

Ezra Pound and Hollis Frampton on Time

A peculiarity in Frampton's theory of art should vex his readers. On the one hand, Frampton proposed time and again the idea that the value of art is that it conveys the structures and dynamics of consciousness, while on the other, he offered a number of withering remarks concerning the notion that art is the expression of the artist's self. It is evident there is a degree of dissonance between the two statements—certainly, we can resolve that discord by interpreting the claim that the consciousness that art strives to apprehend and convey is not that of a limited self—rather, it is that of a higher, transcendent self, a higher Mind. That manner of resolving the discord would not be wrong but it would be glib: it glosses over the details regarding Frampton's conception of the limited self, his beliefs about the nature of that higher Mind, and his notions of the possible relationships between the limited self and the higher Mind. These are the topics I explore in this paper. I consider what might have led Frampton to embrace these two ideas and how he understood their relation. It turns out that the gory details tell a far more extravagant story than the glib patch between the individual situation and the higher Mind. For Pound, the reality with which the mind presents us is not much more than a diaphanous film in which appear forms, shades, spectral beings (that we ordinarily think of as being objects and whose aggregate we sometimes take to be the whole of reality). In the presence of beauty, the mind perceives gods—Pound's way of saying that mind apprehends a higher reality, beyond that of the furniture of the material realm. The *Cantos* presents these gods as no less real than the tables and books and wine-glasses and all the other objects that constitute the furniture of the everyday world—indeed their appearance in consciousness (however rare that is) hints at a higher realm, beyond the material world. Pound's interest in these gods' appearing within consciousness is evident in the following passages from these early drafts of the *Cantos*—this is from a draft of the first *Three Cantos* published in *Poetry*, June 1917.

Let's believe it . . .
No, take it all for lies.
I have but smelt this life, a wiff of it—
. . . And shall I claim;
Confuse my own phantastikon,
Or say the filmy shell that circumscribes me
Contains the actual sun;
confuse the thing I see
With actual gods behind me?
Are they gods behind me?
How many worlds we have! If Botticelli
Brings her ashore on that great cockle-shell—
His Venus (Simonetta?),
And Spring and Aufidus fill the air
With their clear outlined blossoms?
World enough (PER 233–4 see the end of the article for a list of abbreviations
used in citations).

Pound was deeply committed to the idea that what ordinarily appears within consciousness has a mere phantasmal existence (this is one implication of using the term "phantastikon" to refer to this reality), though he also maintained that these appearances suggest something about the higher reality. The following passages from these early drafts of the *Cantos* provide evidence of Pound's belief in the importance of these intimations of the immortals.

And the place is full of spirits.
Not *lemures*, not dark and shadowy ghosts,

which he is best known in occult circles is *The English Physitians Guide: or a Holy Guide* and it is generally reviled as a sort of esoteric stew. A.E. Waite, an authority on Rosicrucianism and esoterism, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (London: G. Redway, 1887), A.E. Waite characterizes Heydon's views with a brusqueness that conveys his contempt.

The philosophical principles of John Heydon need hardly detain us long. That Typhon is the adversary of Beata Pulchra, that Hyle is the spirit of the cold and dry earth, that Beata Pulchra is the vivifying spirit of Nature, that the bodies of the dead rebellious angels became a fruitless and unprofitable chaos, are matters which will scarcely interest the serious student. His alchemical theories and experiments belong to the lowest dregs of this much degraded science, except in those parts which are bodily stolen from Eugenius Philalethes; and all that is of value in his numerical mysticism, geomantic revelations, astromancy, and investigations of spiritual mysteries, is derived from anterior writers. His medical treatises are disfigured by his gross superstition and credulity; but the unheard of experiments and recipes which they occasionally provide make them extremely curious reading. *Très rares, très curieux, et recherchés des amateurs*, his books, one and all, command large prices in the market, and the republication of his marvellous Rosicrucian reveries and romances, is a venture that deserves well at the hands of all students of the byways of occultism (332).

Yet John Heydon is the thinker to whom Pound turned in order to buttress his transcendentalist conception of aesthetic experience and its capacity to foster what Plato called νόησις (noēsis, understanding). Pound even closed the section of *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* just cited with an admonishment to read "John Heydon's "Holy Guide" for numerous remarks on pure form and the delights thereof" (GB 134). In that book Pound also quotes this nugget from Heydon's *The English Physitians Guide: or a Holy Guide*: "if God would give you leave and power to ascend to those high places, I meane to these heavenly thoughts and studies." Heydon appears in later *Cantos* as well.

to ascend those high places
wrote Heydon
stirring and changeable
"light fighting for speed" (Canto 91:611).

