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EZRA POUND: THE EARLY CAREER

THE high Modernist mode dominated English and American poetry for approximately thirty years, from the early 1920s to the 1950s. A few names and titles may call to mind the brilliance of its beginning: Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* in 1917 and *Poems* in 1920; Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,* 1920; Marianne Moore's *Poems,* 1921; Edith Sitwell's *Façade,* 1922; Eliot's *The Waste Land,* 1922; and, in 1923, Stevens' *Harmonium,* William Carlos Williams' *Spring and All,* Jean Toomer's *Cane,* E. E. Cummings' *Tulips and Chimneys,* and D. H. Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers.* The flow of important publications continued into the 1940s, by which time the ascendancy and grip of the mode seemed almost unshakeable. After the Second World War, however, the movement began to erode, not in academic and critical prestige (for it was soon incorporated into academic orthodoxy) but as a combination of values for practicing poets; by the later 1950s a "post-Modernist" poetry was becoming more widespread.

What is called here the "high Modernist mode" is really a synthesis of diverse types of poetry that had gradually been created and made available as resources or models in writing during the thirty years between 1890 and 1920. These included the careful and polished formalism of the London avant-garde in the 1890s,

the impressionism and dandyism of the same group, and the early uses of symbolism in Yeats, together with the growing awareness of French symboliste poetry. The United States had the tradition of Whitman. Also, the 1890s in America saw in Robinson an assimilation of methods and purposes usually associated with prose fiction. This assimilation resumed independent of Robinson in England and America during the 1910s. In reaction against the melodious and "poetic" diction of most poets at the end of the nineteenth century Hardy, Robinson, Frost, Yeats, and some of the Georgians cultivated a sinewy colloquialism that was subtly and dramatically expressive. And Kipling, Davidson, Masefield, and Sandburg exploited the colloquial even more boldly to render the speech of the people. The Imagists adopted a direct, spoken idiom, while emphasizing the prose values of economy and exactitude. There was also a tendency to express harsher facts and emotions; this culminated in the violence and satire of the poets of the First World War. Meanwhile, several poets discovered and eagerly responded to the fopperies and surprising verbal juxtapositions of Laforgue and the intellectual complexity and ironic "wit" of the Metaphysical poets.

To these developments within poetry we should add the impact of psychological and anthropological lore. New subjects and techniques were suggested by concepts of the streaming, irrational, associative flow of consciousness, the prevalence of mental maladjustment or neurosis, the unconscious mind, the revelation of it in dreams, the collective unconscious, archetypal imagery, and the universality and significance of myth as well as of the primitive or myth-making mentality. Also, poets were influenced by techniques developed in other arts, such as the leitmotiv in music and the collage in painting.

Although the Modernist synthesis took different forms in individual poets, Modernist poets generally shared the feeling of a breakthrough. The "movemong," as Pound called it in burlesque French, possessed an idiom that was not merely fresh and challenging but also, in their opinion, superior to that of the nineteenth century. For the new, Modernist idiom was either more intense—more packed, dense, polysemous—or else it was more exact and precise. Perhaps it was both at the same time. And the idiom permitted, in fact, had been created in order to convey a richer, more authentic rendering of reality.

The chapters that follow deal only with the years in which the high Modernist mode was becoming established; the period of its dominance will be covered in a forthcoming volume. Hence, although I take up such major poets as Eliot, Stevens, Pound, and Williams, I concentrate only on their early careers. They continued to write for another thirty to forty years, and the second volume describes their later works. During the years observed here each of these poets "Modernized" himself. For the most part they did so deliberately and with struggle. Our account of each poet traces the course and phases of his evolution into Modernism, noticing what it meant to him. In this way we come as close as is possible to the actual development of Modernist poetry as it took place.

Many Modernist poets whose careers fell roughly within the same decades as those of Eliot, Stevens, Pound, and Williams are not discussed at this point. Marianne Moore is an exception. Most of the other young poets who began to publish in the 1920s or even earlier—Robinson Jeffers, John Crowe Ransom, Archibald MacLeish, Edwin Muir, Hart Crane—are treated in the second volume, in relation to the period in which they did their best work or had their greatest influence. Since Yeats became a Modernist poet only in his last phase, I here describe his whole career. To do so is especially appropriate, since his poetry changed greatly from the 1890s to his death in 1939, and the changes correspond in some respects to the general development of poetry in his time. His work allows us to bring the long, complex history here narrated to a final focus.

POUND BEFORE IMAGISM

Pound's achievement in and for poetry was threefold: as a poet, and as a critic, and also as a befriender of genius through personal contact. The least that can be claimed of his poetry is that for over fifty years he was one of the three or four best poets writing in English. During a crucial decade in the history of modern literature, approximately 1912 to 1922, Pound was the most influential and in some ways the best critic of poetry in England or America. He had an almost unerring eye for quality. And of all that he read—whether Eliot, Joyce, Yeats, Flaubert, Voltaire, Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Arnaut Daniel, the Anglo-

Saxon "Seafarer," Sappho, or Homer—he asked, what does it show about writing? Thus sifting, he developed principles of style which he conveyed to other poets in instructions that were intensely practical and specific. These had a large impact on style and form and still throw a spell over young poets. Finally, he spent much time and energy aiding other writers. W. C. Williams, H.D., Frost, Eliot, Joyce, Hemingway, and E. E. Cummings were indebted to him for encouragement and criticism when they were still unknown. Some of them were also helped to publication, money (of which he himself had very little), and reputation, not to mention more personal services of miscellaneous kinds. He did this for the sake of literature, for he did not always like the writers he helped. Without his harassed ingenuity, some of the brilliant literature of the early twentieth century would not have been written. Besides his labors as a poet, critic, and befriender, Pound also devoted himself to enthusiasms in art, sculpture, music, history, politics, and economics. Each of these influenced his approach to the others, and their complex interaction shaped his changing attitudes and techniques in poetry.

Pound was born in a mining town in Idaho in 1885. The family moved shortly to the suburbs of Philadelphia, where Pound grew up in middle-class circumstances. At least from his early teens he gave past and living poets the devotion some boys give to athletes. "The study of literature," he later wrote, "is hero-worship." In college and graduate school he specialized in the late medieval and Renaissance literature of the Romance languages—in, for example, the troubadours of Provence, the *Cid,* early Tuscan poetry, Dante, Rabelais, Villon—and this literature continued to fascinate him for the rest of his life.

That a chief urger of the Modernist revolution was also an avid trotter over the past, as Wyndham Lewis put it, is a fact of much meaning. Pound's awareness and use of many pasts was one of the characteristics by which he distinguished his type of modernism (and that of Eliot and Joyce) from the Georgian poets and from the "Futurists," as he called them, lumping most of the "new" poets in America with the followers of Marinetti. For him the former were uncritically continuing an outworn tradition; the latter wrote as if there were no literary past whatsoever. Both lacked the high standards of craftsmanship that a close study of past "masterwork" may inculcate and both lacked the range of different techniques and the critical and self-critical alertness a writer may develop through comparing and crossing different traditions. (To Pound most avant-garde poets of his generation in America—for example, Williams and Sandburg—were Futurists, and he would certainly have applied the term to most poets of the present time.)

Although he held and promulgated the belief that the past must be known and used, he also held that a poet must "modernize" himself and "make it new." The relation between these convictions caused him much anxiety. The point also teased Eliot, eliciting some of his especially complex critical formulations. No one has yet studied the extent to which Eliot's general positions as a critic were formed in a dialogue with Pound. But if one reads their writings concurrently and in chronological order, one sees that they were addressing the same problems remarkably often. And one sees also that the conceptions developed in Eliot's essays must frequently have been suggested, or independently supported, or provoked in reaction, by Pound's conversation and literary journalism—just as Pound echoed and debated with Eliot. Eliot's suave and subtle criticism will be read long after Pound's remarks are forgotten, but Pound was first in the field. Many of the viewpoints he and Eliot later elaborated were originally articulated by Pound in connection with his study of early Romance literature. In this literature he observed that each poet had a strongly individual character but also expressed the mind of his age. From the Provençal troubadours to Dante he saw an ongoing and international tradition of poetry, a style and a sensibility that continued and developed from one poet to another and finally culminated in Dante, who had been aware of his predecessors and built on their work, and had thus expressed what Eliot later called the "mind of Europe" in that phase of its evolution. One may add parenthetically that early Romance poetry was difficult to read and that to understand it often required special information; in these respects it was unlike the poetry written in America and England in Pound's youth but not unlike the poetry he would eventually write.

He also admired the qualities and performances of Browning ("Ueberhaupt ich stamm aus Browning," he later wrote), Rossetti ("my father and my mother" in "my knowledge of Tuscan

poetry"), Swinburne, Yeats (he was "drunk" with "Celticism"), Symons (almost a "god"), Fiona McLeod, and Ernest Dowson. All of these enthusiasms are visible in his first volume of verse, *A Lume Spento.* This was printed at his own expense in 1908 in Venice, to which city he had migrated after a brief experience of teaching at Wabash College in Indiana. In Venice he lived at first over a bakery, tried to earn money as a gondolier (his muscles were not strong enough), and enjoyed the company of a lady piano player fifteen years older than himself. He soon made his way to London, arriving in September 1908 with a few copies of *A Lume Spento* and £3 cash. He saw Ford Madox Hueffer frequently, attended Yeats's Monday evenings, Ernest Rhys's evenings, the Poets' Club, and Hulme's evenings at the Eiffel Tower restaurant.

