Imagism Study Guide

Imagism

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Introduction

Imagism flourished in Britain and in the United States for a brief period that is generally considered to be somewhere between 1909 and 1917. As part of the modernist movement, away from the sentimentality and moralizing tone of nineteenth-century Victorian poetry, imagist poets looked to many sources to help them create a new poetic expression.

For contemporary influences, the imagists studied the French symbolists, who were experimenting with free verse (*vers libre*), a verse form that used a cadence that mimicked natural speech rather than the accustomed rhythm of metrical feet, or lines. Rules of rhyming were also considered nonessential. The ancient form of Japanese haiku poetry influenced the imagists to focus on one simple image. Greek and Roman classical poetry inspired some of the imagists to strive for a high quality of writing that would endure.

T. E. Hulme is credited with creating the philosophy that would give birth to the Imagism movement. Although he wrote very little, his ideas inspired Ezra Pound to organize the new movement. Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is often given as one of the purest of his imagist poems. Amy Lowell took over the leadership role of the imagists when Pound moved on to other modernist modes. Her most anthologized poems include "Lilacs" and "Patterns."

Other important imagist poets include Hilda Doolittle, whose poem "Sea Poppies" reflects the Japanese influence on her writing, and her "Oread" is often referred to as the most perfect imagist poem; Richard Aldington, who was one of the first poets to be recognized as an imagist, and whose collection *Images of War* is considered to contain some of the most intense depictions of World War I; F. S. Flint, who dedicated his last collection of imagist poems, *Otherworld: Cadences* to Aldington; and John Gould Fletcher, whose collection *Goblins and Pagodas* is his most representative work under the influence of Imagism.

Themes

War

Several of the imagist poets used war as a theme of their poems and sometimes of their entire collections. One of the most dominant uses of this theme is Aldington's *Images of War*, in which the poet relates his personal experiences in the trenches of World War I. This collection also includes poems that he wrote after the war, poems in which he uses a cynical tone to mark his disgust of societies that allow war to occur in the first place. The poem "The Lover," which appeared in this volume, is one of the most prominent poems in this collection. It brings together an interesting mix of his fears as well as the sexual desires that he experienced during the war.

Pound's *Cathay* is also based on the theme of war. Although Pound wrote these poems from translations of Li Po, an eighth-century poet from China, the original poems focused on war, a timely concern of Pound's, as the effects of World War I were influencing his thoughts.

Male poets were not the only ones who were affected by the war. Many of Doolittle's poems in her collection *Sea Garden* engage images of pain, suffering, and desolation. Some critics relate these images to the ravages of war felt by the entire population, including those who were left at home. Doolittle was married to Aldington at the time he served on the front lines and thus felt the full impact not only of her personal fears and sense of loss but also of Aldington's suffering. Many of the poems in Flint's *Otherworld: Cadences* also portray the devastation of World War I. In fact, he dedicated this work to his fellow poet Aldington because he was well aware of the effect that the war was having on his friend.

Sense of Place

Flint, who lived all of his life in or near London, has many times been referred to as the poet of London. He grew up in the streets of this city and knew the sounds and smells and colors so well that they permeated his poetry. His love of the city was not always an easy one, however, as espoused in some of his writings, such as his poem "Courage," in which he awakens every day and hopes for the strength to face the city one more time without whining. On a lighter note is his "To a Young Lady Who Moved Shyly among Men of Reputed Worth," written quickly at a dinner party in London. The original version of this poem did not meet the tenets of Imagism, so Flint rewrote it and titled it "London." In this form, it has become one of Flint's most admired poems.

John Gould Fletcher returned to his childhood home in Little Rock, Arkansas, and there he wrote poems that would be collected in the book *Ghosts and Pagodas*. He would eventually return to Europe and then come back to the United States again. During his second return, he would travel across the continent and look at his homeland with

refreshed eyes. The result would be his *Breakers and Granite* (1921), a sort of salutation to America. This collection demonstrates Fletcher's experiments with free verse and polyphonic prose, demonstrating the imagist influence on his work. The poems describe such diverse images as the Grand Canyon, the farmlands in New England, the small towns along the Mississippi River, southern culture, and life on Indian reservations.

Nature

Doolittle's *Sea Garden* is filled with images of nature: flowers, bushes, oceans, beaches, and more. Doolittle used nature in this collection to reflect on a variety of emotions, her sense of isolation, and suffering. Fletcher also employed nature in his poetry, beginning with his first collection *Irradiations*, in which he often refers to gardens, forests, and rain. Under the influence of Japanese haiku, which often portrays scenes from nature, Fletcher's poem "Blue Symphony" intertwines colors and images of trees in mists of blue to suggest seasonal changes.

Lowell also reflected on nature in her experiments with polyphonic prose, such as in her "Patterns," in which she envisions herself walking through a garden, as well as in "The Overgrown Pasture." In her poem "November," she describes many different types of bushes and trees as they are affected by the cold of the approaching winter.

One of Flint's earliest poems, "The Swan," has been referred to as a poem that carefully follows the imagist practice of conciseness and suggestiveness. The poem consists of several short lines, written in very concrete terms as it describes the movements of a swan through dark waters. The poem is filled with the colors found in nature, painting a very precise image in words. The image of the swan gives way at the end to a symbol of the poet's sorrow.

Greek Poets

Both Aldington and Doolittle were passionate in their studies of Greek literature and mythology. They both looked to the classical poets to find a model of excellence for their writing. Doolittle was perhaps most inspired by Greek poets, often alluding to Sappho in her works. Her poetry in which this theme is most prominent has readily been referred to as her most original.

There is only one poem of Sappho's that has been retained throughout history in its completed state. The rest of Sappho's poetry exists only in fragment. It is upon these fragments that Doolittle built some of her more fascinating poetry. Doolittle has been credited, by Greek scholars such as Henry Rushton Fairclough (as quoted in Hughes's book), for becoming so completely "suffused with the Greek spirit that only the use of the vernacular will often remind the cultivated reader that he is not reading a Greek poet." Fairclough particularly refers to Doolittle's poem "Hymen" as exemplifying her ability to write under the influence of Greek poetry.

Lesbianism

The theme of lesbianism is portrayed in many of Lowell's poems. She does not name them as such, but her poems depict the love she felt for women, in particular, one woman. In her poem "Decade," she celebrates the tenth anniversary of her relationship with her live-in companion, Ada Dwyer Russell. In her poems "A Lady" and "The Blue Scarf," she alludes to her love of an unnamed woman.

Style

Polyphonic Prose

Amy Lowell was the imagist poet who was most heavily influenced by the practice of polyphonic prose, a term coined by Fletcher (who also enjoyed using this technique), but a practice that Lowell learned from the French poet Paul Fort (1872-1960). Lowell interpreted this form to be similar to free verse but only freer. She called it the most elastic form of poetic expression, as it used all the poetic "voices" such as meter, cadence, rhyme, alliteration, and assonance. When writing in this form, the poem is printed out in prose form, but the sound of the writing reflects the modes of poetry.

Lowell described this technique in an essay she wrote, "A Consideration of Modern Poetry," for the *North American Review* (January 1917). She employed this technique for the first time in her collection *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914), to which Aldington wrote an article in the *Egoist* commending the collection and suggesting that all young poets should read Lowell's poems to learn the technique. Aldington writes (as quoted in Hughes's book), "I am not a bit ashamed to confess that I have myself imitated Miss Lowell in this, and produced a couple of works in the same style."

Although Lowell's poetry was often criticized for lack of depth, many critics praised her for her use of language, especially her proficiency in using polyphonic prose.

Free Verse

Pound was responsible for creating six tenets of what he believed would help poets understand what Imagism was all about and how it differed from other forms of poetry. Of these six, one of the main tenets was free verse, which, according to the manifesto, would best express the individuality of the poet. The exact wording of this tenet is quoted in David Perkins's book, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*: "We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea." Free verse was one manner of escaping the need to rhyme. Pound thought that by releasing poets from this need to rhyme, he would create an atmosphere in which they could better focus on the image.

Pound was not original in this idea, as various forms of free verse had been used in classical Greek literature, in Old English literature (such as *Beowulf*), as well as in French, American, and German poetry. However, Pound and the other imagist poets took the meaning of free verse to new ground. They believed that rhythm expressed emotion, and the imagists understood, according to Perkins, that "for every emotional state there is the one particular rhythm that expresses it." Therefore, limiting rhythm to the fixed stanzas, meters, and other rhythmic standards of conventional poetry disallowed a full rendering of those emotions. In other words, the individuality of the

poet's emotions would be thwarted by following traditional rules, and thus the overall effect of the poem would become inauthentic or insincere. Thus, the imagists were encouraged to let go of the old standards and open up their emotions to the freer flow of words that was allowed in the use of free verse. Of the imagist poets, the Americans, more so than their fellow British cohorts, readily took advantage of free verse. The traditional rules of poetry had been created in Europe and therefore had a European character. Through the use of free verse, the American imagists felt that they could compose more individualistic poetry that spoke in an American voice.

There was controversy around this form, as many critics had trouble distinguishing the differences between so-called free verse and actual prose. So the question arose: What makes a poem a poem? Poetry, most critics argued, required form. Aldington defined his use of free verse as poetry in this way: "The prose-poem is poetic content expressed in prose form" (quoted from Hughes). Whereas Fletcher took a more visual and more general approach in attempting to express his understanding of the difference between prose and poetry, believing that all well-written literature could be referred to as poetry, so that it did not matter if poems were written according to very traditional rules or in free verse. In Hughes's book, Fletcher is quoted saying: "The difference between poetry and prose is . . . a difference between a general roundness and a general squareness of outline."

Common and Precise Language

Another tenet in the imagist manifesto dealt with the specific use of language. Imagist poets were told to use the language of common speech, more like the language one would hear in conversation rather than the formal or decorative language often used in traditional poetry. Imagists were also told to be spare in their use of words, to practice using only the words that were needed to describe an image. They should be concrete in their language, to stay away from abstraction.

