems, in spite of the fact that it has a seeming origin in the old furniture, broad breasted walls, and the staircase and the like, really concerns with the speaker's authentic manners of fear and dread. In fact he poetically dabbles in the concepts of fear and dread in a very interesting manner. His contribution here can be adjudged as a sort of phenomenological process of the authentic interiority of child. Again the child is only a possible metaphor for the widest spread manner of projecting innocent insights into the unknown, with all their contingent fret and fever on the experiencing self. The fear and dread that he reflects are not founded in
the reality. But then they in themselves are as real as the child's being. To that extent from the point of view of the child they are neither superficial nor supernatural. They preoccupy the very being of the child. The poem "The Prologue" creates the images of tainted walls, desolate rooms, dusty chairs taking us into a gothic world.

PROLOGUE

The house that I write of faces the north
No sun ever seeks.
 Its six white columns
The nine great windows of its face
It fronts foursquare the winds.

Under the penthouse of the veranda room
The upper northern rooms
Gloom onwards mournfully
Staring Ionic capitals
Peer in them:
Owl-like faces.
On winter nights
The wind, sidling round the corner,
Shoots upwards
With laughter
The windows rattle as if some one were in them wishing to get out

And ride upon the wind.22

The poem gradually builds up the world of a haunted house. The poet compares the winds' play to the mysterious laughter. To a child the big walls seem to create a gothic world. Though the poems of this section of the collection are of childhood reminiscences and are human in their content, their contents have a pathetic imagery. The images of pathos have an imaginative force and intensity. The 'prologue' itself builds up the
loneliness of a child. The poet reminisces about his childhood as a period spent with 'owl-like faces', 'the shooting laughter of winds', and the 'gloom' pervaded his innocent world where ghosts and spirits frightened the little soul with the 'rattling windows'. Clarity of images is the important element in this section. All these images in their togetherness do the necessary poetical act of converting the total experience to that of unrest. The Imagist worth of the particular images and the ensemble worth of all the images in their togetherness maintain a sort of variation. The 'six white columns' never getting exposed to the sun's radiation ('the house faces north') is suggestive of a strange antithetical experience. The whiteness of the white columns, the poet wants to suggest, is not due to the exposure of the same to the sunlight. If so, the white property they radiate is in itself startling for their simple reason that there is no known cause of the whiteness of the columns. The 'nine great windows' do not allow even the wind, let alone light, to pass in. They rather foursquare, meaning they block the wind which is certainly supernatural. The very etymological meaning of the window is the passage of the wind. Quite naturally there is an immense suffocation in the house.

It is noteworthy here that the entire experience is the summation of the feelings of the child. The child's feelings become intensely bizarre as the poem advances further. Reference to the 'Ionic capitals' is, however, not childlike in
operation. Ionic is the dialect out of which Attic was a later development. In the Ionic dialect the two lateral volutes of the capital are suggestive of certain mysterious appearance, wherein the spiral scroll characterizes their mysterious origin. The point becomes clear when we notice that the Ionions perfected their language after having heard the sound patterns from the ghosts of their ancestors. Such supernatural origin of their dialect is particularly reminiscent in their 'capitals', in which the two spiralling movements converge into a shell shape and create an arresting visual image. This kind of far-fetched reference is not childlike in its imports. But, however, the consecutive supernatural images sustained in 'Owl-like faces; winds shooting upwards with laughter are very common suggestions of the child's night fears. The composite image that emerges out of all of them put together is expressive of the child's extreme personal sensibilities. The overall import of these sensibilities is a sort of shaking fear. The 'windows rattling' as if some hidden ghosts are struggling to come out of the house, completes the supernatural profundity of the poem.

Fletcher's Images in Musical Patterns

The second section of the above book consists of eleven 'musical symphonies shown in eleven poems. They have no relation to the supernatural poems of the first section. They characterize in themselves a great classical musical performance.
Fletcher is essentially a musical poet. He prefers to give a musical turn to all other sense perceptions. He appears to consign his aesthetic ideas to the great metaphysical assertion of Schopenhauer who said that everything in the universe aimed to attain the status of music. In the preface to the collection Fletcher reflects the aims of these symphonies. The symphonies are here:

... to narrate certain important phases of
the life of an artist... each phase in the
terms of a certain colour or combination
of colours.23

It is obvious here that Fletcher wants to evolve a poetic technique wherein the visual colour composites automatically spiral themselves into such spontaneous patterns which have the evocative, pervasive and exciting qualities of music in its various ascending and descending orders of performance. In fact it is rather unconventional to speak of colour properties of symphonies. A symphony is a property of audio-experience. In this delicate use of antithetical performances, Fletcher achieves a rare Imagistic perfection. His painted poetic pictures maintain in themselves all the spontaneity, instinctive and instantaneous operation of ecstacies approached through the lucidly moving graphic visual images. Therefore in every symphony, the poet sings a phase of an artist's life. The poet contemplates the dominant phases of an artist's life. A painter not only plays with colours but his own life itself is a composite of colours. So the poet considers himself the object of
of his thesis and paints the phases of the life of the painter in him. For Fletcher every phase of a painter's life is characteristic of a specific colour. Through colours he discovers the symphony within every phase of life. The symphony here can be taken as a balanced composition of ideas converted into pictures and placed in a sort of sing-song phenomena. Fletcher appears to suggest that the body of man has different colours. In a sense every minute part of his physique has a distinct colour of its own. The mind of him absorbs colours depending upon the strengths or weaknesses of it in imbuing colours from the world around. Apart from this in the cycle of life the circumstances and experiences bring newer shades to his body, mind and soul. Rather, he softly and tenderly makes himself malleable and yields to the changes of his colours. Here the change of colours implies that a particular colour is capable of being superior to all others depending upon the mood. Ultimately his total life is a montage of colours. It is rather a contrast of colours in him that makes him distinct from others. And the coexistence of so many colours reflects the assemblage of moods that governs his life as well as makes his life dynamic. Here Fletcher finds the symphonic aspect of the colours. In presence of every colour with respect to other colours he discovers the symphonic mould. As in orchestra every instrument has a distinct tune of its own; every such tune finally coalesces into the total symphonic orders of many instruments. In these
poems thus we have a symphonic structure, rather in a meta-
phorical sense of the painter's vistas. Every symphony is a
musical picture of a psychological state of man's life. In
every symphony there is an image suggestive of a distinct
phase of life attuned. It is Fletcher's discovery of the
music and colour within the image that matters most. A phase
of life has its specific tune and also a specific colour.
About the first symphony that is the "Blue Symphony" Fletcher
reflects that the poetic inspiration came from the enjoyment
he got from the German Hans Bethge's translation of Chinese
poems:

As I listened to them it seemed to me that
the poem I was now writing was the same
poem that many old Chinese poets had already
written. My modern loneliness, exile, des-
pair, fled across centuries of time and
thousands of miles of space, and was joined
to theirs.24

Thus, Fletcher snaps an image of life from his visualization
of life which has a distinct colour of its own. He discovered
the inner chord uniting the oriental and his occidental philoso-
phies. During this poetic phase of his symphonies, that is,
during 1914, Fletcher read much of Chinese poetry. The poetry
of Chinese poets Li-Po, Wang Wei, Tu-Fu and Po-Chu-I naturally
influenced him a lot. Therefore the intricate colours con-
taining the phases of life are very much Chinese and they
are dipped into the oriental philosophy. According to him the
Chinese poetry had a "crystallizing influence"25 upon him and
his Imagist patterns. In these symphonies, if studied carefully,
we note the orientalism coming as an amalgamation of ideas from Taoism, Buddhism, Zennism and Hinduism. For him the colours have their symbolic connotations. He says that "...blue to me depth, mystery and distance". In this context the words of Glenn Hughes are noteworthy.

The 'Blue Symphony' is a subtly modulated and exquisitely suggestive allegory (I use this word hesitantly) of the pursuit of beauty, the beauty which is never to be found. It is the vision of the young man as artist who realizes the futility who knows that nevertheless his life must be devoted to it.

When Fletcher says that blue is symbolic of 'depth, mystery and distance' he is suggesting more or less the same feelings as expressed by Hughes. The blue being the 'allegory of the pursuit of beauty' which can never be found or achieved, confirms the ever-searching and never-resting mind to achieve its goal. The 'depth, mystery and distance quite naturally sums up the same idea, particularly the expression 'distance' confirms the unreachability and unattainability. Therefore, for Fletcher blue is the colour of constant passionate pursuit in search of something that is unattainable.

Look, the sky
Across black valleys
Rise blue-white aloft
Jagged unwrinkled
Mountains, ranges
of death.
Solitude. Silence.

The 'black valley' suggests the dark mysteries of life. The
sky spreads over the same; and out of the same dark rises 'blue-white aloft/ Jagged unwrinkled mountains'. The combined effect of blue-white makes a very profound suggestion. Blue stands for unending and unattainable desire and white stands for the purity of soul's purpose. The combination of the two suggests the blue itself absorbing white in its profundity, that is the desire for the unattainable and unachievable being pure in itself. The mountains here are implicating the idea that the blue sky evoked in them a rare desire to reach the sky but then we know that the mountains, with all their robust massivity and energy also cannot really reach the sky. But the desire to reach the same made them take the blue of the sky into themselves. Therefore, they are blue-white. The mountains further get characterized as 'the ranges of death/ Silence. Solitude'. In rapport with the sky they had certainly taken a blue tint upon themselves. But then they are really 'ranges of death/ Silence. Solitude'. It is here we have those significant Buddhistic connotations. In the beginning itself we are told that the sky spreads itself 'across the black valley', from out of which valley the blue-white mountains project themselves. They are therefore the inherent property of the 'black valley'. Therefore they are suggested as 'ranges of death,/ Silence. Solitude'. In the ultimate analysis the desire of the mountains to reach the sky is a futile wasteful tragic loss of energy on their part. Mountain as a metaphor for the ebbing desires from the heart of man is implicative of the Buddhist nihilism.
In the poem "Blue Symphony" the associations of 'blue' with 'mist', 'veils', 'stone', 'death-mountains' suggest the endless voyage of the young protagonist of the poem. In the poem we come across a statement 'I have forgot so long'. It suggests the body, in which the soul has expressed itself, has not delayed its pursuit of salvation. The soul gets purged gradually changing its manifestations. It is the Buddhist philosophy that Fletcher touches upon building images of a youngman's voyage. The soul never ages. It is ever-young. The poem also depicts the search for beauty that is immortal and divine, which evokes joy in the individual and makes him steady in his journey. Whatever the poet wants to say in the "Blue Symphony" gets condensed in the lines of the poem. The search here is a search for Nirvana. Even the soul is not sure whether it attains Nirvana. Actually here the mountain turning blue-white suggests heart's desiring for Nirvana is through union with the sky. In this context there is a suggestion that the Nirvana itself is an unattainable formula. But, however, the pursuit for it continues. In the earlier part of the poem there is an image of a broken willow branch ('And a Willow branch is broken'). Here the broken willow branch symbolizes spiritual draught. Also there is an ardent desire for spiritual awakening. 'Willow' symbolically suggests pure innocence capable of commensurating its movements with the wind that is capable of criss-crossing itself. In the criss-cross movements of the winds there is no wonder if the willow
branch gets broken. The willow branch is broken because of its pure innocent desire to attain the strong movements of the wind. The same wind for which it aspired becomes the cause of its brokenness. Once broken it can no more toss in the wind. In the counters of Buddhistic philosophy the same profound principle for which the soul aspires (Nirvana) becomes the cause of the soul's wreck. It is this idea that is suggested in the poem "Blue Symphony".