An index of the esteem in which Pound held John Heydon is that in the *Cantos*, Heydon keeps company with Ocellus, Erigena, Mencius and Apollonius—the celestial company whom Pound was preparing himself to join through the initiation rite the *Cantos* chronicled. Dimitri Triphonopoulos notes that the magus Heydon figured as a major character in Pound's abandoned Ur-Canto III, where Heydon's vision of the goddess, as given in the *Holy Guide*, is presented. In that same passage Tryphonopoulos connects Heydon to Pound's belief in his role as a mystes: "Pound uses phrases from Heydon's text to point out that the mystes, or rather his "mind," is able to ascend to those 'high places' and come to the 'High City . . . ' Thus, Magi such as Apollonius, Odysseus, and Heydon himself can inhabit the hylic world of "TLEMOUSUNE [endurance and patience under adversity]" or "dromena [things acted, but see note]" and at the same time enter into a higher level of existence where 'light [is] fighting for speed.'" Perhaps Pound believed that Heydon writings had come to him so that the magus could serve as his *mystagogos*. Certainly Pound's belief in Heydon's lofty importance resulted from Pound's having embraced Heydon's conception of transcendental experience and having made it central to the *Cantos*. Here is an example.

from the green deep
 he saw it,
in the green deep of an eye:

Crystal waves weaving together toward the gt/healing
 Light *compenetrans* of the spirits
 The Princess Ra-Set has climbed
 to the great knees of stone,
 She enters protection,
 the great cloud is about her,
 She has entered the protection of crystal . . .
 Light & the flowing crystal
 never gin in cut glass had such clarity
 That Drake saw the splendour and wreckage
 in that clarity
 Gods moving in crystal (Canto 91, 611)

Ra-Set has ascended to the high places that Heydon wrote about. Noesis of crystalline clarity, an apprehension of perfect form in which the gods moved, was the reward of the seeker who taught himself to strive for the loftiest form of knowledge (an effort on which the *Cantos* reported). Ezra Pound was immensely taken with a very odd book, *An Adventure*, published in 1911, Anne Moberly (1846–1937), who served as Principal of St Hugh’s College, Oxford from 1886 to 1915 and Eleanor Jourdain (1864–1924), who was Principal of the same college from 1915 to 1924, recounted that on August 10, 1901, they were visiting the Palais de Versailles; they decided to go in search of the Petit Trianon and, strolling through the Versailles gardens, felt an oppressive gloom. They found themselves transported back into the eighteenth century. Pound took the book as providing empirical evidence supporting the transcendental philosophers’ claim that experiences—or, at least, experiences of great power—endure for all time and are available at all times. Others can enter into the same experiences that thinkers of earlier eras had.

“Ghosts dip in the crystal,
 adorned”
 . . . A lost kind of experience?
 scarcely,
 O Queen Cytherea,
 che ‘l terzo ciel movete
 [who give motion to the third heaven]
 (Canto 91:617)

No string experience is ever entirely lost. Thus, Pound insisted that myths are “real” for “those people to whom they occur.” He characterizes this reality in a striking fashion—and in a way that has parallels with Frampton’s own characterizing of shape, form and reality. Pound regards myth as part of the “vital universe,” the “universe of fluid force.”

Man is—the sensitive physical part of him—a mechanism . . . rather like an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc. Chemically speaking, he is *ut credo*, a few buckets of water, tied up in a complicated sort of fig-leaf. As to his consciousness, the consciousness of some seems to rest, or to have its center more properly, in what the Greek psychologists called the *phantastikon*. Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos. And with certain others their consciousness is “germinal.” Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or grain, or the blossom. And these minds are the more poetic (SR 92).

Energy, even that in a current of electricity, has sensible form for a visionary. Guido Cavalcanti (1255–1300) was such a seer, Pound claimed, so that a “medieval natural philosopher” would have found “this

modern world full of enchantment; not only the light in the electric bulb, but the thought of the current hidden in air and in wire would give him a mind full of forms” (LE 154–5).

Pound, it is clear, thought of reality as the products of an intelligence—not, surely an intelligence of the limited variety, but a demiurgic Intelligence. It is his interest in the activities of Intelligence as it forges a reality that grounds his efforts to discern and convey the structures and dynamics of consciousness. His use of elliptical and paratactical constructions, reflecting the associative leaps that characterize movement of consciousness, conveys flashes of insight, of illumination, and so suggest the individual mind’s efforts to more fully participate in Intelligence. The ellipsis and associative connections that characterize his lyrical poems—and even the *Cantos*, despite Pound’s claim that the poem is an “epic” (that is, according to his definition of the term, of a poem “containing history”) is, for the most part, a collection of lyric fragments—are the syntax not of finished thought but that of a mind endeavoring to join itself to Intelligence (and, in the process, discovering what it truly was thinking).