Image

Pound's definition of what an image was in terms of imagist poetry is rather vague. He stressed that the language should be precise and concentrated in expressing this image, but he never quite defined what the image of the imagist movement was. One of the tenets of the imagist manifesto was the freedom of the poet to choose any subject that he or she wanted. So image was not related to subject matter. However, it is stated that one of the main purposes of poetry is "To present an image" (quoted from Hughes). This image should not be an abstraction. If an abstraction, such as an emotion, is to be expressed, indeed, it should be told, through an image.

Aldington, as stated by Hughes, tried to be a little more specific in his definition of an image by stating that poets should try to create "clear, quick rendering[s] of particulars without commentary." William Carlos Williams, who wrote an occasional imagist poem, may have defined the image best. Ideas are best expressed through things, Williams

believed, and there was no better way to express things that contained ideas than through images. The imagists' intent to focus on one image led them to embrace the poetry of Japan, especially haiku, which presented single images in each of its poems.

Japanese Haiku

Japanese haiku is an ancient form of poetry, originating almost seven hundred years ago. Haiku is a very precise poetic form, consisting typically of seventeen syllables in three lines. The Japanese language, which is syllabic rather than based on individual letters of an alphabet, is better suited to this form than is the English language. Therefore, even though the imagist poets became enamored of this form, they technically never wrote an authentic haiku. However, haiku greatly influenced their work. Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) is one of Japan's best-known haiku poets. His most famous poem of this type is a good example:

An old pond . . .
A frog jumps in□
The sound of water.

In comparison is Doolittle's "Oread" (also taken from Harmer's book), which demonstrates the imagist attempt to practice haiku by writing simply and focusing on one image:

Whirl up, sea□
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir.

Historical Context

Modernism

The transition from the Romanticism and Victorianism into Modernism was one of the major shifts in the history of poetry, and some critics credit the imagists with beginning this great change. The romantics were marked by their idealism and embellished language, while the imagists proclaimed that they were realists who would write in a simple vernacular. The romantics were behind the times, the imagists believed. The older poetic form appealed to audiences that were usually made up of the upper social classes. The modernists wanted to communicate with the masses.

"Imagism has been described as the grammar school of modern poetry," writes Perkins. The imagist poets were responsible for creating some of the basic instructions for Modernism, which included clear and precise language and suggestive and visual imagery. Modernists would experiment with ways in which to relate poetry to the other arts.

Modernism implied that the population was tired of the past and wanted to see things as they really were in the present or to think about how they might be in the future. The past was old, and the ancient casts should be broken and discarded. Modernists wanted to create something new. Experimentation and exploration were the new focus. There was a breaking away from patterned responses and predictable forms. Modernist themes often included the feeling of alienation: the individual having difficulty placing him- or herself in time because the traditional has been discarded and the present is in a state of redefinition. Other themes of the modernists were the beginnings of an exploration of the inner self, life as experienced in large urban centers, and the effects of rampant materialism and industrialization.

World War I

World War I was a traumatic event for Europe and the United States. Previous wars had involved the upper social classes more so than the general population. World War I was also the first war to involve gas warfare and heavy artillery. The physically and emotionally wounded soldiers were brought home, most of them in shellshock, most of them filled with bitterness. They found themselves alienated from their own optimistic views of the promises of the machine age that they had held prior to the war. European and American authors writing during and after the war spoke about the horror of war and its attendant disillusions more than any generation had before them. Their styles became more introspective, less idealistic, and more cynical. In an attempt to heal their inner wounds, they tried to explain the effects that the war had upon them and to analyze and criticize the society that had sent them there.

Women's Rights

In 1903, the women's suffrage movement in Britain took a turn toward the militant under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters. They had grown tired of being silenced and were determined to grab headlines with their acts of arson, destruction, and general mayhem in the streets. Many of the leaders of this group were often imprisoned, at which time they would then go on hunger strikes. After World War I, limited suffrage was granted to them. In 1928, eight years after their American sisters, British women were granted the right to vote.

With political awareness of their rights, women also gained the courage to speak out not only for public freedoms but also for independence in their personal lives. Everything from clothing to sexual relations was undergoing close examination as women began defining their lives in terms of what they needed and wanted rather than what the male-dominated society dictated for them. This can be seen in terms of Lowell's mannerisms, in particular. She liked to wear men's clothes and often smoked cigars. She, like Doolittle, was involved in a lesbian relationship. Doolittle was also very free in determining her relationships with men. While married to Aldington, she had affairs with other men, one of them resulting in her getting pregnant. Although both these women were courageous enough to demand their rights, Doolittle often suffered mentally from the emotional impact of her actions. She was well ahead of her time in terms of women's liberation and often sought the care of psychiatrists, including Sigmund Freud, to help her come to terms with her emotional needs and the social confines of the early era of women's rights.

Movement Variations

Of the six major imagist poets, four of them (Lowell, Doolittle, Pound, and Fletcher) were born in the United States, and all four, upon deciding to dedicate their lives to writing, and more specifically to poetry, traveled throughout Europe. There was a void, as far as poetry is concerned, in America at that time, and those who had a passion for creating poetry felt that they needed to go abroad to find out more about it. The American poetry that did exist in the early part of the twentieth century, according to Pound, was mediocre. As quoted in Perkins, Pound states: "Only the mediocrity of a given time can drive intelligent men of that time to 'break with tradition.'" Thus, the American poets, tired and frustrated by the conventional poets of the previous century, traveled to Europe and helped to open the gates of the modernist period, influencing it with their own credo of Imagism.

Interestingly, once these American poets became involved in creating the imagist movement, some of them (mostly Lowell and Fletcher) tended to veer in different directions from their British contemporaries in their attempts to give the language of their poetry a more American slant.

Representative Authors

Richard Aldington (1892-1962)

Richard Aldington was born on July 8, 1892, in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, to Jesse May and Albert Edward Aldington. He attended University College in London but did not complete his degree, due to the loss of family funds.

In 1912, Aldington met Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle, and from this meeting, the Imagism movement began. In the same year, Aldington published his first imagist poems in *Poetry*.

The following year, Aldington traveled to Paris and Italy with Doolittle and on October 18, 1913, they were married. Shortly after, Aldington became the editor of the imagist publication *Egoist*, a position he would hold until 1917. His poems appeared in *Des Imagistes* (1914) as well as the second imagist anthology, *Some Imagist Poets* (1915). He completed his first book, *Images (1910-1915),* also in 1915.

Aldington enlisted in the army in 1916. His most reflective responses to this experience are included in his collection of poems *Images of War* (1919) and his novel, *Death of a Hero* (1929). During the remainder of his writing career, Aldington would publish a wide variety of books, which included biographies, translations, novels, and short stories. In 1941, he published his memoirs, *Life for Life's Sake*.

Aldington was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for his *The Duke* (1943). He also received the Prix de Gratitude Mistralienne for his *Introduction to Mistral* (1956). He died on July 27, 1962, in Lere, France.

Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961)

Hilda Doolittle (she published under the monogram H. D.) was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on September 10, 1886, to Helen (Wolle) and Charles Doolittle. She attended Bryn Mawr College for one year.

When she was twenty-five years old, Doolittle went abroad, during which time she renewed her relationship with Ezra Pound, through whom she met Aldington. Pound encouraged Doolittle's writing and sent her poems to the magazine *Poetry*, identifying them with the monogram "H. D.," a signature that Doolittle would embrace.

After the dissolution of her marriage to Aldington, Doolittle became pregnant from a brief love affair with another man and gave birth to a daughter in 1919. She named her Perdita. After her daughter's birth, Doolittle became seriously ill and was nursed back to health by Annie Winifred Ellerman, a writer who went by the name Bryher and who would become Doolittle's companion throughout the remaining years of her life. It was

Bryher who arranged for Doolittle to be psychoanalyzed by Sigmund Freud during 1933 and 1934. Doolittle's "Tribute to Freud" refers to this period.

Doolittle's first collections of poems include, *Sea Garden* (1916), *Hymen* (1921), and *Heliodora and Other Poems* (1924). In 1927, she published a complete play in verse, *Hippolytus Temporizes*, her attempt to approximate her favorite Greek dramatist/poets. One of her most often quoted imagist poems is "Oread."

In 1960, Doolittle was the first woman to receive the Award of Merit Medal for poetry from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. On September 27, 1961, Doolittle died of a heart attack in Zurich, Switzerland. Her body was buried in her family's cemetery plot in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950)

John Gould Fletcher was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on January 3, 1886. He was the son of John Gould (a banker and broker) and Adolphine (Kraus) Fletcher. He attended Harvard University, but he left without obtaining a degree.

Having inherited his father's estate early in life, Fletcher did not have to worry about finding employment. Instead, he devoted himself to the study of literature. He eventually traveled to England, where he met Ezra Pound and the other imagist poets.

Shortly after meeting Pound, Fletcher became alienated from him due to Pound's criticism of his poetry. At the same time, Amy Lowell took an interest in Fletcher's work, encouraging him and helping him to find publishers. In exchange, Fletcher introduced Lowell to his theory of the free verse of French poets. According to Glenn Hughes, in his *Imagism and the Imagists*, "Lowell was greatly impressed by both the theory and its results," and she began to use Fletcher's ideas in her own poetry. After learning that Fletcher could not find an English publisher for his *Irradiations: Sand and Spray* (1915), Lowell took Fletcher's manuscript and found a publisher in the States, where it was well received.

Fletcher would go on to produce many more collections. *Goblins and Pagodas* (1916) reflects his return to the United States, during which time he revisited his childhood home and then Boston, where he became enthralled with Japanese art and produced his *Japanese Prints* (1918). The latter work was his attempt to write poems likened to Japanese haiku, a form that influenced many of the imagist poets. After his *Breakers and Granite* (1921), in which he takes a fresh look at the United States after many years of living in Europe, critics classify Fletcher's work as post-imagist. He would go on to win the Pulitzer for his *Selected Poems* (1938).

