

Chapter 1

As regards the Lost Word, it is explained that the sun at autumn has lost its power and Nature is rendered mute, but the star of day at the spring tide resumes its vital force, and this is the recovery of the Word, when Nature with all her voices, speaks and sings, even as the Sons of God shouted for joy in the perfect morning of the cosmos. —A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*

I.

It is some afternoon in May, twenty-five years ago as I write here—1935 or 1936—in a high school classroom. A young teacher is reading:

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air . . .

The patience of her voice, where hope for a communion in teaching still struggled with a resignation to institutional expediencies, the reaching out of her voice to engage our care where she cared, had a sad sweet lure for me. But now, as she read the poem, something changed, became more, transformed by her sense of the poet's voice, impersonating the poet H.D.

. . . fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

To recall the poem, blunted and rounded in the heat, is to recall the first reading, and leads me back to that early summer of my sixteenth or seventeenth year. Just beyond the voice of the poem, the hum and buzz of student voices and the whirr of water sprinklers merging comes distantly from the world outside an open window.

Inside, in a room that was hers and an hour that was hers—for each period in the schedule of my school day still in those years would become a realm of expectancy for me—the poem came as an offering. It may have been a diversion or a reward after duties in our course of instruction. She had presented it as something more, a personal communication. “I have brought a poem today, not as part of your required reading,” did she say? or “not belonging to English Literature, but to my own world, a confidence, a gift, or share?” It was clear, anyway, that for her as for us, much of what we had to read was the matter of a prescribed course and not of our own explorations. We were a group set apart from the mass of those attending high school, a few by their special aptitudes, but most of us by our being the sons and daughters of college graduates, and all of our courses of study were designed to prepare us for entrance examinations for college. We were in the proving ground of the professional middle class, where we were to learn by heart the signs and passwords of that class. Not only cases and tenses, histories and zoologies, but news reports and musical appreciations and the reading of novels and poems were to become critical tests in the would-be initiate’s meeting the requirements of a cultural set.

Books had opened in childhood imaginations of other lives, dwelling in which the idea of my own life to be had taken on depths and heights, colors and figures, a ground beyond self or personality in the idea of Man. In fairy tales and in romances, old orders overthrown by the middle class lived on in the beginnings of an inner life, kings and knights long deposed by merchants and landlords, peasants and craftsmen swept aside by the Industrial Revolution, once powers and workers in the realities of the actual world passed now into the subversive realm of the unreal. In each of our histories, we were to repeat the historical victory of the Rise of Capitalism. Were there “Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,” we were schooled not to be taken in by them but to take them

in, to appreciate the poet's fancy, even as our forefathers no longer worshipped grove and fountain but exploited wood and water power as public utilities. English Lit with its reading lists, its established texts and tests, was to map in our minds the wilderness yet to be converted to our proper uses from the already developed areas of our real estate. Work by work, author by author, the right roads were paved and marked, the important sights were emphasized, the civic improvements were pointed out where the human spirit had been successfully converted to illustrate the self-respectability of civil men, and the doubtful, impulsively created areas or the adventuring tracks into back-country were deplored. If we, in turn, could be taught to appreciate, to evaluate, as we read, to improve our sensibilities in the ground of other men's passions, to taste and to regulate, to establish our estimations of worth in the marketplace, we were to win some standing in the ranks of an educated middle class as college graduates, urbane and professional, as our parents had done before us.

But there were times when Miss Keough all but confided that the way of reading required by our project was not only tedious but wronged what we read; and there were other times when—even among these things we were supposed to acquire among our cultural properties—she would present some poem or story as if it belonged not to what every well-read person must know, the matter of a public establishment, but to that earlier, atavistic, inner life of the person. Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* would be essential to our picture of English culture and society, but Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* or Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* were of a different order—the whole confidence and tone of her speaking was of an other order when she came to these works that she took as revelations of a life back of culture or society, of a life she wanted us to find. All the status of appreciation and knowing about things, of reading skillfully and remembering points that were important for tests in what you read, seemed nothing at all when compared with the alliance one's own life might make in love with other lives revealed in men's works that quickened such a sense of kinship. She would introduce certain writers, reading aloud in class or lending a book for us to read at home, with some hesitation and decision that gave the lending or reading aloud an importance in

my personal relation to her, fearfully and in that bravely, as if, were I to come to the heart of the matter of them, I would come too to the matter of this woman's heart and to my own too.

This poem "Heat," by H.D., I understood was offered so. It belonged not to the order of poems and stories that we must know all about if we were to be accomplished students. It belonged to the second order that seemed to contain a personal revelation. It was the ground for a possible deeper meeting with her. At times like this, reading to us, she had the shy confidence of a child searching out her companions, sharing with us corners of a garden that were secret or magic places, risking our blindness or rejection of the gift, bringing forward treasures or keys, taking us to see her familiar animals or friends, in order to place her life in our keeping. She was trying us, not demanding response but testing for an affinity.

"This is the fine thing"—was that part of the transformation of the reading voice? a serious regard? "This intense care that can so distinguish its feeling of thickness and pressure, this is the rare courage?" There was her admiration for the sensitivity and the intensity that the poem made available, but there was her shyness too, as if what had been disclosed in the poem touched upon a similar disclosure in herself. The voice told us that something was at issue. The way the poet H.D. admitted—let in—to her self through the poem, and then, in a double sense, admitted to the listener or reader, being almost a victim of the thickness of air, the bluntness of fruit, to let life use you like this, was not shameful but heroic. To reveal, even if it be shameful in other eyes (as crying out, "O wind, rend open the heat,"—being intense that way about trivial things like pears—threatened the composure of household, gang, school, and city or state, and was shamed, put down, as one must put away childish things), to propose the truth of what was felt, to articulate just the emotion that was most vulnerable and in need, took courage.

Courage, yes—but there was something more. This poem in itself was necessary in order for what it evoked to be kept alive as a living power. It was the sense of the necessity that what was felt be kept that filled the poet in writing. To find out feeling meant to evoke a new power in life. To feel at all challenged the course of everything

about one. To articulate the feeling, putting it forth in a poem like this, brought others into the challenge. To strengthen response was to strengthen and enlarge not only the resource but the responsibility of life ahead. It was something larger than being courageous then—a trust in living, not only to use things but to be used by them, a drive that broke through the restrictions and depressions of spirit whereby men were shaped to a conventional purpose.

Falling in love, a conversion or an obsession—these were close to what the poet knew in the poem, seeing the world in the light of a new necessity, a being in-formed. “O wind, rend open the heat, / cut apart the heat,” meant that the poet submitted her will to be shaped by what happened. A longing? Or prayer? Addressed to a natural force in a world in which inner and outer nature were one?

In the heat of the afternoon. Outside, the whirl of sprinklers, the glare, the blur of voices. Inside, from that murmur, there was a place of refuge, a silence created in our attention. Classrooms were for us—certainly for me—in high school meeting rooms. What I was to become was there for me in the presence of a few teachers, as it never had been at home, it seemed, as it never was to be later in university lecture halls until after ten years I was to return to study with Ernst Kantorowicz. Yes, there were others, but this one, this grave young woman in my adolescence, attended the possibility of a poet in me. She could be a task mistress where the preparation for college entrance exams was concerned. She had, after all, to project an authority over us. She was paid to carry out the intentions of an educational system that was devoted not to the discovery of self but to self-improvement. She must have endured, as we endured, a tedium then, but the dreary tasks of accomplishment and graduation could vanish in moments when work itself took on another meaning.

