

T. E. HULME-AS A LITERARY CRITIC

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I certify that the Dissertation entitled "T.E. Hulme - As a Literary Critic", submitted by Shri Krishan Lal in part-fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of the Master of Philosophy of the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, embodies the record of original investigation carried out by him under my supervision.

He has been duly registered and the dissertation presented is worthy of being considered for the award of the M. Phil Degree. This work has not been submitted for any degree of any other University.

Dated : 13/7/81
Place : Shillong



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P R E F A C E

The present research was undertaken under the stimulating supervision and direction of Prof. D.P. Singh, Head, Department of English & Dean, School of Languages, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

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?
Constraining

T.E. Hulme was the great isolated figure at the turn of the century, who emphasized in a novel and surprising manner, the true essence of modernism by disentangling religion, ethics and literature from the time-worn concept of continuity. It was Hulme's special privilege to sum-up new trends in literary criticism by his emphasis on form and colour rather than content; the aesthetic rather than the moral, and the technical qualities of literature rather than the social and ethical.

As my present inquiry will indicate, a number of Hulme's concepts clarified the true nature and criteria of art, which were also responsible for the development of modern aesthetics. The most significant aspect which focuses our attention on Hulme is the justification of his critical formulations in the later criticism of Pound, Eliot and the New Critics. As such, Hulme's seminal importance cannot be neglected, or dissociated from modern literary movement which signifies a clear shift of interest from romantic-humanistic to neo-classical criticism.


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Dated Shillong,
the 10th July '81


KRISHAN LAL

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INTRODUCTORY

Neo-classicism in England took its first bearings from T.E. Hulme and found its fulfilment in the literary theory and practice of T.S.Eliot. Between these two major critics, there stretched a period which has become a landmark in the history of modern literary criticism. It covered the dawn and the glorious sun set of an era which exhausted itself too soon in an attempt to arrive at a definite conclusion regarding the correct form and function of criticism.

As a critic and a theoretician, T.E. Hulme enjoys a central position among the pioneers of the modern movement of poetry and the arts. He was the first critic at the turn of the present century, who gave a new direction and a definite form to the theory and practice of literary criticism. In fact, he was one of the great revolutionary individuals, who attacked the established conventions and traditional assumptions and struck out in an altogether new direction.

Unfortunately, Hulme remained unfamiliar to his contemporaries and a forgotten myth to the later generation. Much of his theoretical insight got obliterated due to his early death. The pace of his literary oblivion was quickened due to mis-placed critical judgements and opinions which presented him as an amateur philosopher and a mere political propagandist. Now sufficient time has elapsed to pass value judgements, and a reconsideration and re-evaluation of his critical theory is essential and a necessary literary commitment.

Ref? The function of a critic, as Ortega Y Gasset describes is neither to defend, nor to attack, but to understand and interpret various literary assumptions in a manner so as to create a better taste and understanding of current aesthetic ideas among the reading public. In this respect Hulme succeeded admirably in his task. His ideas on poetry and abstract art and his political ideology rest broadly on his concept of culture which involves also a general theory of reality.

Most of Hulme's aesthetic ideas, his notes and essays have yet to be correlated. His philosophy of the 'vital' and 'non-vital' and its application to the problem of aesthetics undoubtedly warrants a serious study. Accordingly, aesthetics, philosophy, religion, abstract art and political ideology are the coordinates within which the following study seeks to construct an interpretive view of Hulme's concept of literature and the arts.

Hulme's major critical assumptions have been assimilated into the modern theory of art, thanks to the persistent efforts of Herbert Read, Sam Hynes, Michael Roberts and A.R. Jones. It still remains doubtful if it can be said with conviction that Hulme has received his due recognition in the modern pantheon over-shadowed and dominated by the 'Pound - Eliot myth'. The real fact is perhaps somewhat different. The critical pronouncements of Hulme in Speculations, brought about a new critical awareness which prepared the ground for Pound's and Eliot's development as also for the development of modern literary

criticism in English. The ideas expressed in that book placed their author in the mainstream of English poet-critics that runs from Ben Jonson and Dryden through Coleridge, Arnold and T.S.Eliot.

✓ Hulme's literary importance and his centrality in giving a definite shape to modern aesthetics and criticism becomes more significant in the context of literary chaos and socio-political unrest in England during the early decade of the present century.

Before the First World War England was shaken by a series of strikes and political upheavals. There was a peculiar air of doubt and unrest in the political and literary circles and a general reaction against the Victorian complacency, and all the accepted conventions and codes of morals. This wind of change had a far-reaching effect on the literary situation of the time.

A new type of poetic sensibility emerged with the appearance of new anthologies containing, what was known as 'Georgian Poetry'. Harold Monroe attracted a group of younger poets, who started a fresh poetic revolt against Victorian conventions.

Chief among them was Hulme, who emerged as an avant-garde figure. He gathered around him a coterie of poets, philosophers, and artists, who gave a definite turn to poetry and introduced modernistic trends in literature.

Hulme's position is central in the history of the twentieth-century literary thought in so far as he discarded the liberal individualism of the Victorian era. He turned away from all those romantic influences which were most potent till the beginning of the present century. He was the first English critic to emphasise that religion and literature operate on absolutely separate levels. The same idea was, later on, reaffirmed by Eliot who derived it partly from Hulme and partly from the British idealist, F.H. Bradley.

Hulme's classicism was based upon the dogma of Original Sin whereas, Romanticism rejected this dogma. Hulme's succeeded in turning the tide away from the romantic tradition by insisting that man was a limited and a fallen

creature, who was incapable of attaining perfection and divinity which only belonged to God. Hence, Humanism could not be a satisfactory substitute for Religion.

It is quite evident from Hulme's essays on "Humanism and The Religions Attitude", "Modern Art and Philosophy", "Notes on Language and Style", "The War Essays", and the corpus of material published posthumously under the general titles of Speculations, and Further Speculations, that he was the first important theoretician behind the Imagist movement in England. Hulme's theory of art gave rise to Pound's 'Vorticism' and Eliot's 'Classicism', which in turn, paved the way for the Experimental literature and the Futuristic Art. Later on, Pound, Eliot, I.A. Richards, and the New American Criticis were to erect a vast structure of considerable aesthetic distinction on the theoretical formulations of Hulme.

It is true that Hulme was not the first philosopher-critic to present a new aesthetic of poetry but his was, definitely, the first clear and articulate voice to emphasize the

importance of 'precision' - 'the curve of the thing' - the basic principle of Imagism on which Eliot erected his whole edifice of poetry. The development of the post-Impressionistic art and Cubism had its early formulations in the abstract art theory of Hulme.

Hulme was also the first to emphasize the importance of 'verse Libre' as against the conventional, regular metric forms. He declared the adoption of solid, plastic images as models of poetic excellence. No doubt, the idea of organic form was first discussed by Coleridge, but Hulme was the first critic to make a clear distinction between the purely 'logical structure', and 'symbolic structure'. He viewed poetry as a visual and pictorial art. Hulme also effected a divorce between nature and art. According to him, nature was unable to supply any criteria of the beautiful, but to evolve and formulate such criteria was the exclusive function of art.

Hulme defined the superiority of the Primitive and Byzantine art over the Humanistic art. Like Oscar Wilde and Wyndham Lewis, he

favoured abstract and geometrical art and opposed naturalistic art. Gautier too affirmed Hulme's faith in the purely aesthetic relations among objects without any moral or conventional interest. He once remarked: "I should like prairies coloured red, rivers golden yellow and trees blue, nature has no imagination."¹

One of the major influences on Hulme was Bergson. To Hulme, Bergson represented the general anti-intellectual movement in contemporary European philosophy. *of* special appeal to Hulme was Bergson's theory that the flux of phenomena is real, but the concepts are false. Intellect, according to Bergson, could construct only approximate models, but by intuition one could identify oneself with the flux. Hulme's lectures entitled "Notes on Language and Style", and "Lectures on Modern Poetry", delivered in 1909, clearly indicate his application of Bergson's principles to the Imagist poetry. One of the important Hulmian theories found a distinctly Bergsonian formulation. Poetry uses direct language, says Hulme, because it deals with living

¹David Perkins, A History of Modern Poetry, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.36.

*Bergson
on intellect &
intuition*

images, whereas prose uses indirect language because it uses dead images, images conventional and trite and hence, not corresponding with reality. Poetry carries the whole load of real communication by reducing language to 'visual', 'objective co-relatives' and thus it purges language of conventional 'counters'.

Under the influence of the German aestheticians, Volkelt and Lipps, and the art historian, Wilhelm Worringer, Hulme developed his thoughts on the aesthetics of art which suited his philosophy best. From Volkelt and Lipps, he borrowed the 'Einfühlung ästhetik', which he defined as 'feeling oneself into the ✓ object'. This idea which he termed as 'the feeling in mere lines', he elaborated in his lecture on "Modern Art and its Philosophy".

But the most significant influence on Hulme was that of Worringer. Worringer provided him with the entire frame work of his theory of art. He borrowed from Worringer what he called, 'the Critique of Satisfaction', and fitted it

*Worringer's
influence*

admirably into the framework of his philosophy of art. The most noteworthy point to mention here is that Hulme's 'Critique of Art', was not an end in itself, but a spring board for his philosophical theory of literature.

Hulme was a revisionist and an aggressive radical. He came under the spell of French political thinkers, Georges Sorel and Charles Maurras, who favoured anti-liberal and authoritarian ideologies. As a logical consequence, Hulme's political theories were anti-humanist and anti-traditionalist. Hulme's militant outbursts against pacifists like Bertrand Russell, and his devotion to the ideology of violence preached by Georges Sorel has been mostly responsible for the commonly held opinion that he had proto-fascist leanings. Actually, Hulme was neither a Fascist, nor a Marxist, or for that matter, an Anarchist. He was purely a theoretician, who was not concerned with the practical applicability of any particular ideology. His main concern was to distinguish between political ideas and the actual politics. He laid down a clear distinction between theory

Lit critic?

and practice at a time, when social disruption had blurred the vision of many of the serious thinkers of his time.

Sp. What is more important is that the ideas which characterize his political ideals, also determine his conception of modern art. Hulme reacted against democracy and the 'spineless liberalism' of contemporary society. His opposition was against the irresponsibility and total apathy of the intelligensia and the gradual disappearance of individual values.

Rel? Hulme was the first theoretician to discuss in a philosophical manner, the best possible alternative to Democracy and Communism. He called it Nationalism which linked his ideology with the Action Française of Charles Maurras and the syndicalism of Georges Sorel. Therefore, it would be wrong to consider Hulme as a mere political propagandist, or a proto-fascist. He was neither of these. At best, he was an 'anti-liberal' and a 'classical' conservative.' As such, Hulme ought to be viewed in the light of Louis Althusser's assertion that an ideology is only a : "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals

to their real conditions of existence."² In fact, Hulme's political philosophy is simply a transfiguration of the collective historical consciousness of modern experience without 'a subject or telos'.³

In Frederic Jameson's opinion, an ideological representation is an authentic way of grappling with a real ~~that~~ that always transcends mere consciousness and a writer attempts to:

... insert itself through praxis, all the while painfully learning the lesson of its own ideological closure and of history's resistance to the fancy-structures in which it is itself locked.⁴

Vague | Thus Hulme's modernism and his aggressive narrative was just such a protest against romanticism and the anti-liberalism of the nineteenth-century.

Hulme was not only a theorist, but also a serious and a dedicated craftsman. We may or may not agree with his philosophy of abstract, but the sincerity of his purpose does compel an acknowledgement

²Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, Trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), p.162.

³Ibid., p.99.

⁴Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (London: University of California Press, 1979), p.13.

of his deep and intimate understanding of the problem of aesthetics. This view has been corroborated among many by Jacob Epstein, his admirer and contemporary. In the Foreword to Speculations, Epstein observes:

What appealed to me most about Hulme was the vigour and sincerity of his thought. He was capable of kicking a theory as well as a man downstairs when the occasion demanded ... His passion for truth was uncontrolled.⁵

At the turn of the present century, Hulme's critical theories quickened the pace of literary revolution, although he remained unfamiliar to many of his contemporaries, and still remains so to the latter generation. The reasons for this contradiction are varied and complex but the more noteworthy among those who lived just after the First World War, could not escape the impact of Hulme's theory and practice of literature and abstract art.

Modernism in literature and art covered various cultural developments and movements at the turn of the present century. The shift from the

5. T.E.Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, Ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924), p.vii.

nineteenth-century literary tradition was characterized by various artistic styles and creeds with frequent overlappings. There was much confusion in the literary scene and every artist was trying to do something new and fresh, though mostly without a definite sense of direction. As a result, the English literary scene could not remain undisturbed by or indifferent to the European upheavals.