On May 10, 1950, Fletcher drowned himself in a pool near his childhood home.

F. S. Flint (1885-1960)

Frank Stuart Flint was born on December 19, 1885, in Islington, England. His family was poor, and by the age of thirteen he had to drop out of school and go to work. A few years later, he was able to afford night classes, during which he gained an interest in the French poets and the use of free verse, which would influence his writing.

Flint made the acquaintance of T. E. Hulme, a poet and philosopher, and together they planted the theoretic seeds for the movement that would eventually be called Imagism.

Flint's first collection of poems, *In the Net of the Stars* (1909), did not embody the full characteristics of the imagist poets, but they did reflect more realistic images and were written in a more natural, contemporary voice than those of his contemporaries. Flint's poetry went through a drastic change over the years, as reflected in his next collection, *Cadences* (1915), which included only imagist poetry. His most ambitious collection was *Otherworld: Cadences* (1920), his last collection of poems. Ford Maddox Ford states (in J. B. Harmer's *Victory in Limbo, Imagism 1908-1917*) that of the imagist poets, only Doolittle and Flint "have the really exquisite sense of words . . . and insight that justify a writer in assuming the rather proud title of imagist." Flint died on February 28, 1960, in Berkshire, England.

Amy Lowell (1874-1925)

Amy Lowell was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, on February 9, 1874, to Katherine (Bigelow), an accomplished musician and linguist, and Augustus Lowell, a businessman and horticulturist. From both sides of her family, Lowell enjoyed the benefits of the leisurely life of a Boston aristocrat. Not known for her academic accomplishments during her private school education, she nonetheless continued a pursuit of knowledge through selfeducation after graduating from high school in 1891.

In 1910, when she was thirty-four years old, Lowell had four of her sonnets published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1912, she funded the publication of her first volume of poetry, *A Dome of Many- Coloured Glass*, which some critics felt relied too heavily on the nineteenth-century romantic tradition, an unpopular form at that time.

During this same year, Lowell met Ada Dwyer Russell, an actress with whom she would share the rest of her life. The poem "A Decade" focuses on Lowell and Russell's relationship, written to celebrate their tenth anniversary together.

During the summer of 1913, after having read Doolittle's poems in the magazine *Poetry*, Lowell went to London to meet Doolittle in person. It was through her association with Doolittle and the other imagist poets that Lowell transformed her own poetry, changing her tight nineteenth-century format to one in favor of technical experimentation and innovation. She eventually became a major sponsor for the imagist movement. Lowell's interests in the movement would eventually clash with Ezra Pound, then considered the

leader of the imagists, and Pound would leave. Afterward, Pound began referring to Imagism as "Amygism."

Some of Lowell's more popular collections of poetry include *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914), *Men, Woman and Ghosts* (1916), *Can Grande's Castle* (1918), *Legends* (1921), *Fir- Flower Tablets* (1921), and *A Critical Fable* (1922). After Lowell's death from a stroke on May 12, 1925, Russell edited several of Lowell's unpublished poems and collected them under *What's O'Clock*. The collection won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry that year.

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

Ezra Pound was born on October 30, 1885, in Hailey, Idaho, to Isabel (Weston) and Homer Loomis Pound, a mine inspector. After receiving a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he left the United States and traveled throughout Europe.

After meeting with Hulme, considered the strongest philosophical influence on the imagist movement, Pound modernized his poetic style. One of Pound's first publications in London, *Personae* (1909) caused a critical sensation. His next publication, *Exultations*, published in the same year, marked what Glenn Hughes, writing in his *Imagism and the Imagists*, called the beginning of "the modern vogue of erudite poetry."

Although Pound is credited with creating, supporting, and educating the imagist poets, he moved quickly through this period and on to other modern forms of poetry. While forming the imagists, Pound wrote "In a Station of the Metro," a poem he considered to embrace the tenets of the movement. Pound's collection *Ripostes* (1912) represents the beginning of his involvement with imagist poetry. Pound created the first anthology of imagist poetry, *Des Imagistes* (1914).

Pound would go on to win the Dial Award for distinguished service to American letters, the Bollingen Library of Congress Award (1949), and the Academy of American Poets fellowship (1963). He died in Venice, Italy, on November 1, 1972.

Representative Works

Cathay

Ezra Pound, although a prominent definer and great promoter of Imagism was not a great practitioner of poetry with an imagist bent. The closest he came to incorporating purely imagist tenets in his poetry was a collection called *Cathay* (1915), which includes poems translated from the eighthcentury Chinese poet Li Po (also referred to as Rihaku). By working with these translations, Pound displays the interest and the influence that classical Japanese and Chinese poetry had upon the imagist.

Critics agree that this collection is one of Pound's finest, at least of his earlier publications. The collection significantly marks not only Pound's connection to Imagism but also the beginning of the Western world's appreciation of Asian poetry. Not fully understanding the Chinese language, Pound worked with previously translated poems completed by Ernest Fenollosa. Being unfamiliar with the language gave Pound the freedom of arranging words and creating rhythms and sounds according to his own understanding and knowledge of poetry rather than being heavily influenced by the original intent of the poet.

The wording of Pound's interpretations is clear and direct. Each line presents a spare image, and the emotions are expressed in understatement. These are hallmark descriptions of Imagism. Pound would go on to study Chinese more seriously after completing these poems. He later incorporated what he had learned about this ideographic language into some of his subsequent poems. Studying the Chinese characters, or ideograms□abstract pictures used to convey meaning rather than individual letters in an alphabet□inspired Pound to create new poetic forms.

Goblins and Pagodas

John Gould Fletcher published his *Goblins and Pagodas* in 1916, after a visit back to his childhood home in Little Rock, Arkansas, and then to Boston, where he had previously attended school. His *Goblins and Pagodas* collection is divided into two parts: "The Ghosts of an Old House," in which he writes several poems that reflect on the large home in which he lived in Arkansas, as well as on family members who influenced his development during those early years. The second part of his collection is called "The Symphonies," which, according to Hughes, "represents an ambitious attempt to arrange the intellectual and emotional life of an artist in eleven separate movements, each movement being dominated by a color-harmony." In other words, Fletcher created poems that intertwined poetry, music, and art in an attempt to use the aesthetics of each form to express his understanding of his emotions.

The poems in the first section, reminiscences of Fletcher's youth, are, according to Hughes, "not a great performance," although Hughes does later recant this position by

stating that taking the first section as a whole, rather than evaluating the poems individually, produces a more powerful "mosaic."

It is the second section of this collection that most critics believe to be Fletcher's most clearly influenced by the imagist mode. Hughes describes this section of poems as reflecting "beauty and mastery of form, and several are consistently excellent." These poems are longer and more complicated than the ones in the first section, and Fletcher works with concepts for which there was little precedent. In these poems, one way in which he is able to combine poetry, music, and art is by giving colors different emotional values. Some of his attempts lean toward the conventionally accepted, such as using blue to express sadness; but other emotional values that he conveys are completely his own, as in his relating the color orange as the color of war. Of the poems in this section, "Green Symphony" and "Blue Symphony" are the most often anthologized.

Images of War

One of the strongest influences in Richard Aldington's life was his time spent in World War I. The experience made him bitter and cynical. His *Images of War* (1919) is a collection of poems that he wrote both during the war and afterward. He spent fifteen months on the front lines of this brutal combat, and from that came what some critics refer to as some of the most beautiful war poems ever written. The beauty comes from the poems' intensity and Aldington's ability to make the reader feel as if he or she were undergoing the same emotions that Aldington was suffering from.

The poems transport the reader to the trenches and allow them the privilege of hearing Aldington's thoughts on life and death, love and pain, fear and loneliness. Ironically, the poems that Aldington wrote during the war are less cynical than the ones that he wrote several years later. The space of time that occurred between the end of the war and Aldington's writing the later poems allowed him to reflect more on the overall picture of war: the reasons behind war and the consequences of such action. While entrenched in the war, Aldington thought of survival. These poems are very personal accounts of emotional intensity. Once he is removed from the action, however, and suffers from the emotional impact of having survived as well as objectively analyzing why nations would ever employ such drastic means, his poetry becomes bitterer. This collection marks the end of Aldington's purest use of Imagism. From this point on, his writing took on other aspects and influences.

Otherworld: Cadences

F. S. Flint published his last collection of poems under the title *Otherworld: Cadences* in 1920. Most of the poems in this collection center on the effects of war, and thus he dedicates this volume to his fellow imagist poet Aldington, whose own writing was greatly influenced by the experience of World War I.

Not all of the poems in this collection are written with a specific reference to World War I. Some poems stress a more personal war, such as in the title piece, "Otherworld." In

this poem, Flint reflects on the battle that he encounters on a daily basis, having to wake up to a world that demands that much of his attention be focused on material details. In contrast, he would much rather sit in his garden and meditate on the beauty of the world, the love of his family, and the goodness of his compatriots. Hughes writes of this poem: "The poem continues, and pictures the deadening routine of the day and the return of the worker at night to his home, weak and disheartened."

Hughes states that some of the poetry in this collection is "soft poetry. It is much softer than most poems written by the imagists. But it is absolutely human." Hughes concludes that even though Flint also writes poems with more of an edge, he is unlike his fellow imagist poets in that he "finds it impossible to conceal his tenderness."

Flint published two collections of poems with similar titles: both had the word *cadence* in them. Cadence was very important to Flint, believing, as he did, that cadence was one of the most important marks of imagist poetry. In the preface to *Otherworld: Cadence*, Flint proposes that unrhymed cadence truly marks the difference between traditional and modern poetry.

Sea Garden

Hilda Doolittle's first collection of twentyeight imagist poems, *Sea Garden* (1916), has been referred to, by J. B. Harmer in his *Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917*, as representative of one of two of "the chief memorial[s] of the Imagiste group." The poems in Doolittle's first collection are the most influenced by the imagist movement, and according to Harmer, after publication of this book, Doolittle "began to retreat" into more traditional poetic form. Thus, this collection marks both her entry into the movement as well as her exit.