He went to London because it was the literary capital of the English-speaking world. "London, deah old London," he wrote W. C. Williams in 1909, "is the place for poetry." In his next letter, commenting on Williams' recently published *Poems,* he wondered how many of the poems his friend would have published had he known the current poetry in London: "You are out of touch." But if London was the place to master the "complete art" and also to make one's reputation in both England and the United States, it was shrewd to arrive in London as a published poet, which may be one reason why Pound paid for *A Lume Spento* in Venice. His gift for literary salesmanship, which later boomed so many reputations, was first applied to his own.

During the next four years four volumes of his verse appeared: *A Quinzaine for this Yule* (1908), *Personae* (1909), *Exultations* (1909), and *Canzoni* (1911). These volumes contained such still-anthologized favorites as "Cino," "Na Audiart," "Sestina: Altaforte," and the "Ballad of the Goodly Fere." Collectively, these volumes show Pound before he "modernized" himself, while he was still in many respects a typical Edwardian poet. He was at this time making no special effort to be modern, unlike such otherwise diverse poets as Kipling, Masefield, and Symons. Often his poems adopted styles of the past—for example, of Bertran de Born or Villon—and whatever the many explanations for his writing such poems, the poems would not have seemed unusual to readers of Robert Bridges, Sturge Moore, or Mary Coleridge, poets who felt that the past was never out of date; what had been written long ago could be written again in

the same style, for one might still feel just as those poets had felt.

Viewed in the context of Edwardian verse, Pound's early work is uncommonly excellent—energetic, crowded with thought, and varied in artistic intention. (By "early work" I mean the five volumes of poetry already mentioned and *The Spirit of Romance,* 1910, his most important piece of criticism during this period, a book-length survey of medieval poets of southern Europe.) But it is not unusual in kind, and for this reason I dwell on it less than some readers may think appropriate. The mystical and occult elements of it are discussed in the second volume with the later *Cantos.*

Some of Pound's fundamental endowments and commitments as a poet reveal themselves in this first period. Of the early poems still retained in his collected shorter poems (*Personae*), more than half render a figure or aspect of the historical past rather than the present. But his fascination with the past was not with events and characters as such; it was with states of mind and the milieus that shaped them. What he sought to present in Arnaut Daniel or Guido Cavalcanti, and later in Sigismundo Malatesta, John Adams, and his other major exemplars, was not only an individual but also the "mind" of an historical period, which may be seen in the individual and especially in his verbal style. Pound writes in sympathetic identification. The speakers are Cino, Bertran de Born, François Villon, or Peire Vidal; we encounter their temperament, experience, and style, not Pound's.

Most of the historical figures with whom Pound identified were poets; in poems without such speakers the subject usually has some connection with his own personal preoccupation with the question of what sort of poetry to write. *The Spirit of Romance* is the criticism of a poet seeking models and instructions. Thus his better poems, such as "Sestina: Altaforte" or "Villonaud for this Yule," fulfilled at least three impulses at the same time: they were history, the representation of figures or states of mind out of the past; they were acts of identification; and they were exercises in ways of writing he admired. Many of Pound's more extended efforts in the next fifteen years—*Cathay,* "Homage to Sextus Propertius," "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," the uses of Homer and Ovid in the early *Cantos,* the Malatesta Cantos—were similarly shaped by this triple motivation.

Although poetry and the other arts were Pound's main con-

cern throughout his life, he was seldom willing to make them his main subject. The fact is much to his credit, for it was a victory of conscience, but the credit belongs also to his early milieu. So far as poetry is concerned, the greatest fact of the years 1900 to 1914, if literary history ever permits such generalizations, was that Yeats was changing his style. He was dispelling the vapors and yearnings of his early verse and was thus the most distinguished and articulate exponent of a general reaction of poets against the avant-garde of the nineties. Though Yeats's opinions were as always many-sided, the direction of his thought was: a poet's experience must not be that of the artist's cell but full, varied, active, and abroad, so that he may have the intense emotions of actual life; he should write direct, "personal utterance"; his words should take their force from his life, as with a character in a play. But Yeats was mingling two doctrines, and Pound agreed with one and not the other. So far as "personal utterance" meant self-expression, Pound usually rejected it. But that poetry should reflect life, not art, he affirmed often and with fervor, for he was struggling against himself. "Art that mirrors art is unsatisfactory," he said, meditating on Camoëns, "and the great poem, 'Ignes da Castro,' was written in deeds by King Pedro. No poem can have as much force as the simplest narration of events themselves." A favorite example for Yeats (and for Synge in his influential Preface to his *Poems,* 1909) was Villon. When Pound came to Villon in *The Spirit of Romance,* he said: "Villon's verse is real, because he lived it . . . [It is] no brew of books, no distillation of sources . . . His poems treat of actualities . . . filth is filth, crime is crime, neither crime nor filth is gilded. They are not considered as strange delights and forbidden luxuries, accessible only to the adventurous few."

Pound's early verse is often of this "lived" kind, and powerfully so—though in a special way. In "Cino," "Na Audiart," "Villonaud for this Yule," "Sestina: Altaforte," and "Ballad of the Goodly Fere," the speakers are completely unlike fin-de-siècle poets; they are warriors, vagabonds, lovers, as well as poets; their strong emotions rise from their own experience. Bertran de Born, who speaks in "Sestina: Altaforte," is an example. When the battle standards are spread, he says, "Then howl I my heart nigh mad with rejoicing." And we believe him; for we hear the howl in the cluster of long and stressed syllables. With respect to Pound himself, the poem is a "brew of books," a "distillation of sources." It depicts an ideal type of poet and in the last analysis expresses the self-criticism of the modern poet, not the direct engagement in life of the medieval one. But no matter. Such poems were still in keeping with the essential Yeatsian doctrine that "art that mirrors art is unsatisfactory."

Concrete presentation was already Pound's preferred mode of expression. In his early poetry he was more or less faithful to the Pre-Raphaelite principle that poetry must not weaken its force by discussion and reflection. In *The Spirit of Romance* he let his authors speak for themselves in quotations and translations: his remarks about them are relatively scant and mostly factual. In an important series of articles and translations in 1911 ("I Gather the Limbs of Osiris") he argues for a "new method in scholarship," a method that presents and relies on the "luminous detail," on the telling fact that gives "sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law." For example, in 1422 "the Venetians refused to make war upon the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither"; the fact shows that the Middle Ages were giving way to the modern era with its commercial motivations. A "few dozen facts of this nature give us intelligence of a period." The artist, he adds, "seeks out luminous detail. He does not comment." The fragmentary, continuously concrete style of the *Cantos* had its roots in techniques and convictions that were forming between 1908 and 1911.

POUND'S MODERNIZATION: THE FIRST PHASE

The story of Pound's modernization between 1909 and 1921 would involve all that he read and wrote, saw, heard, and lived through during these years. If I stress that he met Yeats, Hueffer, Hulme, Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis and eagerly read Fenollosa and Joyce, while other happenings go unmentioned, the reason is a lack of space, not that I imagine Pound's development is to be conceived as a sequence of a few encounters and reactions. But even if we notice only some significant moments, we can articulate the main themes and chronology, showing what modernization meant in the case of Pound.

His re-education began the moment he arrived in London,

eager to find out "how Yeats did it." The new stylistic values to which his eyes gradually opened are summed up in some of the ideas pressed upon him by two friends he now made, T. E. Hulme and Ford Madox Hueffer (Hueffer subsequently dropped his Germanic surname, becoming Ford Madox Ford). "I would rather talk about poetry with Ford Madox Hueffer," said Pound in 1913, "than with any man in London." In 1937, when Harriet Monroe reprinted in her autobiography some precepts Pound had sent her in letters twenty-five years before, Pound added a footnote: "It should be realized that Ford Madox Ford had been hammering this point of view into me from the time I first met him (1908 or 1909) and that I owe him anything that I don't owe myself for having saved me from the academic influences then raging in London." The point of view Pound credited to Hueffer is that

> Poetry must be *as well written as prose.* Its language must be a fine language, departing in no way from speech save by a heightened intensity (i.e. simplicity). There must be no book words, no periphrases, no inversions. It must be as simple as De Maupassant's best prose, and as hard as Stendhal's. . . . Objectivity and again objectivity, and expression: no hindside-beforeness, no straddled adjectives (as 'addled mosses dank'), no Tennysonianness of speech; nothing—nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say. Every literaryism, every book word, fritters away a scrap of the reader's patience, a scrap of his sense of your sincerity.

That the language of poetry should be modeled on speech was a commonplace by this time. But Hueffer went further. Insisting on what Pound called the "prose tradition" in poetry, he praised clarity, precision, objectivity, contemporaneity, and, in Pound's phrase a "hard" or unsentimental "constatation of fact"; the doctrine was radical.

