



**A University of Sussex DPhil thesis**

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

# Modernism and State Power in the Pre-War Poetry and Prose of Ezra Pound, 1911–1914

by David Hull

Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

University of Sussex

September 2014

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

DAVID HULL

PHD IN AMERICAN STUDIES

**MODERNISM AND STATE POWER IN THE PRE-WAR POETRY AND  
PROSE OF EZRA POUND, 1911–1914**

**SUMMARY**

Pound scholars have tended to assume that questions of state power, and of the relationship between the state and the individual, only become central to his work during the inter-war period. The present thesis, however, argues that these questions are a major concern in Pound's writing during the years immediately preceding the First World War, and that questions of state power significantly colour Pound's imagist and vorticist work.

Chapter one reads Pound's translation of the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* as a contribution to the radical Edwardian debate about the expansion of the state's bureaucratic power and the threat it might pose to individual autonomy. I also consider the way Pound's translation links state power to the division of labour. Chapter two reassesses Pound's instigation of the imagist movement, against the backdrop of his concurrent fascination with the First Balkan War, an episode all but ignored in previous Pound scholarship. I argue that Pound interpreted the Balkan states as undertaking on the battlefield the very same modernizing struggle that he saw himself as embarking upon in the field of letters. Chapter three argues that as Pound's pursuit of the 'new' intensifies, his identity as an American—as, in his words, 'a citizen of a free State, a member of the sovereign people'—takes on a dual significance. Poetically, America's perceived national youthfulness and virility become important tropes for novelty and modernity in his poetry. Politically, though, Pound casts the unfolding national, political and nascent imperial project of the United States as a metonym for modernity itself, scoffing at the Italian Futurist's 'automobilism' as essentially provincial, and proposing instead his own 'American Risorgimento'.

Methodologically, this thesis strives to combine close readings of Pound's poetry and prose, seen within its original publication context (that is, largely in little magazines), with careful reference to the broader historical context.

**Please note: For the purpose of online publication, all copyrighted material reproduced in the examination copy of this thesis (except that considered 'fair use') has been removed. The redacted material is collected in a supplementary volume.**

## Table of Contents

<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A note on sources for Pound's poetry and prose.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>'Not any protector': the state and the individual in Pound's 'The Seafarer' .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Part one: the state.....	26
'Ishmael by himself alone': A. R. Orage and the expansion of the Edwardian state .....	26
'The Seafarer' and the state.....	35
Pound, Orage and Edwardian industrial relations.....	43
Part two: the individual.....	50
The poetics of Poundian individualism.....	50
Pound, Walter Pater and virtù.....	55
Part three: the difficulty.....	63
Intellectual and manual labour.....	63
Serious artist or state functionary?.....	72
A 'foreign fastness': 'The Seafarer' and European colonialism.....	79
<b>Imagism's 'fellow rebels': Ezra Pound and the Balkan Wars.....</b>	<b>84</b>
The Balkan Wars as background to imagism.....	87
Pound's intervention.....	94
'the silly sentimentalism of post-Victorian England' .....	100
Imagism's harem.....	103
Wooden bullets and luminous details.....	112
Imagism and warfare: 'the swift contraposition of objects' .....	120
'Tenzone' and modernism.....	129
<b>'[O]ur American Risorgimento': Pound, The United States and the conception of modernism.....</b>	<b>136</b>
'our American Risorgimento' .....	143
Pound's transnational nationalism?.....	152
Pound's anti-democracy and American imperialism.....	160
Pound's 'Alexander Hamiltons' and American democracy.....	168
An imagist national portrait: 'one sap and one root' .....	176
Frontiers.....	184
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Appendix: Pound's Balkan War letters in The New Age.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>197</b>

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to University of Sussex and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for the funding they provided for this project. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Daniel Kane and Keston Sutherland for their advice and patience.

A number of scholars have offered me valuable help and advice in the course of this project. In particular, I would like to thank Bob Jessop for his incredibly generous response to my query about Nicos Poulantzas's work. Similarly, Eugene Michail, Sam Davies and Jean Rose, took time to offer me advice and information. Gerard Gunning gave me the benefit of several enlightening conversations about poetry, and made one remark in particular which inspired the third chapter of this thesis.

Thanks are due also to my friends in the School of History, Art History and Philosophy—particularly, Tim Carter, Patrick Levy, and Gabriel Martin—and to the department itself for providing the study space we shared. I am grateful also to Sara Hooshyar for her support and her keen editor's eye. I must also thank my brother, Daniel Hull, for providing me with a very fine roof over my head for the past year. Finally, I thank my parents, John and Wendy Hull, for their unwavering support (emotional, material, intellectual, grammatical) without which this project would have been simply impossible.

## A note on sources for Pound's poetry and prose

Much of the primary prose material cited in this thesis was originally published in little magazines, particularly *The New Age*, *The New Freewoman*, *The Egoist* and *Poetry*. The intellectual context of these journals forms an important part of this thesis. Happily, these publications have been made available online by the Modernist Journals Project (<http://www.modjourn.org>), a fantastic resource run by Brown University and the University of Tulsa. Consequently, although some of Pound's prose is available in T. S. Eliot's edition of Pound's *Literary Essays*, and William Cookson's edition of Pound's *Selected Prose*, and all of his work published in periodicals is available in the eleven-volume *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, I have cited the original journals wherever possible, as these are now the most readily available sources.<sup>1</sup> Only where particular pieces of Pound's prose are unavailable from the Modernist Journals Project have I cited the Eliot, Cookson, or Longenbach, Litz and Baechler editions.

The majority of the poems I quote in this thesis appear in Pound's *Personæ*.<sup>2</sup> References to this edition are abbreviated as 'P' and given parenthetically in the text. Similarly, references to Pound's *Cantos* are given parenthetically with Canto number in Roman numerals and page number in Arabic numerals.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974); *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975); *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, ed. James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler, 11 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*, ed. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

## Introduction

Plato said that artists ought to be kept out of the ideal republic, and the artists swore by their gods that nothing would drag them into it.<sup>1</sup>

What is the relationship between poetry and the state? As the seemingly throwaway remark I quote above suggests, there are considerable tensions, struggles, and contradictions involved in Ezra Pound's approach to this question as it pertains both to the abstract ideal of 'the state', and to particular states situated in time. It is his association with one historical state in particular, of course, Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, for which Pound is chiefly known—indeed, for which he is notorious. The question of how to read Pound's work, or of whether to read it at all, in light of his political views and his abhorrent racism has been one of the most abiding controversies of modern literary culture. But Pound's Fascism, his anti-Semitism and his heterodox economic beliefs (which, while not coterminous with those deeply offensive commitments, were undeniably intertwined with them) have, rightly, been the focus of a great deal of scholarship over the past three decades or more.<sup>2</sup> It is the task of this thesis to show that questions about the state, as ideal and as reality, become a vital factor in Pound's work at a much earlier stage—indeed, that these questions emerge roughly simultaneously with Pound's nascent modernism.

The pre-war London in which Ezra Pound produced his first recognizably

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Affirmations. I. Arnold Dolmetsch', *The New Age* 16, no. 10 (7 January 1915): 246.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Nicholls's *Ezra Pound, Politics, Economics and Writing: A Study of the Cantos* (London: Macmillan, 1984) is still perhaps the best study of the political ideology of *The Cantos*. Robert Casillo offers a thorough and damning account of Pound's anti-Semitism in his *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988). Pound's economic theories receive fair and detailed critique in studies by Alec Marsh and Leon Surette. See Marsh, *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), and Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).



modernist work was at the centre of enormous political and social volatility. Organized labour grew in strength, industrial action spread across the country, and radical syndicalists agitated for a general strike with the aim of smashing the state apparatus; the Suffragette movement grew in militancy in its call for women to be enfranchized; and demands for Irish Home Rule were gaining considerable momentum and were shortly to erupt into violent rebellion in the 1916 Easter Uprising. Moreover, after a century of precarious peace in Western Europe, there was widespread apprehension that a disastrous confrontation between the Great Powers was imminent. For the British state, too, the pre-war years were a period of crisis and rapid change. The pressure of these developments from abroad and from the margins of society began to expose deep internal division and instability at the very centre of the state's institutions. Reformers within the governing Liberal Party, such as David Lloyd George, introduced numerous reforms to the welfare system, including old age pensions, National Insurance and domestic health inspections. These measures radically altered and expanded the role of the state in terms of its relationship with the working classes. Conflict between the House of Lords and the House of Commons—essentially the last stand of aristocratic power against bourgeois liberal democracy—resulted in the Parliament Act of 1911, which denied the Lords the power to strike down legislation. An even more extreme example of reactionary radicalism occurred in 1914 when, in response to the prospect of Irish Home Rule, the Tory leader, Andrew Bonar Law, strategically pushed the country to the brink of civil war by not only sowing dissent among British Army officers who would be tasked with imposing the transfer of power, but also inciting loyalist paramilitaries to prepare to take up arms in the event Home Rule was declared.<sup>3</sup> As David Powell writes,

Between 1911 and 1914 the stability of British institutions and the integrity of the British state had been tested to their utmost and the British isles had been brought immeasurably closer to civil war than at any time since the conflicts of the seventeenth

---

<sup>3</sup> See Jeremy Smith, 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill', *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 01 (March 1993): 161.

century or the Jacobite rebellions of the eighteenth.<sup>4</sup>

Recent scholarship in modernist studies has elaborated the ways in which many of these historical factors register in the literature of the pre-war period. Morag Shiach's *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1900–1930* places special emphasis on syndicalism and the powerful idea of the general strike.<sup>5</sup> The question of labour is also central to Ann Ardis's *Modernism and Cultural Conflict: 1880–1922*, which pays particular attention to the ways modernist literature responded to the specialization and professionalization of modern life.<sup>6</sup> Rachel Potter discusses the attitudes modernist writers held towards liberal democracy, and argues that proper attention to important female modernists reveals a democratic modernist counter-strain to the well-known anti-democratic beliefs of Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot and others.<sup>7</sup> And Lawrence Rainey has discussed the insurgent force of Futurism—and its considerable influence on Pound—within the context of the socio-political turbulence of pre-war London.<sup>8</sup> The careful historicism of these studies has closely informed my own approach in this thesis.

To write about the state in literary studies may seem outmoded. It is fairly common in the humanities and elsewhere to hear claims about the decline of the state as political form,<sup>9</sup> or of its inadequacy and redundancy as a concept.<sup>10</sup> I have not engaged this body

<sup>4</sup> David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain, 1901–14*, British History in Perspective (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 162.

<sup>5</sup> Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour, and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Ann L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Potter, *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture, 1900–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Probably the most prominent scholarly exponent of one form of this position is Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault is undoubtedly the most influential exponent of this view, though his position on the state shifts throughout his career. See, in particular, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), and *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Foucault's concept of governmentality inspired an influential school of thought within the social sciences which purports to eschew the concept of the state entirely. One classic text of this school is Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, 'Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government', *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (2010): 271–303. (To be sure, this move is not

of work directly because my main focus is to demonstrate that the state was a very significant category for Pound in the years immediately preceding the First World War. For the purposes of this thesis, the theoretical and political questions raised by the anarchistic thrust of much recent theory, though urgent and fascinating must, for the most part, be put aside.

Less obviously, though perhaps more directly, my emphasis on Pound's engagement with the idea of the state, and with the necessarily statist desires of certain nationalisms (Balkan and American) in the pre-war period is also at odds with the recent transnational turn in both modernist studies and American studies. Critics such as Wai Chee Dimock, Susan Stanford Friedman and Jahan Ramazani have suggested that Pound's cosmopolitanism, his 'global citational strategies',<sup>11</sup> or even, for Dimock (ambivalently), his alleged wartime treason against the United States, might help point the way to a criticism less beholden to nation-centric models.<sup>12</sup> As Ramazani in particular has demonstrated comprehensively, such reductive models fail to comprehend the richness of cross-national particularity—the 'translocal' in his useful coinage—that characterizes so much recent poetry in English. This broadening of critical scope is very much to be welcomed. I would contend, though, that national communities are rarely as static and homogeneous in practice as transnationalism fears—their commonality and cohesion is, in Anderson's sense, 'imagined' and largely performative.<sup>13</sup> Powerful states may, in fact, depend for their stability upon a diverse, competitive plurality within their borders, as James Madison saw very clearly in *Federalist* 10.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as Eric

---

entirely novel, and had been argued for by David Easton and others in the late 1970s. See Easton, 'The Political System Besieged by the State', *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 [1 August 1981]: 303–25). For a thoughtful critique of Foucault's thinking on the state, and of the broadly neo-liberal implications of the governmentality school, see Thomas Lemke, 'An Indigestible Meal? Foucault, Governmentality and State Theory', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 43–64.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Planetarity: Musing Modernist Studies', *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 3 (2010): 488.

<sup>12</sup> Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), esp. 107–22; and Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1983 (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Lawrence Goldman

Hobsbawm argues, the nation ‘is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the “nation-state”, and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it’.<sup>15</sup> Transnationalism is less candid than it might be about its attendant political stance, which is in fact quite radical. In the transnational imaginary the state appears as a singularly alien and oppressive agent—taking the form, typically, of an immigration official or of a military force.<sup>16</sup> Absent from this work is any real conception of the state as a site of political struggle—let alone as a means of democratic representation (however imperfect) or a hard-won source of collective welfare.<sup>17</sup> This imaginary is illustrated clearly in Dimock’s reading of Pound’s wartime conduct as a tragic but nonetheless thrillingly subversive instance of the Kantian universal aesthetic gone wrong. She writes that her aim here is to ‘explore the aesthetic as a term activated on both ends of *the political spectrum*: speaking to state sovereignty on the one hand, global humanity on the other’—as if states were not terrains over which the contests of manifold conflicting and coinciding interests are fought out, but were, rather, themselves the sole, monolithic barriers to global unity.<sup>18</sup> In its considerable unease with collectivist politics, or its too-easy universalist evasion of it (both perhaps signs, ironically, of a peculiarly North American parochialism) transnationalism’s globalist exuberance risks converging with the anti-democratic, anti-welfare rhetoric of neoliberalism.<sup>19</sup> My discussion, in chapter one, of the ironies within

---

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48–54.

<sup>15</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9–10.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 23–24, 48. Dimock’s Introduction begins with the figure of a US Marine in Baghdad, oblivious to history (*Through Other Continents*, 3). Her first chapter is framed explicitly as a search for alternatives to the nation state, which is embodied, for her, in the violent Soviet response to the Prague Spring (7).