Susan Stanford Friedman, writing in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vol. 45: *American Poets, 1880-1945*, compares many of the poems in this collection to Georgia O'Keeffe's flower paintings, stating that like O'Keeffe, "H. D.'s flowers indirectly suggest an intense eroticism, whose power comes precisely from its elusive, nonhuman expression." Friedman also states that it is through these poems that Doolittle expresses traits of her personality, such as her "pride in her difference, and her separation from the conventional."

This pride is best witnessed in the poem "Sheltered Garden," in which Doolittle writes that she is tired of the pampered, neat garden and longs to find a fruit tree upon which the fruit is allowed to stay on the branch to naturally whither and die.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis, writing in *H. D.: The Career of that Struggle*, mentions that in Doolittle's poems about flowers, she rebels against convention by depicting the flowers in harsh environments, praising them for their wounds: "These flowers of the sea gardens are of a harsh surprising beauty, slashed, torn, dashed yet still triumphant and powerful." Such is the case with the poem "Sea Rose," in which Doolittle does not praise the flower for its delicacy but rather for its ability to stand against the winds. She

repeats this theme in her poem "Sea Poppies," in which she describes the roots of the flower as being caught among the rocks and broken shells and praises it for its endurance.

Sword Blades and Poppy Seed

Amy Lowell spent several years in London, meeting imagist poets and eventually taking over the promotion, education, and organization of this movement. When she returned to the United States in 1914, she published her own collection of imagist poetry, *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*. The poems in this collection reflect all the theories and philosophies that had been espoused by the imagists, as well as by the French symbolist poets who had greatly influenced the Imagism movement. It is in the preface of this collection that Lowell discusses her interpretation of free verse and what she refers to as polyphonic prose, two concepts that were used by some poets in the imagist movement.

Although Lowell was to become a popular poet, she was often criticized for her lack of originality. In this first collection of hers, the influences of Pound, Doolittle, and Fletcher are very apparent. Lowell was mostly known and praised for her business sense, especially in promoting the movement and finding ways to have the other poets published. However, it is her ability to use polyphonic prose, one of the major aspects of this collection, that impressed many of the other poets. Aldington, in fact, was so impressed with Lowell's ability to use this technique that he wrote an essay in which he recommended that all young poets study this collection of Lowell's.

Polyphonic prose is a type of free verse that uses alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds), assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), as well as other poetic devices to create a poem that is ap- pears like prose, but that reads or sounds like poetry. Although Lowell did not invent polyphonic prose, she is given credit for popularizing it, and it is in this collection that she best displays her ability to use this form.

Critical Overview

In the chapter "Critical Reaction," Hughes makes the statement that "few comments on the [imagist] movement have appeared in English periodicals. The effect is that of a conspiracy of silent scorn." Hughes wrote this in 1931, but his book remains today, one of the standard studies of the imagist movement, so his seventy-year-old opinion seems to be still standing. Hughes claims that the critics who did write about Imagism were usually either the imagist poets themselves or else their friends.

The only comments that were made were either brief sarcastic remarks or "mutual backscratching," Hughes concludes. Of the sarcastic remarks, he mentions Harold Monro, who wrote an article in the *Egoist*, a largely imagist publication. Monro writes, "the imagists seem to have been struck partially blind at the first sight of their new world; and they are still blinking."

Ford Maddox Ford (using his German last name, Hueffer, for this article) is quoted by Hughes as commending Doolittle and Flint for their writing, praising them as the only two poets in the movement who wrote well enough to be called imagists. Ford then continues: "Mr. John Gould Fletcher, Mr. Aldington, and Miss Lowell are all too preoccupied with themselves and their emotions to be really called Imagists." Ford concludes by stating that the imagist movement is the only thing that was happening in literature during that time.

Hughes then goes on to discuss the critical response that the imagists received in America. He begins with a statement from a reviewer writing for the *Chicago Tribune*. The writer concluded the review by stating that Imagism should be established as a constitutional amendment and that anyone who writes anything other than in the imagist mode should be imprisoned. Later, after the pub- lication of *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), Conrad Aiken, an American poet himself and friend of Pound, wrote a poem for the imagists and had it published in the *Boston Transcript*. The poem was not at all flattering, and as presented in Hughes's book, Aiken ended each stanza with the question: "Where in a score years will you be," making an allusion to the fact that he thought Imagism was but a mere fad.

Aiken later wrote an article for the *New Republic*, in which he praised Fletcher at the other imagist poets' expense, stating that only Fletcher was able to express enough emotion to move the reader. W. S. Braithwaite, in response to Aiken's attacks, also published an article in the *New Republic*. His opinion of the imagists was more generous, praising the poets for their courage to break out of the old poetry molds. As quoted in Hughes's book, Braithwaite writes, "The final test of poetry is not that it stirs one . . . but that it haunts one."

In 1915, William Ellery Leonard, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, took upon himself the task of critiquing the imagists. His analysis was not very favorable. Hughes describes Leonard's remarks as "the most scholarly, sarcastic, and seriously-considered attempt at the annihilation of imagism yet recorded." Leonard disliked the

imagists' allusions to Japanese poetry, although Hughes points out that at the time of the criticism none of the imagists had yet written any poetry that was influenced by haiku. Leonard also criticized their use of classical Greek and Latin poets, assuming (wrongly) that none of the poets had a real understanding of the classics. Hughes sums up his views about the Leonard attacks on the imagists by stating that Leonard was correct in pointing out some of the weak points of some of the poets but that to condemn the whole movement without mentioning any of their strengths was a "cheap trick."

Other critics did not like the egoism that the imagist poets appeared to flaunt. Some felt that the imagist poet made him- or herself more important than the poem. Hughes then writes that Lewis Worthington Smith, writing for the *Atlantic Monthly*, believed that the imagists were only pretending to revolt from all literary forms but were, actually, "doing nothing of the kind: they are minor poets who cannot stand the strain of the sophisticated and complex world in which they find themselves." Smith concludes that Imagism is merely a "freakish and barren cult" and a sign that Romanticism will bounce back with a much "fuller and more vital poetry."

These were the early reviews. Later, Hughes writes, the critics were "more favorable, owing to the continuous propaganda of the imagists themselves and to the natural decline of prejudice toward something new."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
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Critical Essay #1

Hart has degrees in English literature with a minor in Asian studies and focuses her writing on literary topics. In this essay, Hart considers the influence of the Japanese poetic form of haiku on imagist poetry.

The Imagism movement, although short-lived and complicated by some basic contradictions and controversies, definitely left its mark on the literature of its time as well as on many works that would follow. Included in the contradictions was the dictate from the movement's founders to break the chains of tradition, while two of its most loyal poets wrote their imagist poems with allusions to classical Latin and Greek poetry. Another contradiction was the call for freedom in writing, and yet the leaders of the movement sat down and wrote an imagist manifesto, delineating rules for anyone who would write imagist poems. Added to the contradictions was the confusion that many readers (and critics) experienced as they tried to understand free verse, which to them read more like prose than poetry. And, finally, even though the basic tenet of this group of poets was that the *image* was the poem, no one was able to offer a definitive explanation of what the word *image* meant to them, despite the fact that, quite obviously, the most influential element of this movement was just that□the concept of the focused image. However, despite this latter problem, the imagists did discover a model upon which they could build their images, and that was the Japanese poetic form referred to as haiku.

It was in the form of the haiku, or, if not the exact form, at least in the general concept of it, that many of the tenets of the imagist manifesto were best expressed. The manifesto, in short, expected imagist writers to use common speech, words from daily dialogue. The language should be precise and concrete. Rhythm should be free, and rhyming was not only unnecessary, it was practically discouraged. The poem should be concentrated and definite; and, most important, the poem should present an image. Matching this explanation of Imagism are the descriptions of the Japanese poem, which state that haiku should be true to reality and written as if it represented a first impression of subjects taken from daily life or as seen with fresh eyes. The language should be simple, and the focus should be on one image. In both the haiku and the imagist poem, two images are often juxtaposed and the meaning of the poem is understated.

Despite the fact that critics argue that the imagists never truly mastered the haiku form, the influence of the Japanese haiku is very evident in many of their poems. Pound, being the initial leader of the movement, tried his hand at the haiku with his often quoted poem "In a Station of the Metro," taken here from Harmer's book:

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

Compare Pound's poem to one from Japan's more famous haiku masters, Yosa Buson (1715-1783), and the similarities are easy to see. Buson's poem is also taken from Harmer.

Alone in a room
Deserted□
A peony.

In both poems, the wording is sparse. The language is simple. There are two very clear images woven together by a subtle reading, that is left to the reader to decipher. In Pound's poem, the image of the petals of a flower that have been momentarily pasted to the limb of a tree after a rainfall is something that almost all readers could relate to no matter where they lived, what culture they were brought up in, or what language they spoke. By using this image, Pound gives the reader a hint of his feelings, as the speaker stands, possibly leaning against some far wall, watching the crowd of temporary faces pass by him. Just as the petals of the flower are temporarily pasted against the wet limb, the people who are passing are only momentarily fixed in the speaker's mind. He juxtaposes the crowded station with a beautiful, understated scene from nature□a few wet petals.

Japanese art, whether a painting or a flower arrangement, is an expression as much of what is not there as of what is presented. A single flower placed with an interestingly formed stick allows space around its images, thus encouraging the imagination to fill in the emptiness. The beauty is in the simplicity. Pound senses this and even plays with it as he first takes his readers to a crowded and busy center of transportation in some unnamed city, then suddenly plants them in a quiet place where they can meditate on a single bough. Buson makes a similar surprising movement. He first implants the feelings of loneliness. The reader is made to believe that a person is sitting in a room by himor herself, although the reader does not know for sure why. The next line adds the emotion. The loneliness gives way to the more incredible feeling of abandonment and neglect. Then Buson adds nature, and the image softens; it becomes pristine and beautiful in its aloneness. It is in the starkness of the single peony that an image of art is created. The lone flower in a vase is turned into a pure, focused image, because there is nothing else in the room to distract the eye.