The 'men of 1914', were already up in arms against the romantic bog and the Victorian complacency and compromise. Thus the early period of the present century in England was a period of radical change in the socio-political as well as literary spheres. In the words of George Dangerfield, this period saw "the strange death of liberal England".⁶

In 1908, Hulme led the younger artists towards neo-classicism with his theory of Imagism. Pound's Vorticism carried Hulme's view of 'free verse' to the extreme degree of precision and

⁶W.W. Robson, Modern English Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.12.



clarity. This change, away from the tradition of the nineties, was witnessed by Yeats. No doubt, he kept away from the general excitement, and for this reason, he was considered as a poetic irrelevance by Eliot. But his awareness of the literary ferment was subtle and perceptive. In a letter to his son, Yeats wrote:

NR
true

The poets loved by Ezra Pound are tired of beauty since they have met it so often I am tired of beauty my wife, says the poet, but here is that enchanting mistress ugliness ... Prometheus leaves his rock to cohabit with the furies.⁷

Along with this dedication to 'ugliness', there was also a dogmatic belief in man's limited and finite condition. No more man was the measure of all things. Nature ceased to be a source of inspiration for the artists. There was a new imaginative vision wherein art seemed to have reached an impasse:

...The emphasis on inner vision, on the creative powers, on the imagination above all, was to exceed the symbolist cult of the soul. More vital emotions, more dynamic powers of description were extolled ... in destroying the conventional picture reality in order that the expression be more powerful.⁸

⁷Richard Ellman, Eminent Domain (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.62.

⁸R.S. Furness, Expressionism (London: Methuen, 1973), p.3.

Just before the First World War, England was exposed to the European influence through Russian Opera and Ballets and the translations of Dostoevsky's works. The Victorian and Edwardian sex mores and ethical standards were questioned by the triumph of unreason over the rational humanism. The whole concept of the function of literature, religion and politics was changed under the impact of the 'Little Magazines' and journalistic literature as exemplified in the writings of Galsworthy, Bennett, Shaw, Wells, Chesterton and Belloc. Virginia Woolf saw in this new awakening the total transformation of human nature and the dawn of a new poetic sensibility.

In the opinion of Bernard Bergonzi, H.G. Wells, in his Tono-Bungay, recaptured the comprehensive vision of the confused state of affairs through the jumbled thoughts of George Penderovo. George Penderovo's thoughts flash back on his own disillusionment. His past experience is more than mere disillusionment. It is a vision of:

... crumbling confusion, of change and seemingly aimless swelling, of a bubbling-up and medley of futile loves and sorrows. But through the confusion sounds another note the positives that George is groping for here remind one of the demands of avant-garde artistic circles in the years 1910 to 1914, for an art which would be austere, geometrical, mechanical, and above all irrelevant to most human interests.⁹

This then, was the demand of the times. Hulme and Pound in their critical theories of Imagism and vorticism provided the new and fresh alternative. Likewise, in painting and sculpture, the mental climate of the age found its meaningful expression in the exhibits at Tate gallery and the first exhibition of the post-Impressionistic paintings in 1910, was the forerunner of Cubism and Futurism.

Hulme exhibited in his theory and practice the growing impatience with the organic and the human which constituted the core of Romanticism. His new aesthetic rejected the postures and poses of the romantic and the humanistic sensibility. Yeats summed-up the new artistic concern and the

Contradiction?

⁹Bernard Bergonzi, The Turn of a Century: Essays on Victorian and Modern English Literature (London: MacMillan, 1973), p.90.

spirit of the age, when he commented:

In 1900 every one got down off his stilts; henceforth nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic Church; or if they did I have forgotten.¹⁰

If we view the modernist movement in all its complexity and totality the first two decades of the present century stand out as the most significant period for the modern literary Renaissance. It served as a battle ground for the forces of traditionalism and modernism. It was also a period of critical activity which was responsible for the production of great art between 1910 and 1930. It would not be wrong to say that Hulme stood in the vanguard of this great movement. He forged new conception of the ways in which poetry should be written and abstract art should be developed.

There is no ~~d~~oubt that Hulme's influence was not felt much at that time. There were two major factors responsible for his obscurity.

Key H's influence was not felt.

¹⁰W.F. Robson, Op.cit., p.15.

Firstly, his work was of ephemeral nature and secondly, it was addressed to minor poetical practitioners like Hilda Doolittle, Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint and other members of the Imagistic school. In the absence of a major poetic genius among the Imagists, Hulme's literary revolution was short lived. The various movements like Impressionism, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism and Experimentalism - were introduced by a shift in emphasis from the physical to mental reality; from the objects of knowledge to the actual process of knowing.

As literary revolution was of ephemeral nature

But the confusion and chaos which accompanied various philosophies and 'isms' could not assuage the minds and tastes of the public by purely experimental verses and too much concern for craftsmanship. Nonetheless, this fervent activity left its mark on the aesthetic consciousness that followed in its wake. And Hulme was, as Wilbur Scott points out, its main intellectual force:

[Hulme] advocated a dry and hard kind of poetry which would repudiate the softness of Romanticism ... the emphasis was to be on the precise presentation of visual images, the vocabulary was to be ordinary but exact, the verse technic as experimental as the writers chose, and the selection of subject matter, completely free.¹¹

Hulme, Pound, Eliot and Bradley criticized the emphasis on the moral content in poetry especially, Arnold's 'high seriousness' and emphasized 'technique' as the new literary ideal. In this respect, Hulme was a seminal influence on Pound and through him on Eliot. Both Pound and Eliot based their critical theories on the conclusions of Hulme. Later on, Hulme also influenced the theory and criticism of the Formalistic school and their concern for a close study of the technique and form in a work of art.

H's influence on Pound & Eliot

Hulme laid down his theoretical ground work for the efflorescence of poetry on the anti-romantic concept of absolute 'sincerity' as the only and one measure of aesthetic sensibility. In "Romanticism and Classicism", Hulme states

¹¹Wilbur Scott, Five Approaches to Literary Criticism (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p.19.

that poetry is great:

If it is sincere in the accurate sense, when the whole of the analogy is necessary to get out the curve of the feeling or thing you want to express - there you seem to me to have the highest verse, even though the subject be trivial and the emotions of the infinite far away.¹²

Hulme is usually lumped together for the sake of convenience with other modernists, who were either his contemporaries or followers. But this association does more harm to Hulme than good. It only serves to obscure his originality and exclusiveness. Actually Hulme's polemics and his aesthetic is but another facet of his aggressive nature. It is reflected both in his work and style. The aggressive nature of his philosophy and his unremitting hostility against the romantic-humanistic liberalism in literature and politics was a generalized projection of the prevalent skepticism of his time.

Hulme was the first critic to point out that Arnold had erred in thinking that religion had become empty and illusory. Arnold was also

¹²Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.138.

wrong as M.H. Abrams points out:

... to place on poetry, with this demonstrative power of achieving effects independently of assent, the tremendous responsibility of the functions once performed by the exploded dogmas of religion, and religious philosophy.¹³

The purpose of the present study is to indicate the revolutionary change in modern aesthetics and ideas, which began with Arnold and continued throughout the second-half of the nineteenth-century, and eventually got a clear conceptualization in the writings of Hulme. He invented a 'new dialect' of the tribe to restate old attitudes. In this mission he succeeded admirably. The present study is also meant to dispel the mistaken belief that Hulme was a mere journalist and a propagandist with a flair for philosophy and the arts.

¹³M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (London: Oxford University Press, c.1953, rpt: 1976), pp.334-35.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND POETICS

Modern literary criticism involves evaluation of culture as well as of individual works of art. Therefore, a critic may combine the function of an interpreter, or a judge alternately or both at the same time. At the turn of the present century, Hulme was the first to show an acute awareness of the critics' historical importance as the evaluator and interpreter of literature.

In his essay, "The Function of Criticism", Eliot appears to have confirmed Hulme's role as a critic, when he stated:

From time to time, every hundred years or so, it is desirable that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and poems in a new order.¹⁴

Among the major poet-critics, whose main task was to change the existing literary taste and to enact the role of a prophet and a moralist, Arnold stands

¹⁴T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth : Penguin, c.1953, rpt: 1958), p.17.

Arnold's view
of poetry

foremost. To him, religion was the highest expression of culture; and poetry, the highest art to: "transform that poor inattentive and moral creature, man."¹⁵

Arnold used the term 'culture' to denote pursuit and study of human perfection. Culture, according to Arnold, enables man to conceive an ideal end for himself. This attempt on the part of Arnold to place perfection in man was responsible for his 'high moral seriousness'. Even as a poet, he made morality the ideal standard, or canon of satisfaction. This obsessive regard for 'moral grandeur' and 'high seriousness' made Arnold more of a prophet and an interpreter of spiritual decadence than anything else.

Nonetheless, Arnold is significant to the moderns because his high moral seriousness has been held responsible for creating muddled and confused zones of reality. There developed a perceptible tendency, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth-century to confuse literature with morality and morality with religion, a tendency

¹⁵Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold (Harmondsworth: Penguin, c.1949, 1973), p.264.

which as Eliot points out, is unmistakably present not only in Arnold, but also in Pater.

In his role as a religious reformer and a teacher of culture, Arnold attached undue importance to the time spirit [Zeit-geist], and extended the limits of pure criticism beyond the specifically literary considerations by involving himself in the complex issues of his time, in contemporary theology, scientific skepticism, social thought and politics. Perhaps, he wasted his poetical and critical talents, or perhaps, at that time it was inevitable because culture was a common cry and Arnold used it as central to his ideas about the pursuit and the study of human perfection:

Arnold's emphasis on culture

A pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world ...¹⁶

But inspite of this inherent weakness and confusion in his critical practice, Arnold is important to us in two ways: First, he originated

¹⁶Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. J. Dover Wilson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p.6.

the modern revival of the concept of classical virtues in poetry. Arnold explained moral perfection in terms of the qualities of the mind. And these qualities, such as, man's predilection for control and discipline, or the critics' ability to learn and know and see the object in its entirety - were definitely classical rather than romantic. Moreover, his anti-romanticism was closely associated with his disapproval of disjointed thoughts and images and a perceptible lack of coherence and design in the nineteenth-century romantic poetry.

Another significant aspect of Arnold's achievement which interested the modern critics was his Hellenism. He had the rare ability to combine classical taste with romantic self-expression. It was on this account that he omitted Empedocles on Etna, from the volume of 1853, and attacked the romantic poets for their idolatry of Shakespeare at the expense of the Greeks. Secondly, Arnold was himself responsible for reaction against the very romantic-humanistic tradition which he tried to defend with his remarkable brilliance and intelligence.

Arnold's disapproval
of the romantic
poets.

Source?

Hulme was the first English critic to demolish Arnold's super-structure of the Renaissance-humanistic morality. Hulme's fundamental difference with Arnold centres round the latter's conception of the function of poetry, which he defined as human actions, past and present, and the inculcation of external virtues for making man a perfect moral creature. Hulme held the diametrically opposed view. He recognized two orders of reality: the one divine, an hierarchy of absolute ethical values represented by religion; the other human, represented by the world of finite physical and imperfect existence.

over what?

religious
humanism
in Hulme

Hulme had a natural distrust of romantic imagination which he believed, gave rise to loose liberal standards in human thought and conduct: by: "the failure to recognize the gap between the regions of vital and human things, and that of the absolute values of ethics and religion."¹⁷ This distrust took Hulme to the opposite pole of a 'hard and dry' classicism. He came to the conclusion that if humanity was to enjoy any degree

?

Do you think
Hulme was
justified?

¹⁷Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.32.

of happiness, it must be disciplined by an order consisting of absolute ethical values:

Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him.¹⁸

In Culture and Anarchy, Arnold had attempted to fashion each individual into a graceful person with gem-like qualities. Therefore, it was possible for him to conceive of human progress. But Hulme's world-view was tragic and grim. It was religious and classical as opposed to the liberal-humanistic world-view of Arnold. Hulme noted that the Church had always accepted the dogma of original sin and hence, his own classical view was identical with the religious attitude. He believed that humanism had suppressed the belief in the radical imperfection of man and the Christian belief in the necessity of external discipline.

Hulme considered romanticism allied to humanism in its conception of man's infinitude. His own philosophy of the ultimate finitude of man,

¹⁸Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.116.

therefore, became associated in his mind with religion. In "Romanticism and Classicism", he states:

What I mean by the classical attitude in verse, then, is this ... the classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man. He remembers always that he is mixed up with earth. He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circum-ambient gas.¹⁹

Diff. bet.
Arnold & Hulme

Hulme was, thus, against the Arnoldian tendency to identify poetry with morality as well as against the aesthetic moralism of the romantic humanists.

Hulme pointed out two types of ambiguity in the romantic-humanistic liberalism: First, by giving impetus to rational and scientific thinking it prepared the ground for the later mechanistic view of the world. Secondly, it tried to explain the absolute religious and ethical values by introducing into human things the perfection that properly belongs to the divine: "The fundamental error is that of placing perfection in humanity, thus giving rise to that bastard thing Personality, and all the ~~the~~ bunkum that follows from it."²⁰ As a logical consequence, it confused

¹⁹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., pp.119-20.

²⁰Ibid., p.33.

both the human and the divine that led to the unfortunate phenomena of: "Romanticism in Literature, Relativism in Ethics, Idealism in Philosophy, and Modernism in Religion."²¹

Interestingly the attack on Arnold's sloppy moralism was launched by a philosopher. F.H. Bradley's Ethical Studies, was the most devastating criticism of Arnold's critique of culture and morality. Bradley noted that it was not for the moral philosopher to tell people what to do, but rather to dispel the false view of the nature of morality. In contradiction to the individualist ethics of the romantics, Bradley held the view that morality was not only social but also incomplete. He regarded society as a real and concrete universal and the individual logically dependent upon it. Bradley believed that the self realizes itself in a social form and develops itself by making its contribution to the whole social ethos. The content involved in this particular notion led Bradley to state that the wish to be better than the world, would ultimately lead to the threshold of immorality.