<sup>17</sup> Where such collective visions are present, they appear, again, in the negative. Ramazani, for instance, theorizes postcolonial poetry alongside modernism as a struggle between the collective and the individual. Postcolonial poets can be considered ‘modernist’, for Ramazani, to the extent that they express ‘alienation’ from emergent anti-colonial nationalisms (*A Transnational Poetics*, 117–40). For a very different discussion of cosmopolitan theory (to which transnationalism clearly owes a great deal) and its relationship to the welfare state, see Bruce Robbins, ‘Cosmopolitanism, America, and the Welfare State’, *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 19 (2003): 201–24.

<sup>18</sup> My emphasis. Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 108.

<sup>19</sup> Bryce Traister makes the provocative claim that the transnational turn in American studies is in fact quite typically American. See Traister, ‘The Object of Study; Or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?’,

Pound's own anti-statism and its trajectory may suggest some partial parallels in this respect.

There has also been a strong counter-current in scholarship in the last two decades or two which insists upon the continued relevance of the state to literary studies. Tom Paulin's study *Minotaur: Literature and the Nation State* collects many perceptive essays on the ways poets have addressed the question of state power in their work.<sup>20</sup> Martine Watson Brownley's *Deferrals of Domain: Contemporary Women Novelists and the State* discusses narrative depictions of encounters between women and so-called 'high politics', and offers, in her introduction, a persuasive argument for the pressing need for feminist criticism to take proper account of the state.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, a 2008 special issue of *Contemporary Literature* was dedicated to the intersections of literature and the state, with contributions addressing Robert Duncan's anarchism (Eric Keenaghan),<sup>22</sup> and the exploration of the idea of the 'failed state' in fiction (John Marx) among many others.<sup>23</sup> Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen discuss strategies for progressing past the familiar but reductive antinomy between the state and the individual, an opposition whose inadequacy, as I show in chapter one, becomes clear in Pound's translation of *The Seafarer*.<sup>24</sup>

In chapter one, I situate Pound's early work in relation to the climate of political uncertainty I have just described. Building on the work of Lee Garver, Tim Redman, Adam Trexler, and others, I consider Pound against the background of his involvement

---

*Journal of Transnational American Studies* 2, no. 1 (30 March 2010). More broadly, Timothy Brennan argues that an anti-statist, 'anarchist sublime' characterizes much contemporary theory in the United States. This tendency arises, he claims, from a particular reading of a Nietzschean-Heideggerian philosophical tradition which 'dovetails with a homegrown individualist anarchism that is as iconically American as cars and westward expansion'. Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 148.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Paulin, *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> Martine Watson Brownley, *Deferrals of Domain: Contemporary Women Novelists and the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Eric Keenaghan, 'Life, War, and Love: The Queer Anarchism of Robert Duncan's Poetic Action during the Vietnam War', *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 634–59.

<sup>23</sup> John Marx, 'Failed-State Fiction', *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 597–633.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen, 'Introduction: Contemporary Literature and the State', *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 491–513.

with the radical little magazine *The New Age* and its editor A. R. Orage.<sup>25</sup> I argue that he was closely engaged in debates about the fundamental nature and purpose of the state, and offer his translation of the Old English elegy *The Seafarer* as a major contribution to these debates. In particular, the poem registers an anxiety about the expansion of the Edwardian state's bureaucratic power and the threat it posed to individual autonomy. Ultimately, I argue, the poem exposes deep tensions within both Pound's outspoken individualism and his purported hostility to 'the state'. Indeed, at times during this period, Pound seems to offer his services (and those of artists in general) as functionaries of state power. In closing the chapter I offer a counter-reading of the 'Seafarer' speaker as embodying a colonialist ideology.

British Imperial confidence was beginning to falter during this period, as Pound himself jocularly notes when he remarks about being 'perched on the rotten shell of a crumbling empire'.<sup>26</sup> I have already mentioned the growing demands for Irish Home Rule and the political chaos these demands were creating. But the British imperial state was not the only major power facing the threat of insurgent nationalism during the pre-war period; Irish militancy was characteristic of a much broader global trend towards forceful demands for national self-determination. The nation-state had emerged as a political form in Western Europe, most emphatically with the force and rhetoric of 1789 but it was always, despite that rhetoric, an *imperial*-nation-state, as Martin Shaw has argued.<sup>27</sup> To its progenitors' dismay, nationalism had gained legitimacy as an ideal in the imperial periphery, beginning in the Americas.<sup>28</sup> But from the late nineteenth-century

<sup>25</sup> Lee Garver, 'Seafarer Socialism: Pound, *The New Age*, and Anglo-Medieval Radicalism', *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 4 (2006): 1–21; Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Adam Trexler, 'Modernist Poetics and New Age Political Philosophy: A. R. Orage, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Through Alien Eyes. I', *The New Age* 12, no. 11 (16 January 1913): 252.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Shaw, 'The State of Globalization: Towards a Theory of State Transformation', *Review of International Political Economy* 4, no. 3 (1997): 499–500, and also Shaw's *Theory of the Global State: Globality as Unfinished Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), esp. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* pays special attention to the particularity of nineteenth-century South American nationalism (see, esp., 47–65). C. L. R. James's classic study of the 1791 Haitian Revolution offers a potent exploration of the power of peripheral nationalism to lay bare the contradictions in the liberal nationalist principles espoused by the French Revolution. See James, *The*

onwards, national demands for co-extensive states proliferated among smaller and smaller national groups.<sup>29</sup> The formerly mighty imperial powers of the Ottoman and Spanish empires had seen their territory erode rapidly throughout the nineteenth century as the peoples over which they ruled seized upon the new national ideology.

One particularly significant and fateful instance of nationalist self-assertion during this period was the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. An alliance of tiny Balkan nation states attacked their erstwhile imperial master, coming within a few miles of ending five centuries of Ottoman presence in South Eastern Europe. As I detail in chapter two, Pound took a keen interest in the Balkan Wars, using them as a pretext for his first published venture into current affairs journalism. This was precisely the moment, late October to early November, 1912, that imagism took shape around the trio of Pound, H. D. and Richard Aldington. This concurrence is far from incidental. I argue that Pound interpreted the Balkan conflict as encapsulating on the battlefield the very same modernizing struggle that he saw himself as embarking upon in the field of letters. The Balkan states' aggressive success was as much of a surprise to their allies (notably Russia) as it was to their enemy. In formulating his high modernist insistence upon artistic autonomy from what he called 'the subversive pressure of commercial advantage, and of the mediocre spirit which is the bane and hidden terror of democracy',<sup>30</sup> Pound looked to the self-directed, self-assertive action of the Balkan nations as an inspiration. Accordingly, modernist aesthetic autonomy is imagined in terms of national autonomy. In writing about the conflict, Pound deploys a number of his major poetic devices in writing about the Balkan War, in particular his heavily paratactic associative style, and the metonymic device of the 'luminous detail'. Perhaps more importantly, a reading of Pound's major imagist texts against the backdrop of his

---

*Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 1938 (London: Penguin, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 102. For Hobsbawm's full discussion of this period, which he calls nationalism's 'mature' period, see 101–130, *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The Renaissance: III', *Poetry* 6, no. 2 (1 May 1915): 88.

fascination with the Balkan Wars, reveals a little-noticed martial intensity beneath imagism's calm, classical exterior.

Much has been made, of course, of imagism's Oriental (or Orientalist) roots. Pound's receptiveness to Eastern cultures has been a major redeeming characteristic to offset, if only in some small way, his conduct during the 1930s and throughout the Second World War. But his attitude towards the Ottoman Empire reveals that, at least at this early stage, he was as steeped in dehumanizing Orientalism as any jingoistic imperialist. In identifying with the Balkan states as heroic underdogs, he is able at the same time to celebrate their victory in terms of a long-awaited European conquest over the Islamic enemy squatting on the continent.

Yet, as events were to prove, the Balkan Wars were no great European victory, but a warning of imminent European decline. The inability of the Great Powers to prevent the conflict only demonstrated how dysfunctional European diplomacy had become, making the outbreak of a full-scale continental war all but inevitable. And as the European imperial states, Britain chief among them, faced the long decline of their global influence, the rise of the United States as an imperial power had only very recently begun. Rapidly overtaking the European powers in industrial output, the United States had, in the 1890s, also acquired its own colonies. It took advantage of the nationalist rebellions in the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, at first posing as a guardian of New World independence movements superficially reminiscent of its own, but very quickly acquiring these territories at Spain's expense. In chapter three, I discuss Pound's response to the rise of American state power and his desire to see what he called an 'American Risorgimento'.<sup>31</sup> Determined to be 'modern' before it was clear what such a modernity would mean, Pound enlisted the imagery of America as a youthful, potent but nascent force. His 'American Risorgimento' represents a bilateral movement. In one respect he uses

---

<sup>31</sup> This term first appears in a letter from Pound to Harriet Monroe, 18th Aug 1912, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 44.



American identity as a metaphor for what he wanted to present as a modernist freshness and energy. But the foretold Risorgimento was presented as a genuine development whereby his hopes for modernism were embodied in the real political, imperial and cultural evolution of the United States.

I have delimited the historical scope of this thesis fairly narrowly for several reasons. One is aesthetic; this is the period in which Pound's modernism—and thus, arguably, modernism in Anglophone literature—first emerges. It is one central purpose of this thesis to explore how questions about the state are intertwined with this development. Another reason for the time-scale is methodological; a narrower focus allows a much more detailed reconstruction of particular historical circumstances and the political issues pertaining to them. I begin in 1911, with Pound's first contribution to *The New Age*, because the milieu around that magazine had such a dramatic impact on his thought. The period ends in 1914 because the First World War marks a considerable change in Pound's thought and his attitude towards the state. In place of the underlying belligerence and conflict in much of his imagist work, which, in chapter one, I link to his interest in the Balkan War, Pound's wartime poetry is dominated by the mournful soldier figures of *Cathay* and the anti-imperial satire of *Homage to Sextus Propertius*. To adequately account for the effect on Pound's work of the war's ferocious display of the destructive power of industrial states would require more space than I have here. Instead, my focus is the relatively understudied politics of Pound's imagist and early vorticist periods—the period before his work takes on an explicitly political cast.

To be sure, Pound was by no means silent about the state during this period. He typically framed his statements on this issue in terms of the arts and what he called a 'real respect for personality, for the outline of the individual'.<sup>32</sup> And he was frequently dismissive of the significance of formal political power. In a 1914 article, he tells us that

Only a few people, and those not of the nicest, have any hankering after the job of Prime Minister. Some one ought to be employed to look after our traffic and sewage,

<sup>32</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—I', *The New Age* 21, no. 11 (12 July 1917): 244.

one grants that. But a superintendence of traffic and sewage is not the sole function of man. Certain stupid and honest people should, doubtless, be delegated for the purpose. There politics ends for the enlightened man.<sup>33</sup>

That Pound intended these remarks to be understood with some irony is perhaps suggested by his use of the pseudonym ‘Bastien von Helmholtz’, which he reserved for his more eccentric political commentary in *The Egoist*.<sup>34</sup> But similar views were aired under his own name in 1917:

I do not care “politically”, I care for civilisation, and I do not care who collects the taxes or polices the thoroughfares. Humanity is a collection of individuals, not a *whole* divided into segments or units. The only things that matter are the things that make individual life more interesting.<sup>35</sup>

Here, major functions of the state apparatus—policing, infrastructure and taxation—are dismissed as banal and quotidian realities—the purely formal givens of modern life, whose essential character remains the same whichever anonymous bureaucrat fulfils the role.

Yet, as I suggested above, Pound was also eager to associate the arts with state power. In his 1912 series of articles, ‘Patria Mia’, he wrote that

Letters are a nation’s foreign office. By the arts, and by them almost alone do nations gain for each other any understanding and intimate respect.

It is the patriotism of the artist, and it is almost the only civic duty allowed him, that he achieve such work as shall not bring his nation into world’s eyes ridiculous.<sup>36</sup>

He repeated this metaphor in a long and enthusiastic review, published in March 1913, of English translations of the work of Rabindranath Tagore, claiming that the Bengali poet had ‘done well for his nation in these poems. He has well served her Foreign Office’.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, further associating the role of poetry with the trappings of power, Pound claimed that Tagore had ‘made them their national song, their Marseillaise, if an

<sup>33</sup> Bastien von Helmholtz, ‘Suffragettes’, *The Egoist* 1, no. 13 (1 July 1914): 255.

<sup>34</sup> See also, for instance, ‘On the Imbecility of the Rich’, *The Egoist* 1, no. 20 (5 October 1914): 389.

<sup>35</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Provincialism the Enemy.—IV’, *The New Age* 21, no. 14 (2 August 1917): 308.

<sup>36</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. IV’, *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912): 515.

<sup>37</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Rabindranath Tagore’, in *Ezra Pound’s Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, ed. James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler, vol. 1 (New York; London: Garland, 1991), 131. Reprinted from *Fortnightly Review*, XCIII (N. S.) (1 March 1913), [571]–579.

Oriental Nation can be said to have an equivalent to such an anthem'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, as I discuss in chapter one, his major 1913 essay, 'The Serious Artist' portrays the situation of the artist in modernity as most properly that of a functionary of the state.

This thesis is concerned primarily with the state, the individual, and the emergence of modernist poetry. One major thematic thread that is crucial to each of these three concerns, in very different but connected ways, is the concept of autonomy—literally, the power of self-legislation. The doctrine of aesthetic autonomy, as Pound inherited it from the late-nineteenth-century aestheticist movement, insists that art obeys only its own laws, and that it cannot and must not be considered in terms of moral, social or political imperatives. One major figure in this respect is Théophile Gautier, who, in the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupain* sets out a *l'art pour l'art* manifesto which sensationally dismisses all claims the moral sphere might make upon art.<sup>39</sup> Pound, in his vocal rejection of pompous Victorian moralism and sentimentalism, styles himself on Gautier. The notion that art obeyed its own laws is in many ways defiant of authority. But it also implies a parallel or analogy with the idea of state sovereignty; states, too, of course, make and enforce their own laws. This alignment between art and state power was something which, as we will see in chapters two and three, played an important role in the emergence of modernism in Pound's writing.