One more example from the Japanese is the following, also taken from Harmer, and credited to Moritake:

A fallen petal
Flies back to its branch:
Ah! A butterfly!

In comparison to this haiku is one written by Amy Lowell. Although Lowell's is not as humorous, she wrote a poem that contains a very similar rhythm. This poem is taken from Hughes's book:

My thoughts
Chink against my ribs
And roll about like silver hailstones

In Moritake's poem, there is surprise in the last line, as there is in Lowell's. The surprise in Moritake's is more evident. The reader feels the jolt, just as the poet must have experienced it, watching one image turn into quite another, from a dead, falling petal to a live and beautiful butterfly. Lowell's surprise is more subtle. The image of thoughts hitting, albeit lightly, against the speakers ribs is somewhat uncomfortable. The concept makes the speaker appear agitated and possibly hungry, if not for food, then for a solution of some kind. Then she adds the final line, having the thoughts roll now, a much more comforting feeling, and they are also turned into silver□smooth and shiny. Iinstead of being bothersome, they now appear somewhat precious.

There are many examples of the influence of haiku upon the imagists, as all of them tried their hand at the Japanese form, some of them more successfully than others. Even T. E. Hulme, who wrote very few poems and was not directly considered an imagist poet, even though it was his philosophy of poetry that began the movement, was able to create a type of haiku. In his poem "Autumn," taken from Hughes's book, Hulme writes a somewhat longer version, but the rhythm and the form are still there:

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.

In this stanza of his poem, Hulme juxtaposes images of nature with the figure of a person. There is a similar surprise in Hulme's poem, as there is in Moritake's, in which the petal suddenly turns into a butterfly. With Hulme, the moon suddenly turns into the face of a farmer. The picture in the poem jumps from one image to the other, as Hulme superimposes the moon and the farmer in such a quick motion that the reader witnesses the blending of the two images into one.

One of the best examples of haiku poetry from Richard Aldington comes from his collection *Images of Desire*. It is quoted here from Hughes's book:

Like a dark princess whose beauty
Many have sung, you wear me,
The one jewel that is warmed by your breast.

Here Aldington focuses on one image, that of a beautiful princess, bejeweled. What is interesting in this poem is that Aldington embeds the speaker in that "one jewel," creating a double image in one object. The attention remains on the princess and her beauty, while the speaker sneaks in and prevails over the throngs of men who clamor for her attention. This is a clever poem, whose image changes the more it is thought about. The picture first appears as a solitary figure, then slowly grows more complex as more people crowd into the image, first the other admirers, then the jewel that takes on the personification of the speaker.

John Gould Fletcher wholly engaged Japanese art in many of its forms, and in the following two lines, taken again from Hughes, he captures a beautiful Japanese image in very few words:

Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain
Dripping from the eaves.

This short poem not only provides an image, it adds music. Raindrops splashing down on the roof, "tinkling" like the sounds of tiny bells or like a wind chime. Then he slows down the rhythm, as he describes the rain as lazy, and the reader can again see the sluggish drops leisurely slithering down from the eaves. This is imagist poetry imitating haiku at its best, with several of the senses drawn in, with such spare and simple words, to create one exquisite image.

Fletcher is successful again in one of his poems taken from his collection *Ghosts and Pagodas*. This one comes from the first section, "The Ghosts of an Old House," and as quoted from Hughes, it reads in part:

The windows rattle as if someone were in
them wishing to get out
and ride upon the wind.

Knowing the context of this poem gives it more meaning. Fletcher has gone back to his family home, after having been away for a long time. His family is gone. All that remains for him are the memories of having once lived there. When the wind rattles the windows, he imagines the ghosts of his memories, trying to release themselves from his mind. Fletcher builds the image by bringing in various senses. Not only can the reader envision what this might look like, or feel like, but the sound of the wind and the rattling of the window are also very easy to imagine. The surprise element is also present. The normal impression might be that if there were ghosts inside the window, and they were trying to get out, that the ghosts would then come after the speaker of the poem. Instead, Fletcher has them wanting to ride the wind, to fly away from him, to return to nature. He has captured the essence of the haiku in his own way, imbuing the image with past emotions conjured in the present moment, all illustrated realistically and concretely.

Closing this essay is a poem from William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), who was not considered one of the major imagist poets, but he is often referred to as one of the major poets of that time who was affected by the Imagism movement. His poem "Red Wheelbarrow" is often used as a classic representation of both the perfect imagist poem as well as one that demonstrates the influence of the haiku. The image of the red wheelbarrow, on which, as the poem reads, "so much depends" visually, is so vivid that it could almost be framed and hung on the wall as a painting. The rhythm is slightly less Japanese, but the picture that is created is very much in line with haiku.

This poem is so visual that the reader feels as if standing in a museum, staring at an oil painting. The first line focuses on the brightest color, the red of the wheelbarrow. Added

to this image is the simply stated observation that the wheelbarrow is "glazed with rain," a concise detail that further elaborates the scene with so few words that it seems understated. (Note the painting terminology in the word *glazed*, thus reinforcing the impression of this poem as a painted image.) Finally, the lustrous, red wheelbarrow is situated near white chickens, which were at first unseen but now stand out, their whiteness exaggerated in contrast to the color red. What, if any, meaning Williams intended in this poem is practically unimportant. However, as a poem of meditation, which is one of the reasons that the Japanese haiku is written, this poem has excelled. When read for purely imagist terms, this poem is still a prizewinner. Who could read this poem and not take with them an extremely vivid, focused image impressed upon their minds?

The imagist manifesto wanted the poets to create images rather than to moralize or preach as many of their poetic Victorian predecessors had done. It also wanted poets to minimize their language. It is no wonder that they were attracted to and influenced by the Japanese haiku, which had been perfected many hundreds of years before them. The Imagism movement was short, and most of the poets who were involved in the movement quickly passed either into obscurity or moved on to create different forms of poetry. However, despite the brevity of their involvement, they left an indelible mark on poetry of the English language by introducing the form and facility of haiku to American and British audiences.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on Imagism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #3

Lexicon of beautiful is elastic, but
walla-walla not yet poetically possible.
□T. E. Hulme, "Notes onLanguage and Style"

For a long time, supported both by Eliot's remark that the Imagists were the *point de repère* of modern poetry and by anthologists of Imagist verse, literary historians took the "modernism" of that English school as given. William Pratt, anthologizing Imagist poems in 1963, adopted Eliot's line: they wrote, he said, "the first 'modern' poems in English." Peter Jones, presenting them anew for Penguin ten years later, said that their ideas "still lie at the centre of our poetic practice." The Imagists themselves, of course, made "modernism" a key element in their platform, and they defined it largely as reaction. T. E. Hulme dismissed virtually the whole of the last century when he named Henley as the single English poet who was "perhaps" a worthwhile model for what he wanted to do, and Richard Aldington voiced a common view with uncommon frankness when he said that "the majority of the poetry of the last century had nothing to do with life and very little to do with poetry . . . except for Browning and a little of Swinburne there was no energy which was not bombast, no rendering of life without an Anglican moral, no aesthetic without aesthetic cant" and when he acknowledged that he was "out to destroy . . . to a certain extent" the reputations of Shelley and Tennyson.

The outpost the Imagists established, however, was nothing like so securely held as historians were for so long willing to believe. Like Murry and Mansfield in *Rhythm*, or the Sitwells and Huxley in *Wheels*, the Imagists named their "modernism" before they knew what it was. Their poetics gather borrowed materials into uneasy equilibrium, and if, as Peter Jones says, we are sometimes struck by the differences between their theories and their practice, that is partly because the materials they borrowed were not always compatible with one another. They did not, however, merely "rummage among a variety of sources," and they were not merely "muddled." They articulated precisely, in both their theories and their poetry, the central conflicts of modern verse. In their theories, they attempted to recover the nineteenth-century synthesis, the accommodating double emphasis of "The School of Giorgione"; in their poetry, they struggled for sincerity, as Hulme defined it: "Each age must have its own special form of expression," he wrote, "and any period that deliberately goes out of it is an age of insincerity." On most important matters, however, the Imagists looked resolutely in two clearly defined and opposed directions: they began by imitating the very models they thought they should reject; they constructed a theory that is based on mutually hostile positions; they cultivated influences that pushed their poetry toward antithetical ideals. These conflicts do not make Imagism any less significant a workshop for modernism□on the contrary, they demonstrate the difficulty of the enterprise and underline the significance of what was achieved□but they do account for the Imagists' failure to accomplish at a stroke what they took to be their chief task, "the reform of poetic style and, above all . . . the assimilation by poetry of modern thought and the complex modern mind." When the Imagists confronted what they came to see as their most important subject matter, the life of great cities, they were paralyzed by their selfcontradictions. Aldington's

"Xenophilometropolitania," which appeared in the *Egoist* in January, 1914, cover the conflicts with parody, but the "Strange Love," the "foreign" objects of this oddly amorous poetry, emerged as a central problem for the Imagist poets. Aldington's assertion that his "Metropolitania" were "penultimate poetry" was not entirely whimsical.

In all of this, Baudelaire is deeply implicated. He is an aspect of each of the Imagist antitheses□ a part of their parentage, an affiliate of their theoretical dilemmas, a model for their precisely defined "modernism." In their work it is possible to observe both the process of his modernizing in England and some of its causes. Moreover, in an account of Baudelaire's shifting English identity, the Imagists are crucial: they redid some of the critical work of Swinburne and Pater, importing massively from modern French writers and so reversing once again the notion that the French could be ignored; they devised a literary classicism which turned the attention of English writers back beyond Mallarmé and Verlaine to the originating double visage of Baudelaire, who carried, as Valéry was to write some time later, his own critic within him; and they articulated a problem for "modernism" that made him seem, inevitably, "the greatest exemplar in *modern* poetry in any language," as Eliot would put it years later, when all of this Imagist activity had subsided into history.

