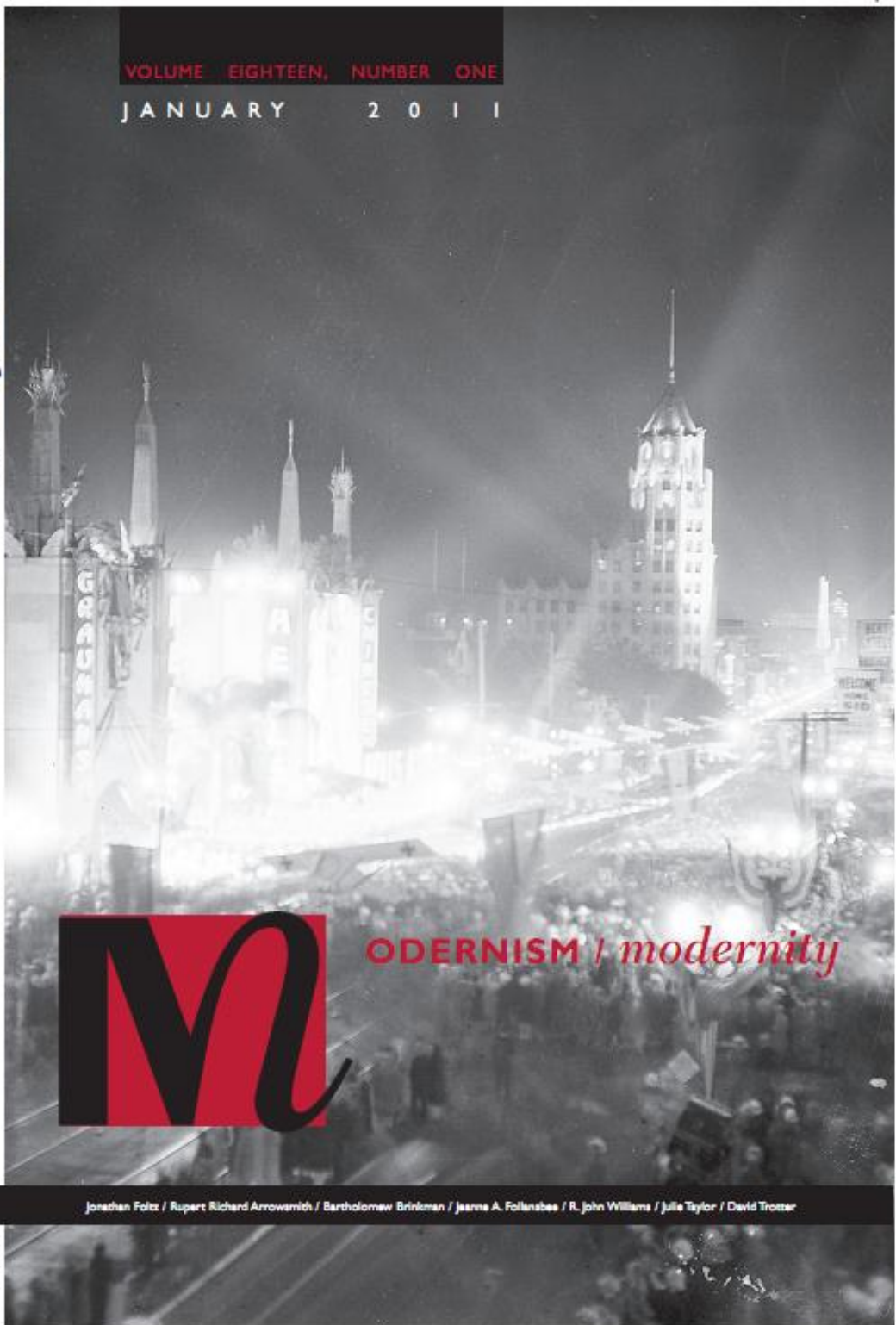


MODERNISM / *modernity*

VOLUME EIGHTEEN, NUMBER ONE

VOLUME EIGHTEEN, NUMBER ONE

JANUARY 2011



MODERNISM / *modernity*

Jonathan Foltz / Rupert Richard Arrowsmith / Bartholomew Birkman / Jeanne A. Follensbee / R. John Williams / Julia Taylor / David Trotter





The Transcultural Roots of Modernism: Imagist Poetry, Japanese Visual Culture, and the Western Museum System

Rupert Richard Arrowsmith

In the early years of the twentieth century, traditional Japanese culture underwent a resurgence that not only extended its influence beyond the nation's borders, but fundamentally affected the character of global Modernism as it was beginning to emerge in the art and literature of cities as distant as Calcutta, Boston, and especially London. For more than three decades, Japan had enjoyed under the regime of the Meiji Emperor an openness to international influences that had been systematically denied by the *sakoku*, or “closed country,” policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate that preceded it. Novelty had induced fascination, and European conventions of architecture, painting, and writing became increasingly fashionable amid the urban landscape of the new Imperial capital at Tokyo—with a population of nearly two million by 1905, one of the six largest cities in the world.