What I was to be grew in what she was. “I want to know what you will make of this,” she would say, giving me Lawrence’s *The Man Who Died* or Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* to take home with me. I was not to sum them up, not to know something about them so that I could do well in an examination, but I was to grow through them and toward them in some hidden way. What I would make of *The Man Who Died* or *The Waves* would be what I would make of myself, the course of a

life. These works were keys at once to responsive chords in myself and to the music they belonged to, to the company of a larger life, and to my work there. A larger life—*la vita nuova*, Dante had called it—may be opened to us in some such way, because we fall in love, as I surely was in love with her, discovering in a teacher that which awakened an objective for ardor. “*La gloriosa donna della mia mente*,” so Dante addresses Beatrice. It was a responsibility to glory that she touched in me.

For my teacher brought me, where I sought to find our meeting ground in these books, not to some estimate of their literary worth but to the love of a way of being that they had known. H.D., Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, had found a realm most real or most alive or most individual in their writing. Wasn't it that they intensely showed what they were? Daring the disregard or scorn of conventional readers, if they might find the regard of the true reader? What other men kept to themselves, reserving certain thoughts and feelings as private properties, these sought to reveal, not as public property, but as belonging to a community of feeling.

The intensity of my own spirit was lifted from the shame it had seemed to incur in adolescence—for intensity, in itself, in the genteel household was uncouth—lifted toward a worth, a share, a fire or flame out of a fire, that through my teacher's eyes I saw disclosed in these writers was a thing—the thing—to be loved. The ardor for the truth of what was felt and thought, the faith in passion, was a virtue, a power of man: to search out a life within life.

The thick air of adolescence, the thick air of Bakersfield, the heat of the valley town where I grew up from the age of eight until I went to college, the pervasive oppressing atmosphere everywhere of social forces seeking to govern and direct a maturation of their purposes in me, blunting the edges, pressing up, gave substance to the immediacy of the poem as she read. There was the charged most real sensual image in the poem of a feeling of my self.

She must have said something about “Imagism.” Certainly she had talked about imagism in discussing another poem—“Patterns”—by Amy Lowell. But Amy Lowell's garden had been descriptive in its appeal, leading us to picture the scene. Images there had illustrated the area of the poem, words chosen to call up visual representations, smells, and

sounds. It was not far from Keats where we had learned to observe the sensual loading in which the picture evoked by the poem was enriched. Amy Lowell was flat work, it seems now to me. It did not sound the depths.

In the poem of H.D.'s, the image stirred not only pictures from my knowledge of a like world, from the shared terms of orchard, pear, and grape at the stem, and the shimmering medium of air in the heat; but it stood too for another statement, arousing and giving a possible articulation to an inner urgency of my own to be realized, to be made good. The poem had a message, hidden to me then, that I felt but could not translate, an unconscious alliance that made for something more than a sensual response. We were directed to imagine the scene, but the actual poem involved something we almost forgot in the suggestion of pears and grapes, of air so thickened and shaped in the heat that it cunningly fitted thickness and shape of fruit so that the suggestion shaped the poem itself. The idea of this being a perfect lyric, an ecstatic, a memorably shaped, moment, drew us away from recognition of the opening and closing address of the poem that cried out for release from such perfection.

We had heard of the heat of composition or inspiration that was like a forge in which words or metal yielded to man's shapings. It was a good thing, like the heat that brought pears to their shape and ripeness. And this poem had been shaped, hammered or cut, but it had too, not perfection but the organic irregularities of being felt out from within that life forms have. It had not the regularity of an imposed system, of repeated patterns of stress and syllable, alliteration and rhyme conforming to a prescribed scheme; but its form grew, as living forms do, in the faith or feeling of its own being, transforming itself, using inheritance and environment, tones and cadences, as they happened, toward its melody. Just beyond the threshold of our untrained ears were the rhymes built up in the tone-leading of vowels and the variation of consonant groupings: "it" to "thick," "fruit" to "through," "air" to "pears," "rounds" to "plough," and the *r*, the *d*, the *p* of "rend open" to "drop" to "presses up." The short lines of the verse forming had their rhythm by the measures of changing numbers. The poem was finely conditioned, felt along the track of some inner impulse. It had form

that was H.D., as the leaves of an oak have a form that is the signature of the oak. It had form not by convention kept but by the pulse of its own event.

There was another expression we had read or heard of that was echoed in the poem: a cry that rent the air. Something about to happen that would challenge inheritance and environment. “Rend it to tatters,” H.D. asks of the wind in the poem. The address and the evoked image in their message concentrated a likewise hidden prayer of adolescence, that this intensity, this threatening to come to a conclusion, this susceptibility to be shaped, not be rounded in the oppressive thick air of home and town toward homeowner and townsman, but be broken or break forth into something yet to be known. The thickness and heat that ripened was the intensity’s own medium of life. All about one, one saw the process of the town’s shaping unruly youth into its citizens, pressing desire into the roundness of available civic enterprise, thickening the fire of the spirit into energetic figures that would be of public use. O, let my youth be rent open by some new force, the soul prayed: let a path be made, like a wind rending what cohered toward an end of energies into even, if need be, an incoherence, to free movement from its impending goal, enlarging the demand for form—

Cut the heat—
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

More than sensation then, more than impression, gave force to the image. It was not only a vivid representation of sensory data but an evocation of depth. Image in Amy Lowell’s poem had meant that words could illustrate and give mood. But in this poem “Heat,” image conveyed not only the appearance of things or the sensual feel of things and moods, but experience, the reciprocity between inner and outer realities. There was another working of the image, more than Amy Lowell proposed, back of sense and mood, partly conscious and partly unconscious. I was aware that sensual intensity in this poem of H.D.’s, like the sensual intensity in Lawrence’s work, demanded some new beginning

in life from my own intensity. Such images were more immediate and real than likenesses of seeing, hearing or smelling were. I was unaware that the poem “Heat” was the matrix of two statements in one. I did not know that this intense image of fruit, heat, and longing for a force that would break the ripening perfection, had a significant concentration for me. I could not, after all, have articulated the significant concentration of my own adolescent experience, for I did not realize that my own human life was an image, that my self was the persona of a poem in process of making, in which many levels of meaning were to be incorporated before the form of that life be realized.

The power of subtle, hidden organization, inbinding all elements to its uses, toward an early conclusion of free movements, a last judgment: such a shaping was the directive of all simple urgencies—toward the pear, toward the poem, toward the person of a man. But simple ends, direct uses of possible things, closing the opportunity in one, threatened the realization of some wholeness beyond. I thought not of the fruit of the tree but of the life of the tree, turned ring upon ring, the years gathered toward the spread of its roots and branches. I felt I must be, the world must be, something more various and full, having more of flux and experience than the immediate terms of achievement around me disclosed. Let me not come into my fulfillment until the end of all things, so the soul secretly resolved.

The poem had something to do with keeping open and unfulfilled the urgencies of life. Men hurried to satisfy ends in things, pushed their minds to make advances, right answers, accomplishments, early maturations. They contrived careers that they fully filled. They grew round and fat upon the bough in the heat that kept them where they were, and they prayed that they not fall from their success, that no wind come to break them loose.

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Yet this very poem “Heat,” I came to learn, stood in the fixed ideas of literary history as an example of a kind of early perfectionism. As it had appeared first, in *Some Imagist Poets* of 1915, it had been not a poem in itself, as anthologists came to present it, but the second part of the poem “Garden.” It was preceded then by the statement of another image, a

rose seen as if cut in rock, and by the poet's counterstatement, "If I could break you . . . if I could stir":

You are clear
O rose, cut in rock,
hard as the descent of hail.