The "hammerings" of Ford must often have struck the same place as those of T. E. Hulme (1883–1917). Hulme was a huge, colorful, overbearing, "ham-faced, idle man," as Sir John Squire later remembered him, who spent much of his time arguing or monologuing among his friends. He pocketed, synthesized, and put in a catchy way some of the newer ideas running loose at the time. (His generalizations had a powerful attraction for T. S. Eliot.) Just how much Pound picked up from Hulme is a puzzle. In later years Pound resented biographers who nosed out influences on him ("cut the 'influence' cliché"—though he boasted of

his own influence on others) and, in contrast to his grateful praise of Hueffer, he dismissed Hulme's talk as "a lot of crap about Bergson." Most of Pound's recent commentators, taking their cue, mention Hulme only incidentally. On the other hand, Hulme voiced his thoughts regularly at meetings of the Poets' Club in 1908, and late in 1908 or early in 1909 he lectured to the Poets' Club on modern poetry, Pound attending. In 1909 Hulme assembled an additional group of poets—F. S. Flint, Francis Tancred, Edward Storer, Florence Farr, Joseph Campbell—who used to meet weekly at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in Soho. They are the "forgotten school of 1909" to which Pound referred in 1912, when speaking of the origins of Imagism. According to F. S. Flint, writing in *Egoist* in 1915,

> what brought the real nucleus of this group together was a dissatisfaction with English poetry as it was then (and is still, alas!) being written. We proposed at various times to replace it by pure *vers libre;* by the Japanese *tanka* and *haikai;* . . . In all this Hulme was ringleader. He insisted too on absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage. . . . There was a lot of talk and practice among us . . . of what we called the Image.

Pound was present on these occasions, he undoubtedly read Hulme's articles in the *New Age* in 1909 and 1911, he heard Hulme's lectures on Bergson in 1911, and he saw Hulme informally. There is a striking similarity at some points between the views Hulme voiced in 1908 and 1909 and those Pound promulgated three years later, when he began his great campaign to reform modern poetry.

So far as they dealt with the question of how to write—the only topic Pound was listening to—Hulme's opinions were, briefly, that the poet's job is to render what he sees and feels precisely, to get "the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind." "Wherever you get this sincerity," Hulme adds, "you get the fundamental quality of good art." It follows that its subject has no bearing on the value of a poem, which can be worth just as much whether it be on "a lady's shoe or the starry heavens." Neither does the scale or kind of emotion matter. There is no need of "dragging in infinite or serious." The questions to be asked about a poem are, "Is there any real zest in it? Did the poet have an actually realized visual object before him in which he delighted?" Did he make one "see"

the object "or idea in the mind" in all its individuality and fullness?

But language is a conventional and communal medium and resists exact expression. It is constantly decaying into abstractions, which cannot render experience in its full concreteness. As ordinarily used, it instigates no imaginative process by which, as Keats once put it, the object swells into reality. To overcome all this, the poet must present images. The image (which may also be a metaphor), embodying the object or state of mind concretely, arrests the reader and sets his imagination working to grasp the thing vividly and completely. Hulme usually speaks of visual perceptions and how to convey them, these offering the simplest illustration of what he means. Poetry "always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. . . . Visual meanings can only be transferred by . . . metaphor . . . Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence . . . You could define art . . . as a passionate desire for accuracy."

With respect to meter and rhythm Hulme's argument is similar. Each emotion has its particular character or "shape." A poet can embody and make us "see" the shape through "rhythmical arrangements of words." As Pound put it in 1912, "I believe in an 'absolute rhythm,' a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed." The standpoint does not necessarily imply free verse, but justifies it. "I believe," Pound continued, "in technique as the test of a man's sincerity . . . in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures . . . the precise rendering of the impulse."

If we combine the views of Hueffer and Hulme, we have the essential doctrines of the new, Imagist poetic Pound was to spread abroad so effectively in 1912 and 1913. But the conversation of Hueffer, of Hulme, and of Hulme's fellow poets at the Eiffel Tower must have had a further, in some ways more fateful, meaning for Pound. His Imagist manifesto and similar utterances of 1912 and 1913 had their impact as the basis for a new poetry partly because they were united with a scornful, particularized indictment of the poetry of the recent past and of the present day. These were not Pound's opinions when he first ar-

rived in London. He came as an enthusiast for Browning and Rossetti, Swinburne and Dowson, Symons and Yeats and, on arriving in London, reported to William Carlos Williams that even the poets of "second rank" were doing "damn good work"; he instanced Margaret Sackville, Rosamund Watson, Ernest Rhys, and Jim G. Fairfax! Hueffer and Hulme turned him around. Hulme especially made him feel that a revolution was needed. To a young poet who had come to London in an intimidated frame of mind, this was exhilarating. He was suddenly no longer there to sit at the feet of Yeats—not to mention Ernest Rhys and Margaret Sackville. He cast a colder eye on the London verse and saw imprecision, abstraction, conventionality, and Victorian decoration. There was slush all about him, and with a suddenly energized self-confidence, almost a new identity, he set about cleaning up the mess. In October 1912 Yeats gave him five poems to send to *Poetry* magazine. Before forwarding them to Harriet Monroe, Pound went through them and made some changes. Four years earlier such liberties would have been unthinkable. Yeats was irritated, but it was not long before he asked Pound to "go over all my work with me" to eliminate rhetoric and abstraction.

By 1911 Pound's own verse was beginning to change. His vocabulary was relatively stripped of poetic diction; his syntax became more direct and natural; he compressed his phrasing by excising much that he might formerly have included, so that individual lines and phrases took on a greater weight of implication; images and metaphors were more carefully poised and expressive; and his rhythms, always his strongest gift, were now those of a master. But his poems were by no means Imagist; most of them were still not particularly modern in their attitudes or feelings; the finest was, typically a version of a medieval original, the Anglo-Saxon "Seafarer":

> Waneth the watch, but the world holdeth.
> Tomb hideth trouble. The blade is layed low.
> Earthly glory ageth and seareth.
> No man at all going the earth's gait,
> But age fares against him, his face paleth,
> Grey-haired he groaneth, knows gone companions,
> Lordly men are to earth o'ergiven.

The impact of Hulme, Hueffer, and other instructors first

showed itself not so much in experiments with new kinds of poetry as in Pound's greater "efficiency" as a stylist in the kind of poem he had been composing right along.

Pound's great work of 1912 and 1913 was his disseminating of the principles of style he had learned since coming to London. Meanwhile, his own "modernization" continued. He read recent French writers at the instigation of F. S. Flint. Flint's article on "Contemporary French Poetry" in the *Poetry Review* laid out various schools and movements of Paris (Unanisme, Paroxysme, Futurisme, and so on), each marshaled by Manifestos—why not also "Les Imagistes"? From the young Richard Aldington he heard about newly found fragments of Sappho's poetry and saw how much a few, disconnected phrases can stir the imagination. He read and was delighted with the "civilized mind" of Remy de Gourmont. He met Henry James of fascinating conversation, with its "weight of so many years' careful, incessant labour of minute observation." Soon he was reading "more" of Henry James. He discovered Flaubert's "exact presentation." In March 1913 the brief statement of Imagist principles appeared in *Poetry* magazine. One month later *Poetry* printed a miscellaneous batch of his poems. They include the much interpreted haiku, "In a Station of the Metro," but also his "Pact" with Walt Whitman, whom he had been reading in his enthusiasm of hope for the "American Risorgimento." Some of his poems in this cluster combine Whitman with Imagism. "Salutation," for example, might have been written by Sandburg. All these encounters were significant in the long run, but in the short run what mattered most were the notebooks and papers of Ernest Fenollosa that Pound acquired in the latter part of 1913.

A philosopher from Massachusetts, Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) taught in Japan and studied the art and poetry of Japan and China. Pound worked over his manuscripts in the winter months of 1913–14, when he shared a cottage with Yeats in Sussex, read aloud evenings to spare Yeats's eyesight—

> and his hearing nearly all Wordsworth
> for the sake of his conscience but
> preferring Ennemosor on witches—

and turned into verse Fenollosa's translations of the Japanese Noh drama.

In Fenollosa's notebooks he also found transcriptions and translations of classical Chinese poetry, together with an "Essay on the Chinese Written Character." These characters, said Fenollosa (whose views on this subject are not now accepted), are "shorthand pictures." The character that means "man," for example, is a simplified image of a man. A line of a Chinese poem is a row of such "pictures" (Fenollosa transcribed them from left to right). Under each character Fenollosa supplied a literal translation. Line three of the poem Pound translated as "Lament of the Frontier Guard" appeared in Fenollosa's notebook as (omitting the Chinese characters),

> tree fall autumn grass yellow.

This meant, as Fenollosa explained, "The tree leaves fall, and autumn grass is yellow." (Pound eventually rendered the line, "Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.")

This poetry was received into a mind already prepared for it. The Chinese written language, it appeared, was undeviatingly concrete. Every word was an image; the line was a succession of images. Pound must have wondered how he might achieve an equivalent in English. The Chinese poetic line presented images without syntactical directions. Fenollosa's manuscript "Essay on the Chinese Written Character" pointed out that nature itself is without grammar or syntax, so Chinese poetry may be said to come upon the mind as nature does. However the method might be explained, it was a succession of images without the less active, more abstract parts of language that ordinarily connect and interpret them and it afforded speed, suggestiveness, and economy. Pound had by this time composed "In a Station of the Metro":

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

The poem juxtaposes two complex images without comment and obtains its intense imaginative impact from the suggestive relation suddenly effected between them. He had also reworked some translations of Chinese poems he had found in Herbert Giles's *History of Chinese Literature*, making, for example, out of twelve lines in Giles his "Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord":

O fan of white silk
clear as frost on the grass-blade,
You also are laid aside.