²¹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.10.

F.H. Bradley's
view

Bradley further viewed morality as an endless process, a self-contradiction, which was always driven by an impulse to resolve its contradictions by transcending itself and passing into religion. Reflection on morality led Bradley to believe that: "it leads us, in short, to see the necessity of a religious point of view."²² Bradley believed that morality is not complete in itself. The moment the 'ought' becomes real, morality eliminates itself. So, morality in order to be morality, must remain below the level of the good. It must always remain an 'ought', a desirable goal because it is a process and not an end in itself. Thus its very imperfection places morality below religion.

Morality
below religion

It is difficult to say whether Hulme had acquainted himself with Bradley's Ethical Studies, or whether he came under the influence of Bradley, but Bradley's critique of Arnold and Hulme's anti-humanistic ideas have a close affinity. Hulme gave a definite direction to modernistic thought by disentangling different zones which had been

²²F.H. Bradley, Ethical Studies (London: Oxford University Press, c. 1876, 1962), p.314.

compounded by the Renaissance-humanistic tradition. He was the first to supply a brief for a sound epistemology and poetics by separating literature and art from moral and religious considerations:

One of the main achievements of the nineteenth century was the elaboration and universal application of the principle of continuity the attempt to restate the whole of religion in terms of vitalism. This is ridiculous. Biology is not theology, nor can God be defined in terms of life and progress.²³

Hulme further states:

... There is an absolute difference between humanism / which we can take to be the highest expression of the vital /, and the religious spirit ... the questions of original sin, of chastity, of the motives behind Buddhism etc; all part of the very essence of the religious spirit, are quite uncomprehensible for humanism.²⁴

Starting with different aspects of man's life in relation to nature, Hulme took into account such important matters as ethics, religion, literature, philosophy, humanism and romanticism. In his

²³Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., pp.3-8.

²⁴Ibid., pp.8-9.

opinion, eighteenth and nineteenth-century scientific and philosophical thought had been guilty of regarding human life and nature as a continuous process. The mechanistic view of life confused the vital with the non-vital, the organic with the inorganic and life was assumed to be simply a re-adaption of the natural, mechanical laws that governed Nature. Thus, the Renaissance-humanistic tradition had confused and blurred the clear distinction between the absolute and the contingent.

Taking hints from Bergson, Hulme attacked the notion of continuity in life and nature, and sharply distinguished between the organic and the inorganic. He made a clear and absolute distinction between the biological, ethical and religious. Hulme pointed out that in the pre-Renaissance thought reality was clearly divided into three distinct zones. These constituted of (1) the inanimate matter, dealt with by physical sciences; (2) the organic world, dealt with by biology, psychology and history; and (3) the ethical zone, dealt with by theology.

Hulme noted that the first and third zones had an absolute character, and knowledge about them was absolute. The intermediate zone was somewhat different. It was a muddy zone between the two absolutes, and knowledge of it remained loose and relative. This gap or chasm could only be filled with approximations - that is to say, with the intuitive perceptions of the poet and the mystic. But under the Rousseauistic-romantic influence, the organic sphere encroached upon the ethical and religious sphere, and thus, the absolute categories were confused. Hulme followed Bergson in describing the discontinuity in nature due to absolute lack of relation between the mechanical and the vital.

This was Hulme's philosophical basis for a new poetic, which had its own kind of 'dry hardness'. Hulme also noted that the realm of art was absolutely separate from ethics and religion. Eliot also confirmed Hulme's view that religion and literature were two distinct spheres. It was on this account that he criticized Arnold:

*Eliot's agreement
with Hulme's
view...*

... he [Arnold] is at least a forerunner of what is now called humanism ... literature or culture tended with Arnold to usurp the place of religion.²⁵

Irving Babbitt, like Hulme, was also a confirmed critic of romanticism. He held Rousseau responsible for giving currency to romantic idealism, which became an unhealthy ethos, and a firm foundation of a powerful ideology which affected literature and society in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. By attacking the romantic ethos Babbitt, like Hulme, became a defender of religion:

What makes him [Babbitt] unique is that, while himself a disbeliever, even an opponent of revealed religion, he attacked the foundations of secularism more deeply and more comprehensively than any other critic of our time. His mind ... might be the mind of a Christian; and except from a Christian standard, I do not see how we can object to his conclusions.²⁶

Babbitt came very close to Hulme in his criticism of romanticism as a literary and aesthetic movement. In his opinion, romanticism was

²⁵Lipking Lawrence I. and A. Waltonlitz, eds. Modern Literary Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1976), pp. 96-97.

²⁶T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London: Faber And Faber, 1934), p.43.

*Irving Babbitt
as a critic of
romanticism &
a defender of
religion*

Law of Discipline
order is
romanticism

guilty of putting the whole emphasis on the individual faculties of man, and the worst casualty was the concept of discipline and order. Babbitt also believed in the ultimate limitedness of man, and as a critic of ideas, he was deeply concerned with the basic anthropological question - what is man? The answer was provided by Hulme. Since man was a limited and finite creature, he could seldom attain the perfection which belongs to the divine. Therefore, Babbitt also rejected Rousseau's theory of the essential goodness of man. The basic consideration for Babbitt was, how to overcome this romantic sentimentalism in literature.

The answer was provided by him in the form of an harmonious synthesis of the two main traditions of control, order and discipline → Greek Socratism and Buddhism. Yet another source of Babbitt's classicism was Confucius. He rejected Christianity and attempted to find a mean; a middle path. This philosophical synthesis was summed-up by Babbitt in the form of the doctrine of 'Inner-Check' : the higher will of man putting in check his animal appetites.

Rejecting Christianity, Babbitt substituted inner-check for the external control of Christian dogma. It is here that we find a direct link between Arnold and Babbitt's humanism. Eliot turned away from Babbitt fearing that: "Such humanism is purely destructive, for it has never found anything to replace what it destroyed."²⁷

In Literature and The Bible, Arnold had concluded that in future poetry would replace religion. Babbitt in Democracy and Leadership, concluded that humanism would replace religion. Unable to accept traditional Christianity each tried to find a substitute for religion. If we reflect on Babbitt's humanism and compare it with religion, then all the essentials of religion appear simply to have been transferred from the spiritual to the human plane:

Arnold & Babbitt

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Babbitt's Humanism</u>
1. Higher nature of man:	1. Higher nature of man:
A. Intellect) spiritual	A. Higher will) humanistic
B. Reason) activities	B. Higher) plane-God's
C. Will) God's grace	Imagination) grace is discarded
2. Lower nature of man:	2. Lower nature of man:
A. Senses) purely	A. Natural will)
B. Imagination) animal	B. Natural reason) naturalistic
C. Sensuous) instincts	C. Senses)
appetites)	D. Lower imagination) plane
	E. Sensuous)
	appetites)

²⁷ Frank Kermode, Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber And Faber, 1975), p.280.

Babbitt often uses the term, humanitarian for the naturalistic in a negative, pejorative sense because an humanitarian is a sentimental person, who has not disciplined his senses. Eliot was opposed to Babbitt's humanism because without external control not even the inner-check could save man from sinking back to the naturalistic plane.

Inspite of his apparently Arnoldian, ethical, humanistic orthodoxy, Babbitt had much in common with Hulme. Besides his opposition to romanticism, he was, like Hulme, opposed to the idea of welding poetry to music. The kind of synthetic abandon which we associate with Romanticism and which was strongly disapproved by Hulme, was condemned by Babbitt as: "a symptom of dissolution of all the boundaries on which a rational civilization depends."** Babbitt differed from Hulme in one respect. Whereas Hulme considered the religious point to be right, Babbitt opted for the humanistic conception of the ultimate values. Therefore, Babbitt erected a new humanistic super-structure in place of religion.

Diff. bet
Hulme & Babbitt

**M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition, op.cit., p.94.

Having considered separate roles of Arnold, Bradley and Babbitt, it would be appropriate to conclude that the ideas of all these critics formed a part of the general tendency that got transfigured in the writings of Hulme at the turn of the present century. The metaphysical, ethical, religious, social and critical concerns of these poet-critics and philosophers provide us with a plethora of syntheses, similarities and dissimilarities in their approach. But they all attempted to achieve the overall objective of reaching a comprehensive understanding of the elements which go to make-up the content and form of art and poetry. Hulme's Speculations, and Further Speculations, represent a concentrated attempt to fuse together all these divergent approaches in order to give rise to a new epistemology and poetics.

CHAPTER - I I

HULME'S CRITIQUE OF ART

It is very difficult to say whether modernism is essentially new and anti-romantic, or whether it is superior, or of little significance to the past literary tradition. Of late, there has been a growing attempt on the part of many critics like; Harold Bloom, Richard Foster and Robert Langbaum to view modernism as a continuing, progressive tradition in its opposition to the subjective and sentimental element in literature.

Its beginnings can be traced back to the radical questionings and revaluation of established norms and the spirit of reformation active in the field of aesthetics at the turn of the present century. The emphasis shifted from emotion and formlessness, to accurate form, visual imagination and the presentation of plastic images. Hulme, Pound, Wyndham Lewis and James Joyce showed a cool, calculated planning and an absolute seriousness in the creation of a work of art. Like Gautier's *L'Art*, they tried to give to their work, a marble-like finish and polish. Thus, a new attitude developed toward philosophy, art and poetry, and the general tendency was to formulate extreme doctrines against the conventional norms.

'The men of 1914', as Wyndham Lewis used to remark,

attempted to define areas of human consciousness at various levels in a different key. Thus they showed a steadfast unwillingness to conform to the conventional norms in philosophy, aesthetics, religion and politics.

Hulme was an avant-garde figure who gathered around him a number of writers, sculptors, critics and philosophers. His personality and critical theory epitomized the general unrest prevalent in philosophy and aesthetics at that time. In order to form a comprehensive view of Hulme's seminal importance, it would be relevant here to consider the psychology of different art styles along with the dichotomy which became clearly marked between realism and abstraction.

Modern art had its origin in various movements and expressions and by analogy, in aesthetics. Hulme's philosophical elaboration of the emerging nature of theory of abstraction was the resultant tendency born out of tension and polarization between the two extreme styles - naturalistic and geometric; vital and non-vital; realistic and abstract. The dominance of modern abstract art was the result of modern man's estrangement from the world of nature, social and political conditions, the state of present culture and philosophical attitude towards the ultimate reality, which according to Paul Klee, was terrible and horrifying.

Juan Gris was the first to describe naturalism and abstraction in counter-point. He explained this compromise by using the analogy of weaving:

Painting for me is like a fabric, all of a piece and uniform, with one set of threads as the representational æsthetic element, and the cross threads as the technical, architectural, or abstract element.²⁸

It is significant to note that Picasso, who was the true father of modern Cubism, did not adopt a style of pure abstraction. It was his followers, Gris and Braque, who tried to create works of art with only one set of thread. They rejected the realistic element altogether.

The modern movement in literature and art was visualized in its logical completeness by the German philosopher and aesthetician, Theodor Lipps, and the art historian, Wilhelm Worringer. Lipps's theory of 'Empathy', or *Einfühlung* in his Raumästhetik [Aesthetics of space], was a great influence in the history of modern aesthetics. He defined 'Empathy' as an act of sympathetic projection into objects and persons distinct from the agent. According to him, empathy was the objectified enjoyment of the self, which was the 'essence' of aesthetic experience and aesthetic activity. In empathy, when the sensory contents are absorbed by the 'mind's eye', the experience turns

²⁸Herbert Read, The Philosophy of Modern Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 92.

into apprehension. There is a parallel between apprehension, which ends in an act of thought, and apprehension, which ends in an act of acknowledgement.

Lipps's theory of empathy γ

Thus we observe that Lipps's theory was an attempt to avoid complete subjectivism in art. However, it did grant an active role to the aesthetic perceiver. Though Lipps's theory of 'empathy' was mainly based on inner-experience, the intellectual clarification was still far from being clear. The intellectual and philosophical assumptions still remained naturalistic inspite of Riegel's and Welflin's abstract generalizations and Picasso's "Denoisselles D'Avignon", and Paul Cezzane's, "Late Bathing group".

Worringer's influence

At this critical juncture, the most significant book to be published was Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy (1908). Almost all the ideas of Hulme about abstract art in Speculations and Further Speculations, were based on Worringer's theory.

Whereas Lipps's empathy was an urge at presumption to aesthetic experience and found its gratification in the beauty of the organic, Worringer's einfuhlung was an urge to abstraction, and found its beauty in the life-alien organic in the art of the primitive races. Worringer stated that the primitive races in all civilizations were

victims of a metaphysical fear. They found themselves spiritually lost and helpless in direct confrontation with a mysterious world, which represented the flux of external phenomena in a terrifying manner. This feeling necessitated a strong urge to divest this world of all externality, and to take a plunge into a state of perpetual apprehension. This act was, according to Worringer, the beginning of an attitude, which helped them in creating a reality through the means of art to vindicate man's individuality. In this way, primitive art became geometrical and abstract.