I could scrape the colour
from the petals
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree—
I could break you.

The imagist thing in the poem, the hard "cut in rock" rose and the thick heat, contained the suggestion of a tense suspended awareness that was to be an ideal of modern sensibility in the second decade of the century and to find its expression in works of that generation in the nineteen-twenties. This experience hung upon its bough, and these poems were like moments brought to and kept in a perfection, roses, fruits or cut stones, valued for their implied discrimination. But the poet's dramatic statement of the wish to be freed from this keep of the perfect moment was not imagist, was romantic, and marred the example that readers searching for H.D. the Imagist sought in the poem. The poems most anthologists have taken, the poems that have been selected to label H.D., are few and were written in the brief period between 1912 and 1916. Even these have been mis-taken, removed from the total context of poetic experience to which they belong, for the work of these years included also "The Shrine" and "The Gift," which are not imagist but dramatic in intent, and poems like "Cities" or "The Tribute," which plead the cause of Beauty against the squalor of commerce or lament the death of young men in the war. So too, the second section of the poem "Garden" has been set apart from its original intent, to become exemplary of clarity, finish, hardness—self-containment, and to stand not as part of H.D.'s creative conscious-

ness but as an example of Imagism. The poem “Heat” now, presented by the anthologist’s picture, appears to have been written in order to capture the very image of stasis of heat and fruit that the poet longs to be shattered. But when we go back of the anthology establishment to contemporary reviews of H.D.’s *Collected Poems* in 1925, we find that Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and Edward Sapir—or, earlier, John Gould Fletcher, reviewing the volume *Sea Garden* in 1917—see her work as a whole, having its vital import beyond and even outside of the Imagist program.

It was Ezra Pound who had first scratched that word at the end of a manuscript of hers—“*H.D. Imagiste.*” Later he was to say that he had started the Imagist idea to launch the poetry of H.D. In the directives Pound drew up—the credo of 1912—the “A Few Don’ts” of 1913, included again in “A Retrospect” of 1917—the new idea of the image goes along with a new idea of poetic form, of composing in the sequence of the musical phrase, and with another idea of—“economy,” he calls it—purification of the poem. The waste of tone color and ornament is to be cleared away; abstraction, whatever diffuse suggestion, must go. It is an imperative toward perfection that haunts the aesthetic propositions of Imagism.

So too, in Pound’s idea of the image itself the perfectionist drive appears, for, though the image Pound proposes is “an intellectual and emotional complex,” the complex does not proliferate but is realized “in an instant of time.” Here, though the perfect and the complex would seem to be of different orders, Pound projects the aesthetic, even moral, suggestion of a perfected experience or epiphany: “It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.” They were working toward an intensity, a concentration of poetic force. Pound had brooded from a poem of thirty lines, he tells us, striving to render an emotion that had arisen in the sight of beautiful faces seen crowded in the Paris Metro:

Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following *hokku*-like sentence:

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

For Pound, H.D. in certain poems had realized the ideal of purity demanded; her poetic line pruned and tried toward the hardness of an utter economy exemplified “craftsmanship,” and in the address of her poems she praised the beauty of flowers, trees, stones, or grains of sand, that had been tried by the elements. She had perfected her name Hilda Doolittle too, leaving the bare initials, the essential signature that might be cut in stone. It was as Ezra Pound wanted her. That first Imagist poem, she tells us, after his reading, had been “now slashed with his creative pencil, ‘cut this out, shorten this line.’” And Pound was the first to write, when the poems of H.D.’s Lawrencian period began to appear in *The Egoist* in 1917—“The God,” “Adonis,” “Pygmalion,” “Eurydice”—that she had “spoiled the ‘few but perfect’ positions which she might have held on to.”

The definition of the image in the talk of Pound, H.D., and Aldington, in the tearoom of the British Museum in 1912, had led to the declarations of a literary movement, and it gave an advertising label to the work of new poems appearing in *The Egoist*, where Richard Aldington had become an editor in 1913, and in the United States in *Poetry*, where Harriet Monroe might be responsive, it was hoped, to Pound’s advice. After Pound’s anthology presenting the group, *Des Imagistes* of 1914, what had been a working program in poetry was fully launched as a literary fashion, and the idea of H.D.’s being the most perfect craftsman of the new Perfecti who had received that *consolamentum*, the “one image in a lifetime,” was to be a central tenet. The original proposition of the Image had harkened back to intellectual and emotional overtones of the Symbolist era even as it moved forward toward a functionalism that was in the Modernist aesthetic to be anti-Symbolist. Like Symbolism, Pound’s Imagism had been conceived as a cult of the elect in art. But with the Imagist anthologies of 1915, 1916, and 1917, edited by Amy Lowell, H.D., and Aldington, the Imagist movement became generalized and popularized. The ideas of image, composition by musical phrase, and verbal economy were let go into the lowest common denominators of impressionism, *vers libre*, and everyday speech. By 1937, twenty-five years after the birth of Imagism, all reference to the word *image*, once defined as presenting an intellectual and emotional

complex, had been dissipated, and the term had come to indicate whatever in a poem brought a picture to the mind of the reader.

It was not only in “Amygism,” as Pound dubbed the heretical popularization, that the first character of the Image as epiphany was lost, for Pound himself was to take as his project the work of small modernists whose use of the image was profoundly anti-Imagist. For T. E. Hulme, whose work had already been published by Pound at the end of the volume *Ripostes* in 1912, and often in Eliot’s poems, the image had not been the nexus of an experience but the opportunity of an expression, of a striking figure in the author’s rhetoric. Whatever else they were, the images—in Hulme’s poem “Autumn,” the ruddy moon that may be like a red-faced farmer peering over a hedge, or in Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” the evening that may be like a patient etherized upon a table—are not mythopoeic in their operation or intent, not deepening our sense of the reality of moon or of evening, but present extension of their author’s wit, personal conceits. In the work of Amy Lowell, the image was imitative of sensory appearances informed by mood, a kind of literary impressionism. The persuasive personal conceit and the sensual personal impression were what most critics and readers readily accepted as the range of the image.

The modern sensibilities of Hulme, Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis excited Pound, and he sought to identify his work with theirs, but as Lewis saw in *Time and Western Man*, Pound was “A Man in Love with the Past,” and for all his efforts to make of *The Cantos* a dynamic ideogram, *The Cantos* remain a post-Symbolist work. For Pound, as for H.D., as for Lawrence or for Williams, the image was not an invention but a numinous event in language, a showing forth of a commanding Reality in the passing personal real. Like James Joyce, they sought epiphanies. “Image,” for Pound, was carefully so set off by quotation marks and spelled with the capital. Although he would disarm us with his reference to “the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart” (the reference to Dr. Bernard Hart, Fellow of University College, London, perhaps to exorcise the thought of Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna, when speaking of the term *complex*), there is, for those readers who are wary of the context of Pound’s thought

immersed as it is in the tradition of Poetry and the Spirit of Romance, a beckoning suggestion in the “intellectual and emotional complex” of that Intellect in which man comes close to the Creative Intent, of the “*Et omniformis omnis intellectus est*” from Psellos, which remains from the beginning thematic in *The Cantos*, or of that “apprehension by means of the potential intellect,” which Dante tells us is Man’s true mode of being. “Did this ‘close ring,’ this aristocracy of emotion,” the youthful Pound writes in the essay “Psychology and Troubadours,” “evolve, out of its half memories of Hellenistic mysteries, a cult—a cult stricter, or more subtle, than that of the celibate ascetics, a cult for the purgation of the soul . . . ?” The “complex” then was a node involving not only the psyche, as that term is used by modern psychologists, but the soul, as that term is used by esoteric schools. So too, the quotation marks and the capitalization, setting the word “Image” apart, carried for the knowing reader the sense that the word had a special meaning beyond the apparent. “Image” and “Intellect” in the framework of Gnostic and neo-Platonic doctrines that haunt Pound’s cantos to the last are terms of a Reality that is cosmic and spiritual; they are terms of a visionary realism.