It is the work of another aesthete, Walter Pater, however, which provides for Pound a vital bridge between the autonomy of art and the autonomy of the individual. Pound adapts the important concept of *virtù* from Pater's work. When Pound begins his translation of the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* with the line 'May I for my own self song's truth reckon' he signals the poem's extended engagement with the complicated association between these two forms of autonomy (*P* 60). But the autonomy of individuals is very often understood—as indeed it was among the anarchistic, egoist,

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>39</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupain*, trans. Helen Constantine, 1835 (London: Penguin, 2005), esp. 1–6.

and libertarian milieux within which Pound moved during his early years in London—as being in direct tension with the power of the state.<sup>40</sup> According to Quentin Skinner, ‘the central topic’ of Western political thought, at least since Thomas Hobbes, has been the question of, as Pound puts it in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, the ‘relation of the state / To the individual’ (P 199).<sup>41</sup> Anachronistically, perhaps, this seemingly axiomatic opposition closely informs Pound’s approach to translating *The Seafarer*, in which the speaker’s spatial remove from the territorial reach of the state stands as a repudiation of state power, even as the vast natural force of the sea comes to seem like a figure for the coercion and inescapability of the state. Statehood itself, of course, also depends upon autonomy. This is the essence of the nationalist demands I discussed above. Despite the conventional perception of an antagonism between the power of the state and the freedom of the individual, Pound came to see struggles for national autonomy as having considerable resonance with aspects of his own aesthetic project. This was true, in quite different ways, in relation to the Balkan states and to the unfolding history (and self-mythology) of the United States.

If the concept of autonomy provides one way of thinking about the conjunction of the artwork, the individual and the state, it also raises important theoretical considerations for criticism. Much of this thesis represents an effort to situate Pound’s poetry and journalism in relation to other texts and traditions of thought, noting what I think are previously unnoticed or under-examined intertextual resonances. In some cases the links I describe suggest a fairly passive participation within broader discourses—such as the Orientalism that colours both Pound’s imagism and his geopolitics, as well as the familiar exceptionalist tropes which help Monroe position *Poetry* within the US cultural field. It is significant in such cases that when straining for new terms with

<sup>40</sup> In addition to the libertarian *New Age* circle, Pound was also involved with Dora Marsden’s *The New Freewoman*, later *The Egoist*. On the Marsden’s radical individualist philosophy, see Bruce Clarke, ‘Dora Marsden and Ezra Pound: *The New Freewoman* and “The Serious Artist”’, *Contemporary Literature* 33, no. 1 (1 April 1992): 91–112, and Robert von Hallberg, ‘Libertarian Imagism’, *Modernism/modernity* 2, no. 2 (1995): 63–79.

<sup>41</sup> Quentin Skinner, ‘The State’, in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball and James Farr, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 90.

which to comprehend the nascent aesthetics and institutions of what would become known as modernism, Pound and Monroe found these particular discursive resources so readily to hand. Of course, the protean theory of discourse—much like the drive toward contextualization and historicization which characterize, for instance, the ‘New Modernist Studies’ with its stress on the complex relations between modernism and modernity—depends upon assumptions about the structural limitations of the autonomy of speakers and texts. In an important recent essay, Michael Levenson has argued that modernism emerged, primarily, as a denial of such limitations, a search for ‘exemption from context’ in the form of the radically new, and that this resistance to reductive ideas about context is one of modernism’s major challenges—as much to present-day criticism as to its early-twentieth-century audiences.<sup>42</sup> The critical struggle to assimilate and naturalize an emergent modernism was very much something that modernists themselves (as I intimate above), not just critics and audiences, also experienced, and with similarly mixed results. And it is surely only half of the story to conceive of ‘the New’ as emerging, pristine, *ex machina*, and, only then, being gradually comprehended through the halting, provisional approaches that Levenson—quite fascinatingly—describes; those tentative improvisations are surely not simply responsive to but also constitutive of modernism’s novelty. One of modernism’s major contradictions is that although the desire to be ‘New’ is a desire for autonomy, its alter-ego the drive to be modern is the reverse—the surrender of a certain kind of autonomy through a rootedness in the present moment.<sup>43</sup> Pound’s pre-war poetry and prose engages with this dichotomy by enlisting the characteristically modern, *political* valence of autonomy. The primary intertextual relations I highlight in this thesis—the Edwardian debate about state power and the autonomy of the individual; the Balkan states’ struggle for national

<sup>42</sup> Michael Levenson, ‘Novelty, Modernity, Adjacency’, *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 665. On the dizzying proliferation of this discourse of ‘the New’ in the modernist period, see also Jed Rasula, ‘Make It New’, *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 4 (2010): 713–33.

<sup>43</sup> I say ‘a certain kind’ because it is important to acknowledge that autonomy is always relative to certain laws or structures. Futurism, perhaps the most radical example of self-identification with an idealized modernity, can, in another sense, be seen as a primary source of aesthetic formalism. See Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 166–67.

autonomy from an imperial oppressor; and the rapid ascent of US imperial power and cultural dominance—are contextual identifications that Pound draws purposively into his work in an active—and, in this sense, autonomous—gesture of self-modernization and self-contextualization.

This gesture leads us to consider the intensely individualist strain in Pound's thinking, a tendency he shares with Anglo-American modernism as a whole during this period. As Levenson elsewhere has insisted, no matter how so-called High Modernism might later 'read itself', and no matter what its early canonizers in the academy might insist, this strand of modernism 'was individualist before it was anti-individualist, anti-traditional before it was traditional, inclined to anarchism before it was inclined to authoritarianism'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, although in the 1920s, Eliot would embrace a High Tory ethos and Pound would throw his energies behind Mussolini's corporate fascist state, in the pre-war period, attitudes to state power were quite different. The first terms of all three of Levenson's dichotomies—individualism, anti-traditionalism and anarchism—denote a world view ostensibly very hostile to the state and its institutions.

In the pre-war years (and, indeed, for some time after), Pound was closely involved with two publications, *The New Age* and the *The New Freewoman* (later *The Egoist*), which both, despite their considerable differences in other respects, took a radically libertarian, anti-statist editorial line. This outlook can be seen too, in heavily aestheticized form, in *Blast*, which loudly proclaimed itself as a being addressed 'TO THE INDIVIDUAL'.<sup>45</sup> In its advertising slogan—'Putrification [*sic*] of Guffaws slain by the Appearance of BLAST', and in its very title, Lewis's magazine played on the idea of anarchist terrorism made possible largely by the invention of dynamite in 1866, and which had been prominently captured in Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent*.<sup>46</sup> Levenson focuses his attention, in particular, upon Pound's involvement with

<sup>44</sup> Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 79.

<sup>45</sup> 'Long Live the Vortex!', *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): [7].

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion on the cultural impact of dynamite and fear of anarchist terrorism, with reference to

Dora Marsden's journal *The New Freewoman* / *The Egoist* and its role in disseminating an egoist philosophy based upon the work of the fiercely individualist nineteenth-century Young Hegelian, Max Stirner. For Stirner, 'Every state is a despotism, be the despot one or many, or (as one is likely to imagine about a republic) if all be lords, that is, despotize one over another'.<sup>47</sup>

Robert von Hallberg tries to reconstruct the historical specificity of the egoistic, anarchistic politics of the *New Freewoman* milieu in order to counter what he sees as the reductiveness and historical distortion of claims that imagism was straightforwardly and irretrievably 'proto-fascist'.<sup>48</sup> He argues that 'the techniques of Imagism carry no necessary political valence beyond that attributed to them by readers and writers in a particular place and time'.<sup>49</sup> Imagism, he argues, 'was written and initially interpreted in an intellectual context that included not protofascism but some other—not altogether unattractive—derivatives of anarchist and syndicalist thought, to which Pound and others directed Imagist poems and the publicity on their behalf'.<sup>50</sup> Anne Fernihough has pointed out the striking resonance between Stirner's scorn for philosophical abstractions, save for the individual ego—democracy and humanity were his primary targets—and Pound's famous injunction in 'A Few Don'ts', to 'Go in fear of abstractions'.<sup>51</sup>

Von Hallberg argues for a careful reconstruction of the pre-war moment in order to gain an understanding of the historical specificity early modernism's politics, free from distortions of hindsight. His argument, which I agree with, 'is not that there are no

---

Conrad's novel, see Sarah Cole, 'Dynamite Violence and Literary Culture', *Modernism/modernity* 16, no. 2 (2009): 301–28. The *Blast* advertising slogan appeared on the back cover of *The Egoist*, vol. 1, No. 7 (1st Apr 1914).

<sup>47</sup> Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 175.

<sup>48</sup> von Hallberg, 'Libertarian Imagism'.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.; Bruce Clarke has argued, moreover, that Marsden's Stirnerian convictions were a much more direct and significant influence on Pound than has been recognized, citing evidence that he was chastened by her incisive retort to the first installments of his essay 'The Serious Artist'. See Clarke, 'Dora Marsden and Ezra Pound'.

<sup>51</sup> Anne Fernihough, "'Go in Fear of Abstractions": Modernism and the Spectre of Democracy', *Textual Practice* 14, no. 3 (2000): esp. 488–89.

connections between Imagism and Pound's later fascism, or among anarchism, syndicalism and fascism, but rather that one can tune one's understanding of Pound's pre-war political affiliations and those of his collaborators more finely than is usually done, and that the politics of modernism was more complicated than is usually acknowledged'.<sup>52</sup> This attention to historical specificity, which is very much present also in Lawrence Rainey's influential work, is something I try to maintain throughout the chapters that follow.

Nevertheless, there are risks in von Hallberg's approach. To illustrate the kind of criticism he takes issue with, he quotes Donald Davie's claim that there is 'clear and unbroken' continuity between Pound's egoist privileging of individuals over institutions, and his later fascist faith in strong leaders.<sup>53</sup> To be sure, von Hallberg acknowledges the strength of Davie's case, but suggests that it over-stresses ideological continuities while flattening historical specificity. But no protagonist ever experiences their own ideological commitments as prototypical; von Hallberg's observation that, in this sense, early modernist egoism was not proto-fascist, is somewhat tautological. Davie's argument (which I quote at greater length in chapter one) offers an important reminder that modernist 'anarchism' is not as dichotomous with late modernist authoritarianism as Levenson's trio of modernist binaries (quoted above) would suggest. Despite Mussolini's conception of 'the state as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State' [*sic*], Pound's embrace of the Italian regime manifested in part as a hatred of the state as a bureaucratic machine. He maintained that 'The republic . . . means, or ought to mean "the public convenience". When it does not it is an evil, to be ameliorated or amended out of, or into decent, existence'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, he was able to praise Lenin and Mussolini alike for what he felt was their shared antipathy to bureaucracy, which he perceived at

<sup>52</sup> von Hallberg, 'Libertarian Imagism', 64.

<sup>53</sup> Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse*, 1952 (London: Penguin, 1992), 99.

<sup>54</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The State', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 184.



its worst extent in the USA.<sup>55</sup>

Pound's political naivety and tendentiousness has led David Kadlec to suggest that the supposed political orientation of Pound's early work was little more than posturing, 'a layering of his aesthetics with political terms'.<sup>56</sup> Kadlec explores the links between Pound and syndicalism in the pre-war period, arguing that he saw in syndicalism something which might give his art an insurgent force to rival the force of Futurism. He concludes, though, that Pound was ultimately more interested in syndicalism's rhetorical form and symbolism than in its political content:

Pound's actions and writings around the time of *BLAST* are flavored with politics, but these politics were formed in the process of adapting political terms of the discussion of ethics in art. . . . The conflict and strife in Pound's work [during this period] is also a conflict of discourses, a false bridging of terms and sympathies.<sup>57</sup>

For Kadlec, Pound short circuits an adequate poetic treatment of syndicalism by imagining he can import its terms directly through a straightforward analogy.

In this thesis I want to offer a slightly different approach to the topic of the individual in Pound's pre-war work, and his or her relationship to the political sphere, and to the state specifically. Peter Nicholls offers a particularly rich characterization of the conception of the individual offered in the work of Pound and his peers:

One of the first moves of this modernism had been to reconstitute the self as closed, autonomous, and antagonistic. At the same time though, this construction of the self eschewed any form of romantic individualism: notions of authenticity and spontaneity were discarded as so many trappings of the democratic age, and the 'Men of 1914' stressed instead the self's *unoriginality*, its embeddedness in a complex cultural tradition. Having made the self autonomous, then, these modernists had no great desire to explore its interior—that was associated with the 'twilight' romanticism of Freud's chaotic unconscious—and the aim was, rather, to avoid a narcissistic individualism by restoring art to the public sphere.<sup>58</sup>

In relation to Pound's work, specifically, one might take issue with Nicholls's claim that pre-war Anglo-American modernists rejected any urge to explore the psyche as a

<sup>55</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Bureaucracy and the Flail of Jehovah', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 187–91.

<sup>56</sup> David Kadlec, 'Pound, *Blast*, and Syndicalism', *ELH* 60, no. 4 (1 December 1993): 1015.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1026–1027.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 251. Nicholls's emphasis.

residue of romanticism. Pound avowedly employs the language of psychology in his most important statement on imagism—‘An “image” is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’—and goes so far as to cite ‘the newer psychologists, such as [Bernard] Hart.’<sup>59</sup> But, equally, this gesture was part of Pound’s attempt to appropriate the authority of science and gain for poetry the status of a professional discipline.<sup>60</sup> This caveat aside, Nicholls’s characterization is one I find very helpful, and which underscores much of what I argue in this thesis—in particular in his insistence on drawing connections between political structures, ideological beliefs and aesthetic form.

Anglo-American modernist writers often perceived the social context of the early twentieth-century as dominated by a particular conjunction of social phenomena deriving from the new urban and suburban middle class and liberal ideology. We might divide this familiar observation into three parts: the political dimension of this conjunction was electoral democracy; the economic dimension comprised markets and consumption on an unprecedented mass scale; and the aesthetic dimension comprised literary realism and mimetic representation. Pound’s *Mauberry* gives voice to the view that this regime had a pernicious effect on the arts, decrying that beauty was ‘Decreed in the market place’ and that in place of supposedly enlightened patrons of the arts like Pissistratus, ‘we choose a knave or an eunuch / To rule over us’ (*P* 187). The poem’s notoriously ambiguous irony, however, signals a sense that in the interwar period it was somewhat redundant to oppose a social, economic and political state of affairs which

---

<sup>59</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘A Few Don’ts by an *Imagiste*’, *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 200. How seriously we ought to take Pound’s reference to Hart is a matter of dispute. Hugh Witemeyer suggests that Pound’s grasp on Hart’s use of the term was negligible, and that the mention of the psychologist ‘is little more than a pseudoscientific smokescreen’ (*The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908–1920* [Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1969], 33 n.). Others, however, have taken the connection much more seriously: see William Skaiff, ‘Pound’s Imagism and the Surreal’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 12, no. 2 (1 July 1985): 185–210.