Here again two images, clearly and directly presented, are compared, and they have a further, more densely suggestive and active interplay as elements in the larger comparison of the woman to the fan. Other poems more or less similar were "Ts'ai Chi'h," "Liu Ch'e," "April," "Gentildonna," and "Alba."

Reading Fenollosa's "Essay on the Chinese Written Character," Pound came on something else that was strongly to influence the way he thought about poetry and the way he wrote it: the ideograph. Some Chinese characters, according to Fenollosa, are "simple, original pictures"; others are compounds. "The ideograph for a 'messmate' is a man and a fire." In another example (from Pound's Confucian "Terminology," 1945), the ideograph that combines the characters for sun and moon means, Pound says, "the total light process, the radiation, reception, and reflection of light; hence, the intelligence. Bright, brightness, shining."

Whatever the ideograph conveyed, it conveyed in and through concrete instances. The character did not merely signify the abstraction "bright"; it presented the sun and the moon as examples. This was not only an advantage for poetry; it was, in Pound's opinion, an intellectual, almost a moral virtue that ought to be present in all thinking and expression. And the ideograph rouses mental energy, an activity of mind toward clarification and realization. Fenollosa held that whenever we encounter the ideograph (sun + moon), we do not understand it as the conventional sign for a third meaning (bright) to which the mind effortlessly repairs. Instead, we educe the meaning by perceiving "some fundamental relation" between the component parts. Pound must have seen that Fenollosa's account of the ideograph—"two things added together do not produce a third thing, but suggest some fundamental relation between them"—was one way of describing the effect of such poems as "In a Station of the Metro" or "Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord." It offered another way of emphasizing that these poems were not images in sequence but nodes of relationships, systems in dynamic interplay.

In 1913 and 1914 Pound made friends with Wyndham Lewis, a painter, novelist, and ideologue of harsh pictorial and verbal force, and with the youthful, rebellious sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. He collaborated with them and with other artists in a new journal, *Blast,* which came out in June 1914, announcing in huge, black letters the forming of a new movement in the arts, the Great English Vortex. Pound's statement of Imagist principles had appeared in *Poetry* magazine only fifteen months before, and he spoke of Vorticism in ways that made it seem continuous with his earlier revolution. His Vorticist pronunciamentos differed from his Imagist ones chiefly in three respects: he caught from Lewis a more strident tone of voice; he acquired a new taste in the fine arts for the kind of work represented by the paintings of Lewis and the sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein; and largely because of his association with modernist painters and sculptors, he articulated his views on poetry in a slightly different way. Though Vorticism had an important place in Pound's development he wrote no significant Vorticist poems, unless we identify the *Cantos* as such.

Wyndham Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, and the other Vorticists "awakened," Pound said, "my sense of form." Their art was aggressively new and, in the case of Gaudier-Brzeska, based itself on non-European cultures—Egypt, Africa, and Polynesia. The Vorticists held that each art should develop the resources of its own medium or "primary pigment," as Pound put it; a carved stone should look like a stone, not like a *tableau vivant;* a painting should not tell a story, nor music be written to a "program." They were foes to sentimental prettiness but did not therefore go in for realistic "analyses of the fatty degenerations of life," as Pound explained, for their work was nonrepresentational. ("You understand it will not look like you," Gaudier-Brzeska emphasized, chiseling at his bust of Pound.) Art was an expression of emotion ("certain emotions which I get from your character," as Gaudier had explained) by means of lines, planes, colors, or, in the case of poetry, images. For although Pound's Imagist doctrine still seemed valid, he now emphasized that the Image is not mimetic. It is better thought of as a form produced by an emotional energy, as iron filings shape themselves when magnetized. It has a meaning, but the meaning is not "ascribed" or "intended"; it is variable, so the Image may be compared not

to arithmetical numbers but to the letters—x, y, z,—of algebra. The Image is "a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which ideas are constantly rushing." Borrowing his terminology from sculpture, Pound thought of the Imagist poem as "planes in relation." If we view the first line of "In a Station of the Metro," with all its associational, semantic, and emotional connotations, as one plane, and the second line as another plane, "planes in relation" seems a suggestive way to describe the poem.

Pound now urged more than ever that poetry is concentrated presentation as opposed to "elaboration" and "dispersedness." "The Image is . . . endowed with energy." The Vorticist poet cannot possibly "get a vortex into every poem," but when he does, his words are maximally "charged." "The general weakness," he wrote Harriet Monroe in January 1915, "of the writers of the new school"—by which he meant Aldington, H.D., Williams, Amy Lowell, Fletcher, Masters, Sandburg—"is looseness, lack of rhythmical construction and intensity; secondly, an attempt to 'apply decoration,' to use what ought to be a vortex as a sort of bill-poster, or fence-wash."

Meanwhile, on September 22, 1914, T. S. Eliot paid his first visit; a week later he brought "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." "He is," Pound immediately wrote Miss Monroe, "the only American I know of who has . . . actually trained himself *and* modernized himself *on his own*. . . . It is such a comfort to meet a man and not have to tell him to . . . remember the date (1914) on the calendar." And Pound was now in active correspondence with Joyce, of whom he had first heard from Yeats and whose short stories in *Dubliners* he had greatly admired for their "clear hard prose."

Late in 1914 Pound started redoing Fenollosa's manuscript translations of Chinese poems. The result made one of his finest volumes, *Cathay* (1915). Everything Pound knew about writing went into these versions of Fenollosa's literal translations. Pound had no idea how the Chinese characters might sound when spoken and was thus free to shape the rhythm and sound as seemed best to him. But he kept one feature of the original form as Fenollosa presented it: each line is an integral unit of

meaning. For line after line he laid clear, direct, idiomatic statement next to statement, spare image next to image. "The Lament of the Frontier Guard" is spoken by a soldier on the northern marches, fought over from time immemorial by the Chinese border troops and the nomad Huns without:

> I climb the towers and towers
> to watch out the barbarous land:
> Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.
> There is no wall left to this village.
> Bones white with a thousand frosts,
> High heaps, covered with trees and grass.

If we use the terms Pound learned, probably from the Vorticists, "There is no wall left to this village" and "Bones white with a thousand frosts" are "planes in relation." If we evoke the criteria of what he considered "efficient" prose, we might say that these are carefully chosen and telling items, quickly and clearly set forth. The prose of Joyce's *Dubliners*, Pound wrote in July 1914, presents "swiftly and vividly." Joyce "does not sentimentalize . . . he does not weave convolutions. He is a realist. . . . He gives the thing as it is . . . he excells . . . because of his more rigorous selection, because of his exclusion of all unnecessary detail." In *Cathay* the factual, declarative sentences, the flat statement or understatement of emotion, the lack of interpretation or generalization, the allusions to traditional Chinese heroes, customs, and localities, all suggest an alien culture and sensibility.

In 1916 *Lustra* was published. Collecting poems written in the previous four years (including *Cathay*), *Lustra* exhibited Pound modernized. For the most part the poems are brief free-verse observations on poetry and society. They include satiric contrasts ("Les Millwin"), epigrams adapted or emulated from Roman poets, fragments from Sappho, haiku, and epitaphs. They rely on the poised image, as in "The Encounter":

> All the while they were talking the new morality
> Her eyes explored me.
> And when I arose to go
> Her fingers were like the tissue
> Of a Japanese paper napkin.

With its high spirits and terse style, *Lustra* makes enjoyable browsing. But such poems are slight, and if his career had ended at this point Pound would be remembered only as a reformer of technique, a translator, and a latter-day Landor who made accomplished bits.

Pound had come a long way in the eight years since he arrived in London. He had learned to look with scorn on the "common verse" of England and America from 1890 to 1910. He had acquired principles of how to write and had, he could justly feel, modernized himself in accordance with them. His influence was felt, his poetry imitated. If such "new" poets as Masters, Sandburg, H.D., Aldington, and Fletcher, not to mention Amy Lowell, had shown themselves not up to the mark, they were dispensable. A "party of intelligence" was forming about himself, Lewis, Hueffer, Eliot, and Joyce. They were the bearers of a new civilization, the Lorenzo Vallas and Pico della Mirandolas of a second Renaissance (of the first Renaissance Pound had no high opinion). As Gaudier-Brzeska worked in 1913 at his stone bust of Pound (it was, Lewis said, "Ezra in the form of a marble phallus") and Pound sat as model in the studio under the railway arch, he felt that had he lived in the Quattrocento he could have had "no finer moment and no better craftsman to fill it."