After "Blue Symphony" in this volume we have a poem called "Golden Symphony". The poem weaves the images of life beyond death. It is a vision and a dream-world of the life beyond. On this symphony Fletcher reflects in the preface of Goblins and Pagodas:

Quickened by spring, ('the young artist')
dreams of a marvellous golden city of art
full of fellow-workers. The city appears to him at times like some Italian town of the Renaissance, at others like some strange Oriental golden-roofed monastery-temple. He sees himself dead in the desert far away. Yet its blossoming is ever near him. Something divine has been born of him after death. 29

Fletcher portrays in this symphony the dreamworld of an artist. Artist's dream-world naturally refers to a world of abundant colours. In his "Golden Symphony" we have a very beautiful picture of a golden city which categorically becomes available for the artist's imagination after death. It may be seen that in the religious mythologies of the world the after-life is
always characterized as good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable in accordance with the performance of the incumbent during his life. The very prospect of golden city being available after death is an axiomatic solution for the real problems of real life. The real life of man is invariably doomed to death and consequent end of all. But the poet's imagination would not allow this death to be the end of all. In building the golden city with golden roofs the poet substantiates the idea that life itself is lived by people, with such profound ideas of after-life. The vision of the poet is warranted by the possible journey of the soul into the golden city. The very liveability of life has a strong bearing on such prospect. In the following lines we have the sort of journey conducted in the life and the after-life.

Music is passing far off:
Music serenely
Is climbing up and vanishing
On the long grey stairways of the sky,
In fanlike rays of light.

Now it falls slowly,
Careering toppling
Shivering and quivering like burnished glass or laburnum-blossom,
Golden cascades.

Peace: now let the music
Sound from further away,
Red bells out of memory's
Blue dream of regret.30

Music in the above stanzas can symbolically be considered as life itself assembling for it the necessary aspirations. But the 'grey stairways' of the sky is the final limit beyond
which life cannot project itself in the known manner of nurturing hopes and desires for a comfortable existence. Beyond the grey stairway of the sky in the musical progress there is a sudden reversal. Invariably the afterlife is a frustration of all the desires and hopes of life. In the after-life the soul's performance is compared to the falling symphonic rhythm of music. Even after falling all the activities of life like 'careering, toppling, shivering and quivering' like 'burnished glass or laburnum blossoms' the soul finds itself altogether different from its earlier state. This is exactly true of the two possible states of music in progress. Music after having reached the heights of progress suddenly seeks a contrary reversal and performs itself as something different from its earlier categorical movements. In this difference there is that symphonic variation, as though in death there could be a prospect of reacting the solid state of perception like 'laburnum blossom'.

In "Golden Symphony" we find an anaesthetic imagery of dream-world. The music acts as an anaesthetic. It casts a spell on the reader. The frequent use of diphthongs signifies the gliding of the individual reader to the world of the artist's dream. The /l/ sound creates a lullaby like music /ij/ sound in the poem creates the ecstasy of the glide and the gradual unfolding of the dream world. The strophe beginning with the word 'Peace' with its nasal sounds creates the delight of the hymns of the spiritual pleasure.
We are likely to be disappointed when we read Louis Untermeyer's reactions to these symphonies because of his casualness. He says:

... there are eleven "colour symphonies" written around a vague program and a vague theory. Just as Swinburne, with all his mastery of verbal melody, proved that poetry inevitably fails when existing principally on sound so Fletcher, obsessed with his pigments, proves that it cannot live when it places its dependence on colour.

Untermeyer forgets the simple analogy for which colours stand. Colours are his moving metaphors for the symphonic phases of life. If we take the colour variations as final death of the poem itself as in the case of sound ultimately converging into non-poetry in Swinburne, we are likely to mistake the intentions of Fletcher. Fletcher's ultimate aim is to suggest that in a trance state of poetic imagination colours spiral themselves progressively to a state of excitation and denouement thereof. Untermeyer appears to suggest that Fletcher failed in his poetcraft when he took up these spiraling colours. Moreover, Fletcher's adoption of colour formula cannot be compared to Swinburne's sound formula. Swinburne somehow believed that sound alone can make a poem of itself. But Fletcher used colours symbolically and suggestively as moving metaphors. By not taking the analogical metaphorical colour propensities of Fletcher into serious consideration Untermeyer perpetrated a gross injustice to the poetic worth of Fletcher.
Fletcher's intention in experimenting colour-sound compromise and contrast is to make his reader visualize the images vividly and enjoy their reading through the echo-effects of the words in their musical order. The manner in which the sounds suggest colours and vice-versa is a unique poetical feat in Fletcher.

In the autumn evening,
You can hear it plainly
The cry of the ancient earth.

Moaning and tossing,
Under the heavy steel rain that falls on it from heaven;
Crying for blood, blood to make fertile
Its growing barrenness.