Hulme based his distinction of 'vital' and 'non-vital' on Worringer's theory and claimed that the Renaissance view was responsible for encouraging the cult of pantheistic life-worship. Hulme observed that the Renaissance-humanistic attitude with all its heterogenous forms was now breaking-up. The complacent humanistic attitude had considered man as the measure of all things. It had not only affected man's ethical and emotional being, but also literature and art. The ultimate end of poetry was thought to be only the objectified self-enjoyment with a purpose to delight and instruct. There was a parallel conception in humanistic art too. The attempts to project accurate representations of natural events and human actions, replaced abstract art in favour of naturalistic or realistic art. Hulme came up with the absolute doctrines of 'original

sin' and 'absolute values'. As a philosopher, he was trying to fight with the 'sloppy dregs' of humanistic tradition in art:

At the Renaissance, there were many pictures with religious subjects, but no religious art in the proper sense of the word. . . . when the intensity of the religious attitude finds proper expression in art, then you get a very different result. Such expression springs not from a delight in life but from a feeling for certain absolute values, which are entirely independent of vital things cf. Byzantine, Egyptian and early Greek art.²⁹

In his theory of abstract art, Worringer proved the dominance of the nature of the spirit over the nature of the world; of the geometric patterns over space and depth. But he also noted that there had been a continual alteration between naturalistic and non-naturalistic styles.

Hulme went a step further than Worringer and converted his [Worringer's] critique of art to define his own theory of abstraction in art. He declared that in the Primitive, Egyptian, Byzantine and Romanesque periods, the artist completely abandoned the projection of space, and reduced organic nature to linear, geometrical forms by eliminating all traces of organic form. Therefore, Hulme defined two different categories in art: naturalistic and non-naturalistic and came to the conclusion that:

✓ These two arts are not modifications of one and the same art but pursue different aims and are created for the satisfaction of different necessities of the mind.³⁰

²⁹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.9.

³⁰Ibid., p.77.

Hulme further maintained that the modern necessity was for an art that would be abstract and non-naturalistic. It was this definite conception of Hulme's placidity of the arts that gave rise to Pound's definition of an 'image' as: "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."³¹

Although the modern movement in aesthetics was the result of constant tension and polarization of various movements and counter-movements (Futurism, Impressionism, Imagism, Vorticism etc.), all these movements got assimilated in 'Expressionism.' Expressionistic art had an enduring influence on poetry, painting and sculpture primarily due to its emphasis on the technical felicity. It attached more importance to the artistic drive than to the formal perfection of the finished product. Hulme defined this creative act as:

. . . the deliberate standing still,
 hovering and thinking oneself into an
 artificial view, for the moment, and
 not affecting any real action at all.³²

The Expressionists tried to unveil the various layers of social, political and psychological reality in order to attain total spiritualization in life and art. As to the German expressionists, art was:

³¹ Frank Kermode, The Romantic Image (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, c.1957., rpt:1972), p.120.

³² T.E. Hulme, Further Speculations Ed. Sam Hynes. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p.95.

Expressionism

not a substitute for religion; it was religion itself. And their principal line of communication, like that of the mystics, was not a horizontal but a vertical one.³³

Hulme was aware of the difficulty of communication on the human plane. Like the expressionists, he rejected the notion of 'Weltanschauung', as the sum-total of intellectual views and emotional attitudes. In his opinion, actual reality was impossible to be attained by the mere reproduction of tangible reality. The main function of art was to reveal that which was ordinarily unknowable to the senses; of making the invisible visible, or the externalization of the internal. The answer to this dilemma was found by Hulme in the definition of style - style meaning primarily the shapes and colours, representing an order of things different from the natural one. This meant, as Hulme asserted, the tendency to abstraction in a violent manner; a deviation from the organic form, resulting in a kind of arabesque.

Hulme was greatly indebted to Worringer for his distinction between individualism and sensualism. According to Worringer, in the age of the Baroque, the sensual element was exaggerated in order to create a superasensual art. In expressionism, the exaggeration of the individualistic component created spiritualized art. Thus Hulme

³³Ulrich Weisstein, "Expressionism: Style or Weltanschauung in", Criticism, Vol.IX, No.1 (Winter 1967), pp. 42-62 (p.48).

Expressionism
with individualism, &
sensualism

concluded that classical art demanded negation of the 'will'. Therefore, artistic volition was necessary to procure man's ascendancy over his worldly environment. So instead of empathy and imitation, he asserted alienation and abstraction as the two essential prerequisites of modernity in art and literature.

Hulme was a distinguished theorist and a very fine exponent of the art of painting and sculpture of the post-impressionistic period. His first love was painting and sculpture though, he was equally interested in verse. Epstein, who was his great admirer and friend, wrote in a foreward to Speculations:

I recall dozens of little personal things characteristic of the man . . . I was at work on the Wilde monument. Hulme immediately put his own construction on my work - turned it into some theory of projectiles . . . Abstract art had an extraordinary attraction for him: his own brain worked that way.³⁴

It would be erroneous to conclude that Hulme was merely a propagandist. May be, the assertion might carry some weight in so far as a critic's task is to interpret original works of art to the readers. But Hulme's use of Worringer's art theory to define and distinguish between 'vital' and 'non-vital', was certainly original and creative. He was the first critic to relate this

³⁴Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., pp. vii-viii.

distinction to the society's attitude toward the world. He was also prophetic in his declaration that all art since the Renaissance composed a single period of vital art and that, the new attitude toward art and literature would be non-vital and geometric:

I start with the conviction that the Renaissance attitude is breaking up and then illustrate it by the change in art and not vice versa.³⁵

He further remarked that:

. . . the re-emergence of geometrical art may be the precursor of the re-emergence of the corresponding attitude towards the world, and so of the break up of the Renaissance humanistic attitude.³⁶

Hulme was the first philosopher-critic to oppose the Renaissance-humanistic attitude which had become moribund and outdated. He was very much prophetic in his assertion that philosophy had to revert to something like scholasticism and art to the geometrical and linear art of Byzantium and ancient Egypt. Perhaps, the following observations would clarify Hulme's position as regards his use of the term, classicism. Hulme's classicism calls for discipline in religion; a belief in the ultimate fallibility of man, precision and form in art and literature, and authoritarianism in politics. It thus, encompasses the whole civilization and not only arts and aesthetics.

³⁵Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.78.

³⁶Ibid., p.78.

Hulme's
interest in the
theory of art.

Although Hulme's philosophy was the main constituent of his aesthetics, his lifelong interest was to define the theory of art. He has been often labelled as an immature philosopher, but the real truth is different from the commonly accepted truth. He was not a philosopher in the traditional sense. His interest in philosophy was informed by the same impulse which was at the root of anti-intellectual movement in the whole of Europe during his time. Hulme believed that there was no justification for philosophy, if it did not express different attitudes in a new manner.

Thus the African, Egyptian and the Oriental influences completed the final break with the naturalistic and mimetic tradition. Hulme's essays on "Epstein and the Critics", and "Modern Art", are a pointer to this new tendency and also a point of departure from the traditional view about art and aesthetics.

There is little doubt that had Hulme lived to recollect his thoughts and views about modern art leisurely, he would have acquitted himself admirably as an art critic, and he would have contributed much to the development of the theory of Modern Art.

Yes ✓

Upto the nineteenth century, the literary and artistic ideals were based on romantic-humanistic, complacent attitude toward man and his relation to the cosmos. Hulme did not believe in any kind of slow, or gradual change. He believed in a violent change, which in his opinion, was imminent and historically valid in literature and beyond it. Moreover, the modern emphasis had shifted from the purely moral and ethical to sociological, psychological and romantic considerations. Man was no longer the centre of interest. This tendency became increasingly pronounced in the latter criticism of Eliot and the Formalistic critics.

H's belief in
c violent change

Hulme's classicism was based on intuitive perception of the complete break with the romantic tradition, which placed perfection inside man. By emphasizing the doctrine of the original sin, Hulme succeeded in bringing to the fore the truth that there exists a tragic discord between man's imperfection and the divine perfection. And this discord, Hulme further emphasized, could only be resolved by the acceptance of an external authority. As Michael Roberts pointed out, Hulme's criticism of humanism, romanticism and liberalism was based on the concept of humility and human fallibility, which implicitly involves the recognition of dogma and authority.

H's classicism
opposed to
romanticism

Hulme's attack on romanticism and humanism was symptomatic of the great intellectual opposition which had become widespread even before the first World War. Hulme was committed to the creative spirit; to invent "a new dialect in which to restate an old attitude."³⁷ Although poetry deals with a plastic material in movement whereas painting and sculpture deal with a static material, both the modes depend on an urge to abstraction because of the artist's commitment to form. His lecture on "Modern Poetry", gave a new dimension to the concept of poetry after centuries of social and ethical theorizings. According to him, modern age demanded a new kind of verse with new techniques and a new form and that, it was: "simply and solely the means of expression"³⁸ and nothing else.

To Hulme, the essence of poetry did not mean the 'beyond of some kind', but "the light of ordinary day, never the light that never was on land and sea".³⁹ He attempted to attain intensity of meaning and the maximum of individual and personal expression in a new form. Hulme had a natural distrust of any subject matter what-so-ever. Therefore, the most important concern for Hulme was to search for an absolute form and through it, the ultimate nature

³⁷Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.36.

³⁸Ibid., p.67.

³⁹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.127.

of reality. This interest consisted solely in the beauty and perfection of the finished form. Hulme considered poetry essentially as a matter of expression and therefore, it could not be made subservient to religion, or to anything beyond itself; nor could it be used as the spring board for the soul to sour into the regions beyond. Hulme's taste was not catholic but violently personal and prejudiced:

I have no reverence for tradition. I came to the subject of verse from the inside rather than from the outside.⁴⁰

This was an altogether a new concept, which Hulme propagated for the emergence of a new kind of verse. Like Allen Poe's theory of a unified work of art and Henry James's concern for the Craft of Fiction, Hulme's concept of the organic unity of a work of art, gave desirable direction to the later critics.

When we take into account various social and cultural traditions and concerns of the critics from the time of the romantics to the present day, Hulme's importance as a critic comes into sharper focus. He attempted to formulate a kind of criticism which would be free from social, moral and ethical considerations. As a critic he believed in the total communication of primarily the aesthetic quality of a work of art. In his criticism he attempted to arrive

⁴⁰Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.68.

His concept
of poetry
Sp.
Is it a
compliment?

at a comprehensive understanding of the elements which constitute form and colour. The close connection between Hulme's concern for form and the impersonal theory of poetry which became in the hands of Eliot, the most powerful tool to judge the aesthetic quality of poetry, was Hulme's foremost concern.

It is true, Hulme was basically a philosophical critic and Bergsonian metaphysics is central to his aesthetic theories. But this fact does not affect his austerity as a literary critic. It is also true that he used many of the philosophical, aesthetic and extra-literary ideas of the German writers. But he was not an exception in this regard. Coleridge had borrowed freely from the German philosophers and aestheticians to formulate his own ideas about the nature of poetry. The most noteworthy instance is Eliot's profuse borrowings from continental and oriental philosophy and literature. Further, the practice of the New Critics like Allen Tate, Ransom and Vivas has amply shown how words and phrases borrowed from metaphysics and other extra-literary sources add semantic richness to literary criticism.

Hulme, by transmuting German ideas and thoughts, brought to English criticism new trends and innovations

and paved the way for the modernistic trend in literature and art. Hulme was not an original thinker of course, but then, the fact remains that often literary revolutions have been effected not by original thinkers, but by critics. Hulme's important contribution thus lies in the fact that he introduced a philosophical method of literary criticism in England.

*Hulme's
contribution
to English
criticism*

Hulme also believed that poetry was not concerned with the task of communicating poetic vision to others; rather it was concerned with the psychological and aesthetic power of poetry itself: "Poetry not for others, but for the poet, Nature infinite, but personality finite, rough and incomplete."⁴¹ He was the first important theoretician at the beginning of the century, who argued that poetry ought to be solely judged from aesthetic standards only, and not from any other extraneous factor. It was this concern that made him the forerunner of the Imagist movement in England, and the true father of the Experimental literature afterward.

⁴¹Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.94.

CHAPTER - I I I

HULME AND THE IMAGIST MOVEMENT

The Imagist movement was essentially neo-classical and it was modelled on Greek poetry. In the early decade of the present century, there was an acute anxiety on the part of the writers to replace the post-Renaissance-humanistic tradition by the tradition of the oriental and the primitive.

Most of the modern artists at that time thought that the liberation of the unconscious was the main task of the age. They all felt that man's world was circumvented by a mysterious force, and it was impossible to comprehend the totality of human existence. Therefore, the most important task for the early moderns was to search for a new art form and through it, the ultimate nature of reality.

But this period was also characterised by utter chaos and confusion, and literary criticism had become completely directionless, it not only failed to establish an academic connection with

Is it
true?

contemporary literature, it also gave rise to unnatural vices.

In the early decade of the present century, Hulme emerged as an avant-garde figure and dominated the Frith Street Cenacle. In his theory and practice, he displayed whatever was innovative and creative in contemporary criticism. F.S. Flint, his close associate and champion of 'verse libre', acknowledged Hulme's contribution in giving a definite direction to the practitioners of verse in the early years:

It is a pity that Mr. Pound's preface says nothing more of these evenings, at which the part of organizing secretary and cerebrus, to bark away undesirable comers, was played by Hulme . . . The outcome of those meetings was three or four books of verse and Mr. Hulme's complete poetical works. . . . It is a good joke, with sufficient in the material to make one regret that Mr. Hulme ever learned German, and read philosophy, and abandoned the making of little Japanese pictures in verse.⁴²

Missing

?