However infectious this fashion was, however, its products should not be seen as imitations of European styles, but rather as hybrid adaptations that anticipate the Western experiments with Japanese aesthetics that would follow them. Shimizu Kisuke II's design for the headquarters of Mitsui bank, constructed in 1872, is a good example. “The style of construction was diverse, with the lower floors consisting in a Western veranda featuring railings along with supporting columns of bronze,” the important urban theorist Maeda Ai wrote of this building in the 1970s, “but above it all was placed a three-story tower styled like that of a Japanese castle complete with projecting gables.”¹ Such deliberate and selective incorporation of Western styles and motifs is also visible in the literature of the period. The author Tsubouchi Shōyō,

MODERNISM / *modernity*
VOLUME EIGHTEEN,
NUMBER ONE, PP 27–42.
© 2011 THE JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Rupert Richard Arrowsmith is a Research Associate of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University College London. He holds a doctorate in English Literature and Art History from Oxford University (Christ Church), and is the author of *Modernism and the Museum – Asian, African and Pacific Art and the London Avant Garde* (OUP, Jan 2011)—a controversial new account of the debts owed by Western Modernist literature and art to extra-European visual cultures. He is currently writing a book on the nature of global intercultural exchange during the twentieth century, and editing a major new study of the aesthetics of Buddhist sculpture.



28 an erstwhile scholar of Russian culture, famously advocated the adoption of Western realist aesthetics in his 1885 critical work *Shōsetsu Shinzui* (*The Essence of the Novel*), but retained the labyrinthine plotting conventions of Tokugawa literature in his own fiction, and translated the works of Shakespeare into the idiom of Kabuki theatre.² In painting, Takahashi Yuichi and Harada Naojiro studied European techniques such as volumetric shading and vanishing-point perspective, but applied these to local motifs such as the *oiran*, or female entertainer; and to devotional images of *Kannon*, an aspect of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara familiar throughout the history of East Asian art.³

By the turn of the century, the use of aesthetics and methods overtly derived from Europe had begun to seem distinctly passé to many members of the Tokyo avant-garde. “We love the poetry of our predecessors, both of the East and of the West,” wrote the poet Yosano Tekkan; “but we cannot stoop to spade fields that they have already cultivated.” Rather than engage in further adaptation of Western poetic genres, his magazine *Myōjō*, or “Morning Star,” encouraged a reconceptualization of indigenous Japanese verse forms, particularly the thirty-one syllable *tanka* format from which the more internationally famous seventeen-syllable *haiku* is ultimately derived.⁴ Thinking along similar lines, the great art historian Okakura Kakuzō in 1898 founded the *Nihon Bijutsuin*, or “Japan Fine Arts School,” the country’s first institution to offer formal academic training in traditional Japanese approaches to painting, sculpture, and design (Fig. 1). “Accustomed to accept the new without sacrificing the old, our adoption of Western methods has not so greatly affected the national life as is generally supposed,” he wrote a few years later.⁵ “We were obliged to assimilate much that the Occident offered for our advancement and at the same time to resuscitate the classic ideals of the East.”⁶

It was Okakura who began the work of turning the tide of intercultural flow so that Asian concepts began to influence the West more strongly than vice versa. His first port of call was the rapidly industrialising city of Calcutta, where he was welcomed in 1902 by Abanindranath Tagore, nephew of the great Bengali poet Rabindranath and soon to be recognized as the city’s most influential early Modernist painter. As a result of his stay there, he began to see all the cultures of India and China as forming a continuity that had been disrupted by historical events such as the devastating Islamic invasions of the former and the extension of Mongol hegemony over the latter. Japan, he thought, represented a repository of those two fundamental civilizations—a “museum of Asiatic civilisation” that could now be drawn upon to revitalize the contemporary culture of the continent.⁷ “The history of Japanese art,” he wrote in his seminal volume *The Ideals of the East*, “becomes thus the history of Asiatic ideals—the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand-ripple as it beat against the national consciousness.”⁸ In order to assist this revitalization, he brought two Japanese artists, Hishida Shunshō and Yokoyama Taikan, to Calcutta to exchange ideas with Abanindranath Tagore and his colleagues; from Taikan, Abanindranath learned the “wash technique” that would become his trademark, and began to experiment with motifs derived from Chinese classicism.⁹

Though written in Calcutta and imbued with the spirit of pan-Asianism, Okakura’s *The Ideals of the East* was composed in English and published in London and New



▲
Fig. 1. Okakura Kakuzō in 1898. Tenshin Memorial Museum of Art, Ibaraki, Japan.

York, suggesting that its target was a Western, rather than an Eastern, readership. One of its biggest fans was the poet and British Museum curator Laurence Binyon, regarded in the years leading up to the First World War as London's premier authority on Asian art. Binyon's first publication on the subject was a review of *The Ideals of the East* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and references to this and to other writings by Okakura, whether overt or covert, permeated his subsequent output of lectures, articles, and books.¹⁰ Even as late as 1933, when he was invited to Harvard to give a series of lectures on the visual cultures of Japan, China, and India, Binyon was still able to begin one of his talks by quoting the opening phrase of *The Ideals of the East*—"Asia is one."¹¹

In the audience at Binyon's earliest known lectures on the same topic—presented twenty seven years previously at the Royal Albert Hall in London's Kensington—there was a listener whose attendance would have profound implications for the development of Modernist poetry in the West: Ezra Pound. Pound had been introduced to Binyon