<sup>60</sup> This tendency is clearest in ‘The Serious Artist [I & II]’, *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 9 (15 October 1913): 161–63. Ann Ardis offers a fascinating comparison between Pound’s essay and the ethnographic writings of Beatrice Webb [née Potter], in her chapter ‘Beatrice Webb and the Serious Artist’, in Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880–1922*, 15–44.

had already, as George Dangerfield was shortly to declare, died a ‘strange death’.<sup>61</sup>

In opposition to the realism which they associated (rightly or wrongly) with this liberal aesthetic (George Bernard Shaw and Arnold Bennett were favourite targets of Pound’s during this period), and to the vagueness and sentimentalism they associated with Tennyson and the Victorian period in general, Pound and T. E. Hulme proposed their self-consciously masculine and purportedly anti-romantic, anti-sentimental aesthetic: ‘harder and saner, . . . [and] “near to the bone”’, in Pound’s formulation; ‘all dry and hard’, in Hulme’s.<sup>62</sup> Pound, in particular, in the pre-war years, made intemperate claims about electoral democracy being a sham and a placation:

[Y]ou ought to have universal adult suffrage; not that one believes in popular government; not that any people ever would take the trouble to govern themselves; but it keeps the populace in a good temper, politically, if they think they have a share in the ordering of the nation. Suffrage is good for the national spirit, it produces political indifference. “The people” may know that things are not quite right, but they will have a vague suspicion that they are, themselves, to blame, and this will keep them quiet and affable.<sup>63</sup>

Unlike ‘the people’, the artist ‘knows he was born to rule’, Pound wrote in 1914.<sup>64</sup>

[B]ut he has no intention of trying to rule by general franchise. . . . He is not elected by a system of plural voting. . . . He has been at peace with his oppressors for long enough. He has dabbled with democracy and now he is done with that folly’.<sup>65</sup>

But the liberal model which Pound and his peers rejected and which Hulme associated with ‘romanticism’ did at least provide a clear way of mediating between the individual and the broader political and social spheres through the mechanisms of voting rights, economic consumption, and the stable bourgeois self of literary realism. Likewise, the avowedly conservative, ‘classicist’ strand of Anglo-American modernism, codified by Hulme and embodied by the later Eliot, was also clear on how it saw these

<sup>61</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914*, 1935 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> T. E. Hulme, ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, in *Speculations*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 126; Ezra Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 3–14.

<sup>63</sup> Pound, ‘Through Alien Eyes. I’, 252.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The New Sculpture’, *The Egoist* 1, no. 4 (16 February 1914): 68.

relationships being ideally mediated—namely through tradition and strong institutions. Indeed, Hulme argued that ‘It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him [i.e., humanity]’, mankind being ‘an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal’.<sup>66</sup>

Pound’s variant of the modernist outlook, however, though it is certainly no less reactionary in its own way than that of his peers, is far more radical. He is much less inclined to imagine the relationship between the state and the individual as mediated by institutions. Indeed, during the pre-war period, he struggles to imagine any mediation of this relationship. In his early poetry, the individual seems often to sustain its autonomy and antagonism through an active hostility to social and political structures, and to the state in particular—to the extent that such hostility actually comes to appear as the very basis of individuality.

Two of his most prominent early personae, that of Bertrans de Born in ‘Sestina: Altaforte’ and the eponymous speaker of ‘Piere Vidal Old’, illustrate this tendency very well.<sup>67</sup> Bertrans de Born’s monomaniacal joy in violence and warfare and his scorn for what he calls ‘womanish peace’ are wilfully antipathetical to any form of stable social order. We might liken Bertrans de Born’s hellish vision to the Hobbesean state of nature, ‘where every man is enemy to every man’.<sup>68</sup> In this condition, individuals are totally atomized and isolated, living ‘without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal’.<sup>69</sup>

In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; . . . no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hulme, ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, 116.

<sup>67</sup> Scholars of medieval literature typically differ from Pound by spelling the troubadour’s name by omitting the terminal ‘s’. Since I refer here to Pound’s persona, not to the historical person of Bertran de Born, I have followed Pound’s idiosyncrasy.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

Hobbes here describes the impossibility of culture in the broadest sense of that term. The sestina form of the poem also seems to embody this absence of development, as its inbuilt restrictions impel a cyclical movement determined in advance. Of course, Pound's Bertrams de Born is a deliberately one-dimensional figure; Pound has 'dug him up' (as the poem's prefatory note puts it) from Dante's Hell. And the obvious paradox of the poem's anarchic, anti-societal force is that the sestina form is itself a symbol and a product of the high cultural achievement of the Occitan troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel and Bertran himself, to which Pound determinedly drew attention. Nevertheless, Pound celebrates what he imagines to be de Born's '*virtù*' (a concept I will discuss in chapter one) in the strongest terms, via a metaphor of unceasing and undiluted conflict with society.

In a related way, the character of Piere Vidal embodies an even more fundamental individuation, seeming to shun not just society and social authority but also his humanity itself. Reduced to an abject, bestial state, he mocks the diminished passions of the society that persecutes him:

Quotation from 'Piere Vidal Old', lines 40-45 (*P* 30). See supplementary volume, p. 2.

Piere Vidal claims a truer individuality than that of the 'stunted' society he finds around him. Unlike those in that society he has no need to 'mask' his passions with a civilized humanity. It is clear that Pound's individual is not the abstract and universal formal quality bestowed by liberal juridical norms of citizenship, franchise and abstract human rights. It is rather a rare and particular quality through which one stands apart from the mass. The struggle to achieve and sustain this kind of isolated and autonomous individuality would find its most sustained and powerful expression in Pound's translation of the *The Seafarer*, to which we now turn in more detail.

## ‘Not any protector’: the state and the individual in Pound’s ‘The Seafarer’

### *Part one: the state*

#### ‘Ishmael by himself alone’: A. R. Orage and the expansion of the Edwardian state

On the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1911 front page of *The New Age*—the same issue in which Pound’s translation of the Anglo-Saxon elegy, *The Seafarer*, was published—the magazine’s editor A. R. Orage used his regular ‘Notes of the Week’ column to offer an extended attack on the National Insurance Bill that was being masterminded and energetically promoted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George. The scheme, which proposed to establish a system of unemployment and health insurance for every adult working male in the country, was the most ambitious aspect of a broad range of welfare reforms introduced by the 1906–16 Liberal Government, which also included old age pensions and free school meals, as well as safety regulations in certain industries.<sup>1</sup> The ‘New Liberal’ philosophy, which underpinned Lloyd George’s considerable expansion of the state’s apparatus, and the radical libertarian socialism which led Orage to so fiercely oppose that expansion, were two salient positions within a pervasive debate in Edwardian Britain about the proper extent of state power and its legitimate purpose. Another influential position was that of Fabian socialists such as Beatrice and Sydney Webb, who favoured a centralized, bureaucratic path to socialism, and were, broadly speaking, supportive of the Liberal welfare reforms.<sup>2</sup> Radical

---

<sup>1</sup> See Ian Packer, *Liberal Government and Politics, 1905–15* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 142–146.

<sup>2</sup> The classic statement of the early Fabian position is found in George Bernard Shaw, ed., *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (London: Walter Scott, 1889), with contributions by Shaw, Sydney Webb, Annie Besant, and others.

conservatives, such as the ‘distributist’ thinkers Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton also offered fundamental and highly influential reconsiderations of state power, which, as we will see below, were much more apprehensive about its trajectory. It is against the backdrop of this debate, and Orage’s position in particular, that the contemporary political force of Pound’s ‘The Seafarer’ should be understood. To demonstrate this, I first want to discuss Orage’s view of the state in more detail, with a particular focus on his opposition to the National Insurance Bill.

It seems curious, from a present-day, post-Keyensian perspective, that a self-declared socialist such as Orage should dread the passage of such ostensibly progressive legislation. The National Insurance Act of 1911 is commonly cited as one of the foundation stones of the British welfare state.<sup>3</sup> Certainly Orage felt isolated in his position, and its likely futility, when he likened himself to ‘an Ishmaelitish Mrs Partington’.<sup>4</sup> He was plainly uncomfortable to find himself allied with those conservative forces who attacked National Insurance as a ‘servant tax’.<sup>5</sup> In reality, though, he was not alone on the left in opposing the reforms: Philip Snowden voiced objections similar to Orage’s, and the Women’s Trades Union League was firmly opposed.<sup>6</sup> British syndicalists such as Tom Mann rejected the Liberals’ welfare agenda outright.<sup>7</sup> And it is clear from Orage’s writing that he opposed National Insurance from

<sup>3</sup> On this assessment of National Insurance within the history of the British welfare state, see, for instance, Bentley B. Gilbert, *The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain: The Origins of the Welfare State* (London: Michael Joseph, 1966); E. P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850-1914: Social Policies Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227–242, and Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 190–200, esp. 199–200.

<sup>4</sup> A. R. Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, *The New Age* 9, no. 2 (11 May 1911): 26. Orage alludes here to the Old-Testament exile, Ishmael, and to the nineteenth-century Bournemouth resident who was supposed to have attempted, with only a mop and bucket, to fight back a flood approaching her sea-front home. Curiously, the figure of Mrs Partington had been used on a number of occasions in cartons to represent the Duke of Wellington’s opposition to the Reform Act of 1832, which greatly expanded the franchise.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The servant tax is the excuse quite as much as it is the cause of the public outcry against the whole Bill’. A. R. Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, *The New Age* 10, no. 5 (30 November 1911): 97.

<sup>6</sup> Pat Thane, ‘The Working Class and State Welfare in Britain, 1880-1914’, *Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984): 897.

<sup>7</sup> R. J. Holton, ‘Syndicalist Theories of the State’, *The Sociological Review* 28, no. 1 (1 February 1980): 13–15.

a position that is recognizably leftist, arguing that the Bill would hinder rather than aid the development of socialism.

It is important to note that throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, state welfare provision in Britain—encapsulated in the moralizing assumptions of the Poor Laws and the punitive system of workhouses—was viewed by the working classes with almost universal suspicion and hostility.<sup>8</sup> Again, in the 30<sup>th</sup> November issue of *The New Age* there is an unsigned review (which Orage refers to in his editorial and probably wrote himself) of a book called *Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics*, by Stephen Reynolds, Bob Woolley and Tom Woolley. *Seems So!* is essentially an ethnographic study of working class attitudes to the state and existing regimes of employment, welfare, and social legislation. It documents very clearly, in particular, resentment of intrusive government inspection of working-class households.<sup>9</sup> Attitudes towards welfare at the opposite end of the social spectrum are described by James E. Cronin:

Before 1914, social reform was aimed at workers . . . and hardly ever administered by their representatives. Policies were often justified by reference to the pathologies of working-class life, culture and institutions and structured in opposition to them. The passion for reform that grew out of the Boer War and the fears of physical degeneration that it provoked were linked directly to a critique of working-class women and the working-class family. Even the most ardent reformers shaped their proposals—on health insurance, for example—so as to prevent malingering and other behaviours which the middle classes were so ready to see as characteristic of those they sought to help.<sup>10</sup>

On account of this situation, a broad array of non-state institutions emerged to provide insurance against illness, unemployment and bereavement on a voluntary, contributory

---

<sup>8</sup> For a thorough recent study of the development of welfare policy during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see George R. Boyer, 'The Evolution of Unemployment Relief in Great Britain', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 3 (1 January 2004): 393–433.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Reynolds, Bob Woolley, and Tom Woolley, *Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1911). Government inspection is a theme that runs throughout the book, in both evaluative prose and interviews (reproduced in dialect), but see especially p. 27: 'Inspection means the judgment of one class by the standards of another; the teaching of people how to live under circumstances of which the teachers have had no personal experience'. For a discussion of *Seems So!* and its impact, see Thane, 'The Working Class and State Welfare in Britain, 1880-1914', 894–95.

<sup>10</sup> James E. Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 35–36.



basis. The most prominent of these were the friendly societies as well as other mutuals, co-operatives and trades unions, which developed organically from within the working classes and were controlled democratically by their members. This various and voluntary system was, as historian José Harris puts it, ‘closely interwoven with the system of natural and personal liberty by which many British people believed their lives were differentiated from those of the rest of the world’—particularly from the more centralized and bureaucratic approach to welfare taken by continental powers such as Germany.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the system of friendly societies and other democratic welfare organizations was, Harris writes, understood as ‘an integral part of the social structure and civic culture of the country’.<sup>12</sup> These attitudes, coupled with the dramatic Liberal reforms, help to explain why the the fundamental question of the state became so contentious in Edwardian political discourse, for right and left alike.

For Orage, deeply rooted in the nineteenth-century tradition of British socialism, there were two fundamental objections, one economic, the other political, to the National Insurance Bill’s considerable expansion of the state’s reach. The first was that the economic benefits it promised to workers and their families were, he argued, an illusion. The scheme was to be funded by contributions from employees, employers and the state. But Orage demanded to know ‘what guarantee . . . there [is] that an employer will not recoup himself by reducing wages to the same extent, if not directly, at least by resisting the next demand on the part of the men for a rise in wages’.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, Orage likened the compulsory and automatic deduction of employees’ contributions to ‘feeding a dog with its own tail’.<sup>14</sup> ‘Every penny that is bestowed on the working classes by this Bill’, he insisted, ‘is bound to be taken from them before it is given back’.<sup>15</sup> Moreover he did not share the optimism of some on the left that such welfare reforms

---

<sup>11</sup> José Harris, ‘Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy’, *Past & Present*, no. 135 (May 1992): 116.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>13</sup> A. R. Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, *The New Age* 9, no. 7 (15 June 1911): 145.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

were ‘stepping stones to socialism’.<sup>16</sup> In his view, even if he were to be proved wrong about the economic benefits of the scheme, ‘no mere amelioration of the conditions of labour in the form of provision for labour’s food, shelter and comfort is in the smallest degree Socialist in character unless at the same time it diminishes the area over which private capital rules’.<sup>17</sup> For Orage, ‘Socialism . . . has as its main object the abolition of the profit and wages system’.<sup>18</sup>

But Orage had political as well as economic objections. He deeply resented Lloyd George’s use of state compulsion, and feared, quite genuinely, that in this respect the Bill was a significant step towards a despotic regime that would so entrench the power of private capital and the system of wage-labour that the result would be a society divided immutably into two classes, one of which would be essentially enslaved by the other.<sup>19</sup> In his ‘Notes of the Week’ columns, he predicted the ‘compulsory arbitration [of industrial disputes], the illegality of strikes, . . . the abolition of effective picketing’, and the absorption of trades unions by the state.<sup>20</sup> He argued bleakly that the Bill had ‘enormous potency as a precedent for slave legislation in the future’, and had set the country on ‘the path to the servile state’.<sup>21</sup> Orage did not elaborate on these remarks; regular readers of *The New Age* would have readily understood his reference to Hilare Belloc’s theory of the ‘servile state’ and its pertinence to the National Insurance debate.<sup>22</sup> Belloc’s ideas—another key moment in the Edwardian debate about state

<sup>16</sup> A strategy of pursuing incremental ‘stepping stones’ of reform towards socialism was most prominently advocated by H. M. Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation (see Mark Bevir, ‘The British Social Democratic Federation 1880–1885: From O’Brienism to Marxism’, *International Review of Social History* 37, no. 2 [1992]: 207–29).