Though Pound was instrumental in fostering interest in the Imagists, and he gave the first public voice to Hulme's five imagist poems, which he printed as an Appendix to his Ripostes, in 1912, the Imagist

⁴²Eric, Homberger (ed.), Ezra Pound : The Critical Heritage (London:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 97-98.

movement as such was started by Hulme in 1908. Enid Starkie⁴³ has pointed out that the poem, "Autumn", was first published in the pamphlet, "Pour Noel", in 1908. It was the first Imagist poem to be published in England which was a kind of Hulme's poetic manifesto of Free Verse. Under the influence of the French Symbolists, he insisted upon absolute presentation of objects without verbiage.

Another probable influence at that time could be that of Jacque Rivière, the editor of the "Nouvelle Revue Française". He was Hulme's French counter-part and a confirmed classicist. Rivière was popularizing the classical tradition by publishing the ideas of such writers as Alain-Fournier, Andre Gide, Marcel Proust and Claudel. Hulme laid down the first imagistic principles for 'a hard and dry' classicism. He was the first poet in England to show extreme obsession with metaphors. His jottings in "Cinders", in Speculations, described the world as a plurality of isolated facts:

. . . the world is finite / atomism:
there are no infinitudes except in art]
and that it is yet an infinitude of
cinders / there is no finite law en-
compassing all].⁴⁴

⁴³cf. From Gautier to Eliot.

⁴⁴Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p. 222.

This premise was confirmed by almost all the imaginative writers of the modern period. His tragic world-view that: "the world lives in order to develop the lines on its face",⁴⁵ was echoed by Eliot in a most powerful manner in The Waste Land.

It would be futile to search for Pound's reasons for substituting Ford for Hulme as the true founder of Imagism. Perhaps, Pound was a victim of the unnatural vice of misplaced hero-worship, or guilty of over-enthusiasm in his role as a popularizer of literary personalities. But the fact remains that he contradicted his own utterances, and created a lot of confusion. In one of his characteristic statements, he declared:

The critical Light during the years immediately in pre-war London shown not from Hulme but from Ford /Madox, etc. 7 in so far as it fell on writing at all . . . It detracts no jot from the honour due Hulme that he had no monopoly of London literary life and did not crowd out other interests. . . .

In another statement he observed:

. . . I have no doubt that the bleak and smeary twenties wretchedly needed his guidance, and the pity is that he wasn't there in person to keep down the vermins.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.229.

⁴⁶Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), pp. 307-9.

Ford was, no doubt, the best memoir writer of his time and his Provence, and Return to Yesterday, gave him the honour of a good prose writer ^{and} ~~on~~ the best exampler of impressionistic style in England. But he was not a serious theoretician, and his poetical exercises were dull in comparison to Hulme's efforts. Moreover, he had a profound disregard for accurate statements, or facts. In the words of Stella Bowens:

Ford's weakness of character, unfairness, disregard of truth, and vanity must be accepted on the other hand, his tenderness, understanding, wisdom /about anything that did not apply to himself! 7 and the tremendous attraction of his gorgeous mind, must make him always regretted.⁴⁷

Ford's theorizing about poetry was vague and immature in comparison to Hulme's. Much of his verse was sentimental and personal. Moreover, Ford himself had admitted the fact that he was a man without definite ideas.

Richard Aldington was a contemporary of Hulme. He was also one of the early practitioners of verse libre. Whereas Hulme took inspiration from the French Symbolists, Aldington modelled his poems on the

⁴⁷ "Ford As Others Saw Him", TLS, Friday 5 May, 1972, No. 3662, p.519.

classical Greek pattern. Like Pound, he also did not consider Hulme as the originator of Imagist poetry. Writing to Herbert Read, in 1925, he clarified his stand in these words:

I do not know what Pound got from Hulme, but I do know that my debt to Hulme = 0 . . . I had written what Pound christened Imagist poems before I had ever heard of Hulme. The point is that Imagism, as written by H.D. and me, was purely our own invention and was not an attempt to put a theory in practice. The school was Ezra's invention.⁴⁸

Richard Aldington's remark that they were not interested in putting a theory in practice, gives a clear indication that the Imagist movement was not a planned movement like other movements. Though they [the early moderns] were all doing something new and fresh, ^{they} it lacked proper theoretical base. F.S. Flint's remarks on "Imagisme" corroborate this view to a great extent. Discussing 'Imagisme' as a movement, he wrote:

The imagistes admitted that they were contemporaries of the post-Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto.⁴⁹

A just reflection on movements and counter-movements

⁴⁸A. Kershaw and F.J. Temple (eds.), Richard Aldington: An Intimate Portrait (Ill:Carbondale, 1965), p.127.

⁴⁹William J. Handy and Max Westbrook (eds.), "On Imagism" in Twentieth-century Criticism: The Major Statements (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, c.1974, Ind. ed., 1976), p.17.

in the chaotic jungle of the early period leads us to the conclusion that no single literary figure could claim to be the originator of Imagist movement. Without exaggerating Hulme's importance, it would not be wrong to say that he was the only critic, who gave a definite direction and shift to modern aesthetics and art theory at a time, when everybody was conscious of a change, but without a clear conception of the new order.

Hulme provided the first systematic and philosophical account of the new reaction against sentimental and personal expression in verse. He deplored the lack of belief in absolute truth or the sense of perfection of form in thought and poetry. He was the first to declare that the new expression in painting, impressionism, would influence the expression in poetry too:

We cannot escape from the spirit of our times. What has found expression in painting as impressionism will soon find expression in poetry as Free verse.⁵⁰

Hulme's views on poetry were new and revolutionary. His stress on 'Free Verse' was due to his distrust of the regular, conventional metric forms,

⁵⁰Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.72.

which were cramping and meaningless. According to Hulme, poetry was an abstract thing, which had: "its own life, quite apart from metre as a convention."⁵¹ He emphasized the need to write poetry without the use of regular metre because: "the direct language is poetry, it is direct because it deals with images. The indirect language is prose, because it uses images that have died and become figures of speech."⁵²

In this connection, we may state that Hulme's classical objectivity had many similarities with the French Symbolists especially, de Gourmont, Laforgue and Mallarme. He abhorred the use of cliché, rhetoric, and regular metre to describe the fleeting and fragmentary impressions. Therefore, like the French Symbolists, he insisted upon the use of clear and concrete images as the only satisfactory mode of poetic transcription. He defined the classical virtues of 'Free verse' in terms of precision of language; the power to crystalize an object into a physical and visual image, and the concentration of thought:

⁵¹Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit.,p.74.

⁵²Ibid., p.74.

This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music, it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes . . . it builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader.⁵³

Hulme's objectivity in poetry was similar to that of the Russian writers like Tchekov, Dostoevsky, Gorky and the French novelist, Flaubert. He desired to convey through the use of fluid metaphors, each separate emotion and thought in its particularity with intuitive perception like Tchekov's vision of moonlight falling on a broken bottle, or Dostoevsky's penny 'hopping and chinking'. His concept of the 'plastic image', was similar to Murry's idea of imaginative crystallization. Hulme wanted the same imaginative power in poetry that Flaubert spoke of, and Tchekov demanded of Gorky - the power to see a thing and the power to describe a thing in an evocative manner. Murry described this power as: "not so much a triumph of language as a victory over language".⁵⁴

H's --
evocative power
of poetry ✓

Hulme was the chief apologist of abstraction

⁵³Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.75.

⁵⁴Middleton J. Murry, The Problem of Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.85.

in art and poetry, which later on, developed within the framework of modern aesthetics to such an extreme degree that it was no longer possible to maintain reasonable balance between content and form. This urge to exceed the boundaries of pure abstraction was seen best in James Joyce's, Finnegans Wake.

It may seem to be a paradoxical statement, but the fact is, Hulme was aware of the pitfalls of excessive abstraction though, he thought it to be a necessary condition of pure poetry. In an essay published in 1909, he attacked abstract philosophers like, Haldane, and approved of such visual philosophers as Nietzsche. He, therefore, suggested that:

The history of philosophy should be written as that of seven or eight great metaphors; . . . abstraction is necessary, but dangerous: As in social life, it is dangerous to get too far away from Barabā-rism.⁵⁵

Bergson's theory that the flux of phenomena is real, but concepts are false, was the fundamental basis of Hulme's idea of poetry as something concrete and visual. Poetry, according to Hulme:

...is not a counter-language, but a visual concrete one ... it always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit., p.11.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.10.

Arthur Symons

Before Hulme, Arthur Symons was credited for starting the Symbolist movement in England. He was also interested in visual art without moral, or sentimental content. Though he fully subscribed to Verlaine's exhortation: "Take eloquence, and wring its neck!"⁵⁷ he was unable to achieve this same effect in his poetry. It was Hulme, who was able to achieve this symbolist goal in his own poetry: "to get out the exact curve of the feeling or thing...."⁵⁸

Hulme exercised a stimulating influence on the major Imagists through his articles in periodicals, and his conversations with his friends especially, Pound, Hilda Doolittle, F.S. Flint, Wyndham Lewis and the Sculptors, Jacob Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska. Hulme's concept of the solid, plastic images became a unique phenomenon in the history of modern aesthetics. He attempted to achieve intensity through a symbol, or an image, which had qualities analogous to those of a crystal.

Hulme's concept of the solid, plastic images became a unique phenomenon in the history of modern aesthetics. He attempted to achieve intensity through a symbol, or an image, which had qualities analogous to those of a crystal.

⁵⁷David Perkins, A History of Modern Poetry, op.cit., pp.57-58.

⁵⁸Hulme, Speculations, op.cit., p.138.

Hulme's concept of 'free verse', was basically similar to the romantic principle of 'organic form', which develops and shapes itself during creative act. That is why, he asserted that, in order to get a new efflorescence of verse, the main task would be to evolve a new technique and a new form. Therefore, his anti-romanticism was not against Romanticism as such, but against the liberal attitude, looseness and emotional spontaneity.

*Hulme's
Anti-Romanticism*

Hulme's real distinction as a critic was to distinguish an object, or an event from the flux of experience. He was able to convey in his theory and practice a vivid awareness of the concrete particulars of which the external world is composed. He defined the true function of poetry as the transcendence of conventional perceptions, new awareness of reality, and prevention from mere abstraction by seeing a thing in its physical concreteness.

The literary situation in England, before the First World War, was well defined by the proliferation of 'Little Magazines' like; Ford's

"English Review"; A.R. Orage's, "The New Age"; Middleton Murry's "Rhythm"; Wyndham Lewis' "Blast", and "The Criterion", edited by Eliot. These magazines served as a common platform for a new poetic of the visual arts. Apart from the creative writers and critics, the most important propagandist for creating a favourable public opinion for the reception of new critical thought was, A.R. Orage. He was an active and important promoter of the Imagist movement. Orage was a classicist, and a Syndicalist, and displayed common ideals with Hulme and a number of writers, critics, and artists. He published almost all the essays and articles of Hulme from 1909 to 1916, which were later on edited and compiled by Herbert Read in Speculations. He was also instrumental in popularizing the views of Pound and Eliot in "The New Age", and later on in "The New English Weekly". "The New Age", was a weekly review which published current developments in literature, art and politics. In the practical field his efforts were largely conducive to the formation of a new style of poetry and the arts.

The credit for starting the "Hulme Myth", goes to Orage, who became virtually his literary

conscience from 1909 onwards. He was, in the main, responsible for making the ideas of Hulme acceptable to a larger audience at a time, when many magazines and reviews were indulging in ideological and critical battles. Eliot considered him as the best literary critic of his time, who encouraged many young writers to find their niche in the literary circles at that time.

Although Pound occupied the central place in the development of modernism in English poetry, it was through Hulme's influence that he decried romantic emotionalism, and extolled the classical virtues of craftsmanship, economy, objectivity and precision. The close similarity and parallel in Hulme's and Pound's views and aesthetics is due to the fact that, whereas, Hulme was the philosophical theoretician behind the Imagist movement, Pound was the chief agent and promoter of imagistic ideas.

But inspite of similar views and ideas, both Hulme and Pound worked independently. By the time Hulme's lectures were published, Pound had already published his second imagistic manifesto and edited Des Imagistes, which appeared in March 1914. In the same year he launched 'vorticism' in

Pound's
meditation
through Hulme

Pound's
meditation
through Hulme

the opening pages of "Blast".

In the light of the aforesaid fact, it is difficult to say with any finality, whether Hulme influenced Pound, or vice versa. Nonetheless, the impression appears to tilt towards Hulme as the central figure, who actually provided guidance in those critical years.

Pound was, no doubt, a versatile experimenter in metre, and his important contribution is to be found in the development of 'Free Verse'. There was considerable originality in Pound's poetry, but his early poems were marred by the unfortunate influence of poets like, Browning and Swinburne. Moreover, he was not a serious and exact craftsman and his early poetry was written in a confused and slapdash manner, On account of his borrowings and adaptations from Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Chinese, and Japanese poetry. Pound was basically a propagandist by temperament. Therefore, his criticism remained at best, ad-hoc because he was not able to formulate any definite system of principles. He was more interested: "to discover a new author, to help him find his appropriate idiom, to preside over the formation of taste".⁵⁹

⁵⁹Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., c.1957, Ind. ed., 1962), p.662.