But there was no money and there was the war, and in these two facts, of which the meaning was remorselessly enlarged and clarified in the next few years, there is a key to much of Pound's later writing. At first it must have seemed that the war (which need not last long) would temporarily slow the Vortex, with Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska gone off to the trenches, but certainly the Vortex would not be dispersed. But in June of 1915 Gaudier-Brzeska was killed—"There died a myriad," Pound later wrote, "And of the best, among them." While he was alive, poverty had forced the young sculptor to work in a studio under Putney Viaduct, the trains passing overhead, the floor mud; he had lacked money to buy the stone he needed for his work. "It was done," Pound said of Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture later, "against the whole social system in the sense that it was done against poverty." Eliot was soon in hardly better case. Joyce, it seemed, was poor as a churchmouse. Also, there were bitter frustrations in trying to get their work published, as Pound's efforts were defeated by the dullness, laziness, timidity, and venality (in his opinion) of the literary and publishing establishment. Lewis' *Tarr* was repeatedly rejected. When *Ulysses* appeared serially in *The Little Review,* copies of the magazine were confiscated and burned by the Post Office Department; its editors were brought to trial. If one believed, as Pound did, that "serious" literature was indispensable to the healthy functioning of the mind ("I mean it maintains the precision and clarity of thought, not merely for the benefit of a few dilettantes and 'lovers of literature,' but maintains the health of thought outside literary circles and in non-literary existence, in general individual and communal life"), it was impossible to accept an economic system which impeded it, which, because it valued profits, not craftsmanship, hindered fine and serious workmanship of every kind. "With usura," he wrote in his splendid chant twenty years later (Canto 45),

> hath no man a house of good stone
> Each block cut smooth and well fitting
> . . . .
> Stone cutter is kept from his stone
> weaver is kept from his loom
> WITH USURA
> wool comes not to market
> sheep bringeth no gain with usura
> Usura is a murrain, usura
> blunteth the needle in the maid's hand
> and stoppeth the spinner's cunning.

Pound did not stop with complaint and invective; he looked about for a way to remedy the system. Not that he withheld invective. A direct line runs from his experience and rhetoric in these years to his terrible fulminations from Italy during the Second World War. His targets in the 1940s were no longer editors, publishers, and the "cultured" public; they were bankers and their political tools (in Pound's opinion), Roosevelt and Churchill. But at bottom they were the same targets. The difference was that after thirty years he thought he had spotted the more essential and underlying evils and had a cure, if only the world would listen. The hurts and angers of Pound in the years from 1914 till he left England in 1921, results of the enormous hope and energy he expended, mark the beginning of an ultimately disastrous development.

HOMAGE TO SEXTUS PROPERTIUS

Pound's next significant effort was his loose translation of portions of the Roman elegiac poet Sextus Propertius. "Homage to Sextus Propertius" was both the longest and the finest work he had yet accomplished. He composed it between 1917 and 1918. Most of the moods, poses, and styles of the poem could also have been found in *Lustra;* the all-important difference was that they now interacted in a single work. The poem has a continually varying feeling and rhythm, subject, and method of presentation. It is spoken by Propertius, who thus becomes the main object of attention, and has some narrative interest from its fragmentary, allusive presentation of the vicissitudes of Propertius' love affair with the courtesan Cynthia. Our imagination builds up a sense of imperial Rome, its culture, politics, history, and manners. The poem is not complexly organized or interwoven, but because it focuses on a character, Propertius, and because it remains within and creates a world, as opposed to moving in swift comparison from one to another, one reads it with a sustained, cumulative interest that most of the Cantos do not engage, however much we may prefer the *Cantos* in other respects.

The character of Propertius represents an ideal of civilized intelligence. With the war in its third and fourth years, Pound strongly felt the preciousness of this and exhibited it in Propertius with a consciousness that he was keeping faith with his own values and also defying the state of mind of wartime England. As he expressed it in 1931, the poem "presents certain emotions as vital to me in 1917, faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the British Empire, as they were to Propertius some centuries earlier, when faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the Roman Empire." His Propertius parodies with gusto the windy rhetoric of poets who flatter the crude nationalism and imperialism of the public and its officials:

> Now for a large-mouthed product.
> Thus:
> "The Euphrates denies its protection to the Parthian
> and apologizes for Crassus,"
> And "It is, I think, India which now gives necks
> to your triumph,"
> And so forth, Augustus.

He reveals his own "civilization" by maintaining private fidelities to his art and to his dubious Cynthia. Moreover—this is what especially matters—he maintains them with an acutely sensitive, complex, ironic awareness and self-awareness.

This ironic speaker, with his ebullience of mind, his manifold and quickly shifting feelings and points of view, is sometimes said to be a Laforguian character. Insofar as he is an intellectual in love with (though unfaithful to) an unfaithful mistress, is fully aware of the humorous sides of his fears and passions and keeps a distance between himself and his emotion by foppery and self-deprecation, Propertius has some traits in common with the stock protagonist of Laforgue's poems. But Pound's Propertius includes the Laforguian protagonist as only one element of a much more various character. He can be fantastic, high-spirited, frivolous, melancholy, joking, and directly and intensely passionate, not only in sequence but in the same breath.

Reading and translating Laforgue, Pound was fascinated by a quality of style he had not so clearly discriminated before. He called it "logopoeia," by which he meant "a play in the shading of the words themselves." It is, he said, a "dance of the intelligence among words," that is, "it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we *expect* to find with the word." In addition to Laforgue, he found logopoeia exemplified in Propertius, Alexander Pope, T. S. Eliot, and Marianne Moore. It is omnipresent in "Homage to Sextus Propertius"; the repetitive or parallel syntactical constructions common in the poem afforded a special opportunity—for example,

> The Parthians shall get used to our statuary
> and acquire a Roman religion.

The "play in the shading of the words" is felt not only in the individual phrases ("get used to" suggests the boredom of imperial statuary; "acquire" is delicate irony—"the citadel of the intelligent," Pound said—by euphemism, since the "acquisition" will come not by conquest but by being conquered) but in the "play" between the phrases: moving from the native and colloquial "get used" to the Latinate "acquire," the shading of the diction wittily reflects the process of conquest and acculturation. It is through the logopoeia of his utterance that Propertius defines himself most subtly and vividly as a character.

His logopoeia reminds us of Henry James. In 1918 Pound reminiscently described James's conversation, and the peculiarities he noted significantly resemble stylistic effects in "Homage to Sextus Propertius": "the long sentences piling themselves up in elaborate phrase after phrase, the lightning incision, the pauses, the slightly shaking admonitory gesture with its 'wu-a-wait a little, wait a little, something will come.'" What comes in Pound's "Homage" as in James's conversation is the *trouvaille*, the found, unexpected epithet that sheds a new crosslight. Speaking of the boring poets who write "to Imperial order," Propertius remarks,

> Out-weariers of Apollo will, as we know, continue
> their Martian generalities.

One senses the suspenseful pause between "continue" and the next phrase, the unspoken "wu-a-wait a little" before the *trouvaille*. Or,

> May a woody and sequestered place cover me with its foliage
> Or may I inter beneath the hummock
> of some as yet ['wu-a-wait a little'] uncatalogued sand.

And so, out of James, Laforgue, the original Propertius, and many other voices, Pound builds the talk of his own Propertius. Taking him at his most ardent in section II, we have, in the opening line,

> Me happy, night, night full of brightness,

a Latinate construction of the initial phrase, followed by a lapsed grammar that is pure Pound out of Chinese. The next line begins in apostrophe to the "couch," a typical bit of Laforguian fantasticality, and ends in a Latinate and Jamesian *trouvaille*, "delectations," that beats a Laforguian retreat from emotion:

> Oh couch made happy by my long delectations.

The underlying emotion breaks through such defenses,

> Though you give all your kisses, you give but few,

and the defenses are immediately, though only partly, repaired ("shift my pains"!)—and broken again:

> Nor can I shift my pains to other,
> Hers will I be dead.

I have been speaking of the poem almost as though it were an original work by Pound, but of course it is not—or not quite. It is a translation in which Pound sometimes closely follows the original, sometimes rearranges, modernizes, makes it more graphic, and puns on it. The fact that it is a translation strongly influences responses to it, whether or not one knows the Latin original. Readers who can trace the changing relation between the original and Pound's version may find the experience not only pleasurable but indispensable for appreciating Pound's intentions and his artistry; they may, on the other hand, find it a shock. No one is likely to conclude that Pound closely rendered either Propertius' language or his general effect. Readers who do not know Latin are possibly more ready to accept some features of its style because they approach it as a translation. One wonders whether in 1917 and 1918 Pound himself would have been willing to adopt in his own person the bold, flowing rhetoric of the opening of section VI:

> When, when, and whenever death closes our eyelids,
> Moving naked over Acheron
> Upon the one raft, victor and conquered together,
> Marius and Jugurtha together,
> one tangle of shadows.

He seems to have thought of his poem as heuristic translation, that is, a translation that would direct attention to some qualities of the original, while also rendering equivalent effects in contemporary English.

POUND'S MODERNIZATION: THE SECOND PHASE

To the older generation of readers in 1916 much of Pound's *Lustra* might have seemed condensed, unpoetic, and disagreeable. But it would not have seemed formidably difficult, and the same may be said of "Homage to Sextus Propertius." Between 1915 and 1920, however, Pound wrote his first seven Cantos and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. In parts of these works he adopted for the first time the extraordinarily compressed, oblique, learned, elliptical, allusive style that still baffles most readers. In 1922 Eliot used a somewhat similar style in *The Waste Land*. Although the styles of both poets changed continually thereafter, and

although many of the subsequent Cantos are not difficult, for at least two decades readers associated Pound and Eliot with "obscurity" in poetry.