30 about a month and a half beforehand by their mutual publisher Elkin Mathews, and had doubtless been invited to the event by the speaker himself.¹² Pound's subsequent remark on the lectures in a letter to his mother—that he had found them “intensely interesting”—demonstrates the strength of their impact upon him.¹³

The nature of the introduction to East Asian culture received by Pound at the Albert Hall in 1909 has been a matter for intensive and varied speculation by poetry critics. Noel Stock began the guesswork in his biography of Pound in 1965, and only a few years ago Zhaoming Qian—the most prolific contemporary authority on Asian art and Modernist poetry—was able still to note that “the precise contents of the lecture[s] Pound heard in 1909 remain unknown.”¹⁴ In 2002, however, a seventy-five volume archive of Binyon's personal papers suddenly became available via the British Library that reveals not only what Binyon said during his talks, but also which lantern slides he projected onto the screen at the front of the hall. The process of dating these documents has not been made easy by Binyon's idiosyncratic practices as a lecturer. Because the fundamental structure of the lecture series changed little over the years, dog-eared pencil drafts are often found interleaved with newer pages written in ink or typed; the page-numbers of the older sheets having been amended to reflect their new position. These older pages are heavily annotated, with anachronisms crossed out or even excised with scissors. Those that have not been incorporated into later talks are strewn randomly throughout the archive, but continue to be datable via internal evidence to 1909 or thereabouts.¹⁵ The most compelling reason for thinking that these handwritten texts represent the Albert Hall lectures, however, is that their contents fit exactly with the handbill Binyon issued to advertise the series (Fig. 2). This document was discovered by John Hatcher among Binyon's papers at the Houghton Library at Harvard, and is reproduced in his 1991 biography *Laurence Binyon: Poet, Scholar of East and West*.¹⁶ Most importantly, both the oldest manuscripts and the handbill are divided into just four lectures, whereas Binyon expanded the series to six after the First World War, and to seven by the time of the Harvard lectures.

Two aspects of Binyon's 1909 lectures stand out as significant for the future development of Modernist poetry in the West. The first is their tendency to juxtapose particularly productive epochs in civilizations remote from one another in time and space in an attempt to uncover correspondences. Lecture Two, for example, investigates the societal conditions that appear to bring on a cultural renaissance—a subject soon to become a key concern of London's Modernists. The discussion begins with the dramatic literary and artistic developments sponsored by Japan's Ashikaga Shoguns—again with most of its observations lifted from *The Ideals of the East*—but goes on to create direct analogies between these and the Italian Renaissance in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Florence.¹⁷ Pound must have found Binyon's narrative strategy equally as compelling as the information on East Asian art itself, for he would later use a comparable system of “subject rhymes” to give structure to the eclectic historical sweep of his *Cantos* project.

With regard to the more imminent appearance in London of the poetry movement known as imagism, however, the types of artwork upon which Binyon chose

Art & Thought in East & West: Parallels and Contrasts.

*SYLLABUS OF A COURSE OF FOUR LECTURES,
illustrated with Lantern Slides, to be given in the Small Theatre
of the ALBERT HALL, KENSINGTON, at 5.30 on
WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS, MARCH 10th, 17th, 24th, and 31st,*

By LAURENCE BINYON.

I. SCULPTURE AND RELIGIOUS ART.

Alexander in India. Contact of Greek and Indian art. Two ideals. Common ground. Transforming power of the religious idea in Europe and in Asia. Mediaeval sculpture compared with the sculpture of India, China, and Japan. Recent discoveries in Central Asia. The "grotesque" in East and West. The classic tradition in Europe. Primitive painting in the two continents.

II. THE RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE AND IN JAPAN.

Coincidence in time. Similar inspiration of both movements; contrast in mode of expression. Splendour and austerity. Great patrons of art: Lorenzo de'Medici; Maximilian; the Ashikaga Shoguns. Difference in temperament and conditions of life. Contrasted conceptions of personality. Portraiture in East and West. Spirit of the early Reformation, and that of Zen Buddhism. Ideal of intellectual freedom. Gaiety. A change of mood. Materialism. Academic tradition.

III. LANDSCAPE AND THE FEELING FOR NATURE.

Gradual growth of landscape art in Europe. The nineteenth century. Deep feeling for nature in early Chinese poetry and painting. Dualism; the Tiger and the Dragon. Elemental qualities in landscape of Asia. Treatment of the sea; Korin and Turner. Perspective in East and West. Drawings by Claude, and Chinese monochromes. Passion for flowers and birds. Pisanello and Oriental art.

IV. POPULAR ART AND REALISM.

Painting of daily life in Venice, the Netherlands, France, and England. Comparison with Japanese colour-prints. Peculiar conditions under which these were produced. Harunobu. Watteau. New treatments of old subjects. Utamaro. Manet. Different conceptions of realism. European art of the present day. Conclusion.

*TICKETS for the Course may be obtained from MR. J. STEPNEY,
24, BURY STREET, ST. JAMES', S.W. Price, ONE GUINEA.
Admission to single Lectures (pay at the door), 6/-.*

Good, Ltd., Burying St., Strand, W.C.