It was Hulme whose concept of poetic image gave a definite turn to the first phase of Imagism and which became indirectly responsible for Pound's vorticist manifesto of the 'Image' as: "that which represents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."⁶⁰ This definition of 'Image' by Pound was directly based on Hulme's metaphor of 'curve'. Hulme indicated the true nature of Imagism by his emphasis on exact balance between subjectivity and objectivity in the creation of 'Image'. His lecture on "Romanticism and Classicism", provides theoretical background to his concept of Image. Pound's "A Few Dont's By an Imagiste", reproduces in an exact manner Hulme's Imagistic manifesto. The only difference between Pound and Hulme, and between Eliot and Hulme lies in the method of description. Whereas Hulme tried to describe a particular attitude by the fresh use of images in an entirely visual and pictorial manner, Pound and Eliot gave reasonable emphasis on cadence and rhythm. Few examples would be sufficient to bring out the difference between Pound-Eliot - Hulme stand.

⁶⁰Kermode, Loc. Cit., p.120.

Hulme states:

The effect of rhythm, like that of music, is to produce a kind of hypnotic state ... this is for the art of chanting, but the procedure of the new visual art is just the contrary ... This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes.⁶¹

And Pound instructs the young poets to:

... behave as a musician, a good musician ... In the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ base ... A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise...⁶²

Eliot notes in "The Music of Poetry":

I think that a poet may gain much from the study of music ... the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure ... and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image.⁶³

Thus Pound and Eliot insisted upon the sense of rhythm for a symphonic form which was quite contrary to Hulme's visual or pictorial form. Hulme tried to

⁶¹Hulme, Further Speculations, op.cit., pp.73-75.

⁶²William J. Handy and Max West-Brook eds. Twentieth Century Criticism: The Major Statements, op.cit., p.20.

⁶³T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose ed. John Hayward, op.cit., pp.66-67.

Answer proper
according to it

Diff. bet. Pound,
Eliot & Hulme

tried to express in an exact and direct manner, in pure imagery without any imposition of decorative or conventional metaphors.

In this respect, Hulme stole a march over Pound and other Imagists by evolving the experimental approach to poetry. His contribution is more significant because his role was that of a revisionist and an innovator. He insisted that poetic language, ought to be separated from the conventional language, which merely gives rise to sentimental and emotional utterances.

It is true that Pound went a step further than Hulme in his 'vorticism' to popularize the concept of poetic image, and he represented the modernistic attitude of the early period in a more effective manner than Hulme, or other Imagists by the creation of a new aesthetic based on Chinese ideogram, varied forms and modes of expression.

It is true that Imagism as a movement failed to catch on perhaps because of too much stress on undisciplined metre, conflicting ideologies and the impact of the First World War'. But that does not

*Causes of
failure of Imagism*

mean that their attempt was in vain. Hulme prophesied a period of hard, dry and classical poetry and the post-Hulmian period has seen that prophesy come true. Modern poetry has been freed from the artificial restrictions of rhyme and metre, and it has established its own rules and its own principles of beauty.

The theory of original sin, which Hulme used as his main philosophical weapon to fight against the romantic idolatry of man, as also the romantic liberalism, linked him irrevocably with the classical spirit. He developed his religious attitude on the lines of Pascal's theory of discontinuity and the concept of man as a fallen creature. Hulme emphatically rejected the romantic apotheosis of man as a demi-god, capable of unlimited advance and progress. To Pascal reality did not represent an intelligible and ordered system easily available to human intellect. In the same manner, he had little faith in rational theology and institutionalized religious belief in God. He was in favour of an inward religious faith that transcends ordinary methods of argument and justification which is beyond demonstrable proofs.

Consequently, Hulme's religious attitude was non-devotional. It was rather imbued with religious spirit. Unlike Eliot, Hulme was not concerned with religion with the traditional, christian dogmatic belief or with ethical and moral considerations as Arnold's and Babbitt's were. In Speculations, he clarifies his position thus:

It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma.⁶⁴

Hulme's main distinction was that he presented Pascal's view of the Christian dogma of original sin in a novel manner. He did not postulate any theological approach to human actions and social problems. Rather, it was the basis of his aesthetic theory and a framework for better social and political behaviour and human actions. Hulme defined Romanticism as a 'Spilt-religion' because it was the cause of the denial of the dogma of original sin. The romantics based their literature and thought on the assumption that man was essentially good and, therefore, capable of perfecting himself by his own efforts. He attacked the doctrine of 'Free Will' on epistemological grounds. In his

⁶⁴Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.74.

H's attacks
on romanticism

opinion, religious dogma was essential to control and discipline man's precipitative nature, which is apt to go awry both in licentious freedom, and in the face of unwarranted suffering. Hulme also believed that man needed spiritual guidance in order to comprehend the deeper causes of good and evil.

Hence, it would be wrong to presume as C.S. Lewis does that Hulme only made the confusion worse confounded by defining romanticism as: "Spilt religion, a certain romantic damp",⁶⁵ without any attempt to give an alternative solution:

... I agree that he who has religion ought not to spill it. But does it fallow that he who finds it spilled should avert his eyes.⁶⁶

In fact, Hulme's concept of the original sin was an attempt to solve the dilemma posed by the nineteenth century, which had been guilty of regarding life, nature, religion and literature as inter-related. He was the first philosopher-critic to lay a clear distinction between the 'vital' and 'non-vital'; the absolute and the contingent. He gave a proper place

⁶⁵Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.118.

⁶⁶C.S. Lewis, Preface to the Pilgrim's Redress (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1958), p.11.

social outlook profoundly and conspicuously in the early 1930^s. Eliot endorsed Hulme's idea that man and life were basically limited and that, ultimate reality could not be comprehended without recognizing the existence of evil. This also implied by contrast the possibility of a positive state of good.

Eliot also re-affirmed Hulme's idea that religion and literature operate on separate levels. He offered a concept of history by concluding that Classicism accepted the dogma of man's original sin and Romanticism rejected this dogma. Therefore, he did not hesitate to accept Hulme's premise that man is a limited, finite creature.

Gr Moreover, Eliot's anti-liberalism and anti-individualism was based on Hulme's conviction that religion plays a vital role in the culture of a nation. As such, in a society bent upon mass hysteria and self-destruction, he found in the Church the only salvation for individuals. Eliot's close affinity with Hulme on matters political, ethical and social became quite conspicuous in his essay on "Baudelaire", wherein he stated:

... T.E. Hulme left behind a paragraph which Baudelaire would have approved
 ... A man is essentially bad, he can only accomplish anything of value by discipline - ethical and political. Order is - thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating. Institutions are necessary.⁶⁷

Like Hulme, Eliot also concluded that literature was bound to suffer with the disappearance of the dogma of original sin, and hence, it could not ignore religious attitude. In Tradition and the Individual Talent, he was presenting the same view in a different form when he insisted on the value of discipline and pointed out the need for the institutions to exist in a succession of organic links, integrating the individual with tradition.

Gordon Lyndall was correct, when he pointed out that Eliot's last of the visionary poems "The Death of Saint Narcissus", was based on Hulme's "Conversion":

Hulme's conversion takes place in a wooded valley, covered with hyacinths, when he is stunned by a revelation of beauty. Saint Narcissus is similarly rapt before his own beauty. Both in the end overreach themselves and suffer a psychic blow, some kind of ignominious death of the spirit.⁶⁸

⁶⁷T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose (ed. John Hayward, Op.cit., pp.195-6.

⁶⁸Gordon Lyndall, Eliot's Early Years (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.62.

But his conclusion that their similarity ends there is difficult to accept. Hulme's tragic world-view encompassed everything - ethics, religion, man, society, culture, politics and literature. Eliot's poetry and his social and religious criticism confirm Hulme's views on most of these matters. Eliot was a puritan, and by nature passimistically cheerless and dry. His view about human nature and human action was essentially tragic. To him, man was basically flawed and imperfect, who was in constant need of ethical and political discipline and purification. Eliot's major concern from Prufrock, to the Quartets emanated from a similar tragic world-view. Thus Eliot interestingly agreed with Hulme's declaration that: "the classicist point of view has been defined as essentially a belief in original sin - the necessity for austere discipline."⁶⁹ This need for ethical and spiritual discipline was suggested by Eliot in The Waste Land, in the imagery of "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyat".⁷⁰

But there was a fundamental difference between Eliot's religious attitude and Hulme's religious approach to life. Hulme's apology

⁶⁹Ronald Schuchard, "Eliot and Hulme in 1916" in, PMLA, vol. 88, No.5 (October 1973), pp.1083-94.

⁷⁰T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land" in, The Faber Book of Modern Verse ed. Michael Roberts (London: Faber and Faber, c.1936, rpt. 1965), p.104.

Punctuation marks removed

sp.

for religious attitude arose from the necessity to provide himself with an objective and intellectual basis. In point of fact his religious orthodoxy was only directed against the doctrine of 'Free Will', as well as against the romantic attitude towards literature.

On the contrary, Eliot's attitude towards religion was emotional; a matter of feeling. He made Christian orthodoxy the touch-stone to view and judge contemporary literature and to bring it in conformity with the theology of the Catholic Church. By the time he wrote his important criticism and poems like Ash Wednesday, Ariel Poems, his religious conversion had been already accomplished. He made the Church a necessary arbiter of human and literary values. Eliot was essentially a Puritan and an ascetic. Therefore, in his poetry and criticism, he tried to formulate what he actually believed in life. To him, religion was inconceivable without its dogmas. So, in order to accept religion there was a need to accept the authority of the Church in all matters. That is why, we find a direct link between Eliot's religious conversion

and his attitude to politics, society and literature.

Moreover, Eliot's approach to history was ethical and he believed in the existence of moral values. Therefore, if we have to consider Eliot's poetry and criticism, it is strictly from the moral point of view. Hulme's view of art on the other hand, was strictly non-moral, because he believed that in the non-moral regions, there was no reason why anything should be valued. In his opinion literature and art had their own existence and value.

Hulme influenced Eliot through Pound and the posthumous publication of Speculations. He gave Eliot's poetry and criticism a definite direction by teaching him the Greek Classical ideal:

I believe that the modern tendency is toward ... classicism ... I will mention a few books, not all very recent, which to my mind exemplify this tendency: Reflexions sur la violence, by Georges Sorel; Avenir de l'Intelligence, by Charles Maurras; Belpheger, by Julian Benda; Speculations, by T.E. Hulme ...⁷¹

Hulme had declared that all art was the product of

⁷¹F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (London: Oxford University Press, c.1958, rpt; 1972), p.91.

H contrast
art as
Non-moral

an effort to metamorphose private emotions and feelings. A great poet was one, who could transfer all personal suffering into something universal and impersonal. Eliot's mind too worked in the same direction. He also believed that the origin of poetry was on account of the poet's understanding of the painful existence of human life, which itself had little significance. The poet's main task was to transform the raw material into a work of art by giving it a universal and an impersonal character.

Therefore, Eliot' based his theory of dépersonalization on the basis of Hulme's classical view of art. Like Hulme, Eliot also arrived at the self-evident truth that poetry takes its origin out of the agonized human predicament and human imperfection, and finds its true meaning through the discipline of suffering.

But Hulme's classicism extended to matters beyond literature. He applied his idea of classicism to wider topics like, philosophy, politics, and economic and social factors under the direct

influence of Georges Sorel and Charles Maurras. Hulme became a crusader and an active polemicist like Pound and Wyndham Lewis and believed that only through political culture, literary culture could be saved.

Eliot, in his early phase, did not evince such enthusiasm. He appeared to stick to the ideology of classicism as far as literature was concerned. He did not show Hulme's dynamism and thrust, which was classical, revolutionary and revisionary in literature as well as in politics. It was only after he came under the direct influence of the French Syndicalists and Hulme that he showed a subtle influence of a reactionary tendency in his critical pronouncements.

Another significant affinity between Hulme and Eliot was their common belief in a fresh poetic expression. They both opposed the prevailing loose standards of taste and value. Both of them argued in their separate roles as critics for the invention of new techniques for the efflorescence of a new verse form. Like Hulme, Eliot also attempted to purify 'the dialect of the tribe'. Both, the poet in

the realm of art and the mystic in life attempted to gather the main threads of inspiration - life, art, and history by going back to the tradition of the past, primitive races in order to effect the commerce between the old and the new.

Hulme's "Humanism And the Religious Attitude," defines many of Eliot's religious and political thoughts. Eliot himself acknowledged Hulme's influences in the seventh number of Criterion (April 1924):

... the late militarist by faith T.E. Hulme appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the Twentieth-Century mind, if the Twentieth-Century is to have a mind of its own. Hulme is classical, reactionary and revolutionary: he is the antipodes of the eclectic mind of the end of the last century.⁷²

E on TE Hulme

As Ronald Schuchard notes, Eliot loved to read Hulme's poems especially, "Fantasia of a Fallen Gentleman on the Embankment," to his students at London University during his Extension Lectures. In fact, Hulme's handful of poems epitomized all the Imagistic ideals.

⁷²William M. Chace, The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot (California: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp.114-15.