The possibility of hearing the cry of the ancient earth in the autumn evening is in itself an example of colour projecting into musical submergence. Later in the stanza we have the expression 'heavy steel rain' falling from heaven and the earth crying for blood to bring back its fertility is in itself an image where the very pictures of 'steel rain' and earth 'crying for blood' compositely add to the startling audio effect.

Fletcher's Polyphonic Prose

Fletcher's sound-play in his poetry is also comparable with his polyphonic prose poems. Here the Imagist patterns emerge out of rhythmic intricacies. In his Breakers And Granite Fletcher believes that the new form exploits various
treatments of sounds of a language. Words are used as the voices of the instruments as tunes produced by various instruments of an orchestra. In this collection the poems like "The Old South", "Clipper Ships", and "The Building Of Chicago" are commendable experimental polyphonic prose poems. Ben Kimpel reflects on Fletcher's technical aptitude in polyphonic prose poems as follows:

... he is unusually skilful in handling alliteration, in varying internal rimes and sound echoes, and in sonorously repeating or contrasting his vowel sounds. Perhaps his technical equipment was really better suited to the abortive experiment of polyphonic prose.33

The polyphonic prose experiment both by the British and American poets did not come to any heights of achievements. Therefore the whole polyphonic prose movement can be considered as an abortive experiment. But, however, even this abortive experiment was best equipped with proper poetical effects so far as Fletcher is concerned. But, however, his experiment too could not come to any great literary heights in so far as the development of polyphonic prose is concerned. It may be just possible to say that his achievement is better than that of Amy Lowell. But the whole experiment could not inspire in other competent followers as craftsmen of the order of Lowell and Fletcher. Therefore too, it is considered by critics as an abortive experiment. But, however, if we take the image-making formula into consideration Fletcher scores
more points than even Amy Lowell. Precisely Fletcher's polyphonic prose is more winning of the reader's interest because of its delicate cadences, 'internal rimes', 'sound echoes' and above all in attributing a bold gusty rebounding effect.

A few lines of "Clipper Ships" can help us understand how he builds up his Imagist patterns with the help of the orchestral quality of this form.

Beautiful as tiered cloud, skysails set and shrouds twanging, she emerges from the surges that keep running away before day on the low Pacific shore. With the roar of the wind blowing half a gale after, she heels and lunges and buries her bows in the smoother, lifting them swiftly and scattering the glistening spray-drops from her jibails with laughter. Her spars are cracking, her royals are half splitting, her lower stunsail blooms are bent aside, like bowstrings ready to loose, and the water is roaring into her scuppers, but she still staggers out under a full press of sail, her upper trucks enkindled by the sun into shafts of rosy flame.34

Here we have a beautiful picture of a ship sailing in the Pacific coast. The dignified and arduous manner in which the ship moves is the pictured image here. The image itself comes home through the bloated sound effects calculatingly incorporated with the aim of producing aweinspiring effect on the mind of the reader. In the beginning itself we have the image of the 'tiered cloud' indicating the rolling of the storm. Even in the midst of the storm the ship maintains its undaunted courage and movement.
Going to the sound effects we find that Fletcher has applied all the rhythmic devices for building up the imagery in the above piece. First, we note the rhymes in the association of the words ('cloud', 'shrouds'; 'emerges', 'surges'; 'twanging', 'running'; 'scattering', 'glistening'; 'cracking', 'splitting'; 'day', 'away'; 'before', 'shore'). Secondly, we discover onomatopoeia in the phrases like 'roar of the wind'. Thirdly, we find assonance or vowel music in the words like 'low' and 'shore', 'roar' and 'blowing', 'lifting' and 'swiftly', 'scuppers' and 'upper'. Fourthly, there is alliteration in 'half' and 'heels', 'swiftly' and 'scattering', 'buries' and 'bows', 'lifting' and 'laughter'. Fifthly, there we see the consonance of 'emerges' and 'surges', 'scuppers' and 'uppers'. Sixthly, there is near rhymes like 'lifting' and 'swiftly' 'scuppers' and 'staggers'. Finally we note the contrast of long and short tonal groups with varying lengths of cadences, and the frequent use of anapaests and dactyles to attribute the strange course of movement and arresting intermittently. Thus the image of the ship against the sky-sea background develops with the painter's skill contrasted with the musician's deftness. The music of the sky-sea-ship makes the telling imagery of the sail of the ship. Fletcher knows how to squeeze the music out of the nature that is elemental, vigorous and wild but beautiful.
Fletcher's Imagery From Oriental Nature

Fletcher's Imagist innovative desires directed him to seek refuge in the poetic life styles and culture. His Japanese Prints which got published in 1918 shows his creative interest in studying the oriental poetry particularly for its Imagistic worth. The poem "Spring Love" can be taken as an inspiration from the oriental nature formula. In the tropical regions of the orient the spring season is invariably followed by hot fervent summer which destroys what all the spring had to bring as a creative wealth.

SPRING LOVE

Through the weak spring rains
Two lovers walk together,
Holding together the parasol
But the laughing rains of spring
will break the weak green shoots of their love.

Grey winter follows the green spring in the phenomenal course of nature in the Orient. Thus the winter is capable of reversing what all the spring brings as a creative wealth of property. Here is a warning, for the lovers walking under the parasol, about the inevitable transition of their love in the course of time. This kind of resigned and restrained attitude to life is something not known to the Greeko-Roman traditions of Romanticism in Europe. The poem creates a typically strange disturbing effect on the minds of the European and American readers.
Fletcher’s Imagery and Oriental Lifestyles

The images in the poems of this volume are actually suggestive of the shades and nuances of the lifestyles peculiar to the Orient.