“Every Force Evolves a Form”

The idea of energy shaping form recurs frequently in Frampton’s writing. In his most widely-read paper, “A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative,” Frampton expresses what might be called a vaguely Heraclitean worldview, according to which all things are in flux. The mind, primarily through language, orders this flux by imposing on it the illusion of fixity. The apparently fixed forms are like the visions the mind sees, its *phantastikon*. Frampton alludes to this with the example of Mount Fuji, which, as Matt Teichmann points out in “Prelude to the Philosophy of Hollis Frampton” serves him as a quintessential example of which is Mount Fuji, has assumed for Frampton the status of not just a physical but an aesthetic megalith. Teichmann is quite right, but there is more to the example—as always, Frampton chose his allusions with care. Mount Fuji, he says, is visible from everywhere in Japan. His notion of the role Fujisan has played in Japanese consciousness came from Katsushika Hokusai and his renowned *36 Views of Mount Fuji*.—the omnipresence of Mount Fuji was a theme of the *36 Views*. Mount Fuji is Japan’s tallest mountain and most prominent geographical feature on all of the islands in Japan. Though Mount Fuji had been an important cultural symbol for the Japanese from as early as the eleventh century, in the Edo (or Tokugawa) period (1603 to 1868) it assumed even greater importance: the capital was moved from Kyoto to Edo (present-day Tokyo), which is near enough to Fujisan that it could be seen from nearly everywhere in Edo, and that is a theme of Hokusai’s series: we see the mountain in the background, looming over a figure working in the fields, etc. But that persistence achieves its significance against the philosophical background of the Edo period. It was in this era that idea of the floating world came to prominence: woodblock prints like those in the *36 Views of Mount Fuji* series are known as “ukiyo-e,” and the term “ukiyo” itself means “floating world.” The term “floating world” arose within Buddhist thought and was meant to suggest the impermanence of the world (and the suffering that results from that impermanence). The idea of impermanence was a central theme of Japanese art and thought of the Edo period: ukiyo-e woodblock prints depict the fleeting beauty of the impermanent and ever-changing world, a beauty the experience of which made all the more poignant by the understanding that it will soon pass away. So Frampton’s insight was that Hokusai’s images of Mount Fuji depict something that is relatively stable, in a world everything is unstable, fleeting, transient—a *basso ostinato*, like the self-awareness that is a part of nearly every one of our experiences and gives an illusion of continuity to this realm where all is fleeting. Other examples follow of what it is to be a semi-stable form that contains change.

A waterfall is not a “thing,” nor is a flame of burning gas. Both are, rather, stable patterns of energy determining the boundaries of a characteristic sensible ‘shape’ in space and time. The waterfall is present to consciousness only so long as water flows through it, and the flame, only so long as the gas continues to burn. The water may be fresh or salt, full of fish, colored with blood; the gas, acetylene or the vapor of brandy.

You and I are semistable patterns of energy, maintaining in the very teeth of entropy a

characteristic shape in space and time. I am a flame through which will eventually pass, according to Buckminster Fuller, thirty-seven tons of vegetables . . . among other things. Curiously enough, then, I continue to resemble myself (for the moment at least) (OCA 142-3).

What we think of as ordinary matter is a temporary organization of energy, a pattern that, if not fully unaffected by time, at least in some way slightly more immune to its corrosive effects.

Elements briefly become part of this organized form rather as water molecules pass, one after the other, through the currents and eddies in water or roasted molecules of beef pass through the form that my body assumed so many years ago, or as Frampton had it.

Pound, too, took great interest in how energy shapes form. Central to the metaphysics that Pound derived from Bergson (by way of T.E. Hulme) was the conviction that he propounded in an essay on Dolmetsch, that “metamorphoses teaches us that things do not remain always the same. They become other things by swift and unanalysable process” (LE 431).

If those patterns of energy we call the self persist beyond the term of the individual’s corporeal existence, then one person should be able to enter into another’s experience. One of the wittiest and most amusing of sections of “A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative” proposes just that fantasy—with film serving as the enduring energy that is an individual’s self. The anecdote describes a male who, to inherit her fortune, is required to watch, from the moment of his birth, a film that recorded the life, from the moment of her birth to the moment of her death, of an astonishingly successful woman, and through watching the film of her life, his life and self become shaped in her image. In the end, we realize, the thesis of the anecdote concerns repetition—repetition understood not at all in the Nietzschean sense of eternal recurrence, but as indicating that time is ultimately unreal.

All this is pure J.W. Dunne, Dunne taken exactly. Jorge Luis Borges was a very important figure for Frampton, almost as important as Pound. Perhaps his passion for Borges accounts for taking J.W. Dunne so exactly. But the idea is also absolutely consistent with Pound’s “adventure” (to use that word we are using to tie it to that odd book by Jourdain and Moberly)—another’s experience, especially if it is intense, is a semi stable pattern, into which we can enter: we can raise ourselves toward the patterns that endure, towards pure experience freed from the accidents of matter with which it was originally associated and so become purely ideal, carry ourselves “out of the realm of annoyance into the realm of truth, into the world unchanging, the world of fine animal life, the world of pure form elevate the mind, toward the crystalline” (GB 127).