<sup>17</sup> Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, 11 May 1911, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, 30 November 1911.

<sup>20</sup> A. R. Orage, ‘Notes of the Week’, *The New Age* 10, no. 1 (2 November 1911): 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>22</sup> Belloc’s book, *The Servile State* (London: T. N. Foulis, 1912), would not appear until the following year. But he had already adumbrated his theory, and popularized the slogan ‘the servile state’, in two articles in *The New Age* (‘The Three Issues’, *The New Age* 3, no. 1 [2 May 1908]: 8–10, and; ‘The Servile State’, *The New Age* 7, no. 4 [26 May 1910]: 77–79). The text of a debate between Belloc and the leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald, in which Belloc defended his thesis at length, had also very recently been published, *Socialism and the Servile State: A Debate Between Messrs. Hilare Belloc and J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P.* (London: The South West London Federation of the Independent Labour Party, 1911).

power—were highly influential, especially on the libertarian left in the pre-war years, and ‘the servile state’ became a widely used slogan.<sup>23</sup> His work also had an impact on C. H. Douglas’s Social Credit theory.<sup>24</sup>

Belloc’s thesis was that collectivist policies such as National Insurance, which purported to offset the worst effects of *laissez-faire* capitalism—and which were hailed by many as fundamentally socialist, or conducive to socialism—were in fact not leading to anything like socialism but to a regime in which state power acted to cement a permanent class division between a tiny minority who owned the means of production, and the mass who possessed only their labour power.<sup>25</sup> In return for the assurance of a basic level of welfare, the majority of the population surrendered their economic freedom and entered into a condition tantamount to slavery. Purportedly socialist developments, Belloc argued, such as state welfare provision, municipally run industries, the creation of public jobs for the unemployed and so on, were funded not by high taxes on capitalists, nor by outright confiscation of the means of production, but by public borrowing—‘borrowed under an obligation to pay the capitalist interest out of the workers’ earnings . . . and the excess is only valuable to the capitalist because he can (and does) reinvest it; that is, use it *to extend his grip upon the means of production*’.<sup>26</sup> To Belloc and Orage, then, legislation like National Insurance was a step towards the creation of a ruling oligarchy of the kind imagined a few years earlier in Jack London’s *The Iron Heel*, a novel reviewed with interest in *The New Age*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> On Belloc’s influence on left-wing thought in Britain, see James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards’ Movement*, Studies in Social History (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1973), 44–48. Belloc’s ideas were also acknowledged in 1940 by George Orwell as having ‘foretold with astonishing accuracy the things that are happening now’—i.e., fascism—and might thus be regarded as an important source for Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. See Orwell, ‘Notes on the Way’, in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, ed. Peter Hobley Davison, Ian Angus, and Sheila Davison, vol. 12: *A Patriot After All, 1940–1941* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1997), 125.

<sup>24</sup> Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt, *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* (London: Routledge, 1997), 16–17.

<sup>25</sup> Quoting succinctly from Belloc is not easy. The clearest and most concise expression of these ideas—and that with which Orage would have been best acquainted—is the *New Age* article, ‘The Servile State’, 26 May 1910.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. My emphasis.

<sup>27</sup> Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (New York: Regent, 1907). For the *New Age* review, see ‘Reviews: The Iron Heel. By Jack London’, *The New Age* 4, no. 15 (4 February 1908): 308.

If anything, Orage's fears were closer to London's bleak, proto-Orwellian vision than to that of Belloc. As Belloc himself conceded, the guarantees of security potentially offered by the 'servile state' held a certain appeal.<sup>28</sup> Orage, in his 30<sup>th</sup> November column, argued that

For a good many years now, the tendency of the State has been to intervene between the parties of every bond, natural and traditional, and to insert between them written terms of mutual obligation, enforcable [sic] by the police in the last resort. Between employer and employed a whole web of legal relationship has been spun, and is still being spun. The same is true of the relationship of parents to children.<sup>29</sup>

To decry state regulation of employment was not, for Orage, to leave employees at the mercy of their employers; he envisaged a balanced relationship in which organized labour was strong enough to look after itself without state intervention. And, as we have seen, he feared that the newly interventionist state would threaten trades union independence.

The 'new bond of the State', Orage wrote, has as 'its symbol . . . not the comparatively elevated figure of duty, but the figure of law and the police. . . . [S]ociety is being reduced by the action of the State to a congeries of groups maintained in their relation by force'.<sup>30</sup> The National Insurance Bill, he felt, imposed a stark relationship between the increasingly vast, rationalizing bureaucracy of the state, and the singular, atomized individual now denuded of the complex, organic network of voluntary bonds and democratic associations which, Orage felt, had traditionally characterized British society.<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that Orage felt the status quo to be perfect; indeed, as we

<sup>28</sup> 'Many people love that ideal. I do not say I dislike it. . . . I do not say the Servile State is a bad thing, but at any rate it is not Collectivism', Belloc and MacDonald, *Socialism and the Servile State*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Orage, 'Notes of the Week', 30 November 1911, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 98–99.

<sup>31</sup> Orage's assessment still stands up to scrutiny. James Hinton, for instance, argues that 'Whatever its ameliorative effects[,] early twentieth-century social reform embodied a counter-attack on democratic and working class institutions at least as formidable as the employers' attack on trade unions in the 1890s. . . . [T]he National Insurance Act of 1911 was constructed in such a way as to subordinate the participatory democracy of the most successful of all nineteenth-century working-class institutions—the Friendly Societies—to the bureaucratic procedures of the commercial insurance industry. What was at issue was whether the growth of state provision for social welfare would represent an extension of democracy and working-class power, or whether it would tend to suppress existing democratic forms in favour of the construction of bureaucratic welfare machine concerned more with discipline and control than with opening up new opportunities for popular self-government'. Hinton, 'The Rise of a Mass Labour Movement', in *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875–1914*, ed. Chris J. Wrigley

have seen, he advocated revolutionary change. But, alluding to Shelley's famous poem about the Peterloo Massacre, 'The Mask of Anarchy', Orage argued that 'the straw of the Insurance Bill proves [the wind] to be blowing in the direction of anarchy'—that condition 'when the natural groupings of the people of a State are dissolved and each individual stands an Ishmael by himself alone'.<sup>32</sup>

Orage neither foresaw, nor lived to see, the turn that the British welfare state would take in the 1940s. His criticisms of National Insurance would have been much less applicable to post-war innovations like the National Health Service (although regarding the railways, he would likely have preferred control to have been handed directly to the workers rather than to the central state). But it is possible, I think, to see a parallel between the dissolution of that post-war settlement and Orage's fears about an over-powerful state. This claim seems paradoxical. But the historian Tony Judt writes that in the ubiquitous drive to privatize publicly owned industries and services since the 1980s, 'the thick mesh of social interaction and public goods has been reduced to a minimum, with nothing except authority and obedience binding the citizen to the state'.<sup>33</sup> For Judt,

This reduction of 'society' to a thin membrane of interactions between private individuals is presented today as the ambition of libertarians and free marketeers. But we should not forget that it was first and above all the dream of Jacobins, Bolsheviks and Nazis: if there is nothing that binds us together as a community or society, then we are utterly dependent upon the state. Governments that are too weak or discredited to act through their citizens are more likely to seek their ends by other means: by extorting, cajoling, threatening and ultimately coercing people to obey them. The loss of social purpose articulated through public services actually *increases* the unrestrained powers of the over-mighty state.<sup>34</sup>

As Judt's brief glance to the totalitarianism of the interceding century ('Bolsheviks and Nazis') highlights, Orage's augury that a complex, voluntaristic society would degenerate into one-dimensional despotism did not entirely miss the mark. Orage did indeed identify one path that state power in Europe would shortly take—namely the fascist governments which came to power in Italy, Germany and Spain—even if the

---

(Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 35–36.

<sup>32</sup> Orage, 'Notes of the Week', 30 November 1911, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin, 2010), 118.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–119. Judt's emphasis.

United Kingdom itself did not follow as he feared it might.

By the 1930s, of course, Pound would be working in support of Italian Fascism—a regime which, according to Mussolini himself, conceived ‘of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State’.<sup>35</sup> Mussolini added that

The conception of the Liberal State is not that of a directing force, guiding the play and development both material and spiritual, of a collective body, but merely a force limited to the function of recording results: on the other hand, the Fascist State is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality.<sup>36</sup>

It is not my purpose in this thesis to chart Pound’s route to Fascism, or to discuss at length the relationship between Pound’s poetics and his Fascist politics; those tasks have been admirably undertaken by Robert Casillo, Paul Morrison, Peter Nicholls and Tim Redman, among many others.<sup>37</sup> But there is an apparent contradiction between the extreme emphasis Pound placed upon individualism in the pre-war period—something particularly evident in ‘The Seafarer’—and his later embrace of an ideology which so openly subordinated the individual to an authoritarian state. As I noted in the introduction, the relationship, often conceived as oppositional, between the state and the individual, has been absolutely central to Western political thought since the seventeenth century.<sup>38</sup> This chapter considers Pound’s attempt, in ‘The Seafarer’, to address that relationship. I consider, first, the poem’s treatment of the state, then look more closely at the conception of the individual that can be derived from the poem. Finally, in the closing sections of this chapter, I analyse the difficulties Pound had in reconciling these two into a coherent relationship.

---

<sup>35</sup> Benito Mussolini, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, trans. Jane Soames (London: Hogarth P, 1933), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See Robert Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988); Paul Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Peter Nicholls, *Ezra Pound, Politics, Economics and Writing: A Study of the Cantos* (London: Macmillan, 1984); and Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Quentin Skinner, ‘The State’, in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball and James Farr, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 90.

It may appear problematic, in a discussion of the links between Pound's poetics and his political thinking, to lay such stress upon a translation rather than an original composition. However, as in Pound's other close engagements with older texts—in particular his *Homage to Sextus Propertius*—'The Seafarer' displays his highly idiosyncratic and creative practice as a translator: semantically, for instance, the first line, is neutral, rendering each word sequentially and more or less literally, yet the jarring syntax and pulsing, monosyllabic rhythm that result are distinct innovations.<sup>39</sup> Pound invested the poem, moreover, with near-talismanic significance, listing it among his 'major personae',<sup>40</sup> reproducing it several volumes (including *Ripostes* and *Cathay*), and alluding to it in Canto I, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and at several points in the later Cantos—inscribing the poem palimpsestically with new significance in each new context throughout his career.

### 'The Seafarer' and the state

The protagonist of Pound's translation of *The Seafarer* is a figure very similar to the 'Ishmael' that Orage describes in his 'Notes of the Week'. In the opening section of the poem, the speaker relates at length the solitary hardships he has experienced at sea, describing himself as a 'wretched outcast / deprived of my kinsmen' (P 61). The poem announces itself in its vitally important first line as the utterance of a lone individual: 'May I for my own self song's truth reckon' (P 60). Alongside his own 'song's truth', the speaker describes the cries of the sea birds as a parody of the social relations typified by the medieval mead hall: 'Did for my games the gannets clamour, / Sea-fowls' loudness was for me laughter, / The mews' singing all my mead-drink' (P 61). As Robert Stark argues, Pound's use of the birds' cries here is highly significant:

<sup>39</sup> Michael Alexander divides Pound's translations into two categories, 'Copies' and 'Remakes', and he argues that 'The Seafarer' straddles both. Michael Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', *Translation and Literature* 6, no. 1 (1 January 1997): 26.

<sup>40</sup> Ezra Pound, *Umbra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1920), 128.

Birds rarely sing in [Pound's] writing, but remain speakers of an execrable, inhuman language. In 'The Seafarer', this is the very reason for their appeal: the speaker is utterly outcast (both words mean substantially the same) from humanity. [Pound's] 'living tongue' is the solipsistic speech of a friendless margin-alien.<sup>41</sup>

Pound claimed to have begun his pursuit of 'the living tongue' after Ford Madox Ford rolled about the floor in laughter at the the younger writer's habitual use of stylized archaisms.<sup>42</sup> Here, though, Stark argues, the living *sociability*, which such a 'tongue' implies—and which we might associate with what Orage called 'the natural groupings of the people of a State'—is felt as a painful absence. Projected ironically onto the sea birds, this absence suggests a contrast between two forms of life: one, a complex society of communal ties and associations; the other, a stark, unmediated, relationship between the individual and an overwhelming impersonal force—be it nature or the bureaucratic state.

The link between voice and social relations, which is fairly evident in *The Seafarer*, has been seen as characteristic of Old English verse, which places great weight on orality. There is an extensive debate in Anglo-Saxon studies, growing out of the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord on orality in Homeric literature, about the extent to which an oral tradition can be detected in the extant Old English written canon.<sup>43</sup> But what I want to stress here is that whether or not (or whatever the extent to which) a given Old English poem emerged from an oral tradition, it is undeniable that, as John D. Niles argues, a great deal of the Old English poetry makes conscious stylistic use both of the trope of orality (as we see in *The Seafarer*), and of formal devices suggestive of oral poetics—the familiar alliterative line being perhaps the most obvious.<sup>44</sup> As such, Anglo-Saxon poetry draws upon and reproduces what Niles calls the 'cultural myth' of

<sup>41</sup> Robert Stark, *Ezra Pound's Early Verse and Lyric Tradition: A Jargoner's Apprenticeship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 113.

<sup>42</sup> Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and The Imagists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 347–48.

<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the best known example of work by Milman or Lord is Lord's Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000). For recent work on orality in Anglo-Saxon literature, see John D. Niles, 'The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Western Folklore* 62, no. 1/2 (1 January 2003): 7–61, and Andy Orchard, 'Looking for an Echo: The Oral Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Literature', *Oral Tradition* 18, no. 2 (2003): 225–27.