Eliot's Lecture on "The Reaction against Romanticism", and Hulme's Lecture on "Romanticism and Classicism", are so similar in thought, tone and wordings that one could easily misjudge Eliot for Hulme, or vice versa. Hulme's Lecture starts with the statement:

I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival.⁷³

And Eliot's Lecture begins thus: "The beginning of the twentieth-century has witnessed a return to the ideals of classicism."⁷⁴ Further he states the classicist attitude as: "essentially a belief in original sin - the necessity for austere discipline."⁷⁵

Though Eliot drew his inspiration from various sources, the most powerful impact on Eliot was that of Hulme and the early practitioners of the Imagist movement. When Eliot started his career as a poet-critic, he had to contend with the protean forms of materialism and utilitarianism. At that time, Hulme gave him the much needed enlightenment to regain his balance. It was on account of Hulme's

⁷³Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.113.

⁷⁴Ronald Schuchard, "Eliot and Hulme in 1916" in PMLA, Op.cit., p.1089.

⁷⁵Ibid., p.1089.

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influence that Eliot was successful in restoring the true tradition of English poetry which had lost its direction since the seventeenth-century.

In spite of obvious similarities in Hulme's and Eliot's views, there was a fundamental difference between the two. Like Bergson, Hulme denied intellect, reason and everything rational. He relied on the intuitive experience which was anti-intellectual. Eliot followed Bradley in recognizing the power of immediate experience which at once, splits it into subject and object because the mind of man intervenes, and the immediacy of the experience takes on a rational form. Therefore, Eliot concluded that if intellect goes then morality also goes by the board. Eliot believed that morality was religion itself and as such, he rejected Hulme's idea of the intuitive experience.

CHAPTER - I V

HULME AS A PHILOSOPHER

As stated earlier, Hulme's philosophy was influenced by Bergson, Pascal and Worringer. From Bergson he borrowed the concepts of 'intuition', 'discontinuity in nature', and the idea of 'intensive manifolds' which became the philosophical basis of Hulme's theory of 'image'.

Bergson⁷⁶ found discontinuity in nature because, according to him there is no relation between the mechanical and the vital. The mechanical belongs to the realm of pure sciences and is an intellectual construct. It is opposed to the realm of art. The vital is perceived intuitively and is the concern of the artist.

Hulme followed Bergson in the belief that the flux of phenomena is real and concepts are false. Therefore, by "intellect one can constructly approximate models", but by "intuition one can identify oneself with the flux".⁷⁷

⁷⁶cf. Introduction to Metaphysics.

⁷⁷Hulme, Further Speculations, Op.cit.,p.xvii.

Hulme alluded to Bergson's 'intuitive' and 'intensive complexity', and opposed 'extensive', or 'intellectual multiplicity'. Hulme was, in fact, the first philosopher-critic to attack humanism and romanticism for giving rise to the mistaken notion that reality was a continuum. He pointed out that reality was divided into three distinct spheres - the inanimate sphere of matter, dealt with by physical sciences; the organic world, dealt with by biology, psychology and history, and the sphere of ethical and religious values, dealt with by theology and the intuitions of faith. Hulme defined the first and the third sphere as having an absolute character, and the intermediate zone, as a muddy, loose zone of relative character. In Hulme's opinion, it was under the influence of Rousseau and the romantics that the organic zone of biological sciences began to encroach upon the absolute zone of ethical and religious values.

Thus all distinctions between the biological, ethical and the religious were confused and lumped together under the general category

of the organic. That is why, Hulme attacked the notion of continuity in life and nature. He established a clear distinction between the biological and the ethical, or religious values:

Biology is not theology, nor can God be defined in terms of life or progress . . . The divine is not life at its intensest. It contains in a way an almost anti-vital element.⁷⁸

On the basis of the above distinction, Hulme prophesied a return to the religious attitude in life, and a classical attitude in poetry and art. In "Intensive Manifolds," he called the romantic outpourings of loose emotions and sentiments as muddy gushings, not from the depths of being, but through a long pipe. And precisely for this reason, Hulme was impatient with traditional philosophers as well as traditional philosophy, which had remained under the dominance of the basic assumptions of the Renaissance humanism.

Hulme argued that modern philosophical outlook aimed to arrive at two different goals,

⁷⁸Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.8.

not necessarily related to each other, although they might be brought together for a practical end. While on the one hand philosophy dealt with what was its scientific concern, on the other hand, it also dealt with subjects of personal concern which were made-up of ideas, literature and art.

Hulme, in his 'Critique of Satisfaction', argued that standards and values which satisfy a particular age, are unconscious rather than conscious standards. These unconscious standards give rise to a particular view of life and literature which is different from the accepted facts, and conscious categories of human mind. Men do not always see the things only in terms of conscious categories. As such, any comprehensive understanding of any period involves an evaluation of unconscious pseudo-categories; their origin as well as their subsequent development.

According to Hulme, the essential categories of men changed twice in the course of history. In the middle ages, the canons of satisfaction were: a belief in the imperfection of man,

clear distinction between certain absolute values and the doctrine of original sin. These canons changed during the Renaissance. With the Renaissance came a new belief in the perfection of man, in personality and progress and the absolute values were diffused with the organic. Correspondingly, the medieval religious belief was replaced by the new humanistic ethos.

When Hulme applied his critique of satisfaction to the modern age, he found that the general spirit of the time was inclined towards a belief in the original sin and absolute categories, which ultimately make-up the religious attitude.

By temperament, Hulme was against the Pantheist, Greek attitude, which had somehow survived all these centuries. So, instead of putting his faith in the doctrine of evolution, and the mechanistic interpretations of life, he allowed himself to be guided by the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. He was convinced that the new attitude

will also change the complexion of modern philosophical thinking as well as literature and art.

Relying heavily upon Bergson's metaphysics, Hulme developed his theory of 'intensive manifolds', as a counter to the intellectual and mechanistic attitude, which was epitomized by the Huxlyian certainty that nothing could exist outside the sprawling mechanism of causes and effects. This view was too complacent and it typified the Victorian and the nineteenth-century intellectual urge to include man, life and the Cosmos within a single purview. The intellectual, scientific method was a wilful imposition upon the universe and human experience.

According to Hulme, the mechanistic theory was only a necessity of the intellect to lay open the tangled mass into an 'extensive manifold'. The intellect tended to analyse and explain the nature of the absolute reality by analysing each part in order to form a whole

picture. The same is true in the case of individual emotion, which is composed of thousand different elements. Hulme argued that ordinary language and intellectual analysis could not describe any particular state of mind, or emotion:

To describe accurately, then any emotion - to give it accurately and not approximately - you would have to describe at the same time the whole personality in which it occurs . . .⁷⁹

Therefore, he came up with his theory of 'Intensive Manifolds'. He based it on Bergson's intuitive method to interpret the successive states of flux by seizing it with the 'fundamental-self'. According to Bergson, intellect has only a basic practical function to construct the mechanistic models and hypotheses of a known experience. But the nature of the absolute reality, which is an ideal real, cannot be known through explanations. It can only be known by 'intuition', or inner sympathetic consciousness, which he called, the 'fundamental-self'.

⁷⁹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.185.

Bergson's
and
Intuition

Hulme applied Bergson's theory of intuition to differentiate between conventional and artistic perception; between scientific and historical understanding, and between communicable and incommunicable experience. He believed that conceptual thought, or language was inadequate to capture the 'essence' of experience because concepts and language were liable to freeze and thus, distort the flux of experience. That is why, he attempted to invent new metaphors and images in order to achieve a near possible approximation to the language of intuition. Hulme wanted a poetry which would convey a physical thing, and not simply an abstract idea:

visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor . . . Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose- a train which delivers you at a destination.⁸⁰

Hulme rightly noted that communication through language was a matter of rare artistic

⁸⁰Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.135.

distinction. Real aesthetic pleasure could only be achieved by the use of fresh images like, a ship "coursed the seas", rather than by the use of the conventional word, "Sailed".⁸¹ He believed that poetry dealt with physical and mental objects and that, a poet could attain the highest aesthetic goal by actually remaining in the presence of the object he wanted to describe.

Thus, Hulme attempted to catch the unpredictability of reality as a psychological phenomenon, which was different from the mechanistic view of it. He observed that it was only in terms of 'mental life' that we could have an intuition of real time, of real change and therefore, of real freedom.

Hulme also borrowed from G.E. Moore a few notions and attitudes which were wholly untypical of British empirical philosophy. Moore's neo-realism offered him a pure system of absolutes,

⁸¹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.135.

which was similar to mathematical sciences. His dislike for the intellectual rationalism and sentimental emotionalism urged him to look for an arbitrarily defined absolute as the foundation of modern poetry. He thought that poetry ought to be geometrical in form, completely devoid of subject-matter. This very ideal of Hulme was described by Lawrence in a letter dated 11 June 1916:

The essence of poetry with us in this dark age of stark and unlovely actualities is a stark directness, without a shadow of lie, or a shadow of deflection anywhere. Everything can go, but this stark, bare, rocky directness of statement, this alone makes poetry today.⁸²

Does Lawrence mean the same thing here?

A.R. Jones, in his The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme, established the importance of Hulme's thought in modern aesthetics, in a befitting assessment. According to him, Hulme offered a timely corrective to the mechanistic determinism of the nineteenth-century by his theory of intuitive, physical and visual perception.

⁸²V. de. S Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry: 1880-1940 (London: Hutchinson University Library, c.1967, rpt; 1972), p.140.

Hulme argued that: "the intuition of the poet does not merely take place in language, but the language is the intuition."⁸³

Bergson, in a letter remarked that Hulme was destined to produce great works in the field of philosophy and art. The later developments in the literature and art of the twentieth-century have amply proved that Bergson's faith was not belied. Writing in "The Sewanee Review" (1927), Allen Tate paid a great tribute to Hulme, when he said:

For Hulme actually wrote in the notes for his critique of satisfaction, our soundest repudiation of the nineteenth-century quest of an absolute solution of the world, of a world it pretended to know something about.⁸⁴

⁸³ A.R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme (London: Victor Gollancz, 1960), p.47.

⁸⁴ W.E. Collins, "Beyond Humanism: Some Notes on T.E. Hulme" in, The Sewanee Review, Vol. 38, No.3 (July 1930), pp.332-39 (p.332).

CHAPTER - V

HULME'S POLITICS AND CONCLUDING
REMARKS

According to Herbert Read, Hulme was an aggressive radical and a militarist by faith in his political declarations. At the beginning of his career, he came under the direct influence of the French political thinkers, Georges Sorel and Charles Maurras. Both of them favoured violence and extremism instead of caution and gradual change in social and political order.

Hulme was also a controversial figure in private and public life, and he had a natural knack of making himself disliked by his friends and enemies alike. His philosophy, literary theories and controversial public involvements were symptomatic of his volatile nature and projectile-like character. By virtue of the peculiar circumstances of his age, and his own powerful personality, Hulme became a vital link between the literary and political attitudes of the French neo-classicism, and the modern

aesthetic and political movement in England.

It is, therefore, not strange that Hulme and his other contemporaries were considered as Fascists. The charge appears to be valid as far as Hulme's political affinities and inclinations are concerned. Fascism, for Hulme, had an aesthetic appeal. Whatever traces of Fascism are to be found in his writings and personal behaviour, were the manifestations of the general spirit of the age. All the major artists of that period were driven by an urge to clear the ground for aesthetic and cultural revolution in the drab and uninspiring situation of English society. Fascism, like Marxism and Socialism, was only a part of the widespread revolt against romantic liberalism and traditional conservatism. That is why, all the political views of the major writers, critics and artists of the time tended to be authoritarian. They were all carried away by the exigencies of the circumstances either to the extreme 'left' or to the extreme 'right'. They were, propagandists of ideas rather than artists. The worst casualties in this regard were, Wyndham Lawis and Ezra Pound,^{and} W.B. Yeats.



Pound and Yeats openly sided with Mussolini, and Wyndham Lewis lost his ideological balance by his frequent flirtations with Hitler. T.S. Eliot commended the Royalist politics of Charles Maurras and spoke favourably of the Fascist dictators of Europe and believed them to be the most important bulwarks against the threat of communism.

Another charge which is often levelled against Hulme is that he was an inveterate bully, who would often kick-up a theory as easily as turning some opponent into a lampshade, or banging somebody with his abstractionistic knuckle duster.

No doubt, Hulme had a native distrust of charlatans and those persons, who would not accept his philosophy or aesthetic principles. Temperamentally, he was volatile, and a very serious person, who valued honesty and liberty above everything. He was also a man of heroic dimensions: Fearless, ambitious, and full of heroic determination to clear this world of the 'slag-heap':

Never speak of my unconquerable soul,
or of any vulgarity of that sort.
But thank God for the long note of the
bugle, which moves all the world
bodily out of the cinders and the mud.⁸⁵

⁸⁵Hulme, speculations, Op.cit., p.238.

Despite certain strands of proto-fascist ideology in Hulme's private and public pronouncements, the fascist appeal was never one-sided and powerful enough to make Hulme a monomaniac, anti-Semitic Fascist like Pound, whose commitment to fascism and Nazi cause was complete. In 1941, Pound remarked: "Mussolini and Hitler follow through magnificent intuition the doctrines of Confucius."⁸⁶

Neither was Hulme^m a self-conceited, self-opinionated fascist sympathizer or ideologue like Wyndham Lewis, who embraced Mussolini and Hitler because Marxist ideology was like poison to him:

I know that at some future date
I shall have my niche in the
Bolshevist Pantheon, as a great
enemy of the Middle-class idea...
I say: I shall be among the bolshie
prophets: My bourgeois-bohemians
in Tarr - and oh, my Apes of God!-
will provide selected passages for
the school children of the future
Communist state - of that I am
convinced...⁸⁷

Like Georges Sorel, Hulme was a seeker, who was not

⁸⁶Bernard Bergonzi "From Imagism to Fascism" in, TLS, Spetember 24, 1976, p.1195.