Perhaps the most telling metaphor Frampton uses for the idea that form is a semi-stable pattern of energy is that of Prince Rupert’s Drops. In the nineteenth century it was still possible to refer to science by a more honourable term: “natural philosophy” and that era was still fascinated by devices referred to generically as philosophical toys—meaning, in fact, toys that taught the lessons of natural philosophy. Originally philosophical toys, before they were thought of as toys, were instruments that operated upon nature, disturbing and troubling it (as Francis Bacon has it), submitting one or another of its phenomena to experimental methods, rather than simply observing it passively. By the nineteenth century, some instruments were branded toys because they provided popular amusement as well as experimental assistance. The idea of learning through play—play that involved intervening in natural processes to learn how to manipulate and control them—achieved widespread acceptance in the 1830’s. This was when Friedrich Froebel devised his famous educational “children’s garden” (kindergarten), which had children play with objects to learn about the constitution and dynamics of nature.

Philosophical toys were used widely in natural philosophy, but in this era, their importance seemed more to be directed towards the manipulation of perceived space and time. Among the earliest philosophical toys was the *camera obscura*, a device that had enormous importance for art as well for science. It was first used to assist in forming realistic images; only later, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was it applied as an analogy to the eye. Later philosophical toys addressed visual perception, probing how we experience motion and depth in an image. Manipulating these appearances was supposed to encourage children to think about fundamental issues concerning spatial form. Among the better known philosophical toys are the thaumatrope, phenakistoscope, stroboscope, anorthoscope, stereoscope, tachistoscope, and chronoscope—in this research,

philosophical toys served to regulate sensory stimulus, so that the methods of physics could be applied in studying their perceptual effects. These contrivances altered the experience of time and space in ways that had not previously been appreciated, and so reinforced the awareness that was growing at the time that we experience space and time as plastic—as relative, as Einstein had it, not absolute, as Newton claimed. Several of these philosophical toys proved to be phenomenally popular, particularly when combined with photography.

Prince Rupert's Drop and Glass Stress

The philosophical toy known as Prince Rupert's Drops provided Frampton with a quasi-scientific image of an object as an organization of energy, of tension held in a temporary equilibrium. Such are the nature of its atomic bonds that glass should be five times as strong as steel. But we all know that in fact pieces of glass generally can withstand having much less force applied to them than steel can. The reason for glass' lower tensile strength concerns internal stresses within a piece of glass—this is what the philosophical toy known as “Prince Rupert's Drops” made evident. Prince Rupert's Drops are drops of glass thrown while still in a state of fusion (i.e., liquid) into water; the glass is suddenly consolidated. The drop assumes the shape of a water droplet with an elongated tail (the resulting shape resembles a tadpole), because the surface tension of molten glass tries to form a sphere (the form that minimizes the energy acting on the surface to deform it) whilst being pulled downward by gravity. When the molten glass falls into the water it starts to cool very quickly on the outside becoming a very tough material, but since glass is a very poor conductor of heat the inner core remains at a much higher temperature. As the inside glass starts to cool, it contracts, which places an incredible tensile stress on the drop and leads to the formation of a vacuum bubble inside the drop head. Glass under stress will rotate polarised light, so by viewing the drops through crossed polarised filters one can see rainbows of colours. The maximum size of the drop is determined from the surface tension and the density of the material.

One can strike the thick end of a Prince Rupert's Drop with a hammer and not break it; but should the smallest part of the tail be nipped off, or the surface scratched, the glass droplet disintegrates, sometimes with near explosive force, into a fine powder. This disintegration is due to a stress in the interior of the mass of glass, caused by the sudden consolidation of the crust formed while the internal mass is still liquid. This glass contracts suddenly on cooling, and if glass is cooled very rapidly, high stresses are “frozen” inside. These pent-up tensions later are released as the warmer glass from the insides bursts the “skin” of the outer, cooler surfaces. The release occurs with such explosive force that object is pulverized. This explosion could be prompted from something as slight as a tiny scratch made on the surface of the glass, or this release may even occur spontaneously.

Romantic Science: The Tradition of Patterns of Energy

Frampton was deeply impressed by the beauty of recent scientific theories. For him, the good embodied in science was not primarily what it reported about the world—indeed Frampton's position implies that the scientific laws don't so much reflect truths as make them. The good in science is pretty much the same as that in art: contemplating scientific explanations elevates the mind through the contemplation of pattern and relation. For Frampton, the world is as Heraclitus described it: a process, in which those congregation of elements we take to be stable objects are, like the shapes of rivers or flames, patterns through which endless streams of particles flow, arranging themselves in an imitation of the arrangement of particles that constituted the immediately preceding state, which was an imitation of the arrangement of particles in the immediately preceding state, which was an imitation of the arrangement of particles in the immediately preceding state. Modern physics sees every object as being in flux: each object is a congregation of particles, which are congregations of smaller particles, which are congregations not exactly of particles, but of wave formations, representing fluctuations in the probability that a particle or particles in a particular state will be measured to have a given position and momentum. An implication of quantum physics' indeterminacy principle is that there are no things—things in the sense of fixed, enduring, unchanging entities. So, Frampton's metaphysics turns out to

be that of contemporary physics.