<sup>44</sup> Niles, 'The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', 38.



the oral poet (a ‘myth’ which, Niles insists, nonetheless has a clear basis in historical fact).<sup>45</sup> ‘Through both literature and iconography’, Niles argues, the Anglo-Saxons ‘promoted the impression that their poetry was descended from the art of ancient singers,’<sup>46</sup> and, moreover, did so ‘all the more emphatically as their literary culture became ever more pervasive and cosmopolitan’—that is, the further it progressed from its oral past.<sup>47</sup> Niles offers the suggestion that the overarching reasons for this development are closely related to the development of state power in the Middle Ages:

What I suspect chiefly motivated the Anglo-Saxons’ search for their oral poetic roots was a desire for the simplicity of master/man relations in a world where the actual workings of power were becoming ever more remote and impersonal. At a time when real-life social ties were becoming subsumed into an impersonal, formalized, state-sponsored bureaucracy, with its systems of coinage and taxation and proxy military service, the desire for spontaneous, personal man-to-man relationships naturally became more pronounced. . . .

It is surely significant that images of the *scop* take on a dominant role in works that were composed, or at least that were in circulation, during the period when lay literacy was waxing, when literary bilingualism and trilingualism were on the increase, when written laws and contracts were superseding the spoken pledge, when a more sophisticated scientific consciousness was beginning to find written expression, and when a strong centralized state was doing its best to subsume man-to-man relations into an effective system of delegated authority. It seems to have been especially during that relatively late period that some Anglo-Saxons wished to associate their art of poetry not just with parchment and ink, but also with the fellowship of the mead hall.<sup>48</sup>

For Niles, the oral poet or *scop*, reflects a particular, small-scale form of social relations; and the artful stylistic evocation of a ‘mythical’ oral tradition can be read as a response to the waning of those relations in the face of new modes and technologies of communication and governance.

This particular link between Anglo-Saxon poetics and socio-politics is only informed speculation on Niles’s part. However accurate this may be, it is very interesting to note just how close a historical analogy there is between the developments Niles describes and those which Orage and Belloc anticipated with the passage of the National Insurance Act. Indeed, as is often noted, the guild socialist movement, in

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 39, 40.

whose formation Orage and *The New Age* would be instrumental, drew inspiration from medieval modes of production in its opposition to industrial capital and wage labour.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the elegiac claims in the final section of *The Seafarer* (which Pound calls ‘the lament for the age’) that ‘There come now no kings nor Cæsars / Nor gold-giving lords like those gone’ (*P* 62) are compatible with the socio-political attitudes Niles postulates.<sup>50</sup>

Pound’s translation of *The Seafarer* certainly does not suppress its source text’s suspicion of state power. The word ‘protector’ is particularly significant in this respect. Firstly, as Adam Trexler has noted, the speaker’s claim that ‘Not any protector / May make merry man faring needy’ seems—when properly considered within the poem’s original *New Age* context—a palpable allusion to the paternalist assumptions embodied in Lloyd George’s welfare programme, and in the National Insurance scheme in particular.<sup>51</sup> The word ‘protector’ stands out for its polysyllabic, Latinate quality in a poem dominated by vocabulary deriving from Old English and Germanic origins.<sup>52</sup> Pound uses ‘protector’ to translate *hleomæga*, which means, literally, ‘a near relation, one who is bound to offer shelter or help’—*hleow* meaning shelter, protection, covering; *mæg* meaning family relation, kindred.<sup>53</sup> But *mæg*, by extension, carries the sense of tribe, people or nation. The social or even political significance of this extended sense is something that Pound’s choice in some ways replicates. The title ‘Lord Protector’ refers, in British history, to an individual who rules in place of the British monarch: Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III); and Oliver Cromwell are the best-known holders

<sup>49</sup> S. T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of Guild Socialism* (London: Longmans, 1966), 17–20.

<sup>50</sup> See Pound’s ‘Philological Note’ to the poem in *The New Age*, ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. I. [The Seafarer]’, *The New Age* 10, no. 5 (30 November 1911): 107. Niles refers primarily to *The Wanderer*—another poem about a lonely mariner, commonly considered a companion-piece to *The Seafarer*, and frequently discussed in the same breath by Pound—as an example of what he means, ‘The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet’, 39.

<sup>51</sup> Adam Trexler, ‘Modernist Poetics and New Age Political Philosophy: A. R. Orage, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2006), 90.

<sup>52</sup> Latinate words are not absent from the poem; ‘clamour’, ‘afflicted’, ‘calamitous’, ‘magnified’, ‘irresistibly’, ‘malice’, ‘durable’, and ‘prosperous’, are others. But they are infrequent enough, particularly those with three or more syllables, for their difference to register.

<sup>53</sup> I make no pretence of being an scholar of Old English. Unless otherwise stated, where I refer to Old English words I have consulted the Bosworth-Toller Old English dictionary.

of this title. ‘Protector’ can also refer to a class of imperial bodyguards in the Roman Empire. Within the semantic field of ‘protector’, then—a continuum stretching from close kinship ties, to large-scale political relations—is contained something very much like the contrast that Niles and Orage highlight in the Middle Ages and Edwardian period respectively. Etymologically, moreover, ‘protector’ derives from the Latin *tēgere*, ‘to cover’. It thus has a distinctly spatial sense which not only participates in the charged spatial dynamic of the poem, but is also very suggestive of the territoriality inherent to state power.

Spatiality is absolutely central to the poem and its political signification. The entire poem, it might be argued, depends upon the forces of repulsion and attraction which play on the speaker as he places himself first physically and then imaginatively outside the territorial bounds of society, its ‘protector’, its ‘lords’ and its wealthy classes. As we have discussed above, the poem begins with the recollection of a solitary—and, we can infer, forced—exile at sea, during which the speaker feels the absence of his ‘kinsmen’, as well as of the sociality represented by ‘games’, ‘laughter’, and ‘mead-drink’ (*P* 61). Having returned to a changed society, however—one based, it seems, upon wealth and privilege—his tales of hardship are ‘little believe[d]’, and he feels no less alienated than he did at sea (*P* 61). In the voyage he recalls, he is very much an object, at the mercy of powerful forces. But now, back in society, he feels a powerful urge, or ‘mind’s lust’, to return to the sea; and he conceives imaginatively of a new voyage, one not of hardship but of liberation from ‘this dead life / On loan and on land’ (*P* 62)—in which he will not be an object but an active agent, attaining his liberty in self-directed action. By casting off from the shore, the speaker imagines and rejects state power in firmly spatial, territorial terms. But he is able to conceive of no more fixed or concrete an alternative to the status quo than that of ‘a foreign fastness’ (*P* 61), which seems simply a negation of present circumstances. It is *utopian* in a very literal sense: absent and abstract, in contrast to the dystopian nature of the concrete recollections with which the poem

begins.

In a way, this aspect of the poem ‘The Seafarer’ seems to partially anticipate the post-national tendency that Andrew John Miller detects in the inter-war work of W. B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf and, perhaps most surprisingly, T. S. Eliot. These modernists, Miller writes, ‘are drawn toward networks and narratives of affiliation that are at odds with the territorially bounded networks and narratives of the modern nation-state’.<sup>54</sup> Yeats’s relation to the Irish diaspora, Eliot’s understanding of the church, and Woolf’s evocation of a cosmopolitan feminism are all, for Miller, ‘connections that operate on a global scale, and that illustrate the impossibility of sustaining conventional forms of state sovereignty and territorial boundaries in the context of an increasingly interconnected world in which all conflicts tend to take on the fratricidal character of civil war’.<sup>55</sup> But unlike Miller’s examples, Pound’s speaker pointedly withholds from positing any new term in place of the old territoriality of power, focusing instead upon a purely *dis*-affiliative, centripetal gesture. In this regard, it is interesting to consider Raymond Williams’s provocative characterization of modernism as ‘a restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovations and experiments, *always more immediately recognized by what they are breaking from than by what, in any simple way, they are breaking towards*’.<sup>56</sup> Williams’s description not only seems particularly apposite to Pound’s work—and more particularly still, to his pre-war writing, in which formal innovation as such, not yet harnessed to the goals of social change (whether social credit or Italian Fascism), are the cardinal value—but it also employs a clear spatial metaphor in its treatment of modernist aesthetics. If we accept Williams’s characterization, then the political restiveness we see in ‘The Seafarer’ and the aesthetic restlessness of modernism—both importantly negative—seem to converge.

---

<sup>54</sup> Andrew John Miller, *Modernism and the Crisis of Sovereignty*, Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature (New York: Routledge, 2008), vii.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>56</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 43. My emphasis.

‘The Seafarer’ relies not just on a spatial dynamic. It also calls upon historical change to make its point about state power. As we have noted, the poem evokes an image of a decadent state, and expresses nostalgia for the ‘kings’, ‘Caesars’ and ‘gold-giving lords’ of a previous age (*P* 62). This sentiment resonates particularly in the context of the rapid transformation of state power during the Edwardian era and the impression that the state—and indeed the whole European system of contiguous and competing imperial-nation-states—was strained to its maximum extent. ‘I know that I am perched on the rotten shell of a crumbling empire’, Pound wrote in January 1913, ‘but it isn’t my empire . . . and anyway the Germans will probably run it as well as you do’.<sup>57</sup> The perception of a decaying authority is expressed through the trope of the body politic:

Quotation from ‘The Seafarer’, lines 66–71 (*P* 62). See supplementary volume, p. 2.

Pound was quite fond of referring to the supposed age or youth of whole countries or civilizations, as we see in the reference, in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, to ‘an old bitch gone in the teeth’ (*P* 188). Chapter three discusses at length Pound’s significant reliance, for a time, on the cliché of the national youthfulness of the United States. In the passage above, Pound uses ‘man’s tide’ as a partially homophonic translation of *tiddege*: literally ‘lifespan’. While ‘tide’ does have numerous senses relating to duration, season, hour and so on, the sense which comes most readily to mind, given the maritime theme of the poem, is that of the rise and fall of sea levels. There is, in turn, then an allusion here to the story of King Cnut commanding the tide not to rise so as to demonstrate to his courtiers ‘how empty and worthless is the power of kings’.<sup>58</sup> In this allusion, there

<sup>57</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Through Alien Eyes. I’, *The New Age* 12, no. 11 (16 January 1913): 252.

<sup>58</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon, Comprising the History of England*

seems an intentional contrast between the king, on the one hand, who demonstrates his powerlessness over nature, and the poem's speaker, on the other, who, in his own way, does conquer the waves—having, 'on ice-cold sea, / Weathered the winter' (P 61). That Pound translates *englum* ('angels') as 'the English', seven lines later, also reaffirms the socio-political valence to this passage.

The figurative portrayals of the state power as a 'protector' and as a mortal body seem fittingly medieval in evoking a personified vision of the state only partially abstracted from the physical figure of the sovereign. But the poem also conveys, in places, a much more contemporary understanding of state power as something able to penetrate into and regulate even the private and domestic spheres commonly assumed to be its very antithesis. In defining himself against the comfort and excess of the burgher's society, which, to him, is a 'dead life / On loan and on land', the speaker describes other aspects of this society that such an individual (now transformed from an 'I' to a 'he') would reject:

Quotation from 'The Seafarer', lines 44–46 (P 61). See supplementary volume, p. 2.

Here the apparent shallowness ('harping') of society and the aesthetic pleasure ('world's delight') it offers are closely interwoven and identified with marriage. But as such an association suggests, this fundamental social institution is imagined primarily in terms of bourgeois possession ('ring-having'), and excess. The phrase 'winsomeness to wife' recalls, lexically and aurally, the 'winsome life' of the 'Wealthy and wine-flushed' burghers; the word 'winsome' or its cognates appears nowhere else in the poem. As Michael Alexander notes, syntactically these lines are among the most convoluted of the poem: "Nor winsomeness to wife" is meant to mean either "Nor winsomeness in

---

from the *Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Accession of Henry II. Also, The Acts of Stephen, King of England and Duke of Normandy*, ed. and trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 199.

women” or “towards women”; but doesn’t’.<sup>59</sup> Yet ‘wife’ is quite different to Alexander’s ‘women’, pointedly focusing upon marriage—as a relation and an institution—rather than upon sexuality. Nevertheless, the ambiguity Alexander identifies seems apt. Whether the speaker refuses (or is unable) to be appealing to women, or whether—as I think is strongly implied by the context of a speaker turning his back on society—he finds no appeal in them, the implication of these lines is that marriage would be a hollow pretence akin to his attempting to fraternize “mid burghers”.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, these lines express a view of marriage reduced to its thinnest and most instrumental form: that of a mere contract governing bourgeois property relations. This anticipates Pound’s concern, expressed in the 1920s, that ‘the present plague of democracy is that we have lost the sense of demarcation between Res Publica, the public business, and the affairs of the individual’.<sup>61</sup> But more immediately, it also recalls Orage’s vision of a society in which organic social relations of all forms are transformed and rendered uniform by the insinuation of state power.

## Pound, Orage and Edwardian industrial relations

‘The Seafarer’ marks a crucial moment in Pound’s career. He came to see it as one of his ‘Major Personae’ and it was at the time his longest poem.<sup>62</sup> ‘The Seafarer’ was reproduced in *Ripostes* and *Cathay*; and it echoes throughout Pound’s subsequent career, most famously, but by no means exclusively, in the first Canto. But the poem is

<sup>59</sup> Michael Alexander, *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 71.

<sup>60</sup> Pound pointedly specifies ‘Abides `mid burghers’ for ‘*gebiden in burgum*’, rather than the more literal ‘abides in the town’, as part of his characterization of the medieval town dweller as a proto-bourgeois burgher. Michael Alexander notes that this rendering gives the impression that ‘the dweller in the Old English *burh* is detained among Rotarians’. ‘Ezra Pound as Translator’.

<sup>61</sup> *The Dial*, 74 (March 1923), quoted in Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism*, 1961 (New York: Octagon, 1974), 115.

<sup>62</sup> Pound’s designation of this poem as a ‘Major Personae’, alongside *Homage to Sextus Propertius* and *Cathay*’s ‘Exile’s Letter’, can be found in *Umbra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1920), 128. In referring to this poem, I will italicize references to the original Old English text, while references to Pound’s translation specifically will be placed in single quotation marks.

also significant because its publication marks the beginning of Pound's long involvement with *The New Age*—a relationship whose significance is increasingly being recognized.<sup>63</sup> The poem was greatly praised by Orage, who called it a 'masterly translation', which was 'without doubt one of the finest literary works of art produced in England during the last ten years'.<sup>64</sup> Orage was not always favourably disposed to Pound's work.<sup>65</sup> But while Pound was never of one mind, politically, with Orage, he was a frequent presence at Orage's regular Thursday evening social gatherings,<sup>66</sup> and almost certainly became at least an occasional reader of *The New Age* very shortly after arriving in London.<sup>67</sup> I do not claim that Pound's translation was directly influenced by Orage's 30<sup>th</sup> November editorial; even if the two men had discussed the article over the preceding week, we know from Pound's letters and from Fred C. Robinson's research that Pound's translation was a long-term labour and not likely to have been radically

<sup>63</sup> See Lee Garver, 'Seafarer Socialism: Pound, *The New Age*, and Anglo-Medieval Radicalism', *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 4 (2006): 1–21; Trexler, 'Modernist Poetics and New Age Political Philosophy: A. R. Orage, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot'; David Kadlec, 'Pound, *Blast*, and Syndicalism', *ELH* 60, no. 4 (1 December 1993): 1015–31; and Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism*.