THE YOUNG DAIMYO

When he first came out to meet me,
He had just been girt with the two swords;
And I found he was far more interested in the glitter of the hilts
And did not even compare my kiss to a cherry blossom.36

Here we have a lover with two swords suggesting his divided loyalties. What all she wants to suggest is that his attention is drawn more to 'hilts' than to her. He does not compare her kiss even to a 'cherry blossom'. He nurtures in himself a passion to go into the war rather than to stick to the house and pour his devotions upon her. The traditional lovers of the Orient are not romantic heroes. Their comparative preference for the more urgent tasks of life is explicit here. The woman while condemning him also praises his heroic spirit. Her grievance is suggestive of her applause also.

Fletcher and Haikus

In the poems of this volume we have the poet's preference for more and more visual effects than for the audio and musical performances which otherwise abound in his earlier volumes.
Here he prefers visual quality of an image to its aural quality. His stress here is on how compactly and how concisely he says something. His poetry tries to absorb and engross the spirit of Japanese visual effects of the haikus. In his preface to this collection Fletcher analyzes the Japanese haikus. He writes:

Let us take an example. The most famous hokku that Basho wrote, might be literally translated thus: An old pond/ And the sound of a frog leaping/ Into the water.

This means nothing to the Western mind. But to the Japanese it means all the beauty of such a life of retirement and contemplation as Basho practised. If we permit our minds to supply the detail Basho deliberately omitted, we see the mouldering temple enclosure, the sage himself in meditation, the ancient piece of water, and the sound of frog's leap -- passing vanity -- slipping into the silence of eternity. The poem has three meanings. First, it is a statement of fact. Second, it is an emotion deduced from that. Third, it is a sort of spiritual allegory. And all this Basho has given us in his seventeen syllables.37

Here we have an independent composition of Fletcher on the lines of Basho's hokku.

**MUTABILITY**

Out of the crane-haunted mists of autumn,
Blue and brown
Rolls the moon. 38

Here we have a particular heartening image of the season wherein the cranes are flying in the misty clouds which also are visually accelerating the movement of the moon to observer on the earth. This kind of observation of the moon rolling or, moon being moved by the clouds also makes no great meaning for the western
readers. Coming to the spiritual counters of its import it can be suggested that the moon that is the soul, is being rolled on by the 'blue and brown' clouds towards her destination just as the cranes were moving towards their homes. By implication the blue and brown clouds suggest the worldly implications of loves and cares. The worldly love and the worldly cares ultimately push the soul towards seeking a calm and quiet abode for herself. The spiritual allegory is profound here and the influence of Basho is marked in its intensity.

Japanese hokku's fact-emotion — spiritual allegory and the definition of an image are very close to one another. The meaning of an image as an object creating 'instantaneous ... intellectual and emotional complex' is very well touched upon by these hokkus. Apart from that they have spiritual intensity. They also serve the Imagist conciseness and directness. Fletcher urges that in borrowing the Japanese technique its spirit should be the primary concern of the poets. In his poems in the form of Japanese hokkus Fletcher maintains the suggestive quality of these Japanese forms along with their elusive oriental atmosphere. Yet Fletcher says:

Good hokkus cannot be written in English.
The thing we have to follow is not the form but a spirit.39

Good hokkus cannot be written in English because it is not possible to render the non-conspicuous delicacies of Japanese language that/beyond the scope of English. There can be a
possible free rendering of the spirit and that is what Fletcher attempted in his haiku imitations. The inspiration is directly derived from the Japanese originals and the necessary poetic fabrication is rendered out of his own imaginative creativity as Fletcher himself says:

As for the poems themselves, they are not Japanese at all, but all illustrate something of the charm I have found in Japanese poetry and art.40

Referring to these poems Louis Untermeyer says as follows:

His latest volume, Japanese Prints, shows a further advance in his experiments in concision; he has not only learned to control an unselective rush of words, he is teaching himself the Imagist tenets concerning condensation and concentration, he is learning his own credo which he has consistently violated.41

The main stress of Untermeyer here is on the conciseness of the poetic expression, which in itself is one of the most cherished aspects of the Imagist movement. Untermeyer however suggests that in his earlier poems Fletcher could not control the 'unselective rush of words', meaning thereby that there is plenty of round-about and clumsy verbal expressiveness. Fletcher's attempt at poetic 'concision' also brings a great amount of concreteness and lucidity.

Fletcher's Haikus and His Zen Association

In this context we want to note one thing which inspired Fletcher to experiment haikus and tankas. The philosophy of
these haikus is Zen Buddhism. And Fletcher had become thoroughly convinced with this philosophy around which these poems were written. In the context of his association with Zen Buddhism the following haiku is a pertinent comment.

**ON THE BANKS OF THE SUMIDA**

Windy evenings of autumn
By the grey-green swirling river,
People are resting like still boats
Tugging uneasily at their cramped chairs.