Fig. 2. Handbill advertising Laurence Binyon's 1909 Albert Hall lectures. Houghton Library, Harvard (BMS Eng 1148 [126]).

32 to concentrate is of the strongest interest. Considering the wide scope of the Albert Hall lectures, there is a disproportionate concentration on the *ukiyo-e*, or “floating world,” school whose intricate woodblock prints were popular in Japan from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The same bias also determined Binyon’s choice of illustrations for *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, a posthumous 1912 publication by that most famous of all Western scholars of East Asian culture, Ernest Fenollosa.¹⁸ Binyon included no less than fifty *ukiyo-e* prints as illustrations in the volume, when—ironically—Fenollosa’s text runs down the movement, contrasting its popularity in pointedly negative terms with the elitist academic traditions of Japanese painting that had preceded it.

The fact is that Binyon was rather obsessive about *ukiyo-e* prints; his concern with collecting them for the British Museum operating, in the words of his biographer, “at a deeper level than was necessary for his curatorial duties.”¹⁹ At the time Pound met him, Binyon was concluding an unprecedented series of exactly such acquisitions, having purchased several thousand prints—the bulk of the museum’s renowned present-day collection—between 1906 and 1909. Binyon’s lecture manuscripts show that he often encouraged his audience to follow up their viewing of his lantern slides by visiting the Prints and Drawings Students Room at the British Museum—affectionately known as “The Print Room”—to see the originals.

New evidence from the British Museum archives shows that Pound had already visited the Print Room twice between his first meeting with Binyon and his attendance at the Albert Hall lectures; and that he would do so on three further occasions before the end of 1909. There are two reasons for thinking that these visits were made in the company of Binyon. The first is that entry to the Print Room required completion of a lengthy membership application that required references and a waiting period of at least one month. There was not enough time between Pound’s first meeting with Binyon and his first two visits to the facility on the ninth and the twelfth of February for these formalities to have been completed.²⁰ The second is that Binyon—who often signed visitors who were not members into the Print Room attendance register personally—entered Pound’s name in his own distinctive copperplate handwriting on two of the young poet’s 1909 visits.²¹ The Print Room was where Binyon engaged in sorting the enormous horde of new acquisitions and taking notes on it for the comprehensive catalog that would take him until 1916 to prepare.²² It is inconceivable under these circumstances that he did not show choice specimens to Pound and discuss them with him, but nothing about the Print Room, or indeed specifically about East Asian art, appears in Pound’s published or unpublished writings until three years later. It would take time for Pound to realize the potential value of Japanese visual art to his poetic development, but when he did, the Print Room would be his first port of call.

The received wisdom about East Asian influences on imagist poetry is that these came via published translations of traditional Japanese verse forms owned by F. S. Flint and imitated by him and T. E. Hulme. New evidence, however, points to a much more significant and direct role in the story for *ukiyo-e* prints. Flint’s and Hulme’s poetry group met throughout 1909 with the objective of creating similar contemporary

adaptations of traditional *tanka* and *haiku* forms to the ones attempted by *fin de siècle* Japanese poets such as Yosano Tekkan. At this point in time, though, Pound was equally prepared to dismiss these innovations as he had been to ignore the possibilities held out by Japanese visual art in the British Museum. Flint himself noted that the younger poet had attended the 1909 meetings, but had “added nothing to the discussion,” insisting instead on talking about his translations from the troubadours of medieval Europe.²³ When Pound later published these last as *Canzoni* in 1911, however, his sometime literary mentor Ford Madox Ford ridiculed them as a “jejune provincial effort,” and advised him to update his poetic idiom to something more fashionable as a matter of great urgency.²⁴

Pound’s decision to publish some of Hulme’s experiments as an appendix to his own *Ripostes* volume the following fall shows that he had begun to come around to the idea of looking beyond the borders of Europe for such inspiration. These were exactly the poems of Hulme’s that Flint referred to as “little Japanese pictures,” emphasizing the intimate connections between that culture’s visual art and its poetry. *Ukiyo-e* prints were often produced to illustrate well-known stanzas that were then inscribed at the top of the print itself; while historical poets such as Yosa Buson, one of whose short poems Flint used as an example in a seminal essay on Japanese verse, typically painted or drew mental images as *haiga*—visual poems—before translating these into words.²⁵ Interestingly, the idea that Japanese visual aesthetics could be just as important to avant-garde poetry in the West as Japanese verse conventions seems to have occurred first not to Pound but to another of London’s early Modernists—Richard Aldington.

Aldington derived the imagery of “The River,” one of the showcase pieces in Pound’s *Des Imagistes* anthology, directly from “a couple of Japanese colour prints” in “the B.M. Print Room.”²⁶ Though these verses did not become public until they appeared without a title in the January 1914 edition of *Poetry* magazine, the paper trail he left behind tells us that Aldington wrote the poem during the fall of 1912—around the time that Pound officially announced the existence of the imagist movement in the same *Ripostes* volume that incorporated Hulme’s “little Japanese Pictures.” Aldington first stepped into the Print Room on the twenty-eighth of August, making no fewer than five visits there before the end of the following month.²⁷ Because he did not go back again until 1915, “The River” must have been composed during this period, probably during the three consecutive days he spent there from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-sixth of September. The text of the poem was printed in *Poetry* as follows:

I have drifted along this river
 Until I moored my boat
 By these crossed trunks.