Reviewing H.D.’s volume *Sea Garden*, John Gould Fletcher, a fellow Imagist, wrote:

It is really about the soul, or the primal intelligence, or the *Nous*, or whatever we choose to call that link that binds us to the unseen and uncreated. . . . To penetrate H.D.’s inner meaning, it is only necessary that we approach her poetry with an open and responsive mind. . . . But this state of mind, receptive, quiescent, is also necessary if we are to understand Plotinus, or Dionysius the Areopagite, or Paracelsus, or Behmen, or Swedenborg, or Blake.

That Image and Intellect may have been in the first phase of Imagism charged with more than a literary meaning begins to be clear.

Pound in his study of Dante and in his conversations and readings with Yeats had come into what was to be a lifelong admiration of Iamblichus and Proclus, late neo-Platonists, in whose imaginations the Image had taken on powers of person and angelic being. Fletcher’s

early review of H.D. would indicate that for others too in the Imagist circle—the “School of Images” Pound calls it in his “Prefatory Note” to Hulme’s poems—for H.D. then, and for some contemporary readers of H.D.’s work, the image of the Imagists was associated with the Image, with Eidolon and Idea as they appear in Hellenistic and again in late Medieval and Renaissance speculation. “One must consider that the types which joined these cults survived, in Provence,” Pound writes in “Psychology and Troubadours”: “and survive, today—priests, maenads, and the rest—though there is in our society no provision for them.”

The very movement of the line might be a magic then, theurgic in its intent, in which the Image was specially evoked. The line was to be expressive—that was the demand of the modern aesthetic, and Pound and H.D. were acutely sensitive to the style that the age demanded; but it was also to be efficacious—it was not to express the Image but to call up its Presence, to cause it to happen. We may read H.D.’s proposal in the *Imagist Anthology* of 1915 with a gathering suspicion: “A new cadence means a new idea” takes on a special meaning when the word *idea* is colored by the poetic lore of neo-Platonic theurgy. Pound’s injunction “to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase” may not only be a departure from literary conventions but a conversion to heresies of a spiritual order. There was no thing that was not, given the proper instant in time and intent in vision, Image. There was no image that was not, properly rendered, the nexus of divine and elemental orders in the human world. Anguish and ecstasy gave presence to, and were aroused by a presence in, the natural world. Rocks and sea, thunderous surfs, gardens and orchards actually exposed the soul to the spiritual presence, flooded it with the presence—all but unbearably—and yet, at the same time, sheltered it within the presence.

“To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation”—this second commandment of Pound’s Imagist manifesto was essential in the high art that lay back of the famous rapture of H.D.’s early work, the root in practice of her lyric genius. The line of her verse grew taut, tempered to keep an edge naked in experience, tense to provide a mode in which reverberations of these presences might be heard. The image and the voice or dramatic mask provided the nexus

of a mystery in Poetry corresponding to the outer and inner worlds in which the poetess, now a priestess in the mysteries of the language, worked toward higher and finer modes of participation in a mystery in Life Itself.

The new poetry was not to be a commodity, a negotiable sensibility in literature or culture, but an instrument in a process of spirit. Pound in his Cavalcanti essay during this early period of Imagism describes such a spiritual process in the contribution of Provence to poetry:

The whole break of Provence with this world . . . is the dogma that there is some proportion between the fine thing held in the mind, and the inferior thing ready for instant consumption. . . . You deal with an interactive force: the *virtu* in short. . . . The conception of the body as perfect instrument of the increasing intelligence pervades.

We find in H.D.'s early work the evocation not only of presences of Nature but of the poet's own nature, her temper or virtue. In the poem "Toward the Piraeus" she pictures her own poetic virtue, contrasting her power with that of another who may have been—for this is one of her Lawrencean poems—D. H. Lawrence:

my own lesser, yet still somewhat fine-wrought,
fiery-tempered, delicate, over-passionate steel.

It is an image of an instrument prepared for experience that is at once the image of her physical body, her spirit, and the temperament of the verse itself. It was an image too of tension in passion that appealed to the sentiments of the modernist generation. Not the erotic sensualities of the poem "Hymen" or the intoxications of "Heliadora" came to stand for H.D.'s special quality as a poet among her admirers, but the tenseness itself, the almost frigid apprehension of the passionate that in the poem "Wash of Cold River" she had characterized as most hers, was taken as her primary attribute:

*all the sheer rapture
that I would take
to mould a clear
and frigid statue;*

We might read “carve” for “mould,” for the fiery tempered steel of the poet’s self-projection is the steel of the sculptor’s chisel, shaping the resistant stone. The art that H.D. projects is haunted by Gaudier-Brzeska’s messianic doctrines of sculptural energy and sculptural feeling that swept Pound up into his Vorticist period. Gaudier-Brzeska sought the expression of challenge and intensity that found modelling insipid. “He cut stone until its edge was like metal,” Pound tells us in his work on Gaudier: “The softness of castings displeased him and so he cut the brass direct.”

The matter is of marble, not of clay:

*rare, of pure texture,
beautiful space and line,
marble to grace
your inaccessible shrine.*

So H.D. concludes “Wash of Cold River.” Her art, and her sense of the passionate, demanded fineness of feeling, exactness, that was not soft or compliant but hard and resistant. She suggested in poems like “Sea Rose,” “Sea Lily,” “Sea Violet,” or “Pear Tree,” an exquisite sensibility, leaf and petal delicately cut, “precious,” “like flint/ on a bright stone,” “fragile as agate,” “from such a rare silver,” at once “precious,” “fragile,” “rare,” the bane of critics-to-be, and yet to be shaped only by elemental energies, by sea and wind, furrowed “with hard edge.”

Pound, too, in his Cavalcanti essay refers to the stone and the stone-cutter’s art in order to illuminate the poet’s art:

The god is inside the stone, *vacuos exercet aera morsus*. The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential and the rest ‘accidental’ in the philosophical technical sense. The shape occurs.

It is along these lines that, in “Pygmalion” (published early in 1917), H.D. presents the poet as the sculptor questioning the vitalities at work in his art beyond the mastery of the craft:

am I master of this
swirl upon swirl of light?

In the magic of the stone's being carved, the Divine and the human meet; the force of the work is interactive. That demonically inspired restless spirit of the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska haunted not only Pound but H.D., for, in the few years before his fateful death in the First World War, charged with the vision of a vortex of energies to be released in matter toward form in which the drive of his own genius might be consummated, he had had evenings too with the Aldingtons, talking on and on to pour out the message of his Vortex. Possessed by his spirit, or married to his spirit, the sculptor in H.D.'s poem works in stone and light, even as the poet works in the densities of the given meanings of words and in the aura of a gathering music, a breath informing the poem, until an image emerges in the work, working the medium until the work itself is immediate to the mind. But this "work" is both a power and, the artist begins to realize, a person. The work of art is itself a living presence in which its creator stands. Man, stone, and light, cooperate in the event. "Am I the god?" Pygmalion asks:

or does this fire carve me
for its use?