From the moment he conceived them, Pound viewed the *Cantos* as his major undertaking, the poem through which he hoped to live in history as a great poet. The opening three Cantos were first printed in *Poetry* magazine in 1917. They had been worked on at least since 1915, and bits of them may date from much earlier. These so-called Ur-Cantos differ greatly from the three that now begin his long poem. They commence as a chatty monologue. Pound is the speaker, Robert Browning the hearer, and long poems—their materials, forms, styles, and how and where to begin them—the subject. As a prototype for the work he has in hand Pound refers to Browning's learnedly obscure poem on the thirteenth-century troubadour Sordello:

> Hang it all, there can be but one *Sordello!*
> But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks,
> Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say the thing's an art-form,
> Your *Sordello,* and that the modern world
> Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in;
> Say that I dump my catch, shiny and silvery
> As fresh sardines flapping and slipping on the marginal cobbles?

This uncompressed, talky style was totally at variance with Pound's Imagist and Vorticist principles, which at this time he felt were inappropriate for a long poem. The Ur-Cantos are not always this accessible. The conversation with Browning fades periodically into a stream of memories and associations. Rapid transitions require mental agility. Allusions to historical, geographical, literary, and autobiographical lore and phrases in foreign languages are not always explained or translated. Nevertheless, for his long poem Pound had given up the "intaglio method," as he put it, and his decision to appear in the poem as its speaker or thinker was of special importance. As in "Homage to Sextus Propertius," whatever came into the poem was going on in the mind of the protagonist, "Pound." This mode of presentation tended both to hold the diverse materials together and to justify the transitions; the heterogeneity and the discontinuity have a psychological verisimilitude, and build up our sense of the protagonist.

But to use the first person forced Pound to write passages of lesser intensity. Successive revisions of the Ur-Cantos progressively eliminated the speaker and advanced toward an objective, maximally compressed presentation, in which the principle of progression is juxtaposition, not transition. It was not in the opening three Cantos, however, but in the fourth that Pound achieved this in a way that satisfied him. He had been working on the fourth Canto since 1917; when he published it in 1919, it began:

> Palace in smoky light,
> Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones,
> ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
> Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows.

To a considerable extent this style was only a return to principles of writing he had previously formed and a ruthless application of them: Here the "image" was again the poet's "primary pigment," the medium in which he thinks and expresses himself, and the "meaning" was embodied in the image, not expressed discursively; the image was set before the reader with maximum economy, using "absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation"; nature, as Fenollosa had pointed out, is without grammar, and an elliptical or lapsed grammar, as it was variously to be studied in both Chinese and French symboliste poetry, afforded speed and intensity (for example, it promoted sudden juxtaposition); the reader was to be made to think, to go through a process of perceiving and relating, working toward earned insight or realization; poetry was not "mimetic," it conveyed reality not by "representing" it but by building a structure of parts ("planes in relation"), whose relation created an emotion and a meaning; the emotion and the meaning were not "ascribed" or "intended" but "variable," capable of changing from reader to reader.

Because these were Pound's views in 1915, when he began composing the original or Ur-Cantos, he must have been of two minds as he wrote them. On the one hand, "the FIRST requirement" of a long poem, as he remarked twenty years later of Laurence Binyon's translation of Dante, "is that the reader be able to proceed"; on the other hand, to compose verse of less than utmost intensity troubled his conscience. His dissatisfactions with the Ur-Cantos were much exacerbated because of

his relationship with Joyce and Eliot. In 1917–1919 Eliot wrote his poems in quatrains and "Gerontion"; Joyce sent *Ulysses* from Zurich in manuscript installments. Because Pound recognized these as masterworks, they caused him much anxiety. He might be left behind in the very qualities of modernized style that he had himself first developed and expounded. In the grip of this fear he returned, as he worked on the fourth Canto, to the principles of his own modernization, and emphasized them in an even more uncompromising way. He also displayed techniques learnt from Joyce and Eliot.

Speaking to Joyce of the Ur-Cantos in March 1917, three months before they were published, Pound wondered "what you will make of it." Probably, he guessed, they were "too sprawling . . . to find favour." One sees how the thought of Joyce brought his doubts to a focus. Nine months later he read the first manuscript installment of *Ulysses;* he found in it "compression, intensity," and rapid juxtaposition and was doubtless further convinced that his Ur-Cantos were encumbered with transitions. He saw literary allusions, sometimes in foreign languages; suddenly inserted into the text, they opened to the imagination what Eliot called a "vista"; for example:

> —God, he said quietly. Isn't the sea what Algy calls it: a grey sweet mother? The snotgreen sea. The scrotumtightening sea. *Epi oinopa ponton;*

Algernon Swinburne speaks thus of the sea in "The Triumph of Time," and next to "the scrotumtightening" comes Homer's "wine-dark sea" in swift juxtaposition and equally voweled and dentaled sonority.

Eliot was also reading *Ulysses,* and in May and June of 1918 Pound could admire in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" the "swift alternation of subjective beauty and external shabbiness, squalor, and sordidness" that he commented on in a review of Joyce at this time (May 1918). Pound could also note the allusions at the end, for example, of "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," allusions that suddenly drew Sweeney into relation with the myths of Orpheus and of Agamemnon. (Eliot said that the "bloody wood" refers to the death of Orpheus, though no unaided reader would catch this allusion in the poem.) These myths are telescoped. One is

made to slide into and blend with another; in the fourth Canto, Pound similarly superimposes the troubadour legends of Cabestan and Peire Vidal on the classical myths of Philomela and Actaeon.

In September 1918 Eliot published in *Today* a review of Joyce which briefly compared his work with Pound's *Cantos.* (Eliot was referring to a revised version of the Ur-Cantos which had appeared in the American edition of *Lustra,* October 1917.) His remarks revealed an attitude toward the Cantos which may have been further communicated in person, may in fact have been Pound's also:

> Joyce . . . uses allusions suddenly and with great speed, part of the effect being the extent of the vista opened to the imagination by the very lightest touch. Pound . . . proceeds by a very different method . . . In appearance, it is a rag-bag of Mr. Pound's reading. . . . And yet the thing has . . . a positive coherence; it is an objective and reticent autobiography.

The comparison was not favorable to Pound. Where Joyce opened vistas, Pound seemed to stuff in odd rags of his reading. Joyce brought off his effects "suddenly and with great speed"; there was no mention of such virtues in Pound. "Autobiography" could hardly come as a compliment from one who insisted that poetry was or ought to be impersonal.

So Pound eliminated the first person completely from his fourth Canto. "Palace in smoky light": it begins with a sentence fragment, and one is there, present at the burning of Troy or in the mind of someone who sees or imagines it. The second line explains and elaborates with a second image: "Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones." The poetry is moving fast, enforcing the rigorous selection of detail Pound had praised in Joyce, rendering, as in Joyce, the flow of consciousness; suddenly, without transition, three allusions enter the field:

> ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
> Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows.

"Anaxiforminges" ("lords of the lyre") is the first word of a poem by Pindar. "Aurunculeia" has its provenience in Catullus, who writes of her marriage; a later passage in the fourth Canto associates her name with a marriage rite. In connection with the fall of Troy and the mention of Cadmus, founder of Thebes, the

cluster of allusions may suggest the rise and fall of cities, love and war, heroism and marriage, public order and rhetoric (dubiously hollow rhetoric, given Pound's view of Pindar) versus private rites and lyric sincerities of feeling; and it may compare or alternatively blend together Troy, Thebes, and Rome; Homer, Pindar (poet of Thebes), and Catullus; Helen and Vinia Aurunculeia. In short, the method is amazingly oblique and the sudden vistas open in too many directions at once. One understands more or less why Pound wrote this way, but the passage remains quirky, without imaginative effect. It is not merely that there are too many possible implications but also that the allusions have no adequately sustaining context. The passage is composed out of parts or fragments too briefly presented to create much effect by themselves. Hence the passage emphasizes and throws all the work on the relations between the parts, but these relations are not coherent.

If the fourth Canto was not always successful poetry, there was much in it from which other writers might learn. We may take for just one illustration a passage that comes slightly further on and renders the suicide of Marguerite, wife of the lord of Chateau Roussillon in the twelfth century. Pound does not write that "she threw herself out of the window" but presents the scene from the point of view of a watcher. The action is broken into sequential phases and the narration arrests itself in details of seemingly secondary significance. These convey the transfixed attention of the watcher and obliquely create the scene in vivid, shadowless clarity. The versification embodies the rhythm of the action and emotion:

> And she went toward the window,
> the slim white stone bar
> Making a double arch;
> Firm even fingers held to the firm pale stone;
> Swung for a moment,
> and the wind out of Rhodez
> Caught in the full of her sleeve.
> . . . the swallows crying.