The Imagists' transactions with French poetry in general and with Baudelaire in particular reflect their characteristic self-contradiction. On the one hand, they placed the French at the heart of their reforming modernism, and for them poets from Villon to Remy de Gourmont represented escape from what they saw as all of that English staleness. But, on the other hand, in rejecting the English mainstream, the Imagists drew heavily on the countertradition: their approach to the French was shaped precisely by their English predecessors, and what they sought from their French models was often what had already been domesticated. Although in their later work the Baudelaire who is recognizable as a contributing voice is also recognizably the figure who speaks in *The Waste Land*, in their earlier work he echoes from the 'nineties.

There were powerful reasons for the Imagists' imitations of their predecessors, of course. The poets of the later nineteenth century had neatly prefigured the Imagists' major concerns, proffering the lyric as a corrective to the long Victorian narrative, seeking to purge the language, focussing on "intense" moments, and emphasizing sensation and individuality. Symons's concern for a "revolt from ready-made impressions and conclusions, a revolt from the ready-made of language, from the bondage of traditional form, of a form become rigid," for instance, could settle with smooth consistency into Hulme's "Notes on Language and Style." After the noise of Imagism's opening battles had stilled, its blood relation to the later nineteenth century became clear to some of its members. Pound wrote in 1928 of the "Rapports fr. > eng. via Arthur Symons etc. 1890 Baudelaire, Verlaine, etc." and John Gould Fletcher confessed in 1937 that he and Amy Lowell had agreed from the beginning that there

> was nothing . . . particularly new about imagism. It was but a more lyrical, a saner and more intelligible, development of the aesthetic theories of the English

Pre-Raphaelite poets, the Parnassians and the symbolists in France.

There *was* something new in Imagism, however, and Harold Monro more accurately described its relationship to the nineteenth century: "We in the twentieth century," he wrote, "are on the treetops of the poetic growths represented by the Pre- Raphaelites and the 'Nineties."

T. E. Hulme, who so immoderately dismissed almost all of his English predecessors, was by no means oblivious to complexity and contradiction in the process of literary reform. He said that he had "no reverence for tradition" and that he "started from a standpoint of extreme modernism," but, like Pater, he was fascinated by this fact of transition itself. "Wonder," he said in the conclusion of his essay on "Romanticism and Classicism," "can only be the attitude of a man passing from one stage to another." Like a belated Gautier, delivering a luxurious account of the decomposed language of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Hulme adopts a violent figure of decay (adding to it the brass knuckles of his misogyny) to represent the present stage in the history of poetic form: "The carcass is dead," he writes, "and all the flies are upon it. Imitative poetry springs up like weeds, and women whimper and whine of you and I alas, and roses, roses all the way. It becomes the expression of sentimentality rather than of virile thought." But Hulme insisted at the same time on the limitations imposed by inheritance: "Just as physically you are not born that abstract entity, man," he wrote, "but the child of particular parents, so you are in matters of literary judgment." He observed a similar lag in the development of poetic expression: it was one thing to be in revolt, he suggested, and quite another to produce a new order:

> What happens, I take it, is something of this kind: a certain change of direction takes place which begins negatively with a feeling of dissatisfaction with and reaction against existing art. But the new tendency, admitting that it exists, cannot at once find its own appropriate expression. But although the artist feels that he must have done with contemporary means of expression, yet a new and more fitting method is not easily created. Expression is by no means a natural thing. It is an unnatural, artificial and, as it were, external thing which a man has to install himself in before he can manipulate it. . . A man has first to obtain a foothold in this, so to speak, alien and external world of material expression, at a point near to the one he is making for. He has to utilise some already existing method of expression, and work from that to the one that expresses his own personal conception more accurately and naturally.

For most of the Imagists, the point closest to the one they were making for was the poetry of the 'nineties. Most of them had, after all, grown up on the products of the

Aesthetic Movement. Aldington began his career by reading Wilde, whose voice echoes frequently in his poetry, and he conceived for him in youth an admiration he never lost, even though he laced it later with resentment. He edited selections from Wilde and from Pater, and as late as 1950 he produced an anthology of writings of the Aesthetes. Pound's modernism was similarly based, and Aldington complained about that when he reviewed his contributions to *Blast*: "It is not that one wants Mr. Pound to repeat his Provençal feats," he wrote, "to echo the 'nineties□he has done that too much already." Although he always knew what was the last word in Paris, F. S. Flint shaped his own verse to the pattern of the recent English past; and the early work of John Gould Fletcher is devoted exclusively to what Eliot later scorned as the last fashion but one.

Fletcher was not one of the earliest Imagists, but by the time of the *Egoist*'s special number on Imagism, on 1 May 1915, he had established his credentials. In the special number, he reviewed the poems of Amy Lowell, praisingly of course, and his own poems in turn were reviewed by Ferris Greenslet, Amy Lowell's publisher, who found them "in the highest degree vivid, original, and provocative." Pound, too, reviewed Fletcher's early poems, in *The New Freewoman*: he found in them promise of great talent and an admirable French influence, and he urged Harriet Monroe to publish him in *Poetry*. Fletcher continued for some time to enjoy the reputation of an *avant-gardist*: his poems appeared in *The Chapbook* and *Coterie*; Eliot printed his work in *The Criterion*; and the whole of *The Chapbook* for May 1920 was given over to his article on "Some Contemporary American Poets." "In England," says a summary of his life, "he was a leader of the Imagists."

Yet, at this stage in his career, Fletcher's "modernism" was a wholly reflected light. His early poems exemplify the inheritance that was the Imagists' first expression and they identify some of the ways in which Baudelaire was an element in that. Glenn Hughes writes that Fletcher's interest in "the new French poetry, particularly in its wilder manifestations," developed after his arrival in England, but, in fact, Fletcher, like Eliot, encountered modern French poetry while he was at Harvard, as a consequence of reading the later nineteenthcentury English poets. A year after experiencing what he calls in his memoirs "the heady and passing intoxication of Swinburne, Rossetti, and the poets of the nineties," he came upon Symons and so learned of Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, who "held me for unforgettable hours." Baudelaire, Gautier, and Flaubert, translations of whose work he found not in the Harvard Union but in the Boston Public Library, became his models: these could be "read and reread for the sake of their perfect craftsmanship alone, their supreme aesthetic delight, rather than for their social value or for any message of importance they may speak to mankind." In Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, Gautier's *Emaux et Camées*, and "in Baudelaire's incomparable *Fleurs du Mal*," Fletcher found "a world of intense aesthetic sensation." When he came to England in 1913, three years after discovering these poets, he found himself in what now appeared to be the mainstream. "I had rushed headlong via English romanticism and French symbolism into modernity," he remembered.

Shortly after he arrived in London, Fletcher published his first five volumes of verse. These identify his own point of departure. They are virtually handbooks of "baudelairism." Fletcher and Squire, who were to take up opposite sides in the poetic

wars of the early twentieth century, set out, though in different countries, from the same texts. Fletcher's books—*Fire and Wine Fool's Gold*, *The Book of Nature*, *The Dominant City* (1911-1912) and *Visions of the Evening*—are enthusiastically and openly derivative. They make *his* tradition their most prominent feature. *Fool's Gold* is dedicated to "Mes 'Poetes [sic] Maudits'" and *The Dominant City* to "The French Poets of To-Day." *Visions of the Evening*, which announces that its author is "a symbol of perverse art," opens with a poem dedicated "To The Immortal Memory of Charles Baudelaire." It takes its imagery and themes from Swinburne:

Baudelaire, green flower that sways
Over the morass of misery
Painfully, for days on days,
Till it falls, without a sigh.

Les Fleurs du Mal are a "clarion call, / To the Judgment held on high." The emotional temperature in these poems is elevated, and several of them—"Blasphemy," "Sin," "Revolt," "Midnight Prayer," "The Descent into Hell"—manifest their ancestry in their very titles: it was of course not Fletcher, but Baudelaire, who had become "a symbol of perverse art." And for Fletcher, just after he arrived in London, as for Symons, until the end of his life, Baudelaire, the perverse, *was* the modern poet. When, in *The Dominant City*, Fletcher writes, "Last night I lay disgusted, sick at heart, / Beside a sodden woman of the street: / Who drowsed, oblivious of the dreadful mart, / Her outraged body and her blistered feet," he is reviving the vocabulary and the iconography of "Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse juive," the thirty-second poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, to which the young Squire had been intensely attracted, which he had translated, and which he had subsequently rejected, in middle-aged embarrassment.

Fletcher, like Squire, withdrew his earliest volumes from circulation shortly after they had been published, and so he extended the list of English "Baudelairean" books that had retreated from the public gaze. The books, however, index a well-established convention of Baudelaire borrowings, and what is most important about them in the present context is that their precisely derivative character passed unnoticed by some of Fletcher's most innovating contemporaries. Pound took pains to point out that Fletcher was above all not an imitator: he had faults, Pound said, but these at least were "mostly his own" and they gained him "such distinction as belongs to a man who dares to have his own faults, who prefers his own to those of anyone else." He was, Pound insisted, a man of his time: "I do not think Mr. Fletcher is an imitator, he is influenced, if you like, as all the younger Frenchmen are influenced. If you ask south of the channel *à quoi rêvent les jeunes gens?* you might find that their reveries are not unlike those of Mr. Fletcher."