Just as there are certain events in actual life that are so charged with the information of a content that is to be realized in the maturation of the soul or form of the total lifetime, and as there are certain dreams that flood our active consciousness with the forms of unconscious, as yet unborn, facts of our identity, so, for the poet, there are poems that are prophetic of a poetry that is to be realized only in the fullness of the poet's life, as for H.D. this early poem stands as a foreknowledge, a foreacknowledgment, of the major task she is to undertake in poetry. *Ion*, her version of Euripides' drama, twenty years later, will mark the re-entry of the forces that for a moment she had seen at work toward fulfillment beyond the psyche in the advent of creative form in "Pygmalion"—of light, of heat, of fire, of stone and god. In the poetry of H.D.'s major phase, particularly in *Helen in Egypt*, the sense increases that as the artist works to achieve form he finds himself the creature of the form he thought at first to achieve. The role of the poet, his craft, is to seek out the design in the carpet, to come to know and then to

acknowledge his identity in the terms of a poetry he but belongs to. The fire is indeed to carve the poet for its use.

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As we come into the fullness of our sense of a life work, it is as if we were recovering or rescuing the import of what had always been there. We make good our earliest readings, make real what even we failed to see present at the time, transforming the events of our earlier life in a process of realizing what our work and life comes to mean. Creating meaning we create work and life, and, in turn, for meaning is the matter of the increment of human experience which we come to recognize in the language, we unite our individuality with a vision of its communal identity.

Over thirty years, my sense of that first reading of “Heat” has grown along lines of recognition and discovery of affinities to inform my return to those lines. Unconscious of the content that made for that imprint and awakened in me the sense of a self-revelation or life-revelation in the pursuit of Poetry, I was conscious only of my excitement in the inspiration—the new breath in language—and of a vocation. Whatever my abilities, it was here that I had been called to work. Beyond that, I had no more information than the uninformed account of what Imagism was as it was taught in literature classes of the late nineteen-thirties, where I came to learn that Amy Lowell’s “Patterns,” Pound’s “Metro,” Flint’s “Swan,” Joyce’s “I hear an army charging upon the land,” and this poem “Heat” of H.D.’s were examples of Imagism. Their titles come in a list as if learned by rote. They had become set in the textbooks and classrooms of the late nineteen-thirties from the anthologies and arguments of the Imagist period itself. In the literary establishment Eliot had won the day—he had, indeed, designed that literary establishment in his essays; and H.D., along with Lawrence and even Pound (for Eliot had dismissed from serious consideration the “Religio” and the later Confucian conversion), belonged with those who had departed from what reasonable men consider of concern and had lusted after strange gods. Eliot had the charge of bringing his own poetic imagination into the circumscription of a Christian orthodoxy; but even in literary ranks where Eliot’s own god was considered strange,

Imagism was dismissed as if it were a false religion. The Imagist fallacy was not an inherent weakness but a danger. In textbooks on poetry, the schoolmasters of the rationalist orthodoxy strove to establish Imagism as an aberration, a kind of insanity of the poem, in which imagery, which properly was a means in the poet's presentation of his picture, became an end, as if image carried a meaning in itself.

There is a crucial difference between the doctrine of the Image where Poetry itself is taken to be a primary ground of experience and meaning in life, and the image which is taken as a fashion in the literary world. With H.D.'s "Heat" or with Joyce's "I hear an army charging upon the land," I cannot separate the poem from its operation as prophecy or prayer in the shaping of my own life, the efficacy of the poem to awaken depths in me. The key lies in a rhetoric which is magic in its intent and not literary. This is its heresy.

Pound had presented his Imagist manifesto as an attack on rhetoric. He had sought a cure of tongues in the discipline of the eye, some restraint that would keep words grounded in meaning. The pomp of Milton or the sensual indulgences of Swinburne had led men to take effect and enthusiasm as in themselves poetic—the more effect, the more enthusiasm, the more poetic. There had been an inflation of language. Protesting against the "prolix" and "verbose," against words "shoveled in to fill a metric pattern or to complete the noise of a rhyme-sound," against "decorative vocabulary," Pound's insistence that there be "absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation" was the expression in poetics not only of a modern aesthetic demand for the functional but also of a demand that was moral and economic. If we think of Pound's later concern for a monetary credit that is grounded in an actual productive order, "the growing grass that can nourish the living sheep," and his outrage at the great swindling of confidence represented by usury, commodity speculation, money changing, and inflation, we find a basic concern for the good credit of things. Both words and money are currencies that must be grounded in the substance of a credibility if they be virtuous. Abstraction from the actual guarantee of experience meant manipulation of the public trust, as, in the United States, demagogues had long established by their misuses of language the common sense that what was "rhetorical" was for effect only, a

persuading with words that were not truly meant, empty or worse, a hiding of the real meaning in order to make a sell.

In *Guide to Kulchur*, in 1938, relating his own Cantos to the quartets of Bartók, Pound saw in these works “the defects inherent in a record of struggle.” *The Cantos*, designed, as we see them, to bear the imprint of Pound’s experience of man’s history, contain as their condition and express the troubled spirit of our times as no other work in poetry does. It is his impersonating genius that, even where he presents flashes of eternal mind—*veritas, claritas, hilaritas*—they do not appear as a sublimation of the poem but remain involved, by defect, in the agony of the contemporary. A profound creative urge—“So-shu also, / using the long moon for a churn-stick”—churns in the sea of Pound’s spirit everywhere, even as it churns in the sea of our own history. We have our moment of truth just where contention will not allow our reason to rest undisturbed. The figure we seek is revealed in fragments in the path of a moon that troubles the waters in which the path of its light is reflected. It is part of the polemics of his time that is also ours that Pound juxtaposes his insight of the good and his prejudice of the bad. We are lost if we take his uses as having an authority other than the truth of how the world is felt and seen by the poet if he keep alive in him the defects inherent in a record of struggle. We, as readers, must enter the struggle and contend with the drama of defects. When Pound writes “Consider the definiteness of Dante’s presentation as compared with Milton’s rhetoric,” all is not *claritas*. In the contention, our sense of the good of definiteness and of Dante is to be the greater; but he means also that our sense of the good of rhetoric and of Milton is to be the less. Where Pound uses the popular pejorative demeaning of the word “rhetoric,” voiding its base in the likeness between the flow of speech and the flow of a river, he troubles the currents of meaning. Working with the debased currency of the word, he forces us to search out for ourselves the good credit of the word in man’s experience.

Hretor (ῥήτωρ, orator) comes from the Greek verb *hreo* (ῥέω, to say) that had, if not a root in the strict etymological sense, the association of a pun, in common with the verb *hreo* (ῥέω, to flow). The flow of speech was for the Greeks, as for us, an expression that could refer to words running glibly off the tongue being like a babbling brook, and likewise

to the elemental power of fluency in saying. The poet must be fluent in speech. There must be currents of meaning as well as particularities of meaning. Speech was a river. The Greek lexicon of Liddell & Scott tells us that “*hoi hreontes* was a nickname for the Heraclitean philosophers who held that all things were in a constant state of flux.” The mistrust that men had of speech was their mistrust of rivers that swept men along, that persuaded.

Pound was a man of inner conflicts. At once to convey a complex of emotions and to perfect an art. So too, his persuasion was against persuasion. It is characteristic of Pound’s nature in saying, of his river of speech, a currency he has in the common sense where it is most disturbed and disturbing, that words that come up in his contentions—“abstraction,” “rhetoric,” “jew,” or “shit,”—appear deprived of their good sense. “Rhetoric” became a term of derogation in his criticism, just as in *The Cantos* his great river of voices began, sweeping all conflicts up into the persuasion of its Heraclitean flux, having mastery through its triumphant rhetoric. The “one Image in a lifetime,” defined “in an instant of time,” in the life-flow of time is no longer discrete and unique but leads to and inherits depths from other times and places. In each instant of time, the tide of its river impended.