The poem itself is a Zen image of autumn. The season of autumn in Zen Buddhism symbolizes eternal loneliness. Autumn embodies a strange mystery of nature. It is the period when the trees lose their foliage and birds stop singing. The poet finds a strange reflection of the same mystery in man. Man delves deep into the mystery of his life and existence. To the poet the same picture of desolation seems pervasive in the life of the world. The poem builds up the imagery around this loneliness. The scene vividly captures this realm of mystery. A river swerving, with its grey-green waters, in the windy evening and the people resting on the banks of it like still boats, quite uneasy in their cramped chairs make the scene. The colour of the river-water is suggestive of the brewing mystery. The evening wind of autumn is not soothing but it makes people uneasy. The people like still boats on the river lack movement. They are as if ones forced to rest on the chairs motionless.
Fletcher's Imagery: The Subject of Love

Fletcher's next volume *The Tree Of Life* got published in the year 1918. The poems of this volume were ignored by the American readers. Even the reviewers also reflected their negative reactions against the poems of this volume. But a close study of the poems reveals Fletcher's development in his Imagist venture. The volume contains some of his best Imagist poems. In this connection one of the statements of Harriet Monroe on Fletcher's Imagist techniques is worth recalling. She says:

> A close study of this poet's technique would show him somewhat rebellious Imagist experimenting in and out of their tense method but profiting by its discipline.43

Harriet Monroe's comment has some truth in it. *The Tree Of Life* though contains poems of love indicates Fletcher's desperate role as an Imagist taking up the subject of love. The Imagistic recreation of this deeper aspect of life with suggestive images and concise compact structure is certainly a rebellious step. Also it is a rebellion against the very manifesto of the Imagists. In the sense it aims at finding images for the phenomenon of love which in itself is abstract. In taking up love as the proper theme of his poems here, he had probably gone out of the range of the Imagists. But in strenuously inventing concrete images for the expression of love
he had simultaneously stuck to the Imagist manifesto. Therefore Harriet Monroe considers him 'experimenting in and out of their tense method'. There is a precise suggestion here that Fletcher went out of the scope of Imagist manifesto.

The Tree Of Life can be considered a long poem where the form is divided into several sections. Every section depicts a shade of the image and thus delineates a movement in connotation. The tone varies from movement to movement creating a symphonic harmony. The effect is naturally melodious with rhythmical variations and delicacies. The five major sections of this volume are viz., the first, "The Aster Flower", the second, "Fruits Of Flame", the third, "The Empty Days", the fourth, "Dreams in Night" and the fifth and the final section "Towards the Darkness". The whole book was written during the period October 1913 to October 1916. Fletcher seems to have been least affected by the horror of the First World War. Otherwise how does Fletcher delve into the theme of love in his poetry? But the theme gets variations in expressions in its development in Fletchian Imagistic experience from section to section. The first section celebrates the joy of love. The second section reveals the ecstasy and maddening state of joy as the outcomes of love. The love affects man so that its existence makes man extremely passionate. But he not only becomes passionate due to the ecstasy of love, he gets a spiritual delight, a divine joy in the sustenance of this world of love.
The third section, the third movement in the development of the theme brings yet another shade of the theme of love. It shows the state of man who is in a state of agony. The pangs of love are yet unrelieved. The love sees itself in the suffering of the lovers who are tormented by its pangs. The fourth section depicts the contrast of joys of love and the sorrows of the pain of love. The fifth section explains the state of lost love. The loss indicates the death in life. When love is lost life loses all its importance. It is a state of living in death. The movements thus indicate a well modulated and compact structure.

In this regard we should go back to the preface that Fletcher wrote to his collection *Goblins And Pagodas* where he reflects on his own style. According to him his is:

... an attempt to develop this essentially musical quality of literature, to evoke the magic that exists in the sound quality of words, as well as to combine these sound-qualities in definite statements or sentences.44

Fletcher's idea is to work upon the sound appeal of the words. Through these words he weaves the emotional world of his own that projects poet's sentiments. Fletcher's method of writing this long poem of five movements shows how sentiments and emotions of a poet, after experiencing the visualization of an image, is and can be texturised with lyrical intensity just through sound qualities of the words that we are the image and
so he squeezes the music out of them as if it is the music of the image itself that the poet visualizes and wants the reader to visualize and enjoy its poetic intensity. The Tree Of Life through its word music and word pictures along with its well-guarded movements comes to the reader as a symphony of compact flow from sonata to finale.

**Fletcher's Symbolist Influences**

In the poetry of Fletcher we find the French influences on which Donald Davidson reflects as follows:

Still solitary, still unadvised, he had tried to write a new poetry that fused the effects of poetry, painting, and music — 'the triple influence' (he afterwards said) of Mallarme, Gauguin and Debussy — and so was practicing his own version of symbolism before it had taken hold in English or American poetry.45

Fletcher's Symbolist influences took place before his joining the Imagist movement and also before Pound and others actively borrowed the same influences. Thus he can be considered as the first Symbolist whose interests have not flowered into a full bloom as he did not indulge in the propagation of the same in the form of a distinct movement. If he had emulated the examples of Mallarme, Gauguin and Debussy he did it out of his personal aesthetic devotion to the works of art. Fletcher was influenced by this 'triple influence' and characterized the same in his chance experiments. It was only later, after Amy Lowell and Harriet Monroe initiated him into Imagist movement that Fletcher
started drawing prominently on his old acquaintance with the above artists.