Here the mist moves
 Over fragile leaves and rushes,
 Colourless waters and brown, fading hills.

You have come from beneath the trees
 And move within the mist,
 A floating leaf.

O blue flower of the evening,
 You have touched my face
 With your leaves of silver.

Love me, for I must depart.²⁸

“The landscape was certainly Hokusai’s,” he told the poetry critic Earl Miner later; “the second one I don’t remember, obviously a girl, perhaps an Outamaro [Utamaro], perhaps a Toyokuni.”²⁹

It is a simple matter to locate the first print, not least because Aldington’s ekphrasis of it is comprehensive enough to allude to its physical condition as well as describing its motif. Katsushika Hokusai’s *Suwa in Shinano Province* forms part of the artist’s early nineteenth-century series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, the British Museum’s collection of which had been completed by Binyon in 1908 (Fig. 3). It shows a pair of crossed trees on a headland, with a boat to one side on what are—in the version Aldington saw—quite literally colorless waters. Woodblock prints are prone to blanching when they are exposed to moisture or light, and the blue shading in the Print Room’s particular impression has almost completely faded away.

The content of the latter part of Aldington’s poem suggests that he may also have been examining some of the museum’s racier holdings. Among Kitagawa Utamaro’s most noteworthy products are his books of *shunga*, or “spring pictures,” a euphemism in Japanese art for erotic images of courtesans and their clients in the Yoshiwara pleasure district of old Tokyo. The British Museum owned a copy of the most highly regarded of these, the *Utamakura*, or “Pillow Poem,” but Binyon kept it out of his official 1916 catalog for fear of disturbing Edwardian notions of propriety. The most famous of these images shows a man having sex with a woman wearing a midnight blue kimono adorned with stylized silver and bronze fall leaves, while her small hands touch the face of her lover (Fig. 4). The sexual urgency of Aldington’s final appeal, to “love me, for I must depart,” may also be felt in the suggestive poem that Utamaro has inscribed on the lover’s outspread fan: “Its beak caught firmly / In the clam shell, / The snipe cannot / Fly away / Of an autumn evening.”³⁰

One reason for the sudden perceived relevance of Japanese culture to avant-garde undertakings in general was the rapidly changing view of the country in Europe during the years leading up to the First World War. The idea of Japan as a forward-looking civic society and industrial powerhouse rather than a picturesque and exotic backwater had been acknowledged by the West only since the crushing defeat of Russia by the Japanese armed forces in Manchuria in 1905. “The average Westerner was wont to regard Japan as barbarous while she indulged in the gentle arts of peace,” Okakura Kakuzō remarked caustically the following year, “he calls her civilized since she began to commit wholesale slaughter on Manchurian battlefields.”³¹ The new status of Japan as



▲
Fig. 3. *Fuji from Suwa* (from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*), by Katsushika Hokusai, 1823–9. Wood-block print (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).



▲
Fig. 4. *Lovers in an Upstairs Room* (from the illustrated book *Utamakura*), by Kitagawa Utamaro, 1788. Wood-block print (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).

- 36 a global power was reinforced in the summer of 1910, when the Japanese government put on a large-scale exposition of architecture, visual art, and landscape gardening in London. This attracted more than eight million visitors, making it the best attended such event held in Britain up to that date. Ford Madox Ford liked it so much that he went along twice, later publishing the following impression:

[I] came out in a great square of white buildings all outlined in white light. There were crowds and crowds of people—or no, there was spread out beneath the lights, an infinitely moving mass of black, with white faces lifted up to the light, moving slowly, quickly, not moving at all, being obscured, reappearing . . .³²

This curious description brings us to the most famous imagist piece of all: Pound's "In a Station of the Metro." It cannot possibly be a coincidence that on the day following Richard Aldington's string of three consecutive visits to the British Museum Print Room, Pound's signature appears in the register there for the first time in three years; nor that the following "hokku-like"³³ poem was sent off to *Poetry* magazine a very short time later:

The apparition of these faces in a crowd,
Petals on a wet, black bough.³⁴

Japanese art and literature has always maintained an obsessive fascination with the ephemeral beauty of *sakura*—the cherry blossoms of spring—and scenes featuring them appear with great regularity as *ukiyo-e* motifs. In Hokusai's *Poem by Ono no Komachi*, for example, a print acquired by Binyon just before Pound's first ever visit to the Print Room, an old woman is shown sweeping up the pale petals, which litter the ground and then cling to the rain-wet cherry wood of the tree's branches (Fig. 5). Binyon liked this artwork so much that he had the poem on it translated, and included the English version in his 1916 catalog:

While I have been sauntering through
the world, looking upon its vanities, lo!
My flower has faded and the time of the long rains come.³⁵