Imagist poems are charged with the drama of this arrest of a time that is like the force of a powerful current in arrest. In the suspended tension of H.D.’s poem “Garden,” there is the threat of movement. So too, in Joyce’s “I hear an army charging upon the land,” which had appeared in Pound’s anthology *Des Imagistes*, the intellectual and emotional complex does not exist in an instant of time, in a flash of the essential reality, but it is charged with the portent of associations to come. Say that Joyce presents the waves of the sea, made the more vivid because he sees them as the horses and men of an army—these horsemen of the surf are an old Celtic idea—and that, in the close, his cry of despair and loneliness conveys the retreat of the wave. It still remains that what the poem presents leads us as readers on to something that the poem “says” beyond the image. Joyce is also telling us he hears (and everything we know of his genius in the story *The Dead* or in *Ulysses* or in the closing pages of *Finnegans Wake* verifies this sense of

his language) the armies of the dead and the unborn at the shores of consciousness, swarming invasions from a sleeping reservoir that press upon Joyce's waking mind, as all things of the waking world press upon his sleeping mind. What appears, whatever we see there, answers the call of his declaration of listening: "I hear. . . ." The beginning of the saying reaches out from the proposition of what it says, and hearing rushes in to illustrate the proposition. The speaker, speaking of his hearing, hears; the hearer sees. Clairaudient to the voice of the poem and then beyond, Joyce becomes clairvoyant. It is all in the medium of saying: second-speech begins; the second-hearing or second-sight comes to meet it.

This complex does not exist in an instant of time but in a language or history out of an increment of times. Where these hosts are also (and all that we remember of what was about to happen in that year 1914 fulfills the prophecy) intimations of the actual armies of the First World War. "I hear an army charging upon the land" is not only an image of the sea breakers but an omen of war, ready to take on reverberations from history, fitting, preparing as it does, our own immediate knowledge of how a world that is now all a sea of armies grew. Place Joyce's poem alongside of Arnold's "Dover Beach" or Hardy's "Channel Firing," and its rhetoric rings out as of the same order.

It was the rhetoric too, the undercurrent of her speech, that gave meaning to H.D.'s poem. "O wind, rend open the heat—" if we respond in the mode of its address, persuades us to a need in our own being to break the perfection of the instant and restore the disturbing flow of time.

In Pound's "Metro," the immediate presentation may be enough, the interchange or correspondence of blossoms wet pressed to a black bough with faces in a crowded subway station. We may grasp the sense in being struck by the likeness. "The proper and perfect symbol is the natural object," Pound writes in the Credo of his essay "A Retrospect": "so that *a* sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk." If we ask further, what does the image mean? what are these faces upon what "bough"? why "apparitions"? if we grant

that the immediate image is a sense of the poem and yet, following the lead of Pound's italicizing the indefinite article, we search beyond for an other sense of the poem, are we reading more into the poem than there is there?

In H.D.'s poem "Heat," the images presented become propositions of a language that spoke of something hidden from me in hearing the poem, an ideogram I could not read yet. Everything that was felt was clearly rendered; what was felt was that something more impended. Not that I knew more than was there but that there was more there than I knew. We, the poet and those of us readers who have the commitment, must, like the knight who would heal the wound of the Fisher King and revive the Waste Land, ask the meaning of "fruit that cannot fall," of "thickness of air," of "heat," and that meaning has only one place in which to gather—our life experience. We must discover correspondences and come in reading the poem to read our own lives.

It may be a sufficient issue of "Metro" or of Flint's "Swan" to have read the image in the terms of its first instance, to have seen vividly the very clustered faces that are also the crowded blossoms or the swan passing into the dark of an archway. But now, turning back to the poem, I see that Flint would add "into the black depth of my sorrow." Does it mar the image? "Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace'," Pound had instructed the would-be imagist: "It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol."

We may do well enough with "Patterns" to follow the Lady in impersonation and see the scene of the garden with its too-planned patterns as we go, as if it were a sequence from a costume movie of the period, scenario by Sabatini. The poets may have meant these images to satisfy us in their being seen. I have never returned to read Amy Lowell's poem in any event since high school, here, at least, taking the Pounding prejudice against Amygism as my own.

Let these ratiocinations stand as they are. They present an account of what the propositions of Imagism have come to mean to me as far as they have gone. But a new way of seeing, related to Pound's later concern with the ideogram, colors my thought of the direct object, the symbol, or the image. The great art of my time is the collagist's art,

to bring all things into new complexes of meaning, mixing associations. I am the more aware that the figures of wet pale faces that are blossoms upon the black bough of some Tree, that the Swan, that the Lady in the Garden, are not only immediate images struck of particular things in their instant seen by Pound, Flint, or Amy Lowell, proper each to its poem, but are parts now of a composite picture, belonging to one passion in me of Poetry. "Only passion endures," Pound writes somewhere, "the rest is dross." And these images are part of an enduring memory. Just so, they have been claimed by my mind among the illustrations of my own life, fitting its vision. My vision then may mistake the poems in part to fit. They have waited there long among the shades of memory, and now perhaps that we have recalled them, the course of this study will bring them forward to a new account, until we must read again the actual texts in the present light. But in the case of Joyce's poem, as with H.D.'s, the memory and the text have been deeply imprinted with the scene of its first reading. Joyce's poem belongs to one of the decisive events of my actual life.

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It may have been in 1938, one of those radiant days that October brings to Berkeley after the fog and even cold of the summer. I sprawled on the grass, the little Black Sun Press book with pages printed in blue italics, lovely and most precious, in my hands; and, as I turned for the first time to read Joyce's poems, cutting the pages as I went, I read aloud to two girls—young women—whose sense of the world was deeper than mine, I felt, so that I was supported by their listening. For they had known poverty and loneliness in an alien land (the one Italian, the other Jewish, coming from immigrant families). They came from working-class households, close to the burden of labor, it seemed to me, that furnished the essentials of life, food, and clothing, so that they had in my eyes a more immediate sense of the human lot.

Athalie was the young Jewess. Let her be a "Jewess"—for she impersonated a racial elegance, knowingly referring to old ideas of beauty from the Middle East, Levantine or Persian hints that had a mock seductiveness, exciting our sense of the exotic and taunting us in that sense. At the same time she had a bitter knowledge of what to be Jewish

meant—it gave reality to her despair. And, being Polish, she had known the scorn not only of Germans but of German Jews. She would bring to play in Eliot’s “Sweeney Among the Nightingales” overtones of a menace that the history of our own time with the rise of the Nazis seemed but to illustrate, where “Rachel née Rabinovitch / tears at the grapes with murderous paws,” reciting the lines with a terrible kind of humor, an imminent threat, so that the poetry and the history we might have associated with the poem became her own revelation to our company that adored her of the reality of some inner risk. “A woman runs a terrible risk,” she would quote by heart. She had barely made—did not finally succeed in making—the transition from her family, dominated by a fanatic orthodox father, from the folk-world of a Polish ghetto and a poetry world out of ancient Hebrew traditions, to the shores of light she thought to find in philosophy. The mind! Her mind was a fire. James and Dewey might be a new testament, and Pragmatism a new dispensation, but the Old Testament and the Covenant remained. Truth she knew by its disaster. Terror of her mad father, pity for her enduring mother, madness and enduring in her self, the old tribal law that put women among contaminated beings, the old mystery that exalted her as an object into the bridal glory of the Shulamite, the old wisdom way that looked deep into the vanity of all things and cried “Fear God! There is *no* end.”