The philosophical toy known as Prince Rupert Drops, then, is a paradigm case, exemplifying the essential nature of objects: they are energies frozen into a definite (indeed a highly rigid) form—one whose shape is the result of the interaction of the principle of minimization (in this case, the minimizing of surface tension). Nevertheless as definite and rigid as it is, this form contains within it energies that soon enough will cause its demise, as the glass droplet is pulverized into the tiniest of particles. Frampton took the concept of mathematical entity as a model for the principles (the *eidos*) that determine that shapes of transient things, principles that precede the object's coming into being and surviving its destruction. So did Plato.

Energy, Mathematics, the Vortex

Vorticism initiated Ezra Pound into the avant-garde and as he began so he remained—he was (in some qualified sense) a committed Vorticist all his life. Vorticists used the term “vortex” to characterize the work of art as a dynamic field in which the elements move or are momentarily suspended in a dynamic tension by their intrinsic energy. For Frampton as for most thinking artists, the art object provides a model for understanding reality: the objects that compose reality are like a Vorticist work inasmuch as they are composed of energies that balance one another, as they do in “Prince Rupert's Drops”—they are each a dynamic field through which energies move as they do through a flame or a waterfall. Thus,

The algebraic equation ‘ $ax + b = c$ ’ is our name for a stable pattern of energy through which an infinity of numerical tetrads may pass. A story is a stable pattern of energy through which an infinity of personages may pass, ourselves included (OCA 147).

A mathematical formula can be thought of as an abstract pattern which can be instantiated with a number of objects: let a be the calories per ounce of a piece of uncooked rib-eye steak, b the number of calories in the garlic-oil which just minimally covers the bottom of a skillet (all of which are absorbed in the cooking), x be the number of ounces of rib-eye I shall cook tonight—then c represents the calories I will ingest eating that rib-eye steak. Or let a be the average number of bullets that Dr. Valery Fabrikant pumped into each of engineering professors he believed to be grifters who were taking advantage of the deceptions that universities' tolerance of joint-authorship has permitted, b the number of bullets he discharged that did not strike any engineering professor, and x the number of professors he believed to have taken credit for research they did not do—in this case c is the number of bullets that Professor Fabrikant fired. Or again, let a represent the slope of a line, b represent the distance of the y-intercept from the x-axis, x represent the distance of any point along x-axis of a Cartesian grid, then c represents where the point falls along the y-axis. A mathematical entity is thus a perduring reality, through which can pass calories, bullets, points . . . and an infinitude of other entities. Its mathematical precision makes it (in Pound's resonant phrase) a radiant node, from which and into which ideas can rush. It attracts associations such as I have made with the simple linear equation given above—it is therefore a system of energy, drawing in whatever comes near.

A mathematical equation is strictly timeless. The formal relations it maps out obtain for all time. The objects in the world instantiate its pattern and, though the particular instantiations come into and go out of being, the patterns are eternal. These formal patterns constitute the true reality: entities, person, events, beings will come into existence and pass away, but the pattern that relates together various beings, at whatever level in the hierarchy of integration and of whatever assorted types, will perdure in a realm beyond time. To apprehend these patterns is the essential character of knowledge. That proposition is venerable: no less a philosopher than Plato propounded it.

Doubtless Frampton associated the idea of the unreality of time with another of his favourite writers, Borges.

Theologians define eternity as simultaneous and lucid possession of all instants of time and declare it to be one of the divine attributes. Dunne, surprisingly, supposes that eternity is already ours, and that the dreams we have each night corroborate this.

According to him, the immediate past and the immediate future flow together in our dreams. While we are awake, we pass through successive time at a uniform speed; in dreams we span an area that may be very vast.

Borges, following Dunne, imagines that the experience of time as plastic might be construed as demonstrating that time is merely a subjective phenomenon. The surprising enthusiasm of the late nineteenth century for that set of philosophical toys whose operations manipulated our experience of time they took as evidence that the experience of time is merely phenomenal. It was also a conclusion that Hollis Frampton embraced.

As early as 1962, Frampton voiced his belief that time is simply phenomenal, and has no purchase in the enduring realm of relations.

There is no such thing as time. Time is a set of conventions for bracketing qualitative variation. E-flat does not exist 'in time' relative to B-flat, before or after it: we hear them as they are sounded, which is always here and now. The adverbs *firstly* and *secondly* are pegs we use in our sentences when we wish to emphasize that those sentences imitate actions (OCA 286).