The print is part of a series of Hokusai's illustrating the *Hyakunin isshu*—"One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets"—probably the best-known verse anthology in Japanese literature. Ono no Komachi was a great beauty of the ninth-century Fujiwara court, whom Pound had already heard described in Binyon's Albert Hall lectures as "the most famous of all the poetesses of Japan."³⁶ Her numerous early works take romantic love as their subject, while later verses such as the example above reflect upon the brevity of life and beauty and the exigencies of old age. There are several Japanese plays about Komachi, and it is interesting that Pound and W. B. Yeats chose to begin their *Noh* theatre adaptations the following fall with two of these—the *Sotoba Komachi* and the *Kayoi Komachi*—both of which express the same feelings of ephemerality and



▲
Fig. 5. Poem by Ono no Komachi (from the series illustrating the *Hyakunin isshu*), by Katsushika Hokusai, early 19th century. Woodblock print (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).

loss as the poem inscribed on Hokusai's print. "Have spent the day in searches," Pound wrote to his fiancée Dorothy Shakespear during the first week of 1913; "I contemplated mediaeval Japanese prints at the B.M. and feel ages older and wiser."³⁷

If anything, the vogue for basing imagist poetry on *ukiyo-e* prints intensified as the American poets John Gould Fletcher and Amy Lowell became associated with the movement. Fletcher, a resident of London, derived the imagery of his 1914 *Symphony in White* from "contemplation of some snow scene prints by Hiroshige."³⁸ He could not have looked at these at the British Museum, for, as Pound had complained to Shakespear late in 1914, "the Print Room B.M. is closed forever."³⁹ Due to Binyon's mania for acquisition, the department's holdings had become too large for their original premises, and were being shifted to more spacious accommodation in the institution's newly-constructed northern wing. The British Museum was not the only place in London with an *ukiyo-e* collection, however, and Pound was quick to ask Dorothy, "is there anything at the S. Kensington?"⁴⁰

By coincidence, London's Victoria and Albert Museum—sometimes named after its location in South Kensington—was about to open "an important loan exhibition of Japanese Colour-Prints" featuring seven of the snow prints by Hiroshige that would so attract John Gould Fletcher's attention for the *Symphony in White*.⁴¹ These included an edition of one of the printmaker's acknowledged masterworks, the rare triptych *Mountain Streams of the Kiso Road* (Fig. 6)—a striking image of meltwater snaking between glacial masses, which may well have inspired Fletcher's lines "Through thin blue crevasses, / Trickles an icy stream." Another print on display was Hiroshige's *Kam-*



▲
 Fig. 6. *Mountain Streams of the Kiso Road* by Utagawa Hiroshige, early 19th century, woodblock print (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).

bara under Snow (Fig. 7)—an elegant depiction of a snowbound village which seems to have given Fletcher “Under their heaped snow eaves, / Leaden houses shiver.” Most interesting of all, however, is the fact that Fletcher, like Aldington, makes a reference in his poem to the physical characteristics of the museum exhibits that inspired it. “O that the white scroll of heaven might be rolled up,” he writes at the end of the piece, perhaps to remind the reader that *ukiyo-e* prints were modeled on hanging scrolls and were traditionally rolled for storage. Fletcher’s tendency to produce what were often little more than direct descriptions of such works intensified over the year that followed, even as Pound was shifting his own interest in East Asian culture away from Japanese art and towards Chinese poetry. Back in the United States in 1915, he spent a week in February at the Chicago Art Institute writing a series of short, *tanka*-like poems based on his impressions of particular prints on display there. When he published these a year later with the assistance of Amy Lowell, he even named the volume *Japanese Prints*.

The form and content of Lowell’s own imagist work closely follows that of Fletcher’s in its development. After returning to the United States from London in 1916, she wrote a poem about the urban center of Boston that features a fairly subtle incorporation of the straight-ruled black lines used by Hiroshige to represent rain falling on the streets of Tokyo:

Cross hatchings of rain against gray walls
 Slant lines of black rain
 In front of the up and down, wet stone sides of buildings.

At Boston’s Museum of Fine Art, the person in charge of Asian visual culture between 1904 and 1913 had been none other than Okakura Kakuzō. He had strongly encouraged the institution’s acquisition of *ukiyo-e* prints in addition to ensuring that they were kept on permanent display in the exhibition galleries. Hiroshige’s *Night Rain at Karasaki*



▲
Fig. 7. *Kambara in Snow* (from the series *Fifty-Three Stations on the Tokaido Road*), by Utagawa Hiroshige, 1833–4 (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).