“Of making many books there is no end”—all was caught up into a wave of hysteria, inspired, impersonating, daemonic in part, with a sense of its own caricature, with a sense of its social outrage. She had histrionics then, delighting in tirade and dramatic gestures. Lighting it all, so that she is still a power in my memory and love, she had intense joys and despairs, a vitality that leaped—as later I was to discover the Hasidim had leaped and danced before the glory or joy of the Lord in the most grievous of times—before the fact of a painting like Picasso’s *Woman in the Mirror* or some scene in reading Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, celebrant, before whatever was expressive of a passionate, troubled human soul. And she had a wild affection for whatever in us showed response. To suffer, to undergo, to understand anything, danced in a frenzy. Her consciousness rose, as the consciousness of the world rose in the last years of the Depression toward the mania of the War. The lot of

the Jews, the lot of women—these stood for her as symbols of the real lot of mankind. Imitating Madame Croiza’s inspired howling as Electra in the recording of the Claudel-Milhaud *Oresteia* that we used to listen to ritually in those days, she was projecting something she felt prophetic of herself; and as we came to the ebb tides of the night, she would acclaim Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, where she had seen in the furies that maddened the young doctor working in the slums of Paris those furies that pursued her own mind. Something had been revealed in the heart of Paris that was prophetic of our own lot to come. Long before her anticipation of human disaster was illustrated in full in the actual world at Belsen and Buchenwald, before at Nagasaki and Hiroshima we were to see that the evil was not German alone, Athalie had passed from the brilliant wave of her despair and joy, and the wave had gone out, back into the miseries and infantile recesses of dementia praecox. Something once acted had become most actual.

Or, we may say, something set into action. We were, it seems to me now, trying the scene and ourselves to find the plot and our roles therein. We imagined a life as passionate, as full of depths and heightened colors as we found in works of art. The lawn, the sun, the two full-bodied young women with their flowing hair and their sandaled feet, and my reading there, had the command the stage has over all other events when we attend. They were my audience as I read—yes—but they were also—the whole little scene was built up with their composition of it—a chorus. Let these things be fates over me, I had resolved. As I read on, leafing through the pages of Joyce’s *Collected Poems*, which I had just found in a bookshop that day, past the bronze crayon portrait by Augustus John, past poems that did not key in, I was looking for poems that would belong to our own scene. Lines or words in scanning would give the clue: “A merry air,”—no—“Welladay! Welladay!”—I all but despaired finding the voice I wanted. There was a self-mockery in the book, where the title *Chamber Music* had a double meaning in which its author mocked his own sentiment with a possibility of parody, the too-muchness of the song’s manner. One had known something like this in adolescence we were only too close to, striving to cover for shyness and passion and ignorance, enacting one’s painful self-consciousness as if it were a deliberate sophistication, anticipating

social rejection by a self-rejection incorporated in the feeling itself, a safety of irony or not caring that disavowed the fatal original importance of that feeling. The voice I sought was a different voice. There were glimmers of it in certain poems where for a moment Joyce had the courage of his sentiment:

Because your voice was at my side

That sprang into life for me, immediately speaking for what I wanted to say.

There is no word nor any sign
can make amend—

came direct from the emotion of the artist as a young man without the later Joyce's self-knowing and dissembling pose, and it spoke too as if from my own emotion to say something I had to tell my two companions. Poetry was a communal voice for us—it spoke as we could not speak for ourselves. And there was a voice in me that sought such a communal speech in order to come to feel at all.

"All day," I continued, "I hear the noise of waters / Making moan, / Sad as the sea-bird is, when going / Forth alone," acknowledging in reading—what I could not otherwise acknowledge in myself or in them—that we too, each, had gone, and now went forth, in such a loneliness.

The Italian girl, Lili, had a kind of laughter of eyes, of the curve of her lips, as if even one's loneliness was reflected there in an amusement. Did she pretend to be a Muse? She walked as if there were a music within which she walked, with an air, a reverie, that set her everywhere apart. Hesiod tells us that the Muses, hinting at their art, said: "We know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things." And then he tells us: "They moved with vigorous feet. . . . Thence they arise and go abroad by night, veiled in thick mist, and utter their song with lovely voice." Everything Hesiod tells of the Muses might tell of Lili. She, like them, a serious spirit who was at the same time playful. She was amused, as if there were some womanly strength and wisdom in her countenancing

life that came out of shared weaknesses and sorrows in which she had her self-humor, where compassion was part of appreciation. She had humanity; and to have humanity was harder and, at the same time, richer, than what was needed to be a woman or what was needed to be Italian or Jewish in a social world where this was foreign. But it was not that life was hard or that it was rich. Life was, I think, in itself, some kind of inner joy to her, not only human life but the life of a geranium or of the grass could awake in her a response that touched that inner music. As I read from Joyce that day, she had a sympathy for the inner music of the poem that in our consciousness of that sympathy made music all, as a sustaining current.

They were, in their audience, these two women, my nurses, as, with a nurse's delight in the free vitality, they caught up the spirit of Joyce with that love in which we find most dear some earnest candid need or weakness—no—the vulnerability in itself that shows bravely forth as a condition, not for our commiseration but for our sympathy, feeling with it, as in Joyce's poem, a vital information.

Or they were playing nurse, for we were all children of ourselves, and writers like Joyce or Dostoyevsky or painters like Picasso and Matisse, artists we admired, seemed to us children of their arts. Or we hoped to be children, for what we meant by "child" had little to do with what we had been. It was, rather, some potential we felt within us. It was the secret alliance with life that we saw in artist or saint that we admired.

Lili had come from a land and a language of saints. "Dearest Brother," she would address me, laying her hands upon me with an expression of intimate care and love that may have emulated Saint Francis, for he was one of our heroes. The man Joyce, because his poem had that vulnerability and candor, in the midst of his self-consciousness and pose, would be "Brother." I had no knowledge then of Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of Brother Sun*; but, just as Athalie evoked her person at times from furies and lamentations out of the Songs and Wisdom of Solomon, so Lili's joy in pathos had its counterpart in the litanies of Francis. The poem was a lament, a confession or a hymn that showed forth sympathy with what was otherwise alone. In truth the poet-voice was isolate, alone with its own music. "*All day, all night, I hear them flowing / To and fro,*" I read aloud and paused before turning to the next poem.

From the Campanile bells sounded, announcing with their renderings of popular tunes that the change of hours was about to come. Turning from my book with dismay, I cried, "There is the bell, I have to go."

In the jostling streams, lowerclassmen, some in uniform, some still to change into uniform, went from all parts of the campus toward the gymnasium. It was the hour for R.O.T.C. classes that impended.

"You don't have to go," Lili commanded, raising her hand in a dramatic gesture that had been delegated its powers by the conspiracy of our company. "Stay with Joyce." What we had been enacting, the reader and the listeners—the Muses, perhaps, for some serious amusement or enchantment had been worked through our cooperation—celebrating this most high reading of the poem, was to become real. "Rejoice with Joyce," Athalie commanded. A poem was to take over.

Away toward duty, the one command of the State over us, the dutiful students went. In time. Toward the eleven o'clock drill. To march in time.

There had been the arrogance of Joyce, or the intelligence of Joyce, or the inspiration of Joyce, that had exiled him from church and state, from Ireland, from place and time, so that Dublin was finally to be all his own creation, transformed. For the poet, too, had been going forth alone. The moment was an eternal, an isolate thing. A moment of a poem was an eternal thing, from which many phases of itself radiated into time, where we might enter our share in a man's isolation.