Or, again, more expansively, in "Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in its Place":

Weston is everywhere concerned, as are so many other still photographers, with the annihilation of time. The image is to subsist not in a time but in all of time, taking for its duration the supreme temporal unity of eternity. In reclaiming the noun from the depredations of the verb, Weston snatches his beloved things from the teeth of causality, orphically rescuing them from the hell of entropy; and, orphically again, at the snap of the shutter, as if it at the utterance of a word or the incantation of a song, causing these opacities to compose themselves into durable and serene hieratic geometries, Euclidean rather than Pythagorean, worthy of Eduard Tisse (OCA 77).

To say that time is not real is not to say that we do not experience events as occurring successively; rather it is to affirm that a purer order of being exists, an order of pure relations beyond time. Experience is perspectival, through and through: I experience the large house at the end of the road as smaller than the much tinier house nearer my home. The spatial relations of perspectival experiences have only phenomenal existence: they pertain only to our experience of space, and not the order of space itself. Similarly, phenomenal events that the filmmaker organizes in time all have in reality completely simultaneous existence on a narrow band that traverses space. The contrast between the material truth of film and the experiences it conditions (as projection converts a spatial order, in which all events are simultaneous, into an experiential succession) provides an image for a possible metaphysical truth: that succession might be nothing but an illusion that belongs to the order of experience, not to the true order of reality. There is another domain that gives evidence of the same temporal duality—we shall see presently that mathematical objects share this feature with the cinema. Time, experienced as succession, is only one order of time. We can experience another order of time, says Frampton. He speaks of this other order of time as erupting upon consciousness, and setting it agog. In "Incisions in History/Segments of Eternity" he concocts a fable about William Henry Fox Talbot, the inventor of the negative-positive process (which allowed paper prints to be made): as Englishmen of his generation and class were wont to do, he was drawing at Lake Como, and longing for a natural image to impress itself upon paper.

when, with no warning at all, he sees, for its own qualities and for the first time, the very thing that has been before him all along, and that has been his secret fascination: he realizes, in one piercing instant, that the "image" that he had sought to make is already there. But more: the emergence of that image somehow sufficiently mimes the extraordinary moment when, time out of mind, the unspeakable, primal Image became

the first gift Talbot's mind gave itself. And then: after the merest interruption, thready and insistent as the drone of the brain's theta wave, faintly overheard in an anechoic chamber, comes the accustomed reminder of mortality.

But for one instant, attenuated to the limits of his energy, Talbot has escaped Time, the Evil. For an ecstatic moment, time is not. We may presume that Lake Como, along with everything else, persists in dropping "natural images," like ripe fruit, into the lapses of the beholder (OCA 39).

Notice the phrase, dropping "natural images, like ripe fruit, into the lapses of the beholder." The idea that natural images are akin to fruit or vegetables is familiar from André Bazin: "Photography affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are an inseparable part of their beauty" (WC1 13). The idea that photography is simply a means of collecting and preserving these natural images is also Bazinian. For his part, Frampton (as we shall see) pursued an interest in what he called autography, by which he intends processes through which objects become images of themselves: mummification, embalming and fossilization are examples—we note that in each of these conspicuous examples the object is turned into a relic of an animated being. But what about that marvellous hiatus in the sentence, the claim that natural images are dropped into the "lapses" of the beholder. That splendid pun suggests that when the true, primal Image appears, it momentarily removes the self, the subject from the scene—the images are dropped into the *lapses* of the beholder.

An allusion to John Cage's experience in an anechoic chamber brings to mind Frampton's use of Katsushika Hokusai's *36 Views of Mount Fuji*, in which the omnipresence of Fujisan in the pictures suggests the self-awareness that accompanies nearly every one of our experiences. However, he did not interpret Cage's description to the idea of pervasiveness of thetic self-presence. Rather he continued by following up the theme of the floating world, of the impermanence of life: "and then . . . thready and insistent as the drone of the brain's theta wave, faintly overheard in an anechoic chamber, comes the accustomed reminder of mortality"—makes us expect the remark that while images perdure, we endure this life for but a while, and then depart. The comment arrives, in a manner that seems as inexorable as our demise itself.

So that it was not the banal landscape Talbot thought he saw but the radiant sight of his own insight that transfixed the artist in a realization too rude for language: that the "creature of a moment, and destined to soon fade away" [this is how Fox Talbot described the "fairy" images that were thrown onto the photographic paper], was [actually] himself (OCA 39).

Frampton goes on to offer a McLuhanesque/Havelockian explanation for the experience of time as transience, and that leads him to remark on the two types of time.

In a life doomed by the structure of language, as the lives of most Occidentals are, to supine acceptance of history as a linear narrative, that moment on the lake must have seemed a boulder in a rapids, which diminishes neither the force of the stream or its volume but rather, by virtue of the local turbulence it generates, serves to measure and demonstrate both.

. . . [Talbot's discovery] seem[s] to establish clearly that there are two different sorts of perceptual time. I propose to call one of them historic, and the other ecstatic (OCA 39).