A similar retrospective rebellion appears in the poems of F. S. Flint, and it is, like Fletcher's, precisely rooted. More than any other Imagist, Flint held the French to be the touchstone of modernity; more than any other Englishman, he was in touch with the French modernists. His works commanded the highest respect of his contemporaries. The Poetry Bookshop published his *Cadences* and advertised his work alongside that of Aldington and Harold Monro; Amy Lowell's Imagist anthologies gave him more space than any other poet save Aldington; *The Egoist*, *The Anglo-French Review*, *The English*

Review, *The New Age*, and *Poetry and Drama* published his poems. May Sinclair thought that *Otherworld Cadences* was a landmark in the development of modern poetry; Ford Madox Hueffer found Flint's poems more compelling than those of any other Imagist; and Harold Monro wrote that his sincerity "of thought, originality of mind, and fertility of imagination make his work important to the student of modern poetry."

But Flint's poems, too, like Fletcher's, are striving to be born. "Yet still we are troubled and torn," he might have said with Dowson, "By ennui, spleen and regret." The world of his poems is often a "mephitic hell of dullness and stagnation," and he frequently seeks to convey a familiar, tormenting *ennui* in figures of enclosure, paralysis, rain, decay, débris, and death. The stock of images comes to him from Baudelaire's *spleen* poems, which document the settling in of solipsism, the imprisonment of the mind. "Silence sings all around me;" Flint writes. "My head is bound with a band; / Outside in the street, a few footsteps; / A clock strikes the hour." The central formal feature of Flint's poetic thought, a characteristic contrast between the deathly solitude of the isolated poet and a dreamed, paradisal escape, comes from the same source, and Flint, like Baudelaire, makes the contrast underline the bitterness of the poet's real circumstances. But while Baudelaire uses it to expose the double nature of the imagination, which turns the poet into a "matelot ivrogne, inventeur d'Amériques / Dont le mirage rend le gouffre plus amer," Flint makes it serve the purposes of his social protest, his anguished attack on what Robert Graves, discussing Aldington, called "the dreariness, obscenity and standardisation . . . [of] the present structure of society." Flint's ironically titled "Unreality," for instance, pits his "dream" ("bloom on the bramble and the wild rose") against the "reality" (a "dull, drab room, in a drab, noisy street") of a degraded world; and his "Once in Autumn," which echoes in its opening line the first stanza of "Une Charogne," establishes a similar contrast for a similar, bitterly critical, effect.

What Richard Aldington took from his predecessors an idea of the beautiful and an attitude toward the relationship of the poet to society confirmed him in an idea of aesthetic isolation. He identified himself explicitly with the "aesthetes," as he called them, and throughout his career he defended their causes. He saw Dowson as a heroic example of the "sensitive, almost over-sensitive type of artist" that society cannot tolerate; he attacked "commercial democracy" for its imperviousness to beauty; and he frequently defended poetry against the moralists. "When you find a man whole-heartedly condemning generally every one from Verlaine to Guy-Charles Cros," he wrote, "you can bet your life that that man is an ignoramus who is concealing his ignorance under that easiest of all poses moral indignation." Often Aldington's early poems show their ancestry proudly. His "Happiness," which is dedicated to "F.S.F.," invokes Dowson in its enumeration of the benefits especially reserved for poets, and his famous "Evening," which is frequently cited as an example of the small perfection sought by the Imagists, borrows its central image of the moon "With a rag of gauze about her loins" from Wilde's "Fuite de la Lune." His overriding early theme is that of lost beauty, his dominant tone is lament. Both come to him, filtered through the 'nineties, from Baudelaire and Gautier. In "Beauty Thou Hast Hurt Me Overmuch," for instance, Aldington takes up the question of "Hymne à la Beauté," and he replies with the answer of "La Beauté" (both of which are quoted above. Aldington's borrowings are pointed:

Where wert thou born
O thou woe
That consumest my life?
Whither comest thou?
Toothed wind of the seas,
No man knows thy beginning.
As a bird with strong claws
Thou woundest me
O beautiful sorrow.

That borrowed, cruel, Baudelairean beauty was part of Aldington's *English* inheritance.

Although the Imagists may have written the first "modern" poems in English, then, the "already existing method of expression" that they "utilized," as Hulme put it, their own *point de repère*, was the poetry of the 'nineties. Their beginnings constituted for them a limitation they could not ignore: what they derived from the 'nineties bound them to a paralyzing ideal of artistic isolation and an outworn convention of the beautiful.

The Imagists' earliest sympathies comprise one element in what came to be their modernist dilemma. Their theories added another. In their attempts to gain a foothold in the "alien and external world of material expression," they became uncommonly theoretical: they are remembered more for their "Rules" than for their verse. Their theories, however, failed in coherence. The Imagists worked earnestly in two directions: Flint was proposing an orthodox, intensely romantic symbolism, a mystical view of poetry which was compatible with the oriental and Greek influences at work in the Imagist group; at the same time, Hulme was arguing for a "classicism," which, while it leaned heavily on French symbolism for some of its terms, was in effect a new realism, a poetic positivism fundamentally at odds with the views Flint had derived from Mallarmé. Imagist theory was the marriage of those two views: "Image from T.E.H.; ism from August, 1912, number of The Poetry Review," Flint wrote in the margin of Eliot's copy of René Taupin's study of the movement. But the theory was a miracle of contradiction, and the strain of its internal conflicts shows in the poetry. Of the first Imagists, only Pound, who came down solidly on the side of "the prose tradition," and H.D., who opted wholeheartedly for the pure poetry, were able to resolve them. In Imagist theory, the double focus of Pater dissolves into mutually excluding viewpoints: the nineteenth- century synthesis fails. But in articulating those conflicts or problems in poetry, the Imagists created a context in which Baudelaire seemed more modern, more usefully a model for modernists, than his great symbolist successors.

Source: Patricia Clements, "The Imagists," in *Baudelaire and the English Tradition*, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 260-99.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay excerpt, Perkins examines Pound's and Addington's definitions of Imagism, and looks at representative Imagist poetry.

Critical Essay #5

The first public statement of Imagist principles was that printed by *Poetry* in March 1913. Written by Pound, the statement was signed by Flint, who said he had obtained the three-fold program by interviewing an Imagiste:

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

The list illustrates that so far as doctrine was concerned, Imagisme, as Pound conceived it, was not so much a special type of poetry as a name for whatever he had learned (from Hulme, Hueffer, Yeats, and others; see Chapter 20) about "HOW TO WRITE" since coming to London in 1908. He was in the habit of scribbling such recipes. In 1916, for example, "the whole art" of poetry was divided (with no reference to Imagisme) into:

a. concision, or style, or saying what you mean in the fewest and clearest words.
b. the actual necessity for creating or constructing something; of presenting an image, or enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader.

The historical importance of Imagism, in other words, does not lie in the formulation of a poetic doctrine, for Pound had developed his ideas with no reference to Imagism and continued to hold them after he disowned the movement. The importance was, rather, the extent to which the name, movement, and attendant controversies caused these values to be effectively disseminated.

So far as Pound endowed Imagism with a program distinct from his principles of effective writing in general, it must be sought in the special role assigned to the "image." Pound defined his key term only vaguely. An image is, he said in the same issue of *Poetry*, "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works." Whatever else the "doctrine of the image" might include was not to be published, readers were told, for "it does not concern the public and would provoke useless discussion."

The March 1913 issue contained further admonishments from Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," which helped interpret the program: for example, "Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something"; "Go in fear of abstractions"; "Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his

attention from the movement"; "Don't be 'viewy'—leave that to the writers of pretty little philosophic essays"; "Don't chop your stuff into separate *iambs*." Such tips were admirably practical, and the offhand phrasing enhanced their authority.

In June 1914 in *The Egoist* Aldington again explained what Imagism was, but the most influential single statement produced in the whole course of the movement was his Preface to the Imagist anthology for 1915. It listed six points, "the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature":

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word.

2. To create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in freeverse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.

4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

The statement was directed against undemanding techniques and against conventional, though not necessarily conservative attitudes. Instead of many adjectives and

statements, there would be an image rendered in concentrated, exact, idiomatic speech. Instead, for example, of the looseness of Masefield's "The West Wind"□

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of bird's
cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown
hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils□

there would be Aldington's "New Love":

She has new leaves
After her dead flowers,
Like the little almond-tree
Which the frost hurt.

As opposed to frequent demands at this time for a specifically contemporary subject matter, Aldington implicitly defended the "Hellenism" of himself and H.D. by invoking the poet's right to "absolute freedom in the choice of subject," a principle to which all would-be Modernists subscribed. Against the expectation that poetry would be metrical, he adopted a point of view that legitimized free verse without decrying meters. Whether verse was traditional or free, there should be "new rhythms" as the expression of "new" and individual moods.

Against the poets and poetic habits Aldington implicitly criticized, his points were effectively made. On the other hand, though this Preface was so strongly influenced by Pound that it seemed mainly a restatement of his views, one finds, if one compares it with Pound's earlier statement, that a vulgarization has set in. "Concentration," the "*exact* word," and "hard and clear" style do not impose quite so severe a standard as Pound's second article, "To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation" (and this was the essential article in Pound's opinion). Moreover, although Pound was probably not quite sure what he meant by an "Image," he thought of it as a "complex" concretely presented. In Aldington's Preface the concept of the Image is wavering toward a much simpler notion, that of a clear, quick rendering of particulars without commentary. Imagist poems of this kind would of course be much easier to write.

The attacks on Imagism that followed in 1915 raised only two important issues. The controversy over free verse□is it poetry?□was discussed in Chapter 14. Secondly, it was immediately pointed out that Imagist successes could only be smallscale. As Conrad Aiken put it, the Imagists

give us frail pictures□whiffs of windy beaches,
marshes, meadows, city streets, disheveled leaves;
pictures pleasant and suggestive enough. But seldom
is any of them more than a nice description, coolly

sensuous, a rustle to the ear, a ripple to the eye. Of organic movement there is practically none.