⁸⁷Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art (London: Cassell, 1934), pp.267-68.

content with any movements or ideologies. At best, he was an admirer of the Syndicalists, from whom he took his political and aesthetic inspiration. Therefore, he was not an active participant in any political movement of his time. He kept himself aloof from practical politics.

Georges Sorel was a theoretician of revolutionary Syndicalism. Hulme's militancy originated in his interest in the revolutionary Syndicalist doctrine of 'direct action' through the general strike of the labour class. Hulme was convinced of the futility of democracy and political action in the face of prevalent apathy of the general masses towards heroic action. Moreover, he was influenced by G.E. Moore and Husserl, who had emphasized the absolute character of values. It was, in fact, this Sorelian element that gave Hulme's outbursts an anti-intellectual, violent colour.

Hulme's concept of original sin had implications outside the realm of theology. Basically it was similar to Sorel's concept of the nation state as an absolute disciplining power against the false notion of democracy and a belief in progress

and evolution. Hulme, like Sorel believed in the strict discipline of the soul and in the external authority of the state.

His famous controversy with Bertrand Russell on the question of 'nationalism' and 'war', was essentially an ideological battle between the classicist view and the pacifist-progressive views. Bertrand Russell was a pacifist and a liberal socialist, who viewed Hulme's anti-democratic, reactionary ideology as a major calamity and a threat to the modern progress and peace. Hulme argued that it was impossible for the modern progressive mind to understand that:

... a revolutionary who is anti-democratic, an absolutist in ethics, rejecting all rationalism and relativism, who values the mystical element in religion which will never disappear, speaks contemptuously of modernism and progress...⁸⁸

In Hulme's opinion, Sorel believed in ethical and political discipline as an essential condition to fight against parliamentary democracy and the rule of the intellectuals. Violence was

⁸⁸Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.250.

necessary to rehabilitate social order and ethical values in a society, which had been disrupted by the disease of individualism and man-centered romanticism. Hulme, in "Reflections on Violence", asserted that Sorel's revolutionary ideology was based on the dogma of original sin:

What is at the root of the contrasted system of ideas you find in Sorel, the classical, pessimistic, or as its opponents would have it, the reactionary ideology? This system springs from the exactly contrary conception of man: the conviction that man is by nature bad, or limited ... In other words, it believes in original sin.⁸⁹

Hulme was an alert mind, who used Sorel's reflections to strengthen his own philosophy of social and political culture. He argued that order was not negative but creative and liberating. He advocated the same concept of discontinuities which, as shown earlier, he had applied in ethics, religion and literature. Political ideas and thoughts have a direct bearing on human institutions and actions. He said that the false concept of democracy and secularism confuses different categories, which

⁸⁹Hulme, Speculations, Op.cit., p.256.

actually belong to the absolute and the non-absolute realms of values. When some powerful individuals become custodians of parliamentary democracy, and try to frame laws with reference to the external social and political conditions and environment while retaining such values as constituted the basis of old orders, they confuse ethical and religious values with values that go with romantic liberalism. Accordingly, Hulme opposed modern democracy and progress as they mislead people in assuming all material progress as 'religion'. He described the absolute distinction between the human and the absolute through the symbol of the wheel. The centre of the wheel sends forth different spokes in different directions. A man standing at the centre might get the illusion of perfection at some other point than where he stands. This is exactly what happens in romanticism. It denies the real religious attitude which is at the centre of all human affairs, and which ultimately defines and controls all other values in the temporal world.

It is interesting to note that Hulme applied the dogma of original sin to literature, art, culture, society and politics. He used the authority of

Pascal, Worringer, Bergson, Sorel and Maurras to defend his basic principle that man was by nature limited and incomplete, and that any transformation and change could be only accomplished by the revival of the classical principles of order, control and discipline in their unitary and absolute sense.

Some critics have found Hulme guilty of the error of imagining romanticism as a static movement, a set of unitary ideas and rules like classicism. Their main line of argument has been that, romanticism is a way of thinking, a visionary attitude and a continuous process of alienation and individuation. Moreover, they maintain that it is a diversified phenomenon, which is very difficult to define with any common denominator. In the opinion of Mumford Jones, romanticism has never been defined satisfactorily. According to A.O. Lovejoy, romanticism is a set of pluralities rather than a unitary set of rules like classicism. Then, there are other critics, who emphasise that romanticism is neither a justification of the ways of nature, nor is it always anti-religious as Hulme would like us to think.

However, we incline towards Hulme's view that romanticism does posses a peculiar tendency

to turn itself into a plethora of self-contradictions especially, in the realm of aesthetics, religion, social and political culture. In philosophy it encourages scientific control over nature, and in aesthetics, it creates confusion by mixing morals, ethics and culture with literature. There are some apparent paradoxes in romanticism, which cannot be resolved without adhering to the principles of classicism.

Hulme borrowed most of his ideas about nationalism and the existence of the nation state from Charles Maurras. Moreover, his politics was deeply rooted in his literary criticism. Maurras believed that an artist had to submit his artistic sensibility to a strict order and discipline in order to arrive at a principle of perfection. In his book, L'Avenir de l'Intelligence, Maurras attacked the revolutionaries who ignored the real nature of man, which was essentially selfish and imperfect. That is why, he was against democracy, individualism and the concept of 'Free Will'. Hulme found Maurras' conclusion a perfect testimony of his own concept of the fallen state of man and thus,

he readily applied Maurras' principles to develop his own political ideology.

Hulme's classicism was also given a boost by Maurras' literary ideals. Maurras had a strong distaste for the romantic emotion in art and literary criticism. According to James Torrens:

The origins of Maurrassian ideas were literary and artistic rather than political. It was disgust with prevailing barbarism, Maurras later declared, that sent him looking for the principles of order, first in art, then in the rest of society.⁹⁰

Maurras
 | Hulme and Eliot were attracted towards Maurras because he laid down the classical canons of literary art and criticism in an absolute manner: economy of language, order and discipline, and a good prose style which would be as perfect and exact as the sensibility of the artist himself. His political ideology was also informed by the same ideals.

Hulme's Speculations, and Further Speculations, which were published posthumously, may not be ranked among the great classics of modern literary criticism. They are often full of

⁹⁰James Torrens, S.J. "Charles Maurras and Eliot's 'New Life'", in, PMLA, vol. 89, No. 2 (March 1974), pp.312-322.

repetitions and fragmentary jottings. But despite these defects they have a lucidity and an exactness of expression that often rises to poetic beauty; especially his essay on "Notes on the Bologna Congress". According to Hulme, the struggle for precision was the essence of artistic merit. Apart from a handful of poems, some essays and lectures, Hulme did not publish a single original work in his own life time and yet, he profoundly influenced all aspects of twentieth-century art and thought. The most significant question that has propped up before the critics is, whether his importance and seminal influence has been overrated or underrated in modern aesthetics.

Quantitatively, his literary output does not amount to much in comparison to the works of other modern critics. By the time he was thirty-four he died in war and only left behind an ambitious plan of work, which might have included a book on 'Modern Art' and a few essays on Epstein, Bergson and 'Modern Sculpture'. But the strangest contradiction is his undefinable hold and subtle influence on the modern mind even after a lapse of more than half-a-century.

*Hulme's influence
on modern mind*

Hulme was an arch anti-romantic, but he inspired the arch-romantic, Herbert Read, to popularize the concept of modern art. Abstract art had a great attraction for Hulme, but he was himself influenced by Bergson, who was anti-classical and anti-abstractionist. Hulme was a humorous and a libidinous character in real life, but his writings were harsh and violent. To stretch the contradiction further: As a man he made more enemies than friends; as a critic more disciples than detractors. His writings were slipshod and arguments often untenable, but he was prophetic in his intuitions and startingly right in his assertions.

Why?

sp?

In his political ideology he inclined towards the 'left', but in that age of chaos and confusion, he invariably found himself on the 'right side'. Moreover, his philosophy and aesthetic theory was also based on opposites: Classicism and romanticism; religious and humanism; fascism and democracy. He steered his way between geometrical precision and sloppiness; fancy and imagination; between the vital and the non-vital.

However, our main consideration is not with these seeming contradictions, but the definite attitude of Hulme towards literature, philosophy and art behind the polemical facade. The significant point is, Hulme prescribed a timely corrective to the prevalent confusion in contemporary art. In fact, he gave a definite direction to the works of such writers as; T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams. These writers followed Hulme's notion of the absolute aesthetic standards. He distinguished between the language of poetry and the language of prose in order to describe the physical aspect of poetry. He also asserted that the main task of the present century was to find out a perfect verbal equivalent of an object in order to satisfy the desire for accuracy.

But, there are some critics who have shown disagreement with Hulme's contention that true poetic perception is characterized by the poet's desire to attempt an accurate precise description. Lemon, J. Lee in, The Partial Critics, draws our attention to the limitations of Hulme's poetics

on two counts: First, there are certain areas of human perception and knowledge which cannot be described by Hulme's notion of 'precision'. In his opinion:

... poetry penetrates too deeply and in too many directions to be precise. A theory that does not account for many of our best poems argues strongly against itself.⁹¹

Secondly, the mind creates form with all the sense perceptions in an ordinary language, which is a living language full of varieties and modes of expression.

It is very difficult to establish whether modernism, which began with various innovations in poetry is essentially different from the past, poetic tradition, or whether the defenders of 'verse libre' are guilty of disregarding the traditional poetic standards. But one thing is definite. Both romanticism and modernism have a common anxiety and a common goal to achieve. In the beginning, romanticism was a protest against sentimentalism, subjectivity and formlessness in art.

⁹¹Lemon, J. Lee, The Partial Critics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.98.

The modern movement initiated by Hulme and his contemporaries was also characterized by the same concerns. They attempted to liberate poetry from the conventional rules of rhyme and metre, and to create form by disregarding the recognized principles of beauty. In this respect, Hulme's imagistic manifesto was similar to that of the early romantics. What is most significant but generally overlooked in Hulme's criticism is the fact that his fight was against the romantic abuse of emotional liberalism, and ethical and moral anarchy, which had been perpetuated by the romantic-humanistic attitude since the Renaissance. As Professor J.L. Lowes points out, the end of art, according to Hulme, was neither in the aesthetic sense of an imperishable beauty, nor in mere emotion. But it was a fragment of reality transmitted through the intuitive consciousness.

According to
Hulme the
end of art

Hulme was the first poet-critic, who asserted that emotional spontaneity could not supply any criterion of the beautiful. In a way, art was opposed to nature. It was the divorce between nature and art emphasised by Hulme that led Wyndham Lewis,

Pound, Eliot and the practitioners of the 'Experimental Literature' to reject imitative art.

Hulme's other important contribution to modern philosophy and the theory of aesthetics was his idea that it was futile to see continuity in the processes of the human mind. The recent psychological studies have amply proved Hulme's point that discontinuous structure in poetry is characteristic of human experience, which is dependent upon continuous shift from the conscious level of the mind to the deeper unconscious.

Poetry is an interrupted sequence of new images. It is the outcome of the poet's attempt to create 'Spatial Form' in poetry. The poet after being freed from the limitations of moral and emotional considerations, uses new images and analogies to express his experience in multiple inter-relations.

Hulme believed that after centuries of madness and disorder, the modern age needed sanity, sense of humility and discipline. The romantic cult of sentiments and emotions was superficial and

What did Hulme mean by romanticism of madness & disorder?

misleading both in human affairs and literature. Therefore, his claim to originality as a philosopher lies in his attempt to absorb what was good and decent in European enlightenment for the development of a fresh attitude towards morals, politics, aesthetics and philosophy. In Hulme's opinion, philosophy was not a pure science but a subject which opened up new vistas for understanding the ultimate reality.

Hulme's philosophy was an attempt to give to poetry an intuitive depth, and physical objectivity in order to capture the true nature of experience. Hulme realised that the ordinary and discursive language of reason and intellect was unable to describe what was intuitively experienced. Therefore, he wanted to revitalize the dead language with the infusion of fresh images and phrases. Moreover, he was the first philosopher to point out that man was not a reservoir of unlimited possibilities, but a limited creature, whose nature was constant. More than anything else, he required humility, and a constant guidance

and control from above in his social, political and religious activities.

Hulme's greatest distinction was his theory or original sin. Wyndham Lewis wrote in Blasting and Bombardiering: ~~the~~

If men of letters had sobriquets or nicknames, in the way that some painters have ... then Hulme would probably be called Hulme of Original sin.⁹²

This was a flattering tribute from a great artist, who was also a personal enemy of Hulme, and who had a pathological dislike for most of his contemporaries. In the early years of the present century, Hulme presented himself as the enemy of democracy, romantic liberalism and humanistic individualism. After a lapse of more than half-a-century, he is slowly emerging from his literary remains as one of the pioneers of the modernistic movement in art and letters.

⁹²Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937), p.101.

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