Now before going to find the triple influences on Fletcher's poetry we note here the chief contribution of Mallarme's poetic theory in the words of John Porter Houston. Says Houston:

At some point, however Mallarme began to realize that the beauty of a poem comes from structural relations, not just from specific images, and with this he moved into a new perspective on art. Upto this time, the English and German organic theory of poetic form was undoubtedly superior to any thinking done about it in France; now however, Mallarme's new definition of poetry as "music in the Greek sense basically meaning a rhythm among relationship" avoided the distracting vegetal associations of the organic theory and permitted Mallarme to use quotidian imagery like furniture and to focus on questions of design, the more essentially poetic element at this aesthetic conception by meditating on music, of which he knew little and had no technical knowledge. His ignorance seems to have preserved him from supposedly Wagnarian ideas current in late nineteenth century France, according to which music is primarily a matter of repetition.46

Mallarme's theory of poetry that beauty of poetic art comes from structural rhythmic relationship drew attention of Imagism. Fletcher in early years of . According to Mallarme building image itself does not create beauty in a poem but it is the intricate association of the said images that creates beauty. Fletcher's imagery is organically and rhythmically patterned.
He creates Imagistic intricacies through their associations. His Imagist patterns thus can be termed as musical filigree of images. His stress on the pervading musical aspects of a poem is significant. In this context the very first poem of his Irradiations can be taken as an example.

The poem starts with the 'spattering of the rain upon the pale terraces of afternoon'. Somehow this evokes in him a mysterious sensibility and he compares the same to 'the passing of a dream'. The exclusive subjective nature of comparison is obvious. The comparison further becomes hard to swallow when he finds an analogy to it in 'the roses shuddering against the stalks of streaming trees'. All the individual images in the above context have something that forbids our rational understanding of the process. Actually the real poetic importance in these lines
consists in the lucid manner in which they automatically roll on the experiencing self of the poet. The poet is present here as a strange irrational entity connecting the images in a profound manner. It might look like a mad chatter but the meaningfulness of the total pattern automatically evokes in him a sensibility that discovers the strange in the process of poetic imagination. It is this discovery of the strange and arresting that is poetical in Fletcher's experiments. The whole manner is comparable with that of Mallarme and his poetic technique. Further he compares the passage of the wind on the 'pale lower terraces' of his dream to the 'crinkling of the wet grey robes of the hours that come to turn over the urn of the day'. It is this turning that spills the rainy dream of the urn. And that dream is the true text of the poet here. When dreams are the subject of poets we are forbidden from intruding into the same with our critical extensions. The symphonic appeal of the images has to be taken as their structural worth. Somehow Fletcher's poem contributes for a rare experience in our minds. Our experience of the poem, as that of the artist himself, is dependent upon a few prominent images passionately attuned into a poetic dream pattern. Here onwards it is the passage of the wind that becomes important in the poem until it crosses the 'pools of rain' -- the vacant terraces/ Wet, chill and glistening/ Towards the sunset beyond the broken doors of to-day'. For obvious reasons 'to-day' is broken. It is finished and thrown into the past. But the
dream winds of the poet are capable of further seeking a flight and abode towards the sunset in order to seek a rest in the sleep and start afresh the day again next day, of course with another dream. Thus the very practical passage of diurnal time passes into a phenomenon of dream and this is the message of the poet. The day is a dream.

Next important influencing force on Fletcher is that of Debussy’s music. Debussy is the founder of modern musical impressionism:

Speaking of Debussy’s work as a whole we may say that his harmonic methods were a very individual amalgam of the new and the forgotten old. On the one hand he was greatly attracted by the combinations of the higher overtones by chords of the ninth and their derivatives treated as primaries, and in particular by chords whose component notes are separated by whole tones; on the other hand he often threw back to the ecclesiastical modes and still further to the diaphony in parallel fourths and fifths of a thousand years before.48

Debussy’s symphonic structure has primarily the effects of the amalgamation of the ancient and the modern modes. His tonal intricacies through variations of the notes, giving treatment to the chords of higher notes in combinations with the ones that are distinct and prominent and separated by whole tones, created the renditions of emotional patterns. His chord movements effecting a tonal structure assembling the variations of ecclesiastical modes and diaphony of ancient times created new effects. Fletcher’s poetry shows the tonal variations through
words producing orchestral music where there is a depiction of complex patterns through frequent variations of higher and lower notes with spontaneous developments of the tunes embodying images and his emotional expressiveness. His Zen Buddhist renderings have the musical delicacies inherent in their serious and philosophical tones along with the modern connotations of the images of the old times. The whole of it is comparable to Debussy's commitment to ecclesiastical properties. Fletcher's mellow sounds for philosophical intensity and the toughness of the implied gestural values of the American life are juxtaposed. There is a subtle movement of hard and soft notes, rhymes, assonance, and consonance and light and dark vowel combinations. Thus his poetry produces an impressionistic music comparable to an organic structural harmony. When he goes to the impressionistic musical renderings of the images, naturally, his images which are vivid in their meticulous particulars take us to the third influence of Paul Gauguin whose decorative element taught Fletcher the colour contrasts. Apart from building vivid images they produce newer shades of meanings and come as complex Imagistic patterns for the readers. Cezanne once contemptuously referred to Gauguin as 'a maker of Chinese images'. The Chinese images being culturally different and strange Cezanne went to the extent of contemptuously brushing him off. But after Pound and the other Imagist poets the same contemptuous Chinese images turned to be highly exciting, and even profoundly poetical. Gauguin's insight into the
Chinese images is a great innovation in the art of painting, which ultimately led to the whole impressionistic movement. Fletcher's own indebtedness to Gauguin emerges out of his commitment to the Imagist manifesto. But, however, Fletcher appears more as a musician rather than as a painter in his poems.

Gauguin's 'synthetic symbolism' characterized his spiritual insights and intellectual complexities. Gauguin's 'synthetic symbolism' means a synthesis of all arts. His orientalism inspired Fletcher's oriental images with occidental connotations and their hardness and vividness akin to Imagist tenets. Gauguin's interest in primitivity and his religious connotations of spiritual enlightenment find reflections in Fletcher's poems.