One could not write a long Imagist poem. Quite apart from particular issues, however, controversy gradually caused the doctrine of Imagism to become less definite. For the battle on behalf of Imagism was fought by Amy Lowell. Since her temperament was not ideological but political, she compromised doctrine, like many another politician, in order to prevail in the field. In *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* she characterized the Imagist principles as "Simplicity and directness of speech; subtlety and beauty of rhythms; individualistic freedom of idea; clearness and vividness of presentation; and concentration." With such generalities no one could quarrel, but neither could anyone be arrested by them, as poets had been by Pound's statement in *Poetry* four years before.

Critical Essay #6

Once the Imagist poem was established as a type, it was written occasionally by many poets who were not members of the original Imagist group. Familiar instances are Sandburg's "Fog" and Williams' "El Hombre." Many other poets, such as Marianne Moore, e.e. cummings, and Archibald MacLeish, were strongly influenced by Imagist principles and style, even though they did not write specifically Imagist poems. Because the poems of T. E. Hulme were the first examples of Imagism offered to the world (by Pound in October 1912), his "Autumn" may be used to exemplify the mode:

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.

The poem was probably written in conscious contrast with Shelley's famous "To the Moon," for Shelley's poem also contrasts the moon to the stars and thinks about companionability or the lack of it:

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,□
And ever-changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Whether or not Hulme recalled Shelley, his verses are anti-Romantic. Within the Romantic tradition to view the cold and starry heavens in autumn would predictably evoke feelings of melan- choly, loneliness, and death. If such feelings are present here, it is only in a complex, indirect, and controlled way. Hulme's "red-faced farmer," unlike Shelley's pale moon, seems well fed, healthy, comfortable, and neighborly, and is humorously regarded. What is conveyed by the poem is not, as with Shelley, a comparison that projects the poet's "moan" (as Hulme would have put it) into the moon but a comparison in altogether unexpected terms. If we ask what is communicated in Shelley's poem, "the poet's feeling of loneliness" would be an inadequate, though not incorrect generalization. In the case of Hulme's poem, the "meaning" cannot be conveyed by a generalization.

Another modal poem, often cited, was H.D.'s "Oread":

Whirl up, sea□
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines

On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.

The perception of the sea as a pine and fir forest is fresh and apt; the cadenced lines enact an emotional transition; the effect is complex, immediate, and made wholly by concrete means; the poet avoids discursive or generalizing comment. As a final example we may turn to MacLeish's "Ars Poetica," which illustrates much that the Imagist movement taught other poets. A poem, MacLeish writes, should be "palpable and mute"; it should not tell a "history of grief" at length but should evoke it through concrete particulars:

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf
For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea□
A poem should not mean
But be.

Source: David Perkins, "Imagism," in *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*, Belknap Press, 1976, pp. 329-47.

Adaptations

Ezra Pound Reads is an audio tape that contains Pound reading several of his "Cantos," as well as his poems "The Gypsy" and "The Exile's Letter." The tape is available from Harper Audio.

There are several interesting websites that contain biographical information, as well as some of the poems, of imagist poets. These include: http://www.americanpoems.com with poems by Doolittle; http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/ poets/m_r/pound/bio.htm with an explanation of some of Pound's works; http://www.poets.org with some of Pound's poems; http://www. english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/g_l/amylowell/ life.htm with background information on Amy Lowell.

Topics for Further Study

The controversy over what constitutes a poem remains unsolved. Research the topic of free verse (or *vers libre*). Consider including a historical perspective, the differences in various definitions and proposed applications of this style, as well as aspects of the controversy of the prose poem.

Both Amy Lowell and Hilda Doolittle were involved in lesbian relationships. Study their poetry and compare how they handled these issues in their writing. You might also want to read some of their prose to give you a fuller background on this issue. For a more complex paper, you could include information on the social implications of lesbianism during the time frame of their relationships. You might also want to read some thoughts on the subject by Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf, two other writers around the same time period who also dealt with issues stemming from homosexuality.

The Greek poet Sappho greatly influenced Hilda Doolittle's writing. Develop as concise a biography as possible about Sappho from the limited information available. Research her poetry to discover how Doolittle's writing reflects upon it; then, using examples from both women, compare specific poems.

Japanese haiku was a major influence on imagist poetry. Read some of the poetry of Matsuo Basho, then try to write some of your own haiku. Include up to five of your haiku in a paper that explores Basho's life and works.

F. S. Flint wrote very moving war poetry. Research other poets or other writers of prose who spoke of their war experiences. You may want to choose a different writer for each major war, such as World War II, the Korean War, the War in Vietnam, or even a war from ancient times. Compare their experiences.

Imagism marked the beginning of the modernist movement in literature and in other art forms. How did Modernism affect other arts such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and music? What were the drastic changes from the romantic or Victorian age to Modernism? Or you might want to switch perspectives and show how Modernism and the postmodern world of art stand in contrast.

Compare and Contrast

Early Twentieth Century: Women win the right to vote after a long period of political activism in both Britain and in the United States.

Middle Twentieth Century: Gloria Steinman, Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, and Betty Friedan join forces to establish the National Women's Political Caucus, encouraging women to use their political power to gain equal rights. **Today:** Although proposed at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Equal Rights Amendment has failed to be ratified in a majority of state legislatures in the United States.

Early Twentieth Century: China and Japan open their cultural doors to the West, influencing Western literature with various forms of classical Asian poetry.

Middle Twentieth Century: After the musical group the Beatles are influenced by the Eastern practice of meditation, Asian spiritual practices such as Buddhism spread across the United States.

Today: The Japanese economy reaches its highest point as Japanese cars and electronic devices flood the U.S. markets.

Early Twentieth Century: Over 57,000 American troops are killed in World War I.

Middle Twentieth Century: Over 55,000 American troops are killed in World War II; over 33,000 troops are killed in Korea; over 58,000 are killed in Vietnam.

Today: Over 300 troops are killed in the Gulf War. America's "War on Terrorism" follows the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center in New York, where more than 3,000 were killed or remain missing.

What Do I Read Next?

Imagist Poem, edited by William Pratt and revised in 2001, is an expanded anthology of imagist poetry first published in the 1960s. This collection is a good place to start for getting to know and understand imagist poetry.

A comprehensive collection of Japanese haiku from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century can be found in *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, and Issa* (1995), edited by Robert Hass. Basho, Buson, and Issa are the most proficient poets of haiku. This anthology contains three hundred of their poems.

The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s (1993), by Christine Bolt, offers an extensive historical perspective of the women's rights movement seen through the more modern vision of feminism. This book offers a good understanding of the environment in which the men and women of Imagism were writing.

Marjorie Perloff, a professor of comparative literature, has spent her professional career fighting for inclusion of a broader range of literary works in the list of books that are usually taught on college campuses. In her *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric*, she discusses poems by authors who have often been ignored. In this book, she includes Doolittle and Fletcher, as well as the more well-known poets associated with Imagism, such as Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence.

The Lost Voices of World War I: An International Anthology of Writers, Poets, and Playwrights (1989), edited by Tim Cross, includes the poems of T. E. Hulme, the man most responsible for creating the philosophical foundation of Imagism. Hulme, who wrote very few poems in his lifetime, died in World War I, as did most of the authors included in this collection.

British Poets of the Great War (1988), by Fred D. Crawford, contains a chapter on the imagists. Crawford offers a literary background for the movement and discusses the imagist poets and their poems.

Further Study

Bergson, Henri, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by T. E. Hulme, Liberal Arts Press, 1949.

Hulme is credited with creating the initial philosophy behind the Imagism movement. His inspiration came from two sources, the symbolist poets in France and Bergson's metaphysics philosophy. This could be considered the book that started it all.

Carpenter, Humphrey, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound*, Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

After meeting with T. E. Hulme, Pound formulated Hulme's ideas and organized the Imagism movement around them. Although Pound's poetry is not totally representative of the imagist tenets, his writing was influenced by the movement that he started. As one of the most noted American poets, the reading of his life story offers an interesting background for the study of American poetry.

De Chasca, Edmund S., *John Gould Fletcher and Imagism*, University of Missouri Press, 1978.

De Chasca studies Fletcher's poetry and offers his interpretations and criticisms of this American imagist poet.

Doolittle, Hilda, *HERmione*, W. W. Norton and Company, 1981.

This is a semi-autobiographical novel about Doolittle's life during her twenties. At this time she was torn between old definitions of herself and her newfound world that included living in a foreign land, working with very powerful poets, and experimenting with sexuality. In this work, she discusses her relationship with Ezra Pound and her bisexuality and offers a vivid portrayal of her inner psychology.

Eliot, T. S., Aldous Huxley, and F. S. Flint, *Three Critical Essays on Modern English Poetry*, 1920, reprint, Folcroft Library Editions, 1974.

The word *modern* in the title of this book can not be taken at face value as it was originally written in 1920. When these three exceptional and wellrespected writers refer to modern poetry, they mean the beginning of the modernist period, which means that imagist poetry is discussed. Eliot offers a brief criticism of poetry in general; Huxley discusses the subject matter of poetry; and Flint writes about the art of writing, especially as affected by the tenets of imagism.

Healey, E. Claire, and Keith Cushman, eds., *Letters of D. H. Lawrence and Amy Lowell, 1914-1925*, Black Sparrow Press, 1985.

Lowell was the major spokesperson for the Imagism movement, and Lawrence, although not one of the major imagists, was affected by the imagist poets. Their correspondence offers the reader an inside look into their private discussions about American and British poetry at the turn of the century as well as their reflections on the movement.

Kirby-Smith, H. T., *Origins of Free Verse*, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

One of the major controversies both in Britain and in the United States concerning the Imagism movement was the discussion of the use of free verse. This book offers an overview of the use of this form and tries to answer some of the questions that free verse has aroused: can free verse be categorized? or what is a prose poem?

Quennell, Peter, *Baudelaire and the Symbolists*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954.

To better understand what Imagism was all about, it is best to comprehend the forces and influences that preceded this movement. Most of the imagist poets were heavily influenced by the French poets, and this book offers a historic perspective of some of the best of the nineteenth-century French poets and their Symbolism movement.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literary Movements for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LMfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LMfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literary Movements for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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