<sup>64</sup> R. H. C. [A. R. Orage], 'Readers and Writers', *The New Age* 17, no. 14 (5 August 1915): 332.

<sup>65</sup> Orage's ambivalence towards Pound's work is evident from this same review ('Readers and Writers'). Furthermore, Beatrice Hastings claimed that Orage was only persuaded to print Pound's work because his translations proved popular with readers, but that he viewed Pound's style as 'a past of colloquy, slang journalism and pedantry' (Beatrice Hastings, *The Old 'New Age.' Orage—and Others*. [London: Blue Moon Press, 1936], 7). It should probably be borne in mind, however, that Hastings's highly critical memoir was written after the long-term relationship between Hastings and Orage had ended bitterly.

<sup>66</sup> Wallace Martin, *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 42–43.

<sup>67</sup> Pound first met Orage towards the end 1911, but it is highly likely that he was already very familiar with *The New Age*. His close acquaintances T. E. Hulme (who would introduce Pound to Orage) and F. S. Flint were regular contributors to the magazine, Flint in fact praising Pound's poetry in its pages (see 6 January 1910). A more concrete dating of Pound's earliest engagement with *The New Age* is suggested by a brief letter signed 'E. P.' printed in the 28 April 1910 issue, which points out an amusing typographical error in an article the previous week. This would mean Pound had been reading the magazine for at least 18 months before 'The Seafarer' appeared. Eminent Pound scholars, A. Walton Litz, Lea Baechler and James Longenbach are sure enough of Pound's authorship of the letter to include it in their comprehensive edition, *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, ed. James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler, vol. 1, 11 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1991). However, we know that Pound left London for Lake Garda (via Paris) in March 1910, and did not return until late May or early June (see Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* [London: Routledge, 1970], 83–87). Even if his commitment to the magazine had been such that he had arranged for it to be sent to Italy, it seems doubtful that he could have received his copy promptly enough, and replied with sufficient haste, for his letter to arrive back in London before the press deadline for the following week's issue.



altered a few days prior to its publication.<sup>68</sup> But it is clear that Pound was familiar with the values and emphases of Orage's thinking. The poem can be read as a contribution to the debate about state power in which Orage was engaged.

During the First World War and its aftermath, Pound would become outspoken about what he saw as the danger of 'the idea that the man is the slave of the State, the "unit", the piece of the machine', arguing, in 1917, that 'the work of the subtlest thinkers for the last thirty years has been a tentative exploration for means to prevent slavery to a "State" or a "democracy"'.<sup>69</sup> These dangers were most immediately embodied, he argued, in, on the one hand, militaristic 'Prussianism' and its 'bacilli', the philological method of the German university,<sup>70</sup> and, on the other, in Fabian state socialism: having discovered, via Orage, C.H. Douglas's social credit theory, Pound wrote that 'Fabianism and Prussianism alike give grounds for what Major Douglas has ably synthesized as "a claim for the complete subjection of the individual to an objective which is externally imposed upon him; which is not necessary or even desirable that he should understand in full"'.<sup>71</sup> Orage and Pound both gravitated towards social credit in the 1920s; but in the pre-war period with which I am concerned in this thesis, despite both writers' firmly anti-statist positions, Pound's fear of 'slavery to a state' is distinct from Orage's position. For Orage, in his pre-war guild socialist phase, modern slavery took the form of the worker's wage-slavery to capital.<sup>72</sup> In this view, the state, even at its most pernicious, simply enforced and perpetuated this state of affairs.<sup>73</sup> Whatever the highly significant differences on this point between Orage and Pound—

<sup>68</sup> Fred C. Robinson, "'The Might of the North': Pound's Anglo-Saxon Studies and 'The Seafarer.'", *Yale Review* 71, no. 2 (January 1982): 199–224.

<sup>69</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—I', *The New Age* 21, no. 11 (12 July 1917): 245; 'Provincialism the Enemy.—II', *The New Age* 21, no. 12 (12 July 1917): 268.

<sup>70</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—III', *The New Age* 21, no. 13 (26 July 1917): 288–89.

<sup>71</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Probario Ratio', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 177. Originally published in *The Athenaeum*, 2 April 1920.

<sup>72</sup> Orage and his *New Age* collaborator, S. G. Hobson, formulated their theory of wage-slavery more fully in a series of 1912 articles in the magazine, which formed the basis for the guild socialism. The articles were collected in *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System and the Way Out* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914). As the original articles had been unsigned, the volume did not bear Hobson's name.

<sup>73</sup> Herein lies the dual sense of Belloc's phrase: in the 'servile state' the state ensures the servility of the working class, but is itself also servile to capital, largely by virtue of public debt.

and we will return to those differences below—at this point I want to stress that from the very start of his involvement in *The New Age*, Pound was participating in the debate about the nature of the state and its ideal role, and that he drew the terms and parameters of that debate from Orage, Belloc, and others in the *New Age* circle.

In a path-breaking article, ‘Seafarer Socialism: Pound, *The New Age* and Anglo-Medieval Radicalism’, Lee Garver points out that throughout much of 1911, when not preoccupied with attacking the National Insurance Bill, Orage had devoted a great deal of space in his ‘Notes of the Week’ columns to the progress of an ongoing strike by seamen, dockers, and other transport workers at ports across the country.<sup>74</sup> Garver argues persuasively that it is against a backdrop of hard-fought industrial struggle, and the radical political commentary it inspired in *The New Age*, that Pound’s translation of *The Seafarer* should be understood—and, moreover, that Pound would have expected his *New Age* audience to readily perceive this connection.<sup>75</sup> In June 1911, the National Sailors’ and Firemans’ Union declared a strike, demanding a minimum wage and improvements to working conditions. The 1911 seaman’s strike—the opening confrontation in what became a much larger general transport strike—quickly expanded to include ships’ caterers and stewards, and prompted action in solidarity by dockers and railways workers.<sup>76</sup> As Garver documents, Orage portrayed the strike as great victory for socialism and as a model for future struggle. Garver’s central contention is that ‘[b]y publishing “The Seafarer” in this venue, where English historical pride and radical progressive politics commingled, Pound . . . affirmed his solidarity with striking English laborers’.<sup>77</sup> Garver takes this point to infer a ‘progressive, left-leaning’ dimension to Pound’s early political views, inspired by what he describes as the ‘Anglo-medievalism’

<sup>74</sup> Garver, ‘Seafarer Socialism’, 5–6.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>76</sup> On the strike, see two works by Eric Taplin, ‘The Liverpool General Transport Strike, 1911’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, no. 33 (1 September 2012): 25–38, and *Near to Revolution: The Liverpool General Transport Strike of 1911* (Liverpool: Bluecoat, 1994). See also Sam Davies and Ron Noon, ‘The Rank-and-File in the 1911 Liverpool General Transport Strike’, *Labour History Review* 79, no. 1 (1 January 2014): 55–81.

<sup>77</sup> Garver, ‘Seafarer Socialism’, 2.

of *The New Age* circle—its Ruskinian and Pre-Raphaelite proclivities, and nostalgia for guild craftsmanship.<sup>78</sup> He is absolutely right to stress the political resonances between Pound's early writings and the radical debate in the pages of *The New Age*. He demonstrates conclusively, I believe, that the seamen's strike was a major underlying reference for the poem in its original publication context.

Nonetheless, Garver somewhat mischaracterizes both Pound's interpretation of the strike and his reasons for venerating it. The wave of strikes which Britain experienced in the immediate pre-war period was a clear expression of increasing working-class organizational capacity and of the consequent shift in the balance of industrial power. But equally, and perhaps even more radically, there was a genuine perception at the time that a militant labour movement posed a considerable threat to the British state. The seaman's strike is an excellent case study of this, but it is something which Garver severely understates. Many of the country's largest ports were affected by the strike.<sup>79</sup> Liverpool, however, saw the longest and most violent dispute: two men were killed there in August when troops opened fire during confrontations in the centre of the city, and many others were injured during police horseback charges.<sup>80</sup> The prominent journalist Sir Philip Gibbs wrote in his 1946 autobiography that the unrest in Liverpool in the summer of 1911 was 'as near to revolution as anything I had seen in England'.<sup>81</sup> The Royal Navy cruiser, HMS *Antrim*, was anchored in the river Mersey for several days during the crisis, ostensibly to bring Naval personnel to operate the Mersey ferries in place of striking workers. But the warship also served very visibly as a double symbol—both of the coercive force of the state and of the anxiety that the strike was generating in Westminster.<sup>82</sup> As if to emphasize the sense of an assault on the British

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>79</sup> Dave Lyddon, 'Postscript: The Labour Unrest in Great Britain and Ireland, 1910-1914 – Still Uncharted Territory?', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, no. 33 (1 September 2012): 246–47.

<sup>80</sup> For two recent historical studies on the Liverpool strike, see Davies and Noon, 'The Rank-and-File in the 1911 Liverpool General Transport Strike', and Taplin, 'The Liverpool General Transport Strike, 1911'.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years* (London: William Heinemann, 1946), 125.

<sup>82</sup> Details about the role of HMS *Antrim* in the response to the Liverpool strikes are recorded in Taplin, 'The Liverpool General Transport Strike, 1911', 30, and Geoffrey Marshall, 'The Armed Forces and

establishment, the strike coincided with the approach of the coronation of George V. *The Times* expressed its disgust that the union had picked a moment ‘when[, as] they must have been fully conscious[,] . . . their action, reprehensible enough at any time, would be peculiarly offensive to public sentiment’.<sup>83</sup>

It is this feeling of resistance against an increasingly interventionist and bureaucratic state, rather than, as Garver claims, the industrial politics themselves, which marks the clearest point of convergence between Pound’s outlook in ‘The Seafarer’ and that of Orage and the *New Age* circle. This is by no means to say that Pound and Orage were of one mind on political questions. When Orage attacked what he called ‘collectivism’ his target was the statist form of collectivism proposed by the Fabian society, a diluted form of which could be seen in the Liberal Party’s welfare policies. But as we have seen in his vision of the citizen as ‘an Ishmael by himself alone’, he was equally anxious at the prospect of an atomized individualism—indeed, he felt that state collectivism would in fact lead to just such an atomization, in the form of what Belloc so memorably called ‘the servile state’. Pound’s ‘The Seafarer’ is a potent, if ambiguous imagining of just these kinds of anxieties. But the poem also seems to jettison the societal ties which Orage saw as a counterbalance to state power; the speaker’s heroism is, in its essence, a solitary, *asocial* quality.

This is, in part, why Garver’s effort to ascribe proletarian class consciousness to the speaker of ‘The Seafarer’ and to interpret the poem as a gesture of ‘solidarity with striking English laborers’ is so problematic. Pound was indeed outspoken in the pages of *The New Age* in support of the wave of industrial action Britain experienced in the pre-war period but this was not because of any sense of class politics as such. Rather, the specific appeal of the strikes for Pound lay in two quite different factors. The first of these was the strikers’ discipline: when a massive coal strike spread across the country

---

Industrial Disputes in the United Kingdom’, *Armed Forces & Society* 5, no. 2 (1 January 1979): 271–273.

<sup>83</sup> ‘The Seamen’s Strike’, *The Times*, 14 June 1911.

in 1912, Pound hailed what he called the ‘stupendous’ spectacle of ‘a million men going out of their work and keeping in perfect order’.<sup>84</sup> It was this, he argued—and not Parliament or the ‘fine, robust, old Tory gentleman’ typifying the imperialist ruling class—that constituted ‘the real strength of the nation’.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, Pound approved of the strikes because he felt that the striking workers—‘the producers, the million men who struck and the rest of their sort and calibre’—possessed the kind of direct, physical expertise he was at that time attempting to integrate into his poetics.<sup>86</sup> Only a few months after the coal strike, Pound reviewed an anthology of Bohemian poetry (translated by another Orage protégé, Paul Selver), focusing exclusively on the work of Petr Bezruč, ‘poet of the mines’.<sup>87</sup> Pound dwells upon the themes of physical labour and stoicism in Bezruč’s work, and claims, in a rather gratuitous pun, that Bezruč’s ‘voice com[es] *de profundis*’.<sup>88</sup> Bezruč, Pound insists, ‘is the truth where our “red-bloods” and magazine socialists are usually a rather boresome pose’.<sup>89</sup> The authentic, immediate physical experience of Bezruč and the coal strikers was in marked contrast both to the petty bourgeoisie, ‘who want to turn [Britain] into a nation of shopkeepers’, and to the ruling class, at least as Pound saw it represented in Parliament.<sup>90</sup> After attending a Parliamentary debate, Pound wrote that he had heard only ‘two things that sounded like sense—one from a man who knew something about the inside of a coal mine, and, later, another argument from a man who knew something about marine engines’.<sup>91</sup>

The attitude underpinning these remarks is best expressed in a passage from ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’—the series of articles which marked his debut in *The New Age* and whose first instalment was taken up by his translation of ‘The Seafarer’:

[E]very man who does his own job really well has a latent respect for every other man

<sup>84</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Through Alien Eyes. III’, *The New Age* 12, no. 13 (30 January 1913): 300.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Bohemian Poetry’, *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1 November 1912): 58.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>90</sup> Pound, ‘Through Alien Eyes. III’, 300.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

who does his own job really well. . . . [T]he man who really does the thing well, if he be pleased afterwards to talk about it, gets always his auditors' attention; he gets his audience the moment he says something so intimate that it proves him the expert; he does not, as a rule, sling generalities; he gives the particular case for what it is worth; the truth is the individual.