If this resembles *mutatis mutandis* the style by which Ernest Hemingway made himself famous in the 1920s it is partly because Hemingway learned from the same masters as Pound and partly because Pound was his master. Throughout the fourth Canto

there are fine, local successes of perception, phrasing, and rhythm:

> Like a fish-scale roof,
> Like the church roof in Poictiers;
> . . . .
> Smoke hangs on the stream,
> The peach-trees shed bright leaves in the water,
> Sound drifts in the evening haze,
> The bark scrapes at the ford,
> Gilt rafters above black water,
> Three steps in an open field,
> Gray stone-posts leading.

When the revision of Canto II was finally accomplished, one could read:

> Olive grey in the near,
> far, smoke grey of the rock-slide,
> Salmon-pink wings of the fish-hawk
> cast grey shadows in water,
> The tower like a one-eyed great goose
> cranes up out of the olive-grove;

and, of the water off Chios in the Aegean,

> There is a wine-red glow in the shallows,
> a tin flash in the sun-dazzle;

which, for what they are, could not be bettered.

During these years Pound was getting through an incredible amount of work. He seized all opportunities to tout for Joyce, Eliot, Lewis, Epstein, and Gaudier-Brzeska. "Les jeunes," as he called them, sent him their poems, and he took pains to reply sensitively. Forced by lack of money into literary journalism, he served as both art and music critic for the *New Age*, reviewing art shows under the name of B. H. Dias, concerts as William Atheling. He reviewed books in batches. He wrote miscellaneous essays—including five articles on "Elizabethan Classicists," three on Henry James, a sixty-one-page discussion of modern French poets—some of which cut seriously into his time. He spent the better part of two months reading for his "Elizabethan Classicists" in the British Museum. Over two hundred and fifty prose

items appeared in magazines between 1917 and 1919; during the same period he also published five books.

Meanwhile he was absorbing the economic theories of Major H. C. Douglas, whom he met in 1918 and whose important writings started to appear in articles in the *New Age* in 1919. Douglas taught him what he was very ready to learn, that a relatively simple expedient, the State Dividend, could eliminate many of the irrationalities of the economic system and provide a richer and more secure life for all mankind. Douglas argued that the value of a product (Pound thought, among other things, of his own products and of those of Eliot, Joyce, and Lewis) was not to be measured by what it cost to produce or by the demand for it but by the degree to which it ministered to a "definite, healthy, and sane human requirement." From now on Pound's arguments stressed how "art of maximum intensity" was preeminently valuable by this criterion. But though he adopted many of Douglas' views, the particular ideas were less important than the general fact that Douglas helped substantiate Pound's dawning conviction of the fundamental, omnipresent influence of the economic system. Henceforth a just and rational system seemed to him the indispensable basis for any hope of a "civilization" or Vortex. Bankers and financiers increasingly figured as archvillains in the theater of his imagination. A bank can promote the real wealth of the people, for example, the Bank of Siena, founded in 1624 to lend money "to whomso can best use it USE it," but for the most part bankers and financiers manipulated for their own gain. They brought about depressions in order to be able to collect loans in deflated currency. They plotted wars for profits. Bank interest added an artificial cost to production. For the next forty years Pound read and wrote often on economic history and theory, and the subject was never far from his mind.

HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY

In 1920 Pound composed and published *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. These two sequences of poems in quatrains explore the life, character, times, and works of a poet in London around 1920. The relation between Mauberley and Pound is complex,

for in Mauberley, Pound projected and confronted what Erik Erikson calls a "negative identity." He saw himself in Mauberley, but a self he wanted to reject. Given the psychological dynamics of this situation, it is easy to understand that the poem might be difficult to interpret. Pound's attitude toward Mauberley could be influenced by such defense mechanisms as censorship, projection, and overcompensation. It is ambivalent and unstable, swinging between wide extremes. In the opening poem one cannot be sure whose career, Pound's or Mauberley's, is characterized; nor can one finally determine whether the characterization is made from Pound's point of view or from that of the age. The poem seems to attack the age that has no praise for chisseled and delicate workmanship such as Mauberley's but it also seems to maintain an ironic reserve of judgment toward such workmanship. In the end, the introductory poem establishes no attitude whatever toward a career such as Mauberley's.

As the first sequence progresses, however, we are no longer much concerned with Pound's attitude to Mauberley, for he writes mainly a satiric attack on the age. He portrays venal writers and la-di-da patronesses; makes allusive, invidious juxtapositions of twentieth-century culture with that of the ancient world—

> The pianola "replaces"
> Sappho's barbitos;

and cries straightforward invective against war and usury. But through most of the second sequence the object of Pound's repulsion is Mauberley himself, and this artist of the poetic medallion (shall I "give up th'intaglio method?" Pound had asked in his Ur-Cantos) is presented as sexually timid, helpless before the age (he lacks Pound's aggressive, reforming energies), and in retreat from life:

> Firmness,
> Not the full smile,
> His art, but an art
> In profile.

Eventually he becomes capable only of escapist reveries.

In a letter to Felix Schelling, his old teacher at the University

of Pennsylvania, Pound dismissed the Mauberley sequences as "mere surface . . . a study in form . . . Meliora speramus." But he had handled the form and texture effectively. The sequence begins:

> For three years out of key with his time,
> He strove to resuscitate the dead art
> Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"
> In the old sense. Wrong from the start—
>
> No, hardly, but seeing he had been born
> In a half savage country, out of date;
> Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;
> Capaneus; trout for factitious bait.

Here again are the sudden allusions and juxtapositions he had developed in the fourth Canto. Capaneus implies the hubris and inevitable defeat of Mauberley's aspiration. "Trout for factitious bait," a fish attracted to an artificial fly, presents the same aspiration in a different light as it compares Mauberley to a blindly instinctive, gullible, and hooked fish and the art he emulates to the delicately contrived, unnatural fly. The lapsed grammar brings these quite different "planes" or perspectives into relationship with utmost speed. The Mauberley sequence also exploits the verbal play and irony Pound had mastered in "Homage to Sextus Propertius" but had not yet ventured to employ in the Cantos. In 1920, *The Waste Land* not yet written, the Mauberley sequences were the most ample exhibition available of modernized style in poetry.

Pound wrote in quatrains because he was disgusted with the "floppiness" of contemporary free verse. As he later told the story, he and Eliot agreed in 1917 that the "dilution" had proceeded too far, and "some countercurrent must be set going." Pound recommended a study of Gautier's terse and polished quatrains in *Émaux et Camées,* whereupon Eliot wrote "The Hippopotamus" and, later, his other poems in quatrains. Pound followed with the Mauberley poems. These examples might have had some effect against free verse, but Eliot's *The Waste Land* soon had far greater importance in leading poets back to meters. The deepest influence of Pound's trim, rigorous quatrains on other poets was probably in the high standards of workmanship he set for stanzaic verse. And in some parts he grafted into the

meter a syncopation based, he said, on the Greek poet Bion. In general the versification of the Mauberley poems reflects not only his disgust with the free versifiers but also, as he explained, his "distaste for the slushiness and swishiness of the post-Swinburnian British line."

In other ways also Pound could justly feel that the Mauberley sequences marked new and important advances in his own modernization. While Eliot and Joyce had been inspecting the "mess" of the twentieth-century mind, Pound had hitherto been bustling about in the past, resurrecting Rome, China, the Italian Renaissance, medieval Provence, and medieval Japan. He had to be sure included sketches of contemporary social types and manners in *Ripostes, Blast,* and *Lustra,* but the Mauberley sequences made up his first long poem dealing with the modern world directly. (He told Schelling that the Mauberley sequences were an "attempt to condense the James novel.") In Monsieur Verog, Brennbaum, Mr. Nixon, and Lady Valentine, not to mention Mauberley himself, he assembled a gallery of contemporary portraits, as Eliot had in Prufrock, Aunt Helen, Mr. Apollinax, Burbank, and Sweeney. In transcribing what he called "moeurs contemporaines," the nuances of contemporary social behavior, he had used an objective and impersonal method, as opposed to the "autobiographical" method Eliot had adverted to in discussing the Ur-Cantos. While expressing his feelings about the economic system, social mores, and literary world of England, he had kept, as Eliot did, an ironic distance and control.

THE CANTOS

Pound's *Cantos* were composed over roughly fifty-five years, and the poem was finally left unfinished. Because most of the Cantos were composed after the 1920s, the notice of them here is preliminary to a fuller discussion in the second volume. The 109 completed Cantos and "drafts and fragments" of eight additional ones have a total of roughly 23,000 lines. The figure may be compared with the 10,465 lines of *Paradise Lost* or, perhaps more relevantly, with the 433 lines of *The Waste Land,* which Pound in 1921 had thought "the longest poem in the English

langwidge." Since the style of much of the *Cantos* is not less difficult than that of *The Waste Land,* the poem requires a formidable commitment of attention and time.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the *Cantos* is the presentation of many different historical cultures: ancient China, eighteenth-century America, the Renaissance, Homeric Greece, twentieth-century Europe and America, the Middle Ages. These times and places are exhibited in concrete samples. There are passages from the letters of John Adams, laws from ancient China ("In doubt, no condemnation, rule out irrelevant evidence"), translations or adaptations of poems from diverse times and cultures, extracts from the accounts of medieval Venice ("3 lire 15 groats to stone for making a lion"), and there are anecdotes of what such figures as Sigismundo Malatesta, Confucius, Yeats, Baldy Bacon, So-Gioku, and Corporal Casey did or said. Such concrete cases embody values, and Pound believed that from so large and varied an accumulation his readers would gradually and tacitly form a sense of what is permanently valuable. Because these values were concretely presented, they would be formative and productive in a way that abstract argument can never be. Viewed in this light, the *Cantos* are the most ambitious educative effort that any poet has undertaken in the twentieth century.