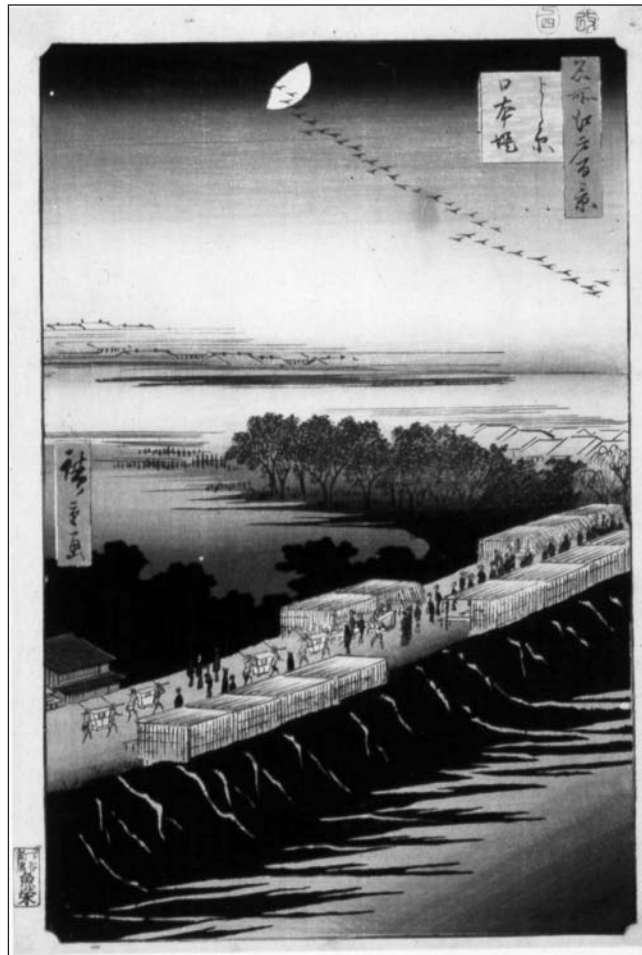
and *Driving Rain at Shono* were acquired shortly after Okakura's death in 1913, and probably suggested both the aesthetics and the title of Lowell's poem, which is named "Afternoon Rain in State Street."

After helping Fletcher to publish his *Japanese Prints* later in 1916, Lowell's poetic adaptation of Japanese imagery became noticeably more overt and conspicuous. Early the following year, she submitted a collection named *Lacquer Prints* to *Poetry* magazine which, much in the manner of Fletcher's volume, comprised what are basically ekphrastic descriptions of individual *ukiyo-e* works.⁴² One of these short pieces, titled *Road to the Yoshiwara*, provides an excellent example:

Coming to you along the Nihon Embankment
Suddenly the road was darkened
By a flock of wild geese
Crossing the moon.

Critic David Ewick has said that the visual ingredients of this poem "are perfectly selected to remind of *hokku*," but they are actually all drawn directly from *Nihon Embankment, Yoshiwara*—the final print in Hiroshige's celebrated *One Hundred Views of Edo* series (Fig. 8).⁴³ Hiroshige's title provides the initial clue to this relationship, and the image itself may be seen to feature every one of the visual elements described by Lowell.

The fact that the first recognisably Modernist school of Anglo-American poetry depended so heavily on interpretation of visual art from a culture on the other side of



▲
 Fig. 8. *Nihon Embankment, Yoshiwara* (from the series *One Hundred Views of Edo*), by Utagawa Hiroshige, 1856–8. Woodblock print (© Trustees of the British Museum, London).

the planet serves to illustrate an important point with regard to the evolution of the movement in a wider context. Far from representing an essentially Western initiative with its roots in Europe, Modernism should be seen as a product of the complex cultural interplay between metropolitan centers across the globe, with aesthetic and technical concepts flowing at least as vigorously from East to West as vice versa. While the late nineteenth century was characterized by an uptake of European conventions of literature and visual art in cities such as Calcutta and Tokyo, the early twentieth century saw an equal and opposite reaction, with sculptors, painters, poets, and architects in London, Paris, Boston, and Chicago adapting Asian forms in order to revitalize what by that time had come to be regarded as a moribund Western tradition. The earliest manifestations of Modernism, then, were transcultural to a far greater extent than has previously been acknowledged, and should be seen as the beginnings of a human, rather than a merely regional, cultural milieu.

Notes

1. Author's translation of Maeda Ai, "Kaika no panorama" in *Tenbo* 226 (October 1977), 33. For a full text translation, see Maeda Ai, "The Panorama of Enlightenment," in *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, James Fuji, trans. (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 67–69. Architectural historian Kimimasa Abe has noted that Shimizu's design demonstrates a complete understanding of European principles, concluding that the composite nature of the building was therefore a deliberate innovation. Kimimasa Abe, "Early Western Architecture in Japan" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 13:2 (May 1954), 15–16.
2. See Marleigh Grayer Ryan, *The Development of Realism in the Fiction of Tsubouchi Shōyō* (Seattle, WA and London: University of Washington Press, 1975).
3. See Aeba Takao, *Nihon kindai no seikimatsu (The Fin de Siècle of Japanese Modernity)*; Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 1990).
4. Tekkan's manifesto of *Shinshisha (New Poetry Society)* in *Miyōjō* 6 (September 1900), trans. Donald Keene, in *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era, A History of Japanese Literature*, Vol. 2: Poetry, Drama, Criticism (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 20.
5. Kakuzō Okakura, *The Awakening of Japan* (New York: Century Company, 1904), 188.
6. Okakura, *Awakening of Japan*, 162.
7. Okakura, *The Ideals of the East* (London: John Murray, 1903), 7.
8. Okakura, *Ideals of the East*, 7.
9. For the definitive account of the Japanese artists' visit to India, see Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1922* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal c. 1850–1920* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
10. Laurence Binyon, "The Ideals of the East," review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 March, 1903, 73–74.
11. Typed manuscript for the second of the 1933–34 Charles Eliot Norton Lectures given by Binyon at Harvard. Binyon Loan Archive Vol. 30, British Library Manuscript Collection, London. Hereafter abbreviated as *BLA*.
12. For details of Pound's introduction to Binyon, see James G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound* (Madison, WI and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 139; Patricia Hutchins, *Ezra Pound's Kensington: An Exploration, 1885–1913* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 59; James J. Wilhelm, *Ezra Pound in London and Paris, 1908–1925* (University Park, PA and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 19.
13. Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound, 15 March, 1909. Pound writes about the first of Binyon's four lectures in this letter, while the second is mentioned in a letter to his father, Homer Pound, written two days later (Beinecke Library, Yale, ms. 59.2659).
14. Zhaoming Qian, *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 11.
15. One piece of handwritten text for example, recommends E. B. Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, a 1908 volume which Binyon describes as "a recent book" (Fragment of Lecture 1: "Sculpture and Religious Art," *BLA* Vol. 31). A slightly later slide-list identifies one image as "Amida descending Shepherd's Bush," a surreal phrase which undoubtedly describes a Shingon Buddhist work on temporary loan to the 1910 Japan-British exhibition in the Shepherd's Bush area of London. List of slides of Japanese artworks—page labelled "4" in top right corner, *BLA* Vol. 103, box 32.
16. John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon: Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
17. Binyon, Fragment of Lecture 2: "The Renaissance in Europe and in Japan," *BLA* Vol. 31. For Binyon's source material, see Okakura, "Ashikaga Period" in *Ideals of the East* (London: John Murray, 1903), 89–100.
18. Ernest Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (London: William Heinemann, 1912).
19. John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon: Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 70.