Frampton had opened the essay in characteristically witty fashion: he presents a parable in which a historian tells him that history is just "one god damned thing after another." History understands time as mere succession. Frampton continued his commentary on time and history with that same point—but only after a minor excursus on the baselessness of the belief that undergirds all science, of the symmetry of the past and the future (the belief that the future will be the mirror image of the past).

Science proposes to lay hold upon the future by an inversion of perspective, an adequation of vanishing points, invidiously treating the future as if were a department of the past . . . and the deception works for as long as the systems of memory and conjecture remain cramped into relative congruence (OCA 40).

Following that excursus, he returned to the point that historic time is “one god damned thing after another.”

Historic time is the time of mechanistic ritual, of routine, automatic as metabolism. It is composed of sequential, artificial, isometric modules which are related to one another, in language, by the connective phrase: “and then.” This sort of connection, like that between links in a chain, is capable of transmitting energy only under the tension of implied causality (OCA 40).

But what if all time *is* already, and there is no causality?

In “Incisions in History/Segments of Eternity” he offers an image: memory and its mirror image, conjecture, are foggy foreground and background, folded over the plane of focus that is the present. The *decalage* between the two as they compare notes creates a sort of accumulating mental anxiety that every once in a while needs to release itself in bursts of cognitive energy. During these bursts, the mind experiences time in a notably different way; the name he gives to the experience is “ecstatic time” (which stands in distinction to the “historic time” of clocks, routine, and industrial capitalism). We experience ecstatic time, he writes, during sleep, erotic rapture, and moments of intense emotion. But if we cannot talk about ecstatic time, we can give a perfect image of the experience: Dosso Dossi’s painting of Jupiter painting butterflies evokes the fragility of an instant that has become eternal—and the role of art in that conversion. But opening up time in this way is also an unveiling of the abyssal past that reawakens the excruciating experience of disappointment, loss, tragedy. The essential nature of the relation between ordinary time and ecstatic time can seem to be the relation between chance and necessity, or chaos and good form, loss and fulfillment.

Time can be experienced as inexorable stepping through moment after moment; it can also be experienced ecstatically: time stops, and the capacious movement incorporates all time. What once was experienced as succession is now understood as simultaneity. Similarly, events that the filmmaker organizes in time all have simultaneous existence on a long but narrow band (space). The film medium itself—in its very constitution—demonstrates that succession is nothing but an illusion that belongs to the order of experience, and not to the order of the real (projection converts a spatial order, in which all events are simultaneous, into a experiential succession: recall that in recounting the anecdote that opens *Circles of Confusions*, Frampton remarks, “Taking the film from the projector, mounting it on rewinds, removed it from serial, spectatorial time and returned it to a randomly accessible space, a skeletal emulation of the conditions under which it had been made” (CC 7). What were the conditions under which it was made? Surely they involve the realization of a plan, the *eidos* present in the demiurgic intelligence that brought the film forth. The projector is a device for transforming an all-at-once temporality, in which all events are simultaneous, to the successive temporality of experience. It is crucial to note that the image puts the artist in the place of the Divine, who has a privileged understanding that understands all things *sub specie aeternitatis*, while the spectators are acquainted primarily with the realm of transience, and only experience intimations of the realm of things immortal, only fleetingly and insecurely apprehending the merest glimmers of the realm of timeless being. But that experience of a spacious instant—an instant that comprehends a somewhat expansive temporality—is the temporal state for which modernists strived. If for the spectator the murk opens and he or she is lifted towards ecstatic experience, then the spectator enters into a condition at one with the work’s maker—another common goal of modernist work.

Frampton goes on to comment on writings that maintain that the timeless is the realm of ideas, that ideas are more real than material things.

Somewhere in a book whose name I have forgotten, Alfred North Whitehead proposes

to correct two items of vulgar terminology. What we call *things*, he says, we should in fact refer to as Events. A little more or less evanescent than ourselves, things are temporary, chance encounters and collocations between and among particles of matter or quanta of energy, each of which, engaged in a journey through absolute space and relative time, has compiled a history that is not yet finished.

Contrariwise, what we call *ideas* should, according to Whitehead, be renamed Eternal Objects, since their perpetuation, while owing something to such events in the universal history of matter as this present mind which thinks and deciphers, and this absent hand which writes, are, once formulated, independent of the local frailties of matter, standing at once within and without it. An Eternal Object, furthermore, is more than what is to be inferred from the static description of an Event; it is a behavior conducted by an Event, or, perhaps, it is an Event's notion of how to get other Events. I do not remember whether or not the recurrent patterns we call myths qualify as Eternal Objects, contingent as they are upon such momentary proclivities of matter as sexuality, curiosity, or irony. But what we call Language, understood as a maximal set of language-like codes that includes music, the natural languages, mathematics, kinesics, and pheromones, qualifies as a prime candidate for the status of Eternal Object (OCA 79–80).