The values highlighted in Pound's multiplied and recurrent examples might be generalized as sincerity and productivity. The ideal of sincerity reflects, as he handles it, a Confucian ambience, though the *Cantos* do not associate it only with China. The sincere man has clarified his intellect and will. He is imbued with persisting truths of nature and human nature and judges and acts properly in relation to them. His way of life has sanity, order, and continuity with human tradition. Pound puts special emphasis on sincerity in relation to language. He interprets the Confucian ideogram of sincerity as, "the precise definition of the word, pictorially the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot verbally. The righthand half of this compound means: to perfect, bring to focus." Another ideogram is interpreted: "fidelity to the given word. The man here standing by his word." As for productivity, Pound's heroes get work done. By work he means especially clearing out the deadwood and promoting new growth. He praises the Chinese emperor who wrote MAKE IT

NEW on his bathtub, and he endows the ideographs with driving energy as he translates them:

> Day by day make it new
> cut underbrush,
> pile the logs
> keep it growing.

His creative figures such as Malatesta and Adams are, like himself, phenomenally busy, carrying on multiple projects at the same time. He gave a natural sanction to productive work. For to his imagination (as to Dante's) there was a deep, mysterious connection, which he expressed in juxtaposed images, between founding a state, like the first Chinese emperors, building a Tempio, like Sigismundo Malatesta, or writing a poem and the fundamental creativity of nature, which he thought of as a generalized sexuality and symbolized in the goddess Aphrodite and in other myths or mythical embodiments of sexuality.

The Ur-Cantos dwelt on the problem of organizing a long poem in the modern world. When Pound saw Eliot's completed *The Waste Land* he reflected ruefully on his own inability to create similarly integrated wholes: "Complimenti, you bitch. I am wracked by the seven jealousies, and cogitating an excuse for always exuding my deformative secretions in my own stuff, and never getting an outline. I go into nacre and objets d'art." Whether or not the *Cantos* have an overall form, as contrasted with formless ongoingness, like a railroad train, has been much debated. Those who find a governing form disagree in describing it. Those who do not, may or may not think it matters. Speaking of W. C. Williams in 1928, Pound argued that "Major form is not a non-literary component. But it can do us no harm to stop an hour or so and consider the number of very important chunks of world-literature in which form, major form, is remarkable mainly for absence"; and he goes on to cite the *Iliad,* Aeschylus' *Prometheus,* Montaigne, and Rabelais. If there is no "major form" in the *Cantos,* there is certainly an incremental recurrence of phrases, allusions, persons, historical events, and myths, and as these references accumulate they tend gradually to become both clearer and more weighted with implications. Thus, any part of the poem is richer and more meaningful if it is read in the context of the whole.

The method of presentation is for the most part that of "planes in relation," the juxtaposition of concrete particulars. The method prevails on the large scale—Cantos and sequences of Cantos are juxtaposed with each other—and also within individual Cantos. For example, Cantos 8-11 present the Renaissance condottiere Malatesta, whom we see amid the welter of his activities as soldier, ruler, man of culture, and patron of writers and artists. He is creating his Tempio, the church of San Francesco at Rimini, which he redid in Renaissance style as a monument to himself and his mistress. The Tempio was an ambitious work of art, carried out over a period of years despite enemies, hardships, distractions, and the age—which Pound considered a florid period unpropitious for art. Nevertheless, the Tempio—

> in the style "Past ruin'd Latium"
> The filagree hiding the gothic,
> with a touch of rhetoric in the whole—

was, though unfinished, a magnificent achievement. Against Sigismundo Malatesta, Pound juxtaposed (Canto 12) a modern soldier of fortune, Baldy Bacon. The contrast highlights the degeneration of the type in the modern world, for although Baldy Bacon has an engaging picaresque unscrupulousness, he is a financial manipulator, building nothing:

> Baldy's interest
> Was in money business.
> "No interest in any other kind uv busnis,"
> Said Baldy.

Then Canto 13 presents Confucius. There is no attempt to articulate Confucian ideas systematically; instead, Pound relates in simple, factual style the sage's sayings and doings. As in reading the gospels, one must infer the whole ethos from the fragments given. Immediately after this come Cantos that picture the modern world as a filthy and obscene hell through which the narrator makes his difficult way. These so-called Hell Cantos are thematically comparable in some ways to the Malatesta Cantos; in both groups one sees a man struggling against the pulluating resistances of a corrupt age and society—the good man amid the muck, as Pound might have put it. The situation corresponds to Pound's view of his own activities at this time.

Similarly, within particular Cantos, Pound juxtaposes successive passages, lines, or parts of lines. As the years passed, he increasingly tended to describe these structures of concrete, heterogeneous materials as "ideograms." For example (from Canto 74):

> rain also is of the process.
> What you depart from is not the way
> and olive tree blown white in the wind
> washed in the Kiang and Han
> what whiteness will you add to this whiteness,
> what candor?

Reading this ideogram, one must keep in mind that the parts are discontinuous, that there need be no narrative or logical transition from one line to the next. Obviously we are not to think of olive trees washed in rivers of China. The images of the olive leaves blown by the wind, making the whitish undersides gleam and ripple, and of being washed in the sacred rivers of China, are two separate suggestions of cleansing or purification. In *Confucius,* Pound quotes Mencius: "After Confucius' death, when there was talk of regrouping, Tsang declined, saying: 'Washed in the Keang and Han, bleached in the autumn's sun's-slope, what whiteness can you add to that whiteness, what candour?'" What the whole, complex ideogram implies is impossible to paraphrase, but it speaks of a spiritual quality which is natural to man, yet at the same time is achieved only gradually. The process of this achieving is the path or way, and the process includes the purification that comes with the natural undergoings and sufferings of life. The spiritual quality or nature that thus realizes itself is suggested in such terms as rectitude or sincerity, in the form in which such virtues are contemplated in the ideals of Athens and republican Rome (olive tree, candor) and of ancient China.

LATER LIFE

Pound's later career belongs to the period covered in the second volume of this history. But a few words may be said about it here. After living in Paris from 1921 to 1924, he then moved to Rapallo, Italy, where he made his home until the close

of the Second World War. He continued to aid avant-garde magazines and writers—for example, E. E. Cummings, Basil Bunting, and Louis Zukofsky; he studied music, organized concerts, tried to learn Chinese, and took all occasions to propagate his ideas on economics and currency reform. He was favorably impressed with Italy's Fascist government, though he did not necessarily think fascism the right path for other countries, and developed an attitude of hero-worship toward Mussolini. The "Boss" had found his *Cantos* "entertaining" (the Boss remarked at their one interview), which was more than could be said for most *soi-disant* literati. Besides, "I don't believe any estimate of Mussolini will be valid unless it *starts* from his passion for construction. Treat him as *artifex* and all the details fall into place." One of the things he felt "Muss" would construct was a currency system along the lines Pound advocated. By the mid-1930s the greater bulk of his writing was on political and economic topics, though Cantos were still accumulating. Toward the end of the thirities he was taking a keen interest in American politics and was trying to influence it through his articles and correspondence. He felt that the drift toward war resulted from criminal ignorance and profiteering. His own ideas, if adopted, would bring peace and economic well-being. He worked desperately to put them across.

In 1939 Pound visited the United States for the purpose of educating Roosevelt (whom he did not see) and members of Congress. When the war broke out he was back in Italy and he strove through letters and other writings to keep the United States from entering the war. He regarded himself as an American patriot and Roosevelt as an unscrupulous misleader of the people. From 1941 to the end of the war he broadcast regularly over the Rome radio, his talks conveying for the most part his economic message, though he also quoted poetry, engaged in literary reminiscence, and fulminated against America's part in the war. At the end of the war he was taken into custody by the United States Army and kept for six months in a prison camp near Pisa. At first he was in a cage, without shelter from rain, heat, or dust. After his health broke down, he was transferred to the prison hospital. Here, with his world in ruins, and (so far as his mental condition allowed him to appreciate his actual position) in fear of hanging, he wrote his eleven Pisan Cantos, the

finest section of the whole poem. They are poems of memory, extending back to his early years in London and they are a final affirmation of his ideas and ideals. They reach their climax at the end of Canto 81, where Pound speaks with a new profundity out of his own immediate experience:

> What thou lovest well remains,
> the rest is dross
>
> What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee
> What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage.

From Italy, Pound was brought to the United States to stand trial for treason. The examining psychiatrists reported, however, that he was legally insane, and he was not brought to trial. Instead, he was committed to a mental institution, where he spent the next thirteen years. He translated the Confucian *Analects* (1951), *The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* (1954), and Sophocles' *Women in Trachis* (1956) and composed more Cantos. Friends had long been working for his release, and finally the United States government agreed to dismiss the indictment against him. He returned to Italy in 1958, where he lived another fifteen years, dying in Venice in 1972 at the age of eighty-seven. He was the last of the major poets who had brought about the Modernist revolution.