20. The dates for the other 1909 visits are 1 March, 4 May, and June 16th. Prints and Drawings Students' Room Visitors Book for 1909, British Museum Archive, London. Hereafter abbreviated as *BMA*.

21. Pound's name was entered by Binyon on 1 March and 16 June; on the other visits his usual signature appears. One anomaly is that on 16 June, Pound's name appears twice—once in Binyon's hand and once in his own. Possibly the poet had not realized that he had already been signed in by Binyon, and went back to the Print Room entrance to sign himself in later. *BMA*.

22. Binyon, *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Woodcuts Preserved in the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1916).

23. F. S. Flint, "The History of Imagism," *The Egoist* 2:5 (1 May, 1915), 71.

24. Ezra Pound quoting Ford Madox Ford, cited in Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, ed., *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 172.

25. F. S. Flint, "Book of the Week: Recent Verse," *The New Age* 722 (11 July, 1908), 212.

26. Richard Aldington to Earl Miner (n.d.), quoted in Miner's *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ and London: Princeton University Press, 1958), 159.

27. Prints and Drawings Students' Room Visitors Book for 1912, *BMA*.

28. Richard Aldington, untitled poem in *Poetry* 3:4 (January 1914), 133. A slightly different version appeared later the same year in Pound's *Des Imagistes* volume under the title "The River." It substitutes "drifted" for "have drifted," and "she has come" for "you have come"; it also splits the poem more clearly into two sections and omits all of the commas from the original.

29. Aldington to Miner (n.d.), quoted in Miner's *The Japanese Tradition*, 159.

30. "Hamaguri ni / Hashi o shika to / Hasamarete / Shigi tachikanuru / Aki no yugure." Lawrence Smith, Victor Harris, and Timothy Clark, *Japanese Art: Masterpieces in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Publications, 1990), 230 (no. 227).

31. Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (New York: Fox Duffield, 1906), 7.

32. Ford Madox Ford, "The Poet's Eye," *The New Freewoman* 1:6 (1 September, 1913), 108.

33. Pound, "Vorticism" in *Fortnightly Review*, 1 September, 1914. Reproduced in Harriet Zinnes, ed., *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts* (New York: New Directions, 1980), 204.

34. "In a Station of the Metro" was originally included in Pound's *Contemporanea* sequence, the manuscript of which was sent to *Poetry* by 13 October, 1912. It was not published in the magazine until April 1913 only because Pound had instructed the editor, Harriet Monroe, not to print his new "ultra-modern, ultra-efete" poems until she had first "used 'H.D.' [Hilda Doolittle] and Aldington." Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe, 13 October, 1912 in D. D. Paige, ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 45–46.

35. Binyon, *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Woodcuts*, 348. The translation is probably by Arthur Waley and the Japanese art historian Hogitaro Inada.

36. Unpublished manuscript for Binyon's fourth Albert Hall Lecture entitled "Popular Art," fo.12, Vol. 30, *BLA*.

37. Reproduced in Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz, eds., *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters, 1909–1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 177. Hereafter abbreviated as *EPDS*.

38. John Gould Fletcher, *Life is My Song: The Autobiography of John Gould Fletcher* (New York and Toronto: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937), 145.

39. Pound to Shakespear, 17 September, 1913. *EPDS*, 256.

40. *EPDS*, 256.

41. Cecil H. Smith (Director and Secretary of the Victoria and Albert Museum), *Board of Education Report for the Year 1913 on The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Bethnal Green Museum* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914), 4.

42. Amy Lowell, *Poetry* 9:9 (March 1917), 302–7.

43. David Ewick, *Japonisme, Orientalism, Modernism: A Bibliography of Japan in English-Language Verse of the Early 20th Century*, <<http://themargins.net/bib/B/BI/bi08.html>> (last accessed on 11 May, 2010).