The notion of the superior reality of the realm of Ideas or Eternal Objects is a leitmotiv that runs through Frampton's writing, thinking and filmmaking. There is a great deal more to Whitehead's notion of Eternal Object than is alluded to in this passage—more than we can give an account of here. One additional aspect of Whitehead's idea of Eternal Objects is germane to Frampton's ideas about permanence and change, a topic that frequently arises in Frampton's writings. Whitehead ultimately defines Eternal Objects as "Pure Potentials for the Specific Determination of Fact." It is due to the "ingression" of these pure potentials into actual entities that "it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming'."

Mathematical objects resemble film in having a dual character, offering us at once the idea of succession and of a reality that is fixed, changeless. A common mathematical object (or, what is the same, a common mathematical idea) is that of a sequence: the paragon of succession is surely the natural numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, . . . ; yet, those numbers also exist in relations that are eternal, timeless and unchanging. Consequently, film, mathematics, and time can be seen to have common ordering principles. So, Frampton must have realized, one can deploy mathematics' famously self-reflexive structures—every mathematical theory is tautological and simply comments on the axioms that ground the system and show another of the implications of those axioms—to open up an inquiry into the cinema's axiomatic conditions. Quite in the Neo-Platonic tradition into which were absorbed the Pythagorean ideas that Frampton's own aesthetic ideas embraced, the notion that ideas, and paradigmatically mathematical ideas, have a reality higher than matter has often been associated with a belief that mathematical ideas are the forms that the gods know and the source of all that occurs within the illusory realm of temporality. If Frampton's writings sometimes seem to suggest a Romantic idea of science (and of the artist as a Romantic scientist), then this is the ground of that conception: the scientist is thought of as the god-like figure who discerns the timeless, unchanging structures that underlie the ephemeral and insubstantial realm of appearances.

But there is more to say about time in cinema—and in Frampton's theory of cinema. Let us consider for a moment J.W. Dunne's famous experiment with time. The exercise concerns a time-capsule—a time capsule is used to send something present into the future. What we accomplish through that exercise is to extract a set (usually a small subset of all items we should like to redeem) of significant items from objects' usual fate: decay and destruction. It does so by transporting them into a future, where they might reappear, and thereby acquire a new future (and fall prey to a new fate). Every film theorist will recognize within this experience the contours of the story that one of their own made familiar to all who think about media. The film theorist to whom I refer is, again, the Personalist André Bazin, who wrote:

Besides, painting is, after all, an inferior way of making likenesses, an *ersatz* of the

processes of reproduction. Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximations . . . The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model. (WC1 14)

Bazin recognized, too, the disclosive possibilities inherent in the act of temporal transmission: freed from their present significance, we might experience them anew in the future.

A remark Frampton makes in an essay on Muybridge is crucial to understanding the import of photography in these considerations. Frampton is the only writer I know of to have pointed out that the still photograph, so-called, represents not an instantaneous three-dimensional configuration of objects in the world, but a four-dimensional solid (or “tesseract”) that reveals a trajectory of time and change in those objects. How easily we forget that the camera’s shutter is open not for an instant, but for an interval, a fact that was probably more obvious in an era when a portrait’s subjects were made to pose for minutes at a time! Importantly, there is no linear order to such a chunk of duration because . . . how could there be? In the photography and interval of time—a sequence of moments—is rendered eternal (and therefore simultaneous, and therefore beyond causality). The tesseract captured by the photograph need not be analyzed into atomic units of time. For Bazin, as we recall, the photograph provides a certain psychological comfort against our feeling of mortality in virtue of the fact that it allows images of things to survive the effects of time in ways that the things themselves cannot; for Frampton the photograph provides a similar sort of comfort, but for different reasons—what it presents us with is a suspension of duration itself.

Here we may be brought to speculate about the ontology of the cinematic image—if the true pretext of a photograph is not a changeless Parmenidean world but a tesseract, is a film to be understood as some kind of four-dimensional animation? That would make it rather odd, but this is precisely the sort of oddness that Frampton is after—and it is precisely how the cinema gets finally to be a metaphor for the “supreme mediator,” consciousness. For it is nothing other than the intellect which originally manufactures stable patterns of energy by arresting itself; by presenting us with an intermittent barrage of such suspended durations, cinema serves as a captivating reminder of the way in which theoretical constructs, such as trees or Euclid’s postulates, continue with each reapprehension to misread themselves and then emerge again in varieties that are, as the expression goes, not quite the same nor yet entirely different.

GB Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*. New York: New Directions, 1970.

LE Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Edited, with an introduction by T. S. Eliot. London: Faber and Faber, 1960.

OCA Bruce Jenkins, ed., *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

PER Ezra Pound, *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*. New York: New Directions, 1949.

SR Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*. New York: New Directions, 1968.

WC1 Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1 Essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