The students obeyed the orders of the day. Military at eleven, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Some, I knew, got excused by doctor's recommendations, escaping from the boredom of it, disqualified by virtue of some physical defect, bad eyesight or flat feet, or by psychiatric warrant. Doctors were liberal in providing the out.

I, too, did not like the boredom, the surrender of mind and body to obey compulsory authority in order that there be such an authority over me. There was an eternal conflict between these orders, forcing us into conformations, surrendering self and awareness in order to endure the tedium, and the other obedience we had just begun, to an inner order of spirit, or the obedience to the beauty of a thing or the fitness of the time. Nerves that must be kept the edges of a vulnerable everlasting

consciousness, kept raw and yet fine, our nerves that must serve us if we were to be artists, strained and recoiled at each session of drill, barely allowed for the numbness necessary to get through.

I hear an army charging upon the land,

I read out of Joyce. Going on to the following poem from where I had stopped, taking up the words that rang out now, not of onerous classes and marches, but of *war*.

And the thunder of horses plunging, foam
about their knees!

War! We were supposed to hate the thought of it but to embrace the fact of it, as if only there we would prove our manhood. Some students were opposed to whatever fact of war. I knew there were pacifists, students who challenged the order to take Military and had gone on strike, as if they had a right to education that they did not owe to the State and its army. They were expelled from school, if they did not dodge the issue. They had conscience. For the State, to be prepared did not mean to be prepared for life but to be prepared for War. It was a condition of our being educated at all at a state university, we were told, that we subscribe to that position, that we be prepared, that we march. Keep time. I, too, believed that back of the army was a cult of War or a business or profession of War, an evil—for it stood against all hope of peace. But I had no sufficient righteous conviction to take a stand. I despaired myself of peace. I was afraid of vested authority.

Away from me the disconsolate students went as I read. It was too late. I could never make it. I would be late. Without an excuse. This poem of Joyce's was not an excuse; it was an affronting fact. The time was gone.

It's that moment I wanted to remember, turning, not without panic, but with relief too, away from the Military hour that had been a bother, a burden, and then, because I felt there was something wrong about the submission, a shame, and somehow, because there had been in those other students a strength of conscience that there was not in me, a guilt—turning away from bother, burden, shame, guilt, to the orders of

the poem. Attended by two radiantly beaming women who had won me so into their company, their conspiracy, against the army, against the university finally. For I never took getting a degree seriously then. I never went to Military classes again. I ceased going to other classes that I had found a sham. I had come into a poetic order more commanding than my fear of military and school authorities, but I had lost too the reality of graduating from a course of studies, of going on to take my place as a member of some professional caste. Toward an other reality where the poem, the little book of Joyce, the reading, and the listening women had a commanding power stronger than the demand of time.

On the fields below, the troops were marching in ranks. Between eleven and twelve o'clock. The students flooded out, breaking and eddying, released, upon the noon bells, hurrying toward their fraternities and dorms and public eating places. I had let them go from me.

With panic, with the benediction of my muses, with guilt and with joy, I had come from the orders of the day, a deserter from my prescribed career where I was to have been assured of a steady living, from literary strategies and fellowships to be, into the reading of a poem. A member of the cast in a play that now would be autonomous—my idea of a drama of a poetry would rule my life. Now the melody of events was stronger in me, “carried away,” so the common sense of it is, I was carried away by the mood of our scene, transported into the authority of the impulse of a poem from the authority of parents, faculty advisors, and the R.O.T.C.

The authority of the poem was a voice of the spirit. To be a poet meant an even fanatic allegiance to a vision or dream, in order that there be Poetry. Men commonly spoke of vision or dream with mistrust. To be a dreamer was ambivalently respected, for dreams rendered men uneasy in their conventional pursuits. A poet must follow his own ideas or feelings wherever they led. In a way, instead of having ideas or feelings, the poet lets ideas or feelings “have” *him*. Seized by an idea.

Turning from the authority that the requirements and grades of the university or the approval of my teachers had once had over me to a new authority in the immediacy of what I had come to love, I came into a new fate. The quickening of vowels and consonants, the breath or spirit that moved beneath the meaningful, the sequence and hidden

design of voice and image that followed the sequence of emotion and intellection belonged now to an eternal order that challenged all other orders.

“They come out of the sea and run shouting by the shore,” I read.

In time, Athalie was to be a mumbling, cackling thing, as Lili or her sister Mary told me later, gobbling down chocolates and then, slyly, as if her visitor did not see, storing them away in her shoes. I saw her once in an interval before all was lost. She had been released by the hospital, shocked into a kind of conformity. But they had cured the jagged edge of her vital being back from its disturbed contact with the knowledge of a terrifying reality.

Lili, working in canneries in the summer, was converted in those years to a Trotskyite politics. Her dream and her imagination must have been won by the vision of unreleased powers that lay in the work of fields and factories still untranslated into ideal and action. But now, not only the expressions of compassion and vision won her, but she became partisan too in the political strategies and revolutionary stands in which the orthodox Trotskyites strengthened their commitment to the ultimate claim of the party.

It is toward what I have called the eternal that time is disturbed to awaken the workers of the world to the virtue, the power, that lies in their labor. The poet, too, is a worker, for the language, even as the field and the factory, belongs to the productive orders and means in which the communal good lies. All that is unjust, all that has been taken over for private exploitation from the commune, leaves us restless with time, divorced from the eternal. If I had come under the orders of poetry, I saw too that those orders would come into their full volition only when poetry was no longer taken to be a profession and when the poet would be seen to share in the daily labor toward the common need.

But the great vision of such a communism in which old dreams of a brotherhood of man survived, the acknowledgment that all goods belonged to a creative order, the gospel that the socialists of the nineteenth century had raised in terms of a new idealization of the working class, has gone into its ebb; and from the salvation and justice that were all ideal imagined themes for a new life, men’s minds have turned to strategies and expedencies and then to their defeat there. Workers were

to be awakened not to the good that was in labor, to the true community that lay in the creation of social goods, but to the political and economic power that might lie in organization. To become leaders! To bargain in the market where labor was not a work but a commodity! Not to increase our common share in labor but to monopolize toward power. Over dinner tables and in living rooms with Picasso's *Guernica* presiding on the wall the flame of inspiration disappeared in the heat of contentions and political ambitions for the seizure of power.

Those young men struggling back to their boarding houses, breaking away from their ordered ranks, released into their crowd or their individual selves, were to go on into the ranks of armies and industries and professions made real upon that other field of lies and ambitions, fears and hopes—a war that only gave rise to a wider breach between nations and peoples, preparing in its waste for war upon war.

My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?

It was before the outbreak of the First World War that Joyce had written that close of his poem, of the war that we have come to know was not a last conflict but the continuum, the meaning of our nations, our politics, our labor unions, our leaders and masses.

Come, let us have a lasting sentence! the heart resolved. What is there lasting but our human condition, but what is most vivid in our imagination of what our life has been? The threat is part of that then. And the green lawn in the sun. The radiant women—Etruscan beauty, as we had seen it in Picasso's archaic mode, Semitic beauty as in Matisse's odalisques. The poem transforming loneliness and despair into lovely measures of song. The feet, feet, feet of young men marching. The distant shouting of orders in the playing field that in turn becomes the issue of orders in battlefields and war offices, warehouses and shipyards and laboratories, new classrooms and political parties and factories of mind. The war, too, defines eternal measures.