Fletcher's Biblical Imagery

Fletcher's Parables that appeared in 1925 presents a different dimension of his imagery. The book has been devoted to the parables of Christ. Here we note Blakean influence of celebrating a marriage between heaven and hell. The two parts of this collection "Parables Of Christ" and "Parables of Anti-Christ" like Blake's "Songs Of Innocence" and "Songs Of Experience" indicate the two extreme states of human soul. In this context Glenn Hughes's views are worth considering:
They are less imagistic than most of Mr Fletcher's poetic work, but they are patently the creations of a poet who has served his apprenticeship and whose knowledge of rhythm, rime and imagery has become instinctive. The religious fervour sometimes overshadows art in the pages of this book cannot be denied.

Glenn Hughes's interpretations of Imagistic skill seems to confine to the implication of an image only. But Fletcher's imagery in this volume manifesting different shades and patterns irrespective of its being rendered through Blakean romantic spirit and getting the distinct expression of two contrary states of human souls, fulfils the tenets of Imagism because of his mature technical variations. Though in the thematic development the poems reflect Blakean influences, Fletcher maintains his Imagistic manner of presentation in these poems. Like Blake's contrary pairs of poems as in "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" we find in Fletcher "Birth Of Christ" and "Birth Of Lucifer", "The Crucifixion" and "After The Crucifixion", "The Last Judgment" and "The Last Farewell", and "Immortality" and "Against Immortality". Then there are poems which depict the dualism of the reality of nature itself as "Christ and Anti-Christ", "God and Mammon", "Buddhism and Christianity" in this poetic collection.

In this volume the poems are either in free verse or in conventional metrical verse pattern. We also find some prose
pieces which are rhetorical in their tone suggesting Biblical influences.

Horace Gregory referring to Fletcher's *XXIV Elegies*, another collection says as follows:

There is scarcely a poem in the present volume that is not better than any one of the *Irradiations* and colour symphonies that brought him recognition; his imagery, curiously delicate, pale-tinted, often vague is now accompanied by an echo of formal music, as though it were something made precious by distance and imperfect hearing.51

Unlike in the earlier volumes like *Irradiations*, *Goblins And Pagodes*, the image-making process sought an alteration in his *XXIV Elegies*. The elegies as the very name implies are primarily celebrations of sorrowful events. In the earlier volumes the characteristic manner of making an image is always by way of projecting imagination towards a certain picture of the nature of life. But here the image gets fabricated by catching the echoes and distant sounds. Consequently there is a broad tonal variation condescending to obscurity and mystery and the pictures themselves get stretched far beyond their natural and ordinary proportions. However, it is the musical pitch and hollowness that reverberate back and formulate the necessary images.
Iron hammers clanked, tilting furnaces poured
Rivers of molten steel to forge this shape;
Elliptical whale that pounds with steady beat
Snorting through red funnels towards the sky:
Indifferent to the winds, it swings across
The wastes where Thetis and Tritons mourned
Shouldering aside the weed, the fog, the drift
And the last solitude where man is lost.52

Here we have the picture of an unfeeling mechanical culture
superseding the ancient Greek culture wherein the mythological
characters like Thetis and Tritons 'mourned shouldering aside
the weed, the fog, the drift'. By referring to Thetis and
Tritons Fletcher opens up our experience to the profound Greek
mythological significances which maintained in them a par excellent human touch. It is this relative echo of the ancient Greek
culture that makes him ponder over the present day mechanized
culture with a sense of great loss. Fletcher in a very concerned manner makes the inhuman picture of modern times with its steel hammers and molten iron flowing to the high skies. These are the same places where in ancient times the Greek mythological gods and goddesses walked. The transition is unbearable and unfortunate. Therefore Fletcher rightly says 'where the man is lost meaning thereby that humanity died a natural death with the cultural extinction of ancient Greece. Referring to his Imagist credentials Fletcher says that an image "... should be an integral part of the poem itself, as indissoluble from it as the substance of the words themselves". In the final analysis it is with the help of the substance of the words that any poet goes to make the fabric of his poetic
world. The picture thus made with the help of the words becomes an integral part of the world of our experience. This is what it should happen to the image of a poem also in relation to the poem itself. This is what exactly happens in his poems.


5 Quoted in Hughes, p.128.

6 Quoted in Hughes, p.129.

7 Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.319.

8 *Tendencies*, p.296.


10 "Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.3.


12 Hughes, p.131.

13 Quoted in Hughes, p.130.
Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.299.

Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.299.

"Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.9.

"Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.7.


"Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.10.


"Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.3.

Quoted in "Poets And Theorist", p.44.

Quoted in *Stephens*, p.34.

Quoted in *Stephens*, p.33.

Hughes, p.137.

Hughes, p.138.

"Goblin & Pagodas", in *Preludes*, p.27.

Quoted in *Stephens*, p.43.

"Goblin & Pagodas", in *Preludes*, p.46.


Quoted in *Tendencies*, pp.322-323.

Quoted in Stephens, pp.59-60.

Quoted in Hughes, p.144.

Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.337.

Quoted in Stephens, p.64.

Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.338.

Quoted in *Tendencies*, p.339.

Untermeyer, p.307.

Quoted in Stephens, p.61.


Quoted in Stephens, pp.65-66.


"Irradiations", in *Preludes*, p.3.


50 Hughes, pp. 147-148.

51 Quoted in Stephens, p. 111.

52 Quoted in Stephens, p. 102.