As for the arts and their technique—technique is the means of conveying an exact impression of exactly what one means in such a way as to exhilarate.<sup>92</sup>

To be sure, Pound is not talking only about manual labour here. Such work could include commerce, engineering or sport: 'buying up all the little brass farthings in Cuba and selling them at a quarter per cent. advance', 'delivering steam-engines to King Menelek across three rivers and one hundred and four ravines', or 'punching another man's head'.<sup>93</sup> As this passage reveals, the premium Pound places on expertise is a corollary of his emphasis on poetic craft and technique—a focus which, as Adam Trexler has shown, places him very much within the orbit of the *New Age* circle's concern, inspired by the work of John Ruskin and William Morris, for the value of 'useful work' and the craft tradition.<sup>94</sup> Here, in a passage written some months before the first imagist manifestos were published, we see can detect the 'direct treatment of the thing' in the 'intimate' pronouncement of the expert; and the refusal to 'sling generalities' foreshadows the imagist's 'fear of abstractions'.<sup>95</sup> Far from being the result of an alienating division of labour which diminishes individuality, this intimate expertise is, for Pound, a specialism so refined that it acquires a generality universally recognizable among other such specialists, who recognize each other as true individuals. Whether such a view is ultimately sustainable under modern conditions characterized by an ever greater division of labour, is a question addressed in the final sections of this chapter. First, though, we must consider Pound's conception of the individual, and the equation he draws—as important as it is problematic—between the concrete particular,

<sup>92</sup> Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IX. On Technique', *The New Age* 10, no. 13 (25 January 1912): 298.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Trexler, 'Modernist Poetics and New Age Political Philosophy: A. R. Orage, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot', 57–58, 67–73. The phrase 'useful work' alludes to William Morris's essay, 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', in *News From Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 2004), 285–306.

<sup>95</sup> F. S. Flint, 'Imagisme', *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 198.

the individual, and something as universal as ‘truth’: ‘he gives the particular case for what it is worth; the truth is the individual’.<sup>96</sup>

## *Part two: the individual*

### The poetics of Poundian individualism

It is difficult to overstate the significance, in terms of Pound’s poetics, of the opening line of ‘The Seafarer’: ‘May I for my own self song’s truth reckon’ (*P* 60). So much of Pound’s project is captured within this line. Thematically, of course, it is a clear assertion of poetic and personal autonomy. The association of ‘song’, ‘self’ and ‘truth’ foreshadows what Pound would very shortly afterwards theorize as the ‘uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable’, ‘absolute rhythm’ of the individual poet, and the attendant belief that poetic technique was a ‘test of a man’s sincerity’.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Pound argued that it was the business of the ‘serious artist’ to add to ‘the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of man’ by ‘present[ing] the image of his desire, of his hate, of his indifference as precisely that, as precisely the image of his own desire, hate or indifference’.<sup>98</sup> The poem’s opening line alludes to the convention of the epic invocation; however, in this case, the familiar muse of the epic tradition, conventionally imagined as something separate from the poet, is internalized, proclaiming the speaker’s autonomy and the autotelic purpose of the poem—‘May I for my own self’. The concern to portray the speaker as autonomous seems to have influenced even the minutiae of Pound’s translation practice. For instance, in a survey of the major translations of the poem, Charles Harrison Wallace draws attention to Pound’s grammatical care in the following lines:

<sup>96</sup> Pound, ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IX. On Technique’, 298.

<sup>97</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 3–14.

<sup>98</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Serious Artist [I & II]’, *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 9 (15 October 1913): 163, 161.

On earth's shelter cometh oft to me,  
 Eager and ready, the crying lone-flyer,  
 Whets for the whale-path the heart irresistibly, (*P* 62)

In contrast to many other renderings of the poem, Pound's translation of these lines 'succeeds in imparting almost exactly the right touch of intransitive self-motivation to "whets"'—that is, Pound conceives the desire arising from within the heart itself and not, as other translations insist, from the call of the seabird or any other external source.<sup>99</sup>

The line also establishes Pound's heavily stressed, alliterative approximation of the Anglo-Saxon line, his strained syntax, and his homophonic word-choice. These factors mean that in this line especially, the rhythmic and aural qualities are felt before the sense can be parsed: 'Mǣy Í fōr mý ōwn sélf sōng's trúth réckōn'. But these qualities, too, contribute to the individualist force of Pound's translation. Six of the line's ten syllables are stressed, five of those stresses falling consecutively. There is also a surprising wealth of different vowel sounds in this line, eight in total over ten syllables, only two of which are repeated: the short /e/ of 'self' and 'reckon', and, of course, the /ʌɪ/ of 'I' and 'my'. As an opening gesture, it foregrounds contrast and individuation over pattern and repetition. To Hugh Kenner, the line is aurally mimetic: Pound builds 'consonantal structures like rocks' by, for example, 'putting *self/song's/truth* into its opening line and compelling us to hear them, craggy monosyllables, one at a time'.<sup>100</sup> This device represents, for Kenner, 'the characterizing note of Pound's psyche': the 'need for elements, dissociable elements'.<sup>101</sup> The image, the 'luminous detail', the ideogram, the 'gist'—all these Poundian notions are indicative of the 'note' Kenner describes. Michael Alexander observes a similarly monadic, paratactic approach in Pound's practice as a translator, identifying (again in reference to this opening line of

<sup>99</sup> Charles Harrison Wallace, 'The Central Crux of the Seafarer', *Studia Neophilologica* 68, no. 2 (1996): 176.

<sup>100</sup> Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 92.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.



‘The Seafarer’) ‘a philologist’s devotion to the individual word, rather than a linguist’s interest in structure’.<sup>102</sup>

Even though the line’s syntax is undeniably coherent, if unfamiliar, both Kenner and Alexander detect, in its rhythm and in its relationship to its source text, respectively, some kind of repulsive force, tending towards the paratactic assemblage of monadic, ‘dissociable elements’. Thus the autonomy of self and poem proclaimed in the opening line (‘for my own self song’s truth’) is reflected also in the lines’ aural and philological dimensions. Parataxis is crucial to Pound’s technique in *Guide to Kulchur*, in *The Cantos*, and, in a more concentrated form, in his imagist work. Donald Davie, writing prior to Kenner and Alexander, proposes a similar link between parataxis and individualism in Pound’s poetics, but in the opposite direction. Noting Pound’s attraction to elements such as the ideogram, Davie first likens Pound’s extended use of such paratactic devices to the technique of the symbolists: ‘An arrangement of signs makes the meaning of an ideogram just as an arrangement of symbols makes the meaning of a symbolist poem’.<sup>103</sup> For Davie, however, the dissolution of syntax may disguise or even encourage lapses in clarity.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, it contributes directly to Pound’s fateful political choices:

By hunting his own sort of ‘definiteness’ (truth only in the particular) . . . [Pound] is led to put his trust not in human institutions but in individuals. Similarly he pins his faith on individual words, grunts, broken phrases, half-uttered exclamations (as we find in the *Cantos*), on speech atomized, all syllogistic and syntactical forms broken down. Hence his own esteem of the definite lands him at last in yawning vagueness, the ‘intuitive’ welcome to Mussolini. . . .

It would be too much to say that this is the logical end of abandoning prose syntax. But at least the development from imagism in poetry to fascism is clear and unbroken. . . . [I]t is impossible not to trace a connection between the laws of syntax and the laws of society, between bodies of usage in speech and in social life, between tearing a word from its context and choosing a leader out of the ruck. One could almost say, on this showing, that to dislocate syntax in poetry is to threaten the rule of law in the civilized community.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Alexander, ‘Ezra Pound as Translator’, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse*, 1952 (London: Penguin, 1992), 82.

<sup>104</sup> For Davie, ‘it may be doubted whether, unless syntax reappears in our poetry, we can say of it, as Bernard Manning says of Wesley’s hymns, that ‘congregations bred on such stuff should not suffer from flabbiness of thought’’. Ibid., 84.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 85–86.

Davie's account, written in the early 1950s, is coloured very strongly, I think, by the freshness of the memory of fascism, still raw and unassimilated. Robert von Hallberg has argued that the connections drawn by Davie between language and politics seem too neat and immediate, and too apt to reduce all radical individualist political discourse in the Edwardian period to proto-fascism.<sup>106</sup> But if Davie does rely too much upon the certainties of hindsight, his analysis of the political and social consequences of Pound's elemental, paratactic way of thinking nonetheless remains remarkably perceptive and useful, particularly so in relationship to a reading of 'The Seafarer'. The speaker's overriding motivation is, after all, to become very much like what Kenner calls a 'dissociable element', atomized and detached from the syntactic bonds of the social and political structures he bitterly rejects—in short, to become autonomous, not subject to the laws of others.

The poem's antagonistic assertion of autonomy and isolation is perhaps why it became such an important touchstone for Wyndham Lewis's vorticist magazine, *Blast*, which styled itself as appealing not 'to any particular class but . . . TO THE INDIVIDUAL' who has 'cease[d] to belong to any milieu or time'.<sup>107</sup> On the first page of 'blessings' (having concluded his litany of 'blasts'), Lewis declares 'BLESS ALL SEAFARERS'.<sup>108</sup> Earlier in the issue, recalling the 'ice-flakes' and 'hail-scur' of Pound's translation, Lewis had 'curse[d]' England for its 'flabby sky that can manufacture no snow, but only drop the sea on us in a drizzle like a poem by Mr Robert Bridges'.<sup>109</sup> 'LET US ONCE AGAIN WEAR THE ERMINE OF THE NORTH', he exhorts.<sup>110</sup> When the 'Manifesto' signed by all the contributors, asserted that 'The modern world is due almost entirely to Anglo-Saxon genius',<sup>111</sup> it is most obviously a swipe at Italian Futurism, but it draws force from what 'The Seafarer' was felt to

<sup>106</sup> Robert von Hallberg, 'Libertarian Imagism', *Modernism/modernity* 2, no. 2 (1995): 63.

<sup>107</sup> 'Long Live the Vortex!', *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): n.p. [7].

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. I have preserved Lewis's underlining and capitalization..

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> 'Manifesto', *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 39.

express—that is, what Pound elsewhere called the English ‘national chemical’ and ‘race conviction’.<sup>112</sup>

Pound’s own manifesto contribution to *Blast* makes no direct reference to ‘The Seafarer’, but it is profoundly concerned with the same question of individual agency that animates the poem:

You may think of man as that toward which perception moves. You may think of him as a TOY of circumstance, as the plastic substance RECEIVING impressions.

OR you may think of him as DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, as CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting.<sup>113</sup>

Pound’s primary target here is Italian Futurism, which he describes as merely ‘an accelerated sort of impressionism’.<sup>114</sup> Impressionism and its contemporary avant garde offshoot, Pound suggests, construe the individual as helplessly at the whim of ‘circumstance’, whether in the form of the unrelenting influx of stimuli or the accelerating course of technological progress. To support his case, he cites two artists associated with nineteenth-century aestheticism: Walter Pater and James McNeill Whistler. Under the heading ‘ANCESTRY’, Pound quotes approvingly Pater’s dictum that ‘All arts approach the conditions of music’, and quotes Whistler as having claimed that ‘You are interested in a particular painting because it is an arrangement of lines and colours’.<sup>115</sup> Along with his imagist definition of the image (‘that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’), which he also reproduces, these aestheticist statements of an autonomous formalism provide the model for Pound’s vorticist artist. That artist rejects straightforward mimesis: ‘The vorticist relies not upon similarity or analogy, not upon likeness or mimicry’.<sup>116</sup> By eschewing mimesis and representation and embracing formalism, vorticism repeats the gesture, so characteristic of ‘The Seafarer’, of asserting the separation and autonomy both of the artwork and the individual. Representation, just as much as syntax, is seen as a problematic limitation on

<sup>112</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. XI’, *The New Age* 12, no. 2 (14 November 1912): 33.

<sup>113</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Vortex. Pound’, *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 153.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

autonomy.

## Pound, Walter Pater and *virtù*

I will return in chapter three to Pound's relationship with Whistler's work. Here, though, I want to focus on his reading of Pater. Much of Pound's early work can be read, in part, as an effort to come to terms with Pater's legacy; as Carol T. Christ argues, 'Pater embodies the heritage of Victorian poetry and poses the problems that modern poetry seeks to solve. . . . Yeats, Eliot and Pound all take that tension [the 'fugitive impressions' of individual subjectivity and the possibility of 'objectivity and universal resonance' from within them] as the starting point of their poetics'.<sup>117</sup> In his *Blast* manifesto Pound appears to reduce Pater's handling of the autonomy both of art and of the individual to a clear and unequivocal stance. But as Benjamin Morgan has recently articulated in some detail, Pater's work is anything but unequivocal on this question. Morgan argues that Pater 'engages with the concept of autonomy on a complicated level, never taking for granted that the work of art or the subject who experiences it is self-sufficient, isolated, and independent'.<sup>118</sup> As Morgan notes, 'Pater certainly connects the autonomy of the artwork to that of the subject', but this dual autonomy is held out 'only as a provisional possibility'.<sup>119</sup> It is important, as Pound must have been well aware, that art does not necessarily attain, but only '*approaches* the condition of music'. (And this is to bracket the question of whether music truly is as autonomous and formalistic as is often presupposed). Indeed, at times, Pater even seems to advocate the deterministic impressionism that Pound attacks: 'At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, *calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action*'.<sup>120</sup> In the next sentence,

<sup>117</sup> Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73.

<sup>118</sup> Benjamin Morgan, 'Aesthetic Freedom: Walter Pater and the Politics of Autonomy', *ELH* 77, no. 3 (2010): 732.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 733.

<sup>120</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley:

though, he does attempt to claw back some small space for individual autonomy even from within these material conditions:

But when reflexion begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. . . . Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.<sup>121</sup>

It is clear, however, that autonomy in this passage can only be won at the cost of an extreme solipsism which reduces the self to ‘a solitary prisoner in its own dream of a world’. Withdrawal from the world seems the only way of escaping determination by external forces, but such detachment and isolation becomes itself a form of imprisonment. And since, by definition, no prisoner can be said to live by their own law, Pater’s penal metaphor in fact totally undercuts the root meaning of autonomy as self-legislation (*auto-nomy*).

Under the pressure of external ‘circumstance’ (to use Pound’s term) Pater’s ‘solitary prisoner’, his ‘individual in his isolation’, seems less like an autonomous individual and more like Orage’s Ishmael, utterly at the whim of a monolithic state. Likewise, he seems to exist in very similar conditions to that of Pound’s seafarer persona. At sea, the speaker of ‘The Seafarer’ is not only physically alone; the ‘Chill’ and ‘chafing sighs’ ‘Hew [his] heart round’ (*P* 61), echoing the hermetic interiority of Pater’s ‘experience . . . ringed round . . . by that thick wall of personality’. That wall, Pater writes, is one ‘through which no real voice has ever pierced’; and accordingly, when the speaker of ‘The Seafarer’ returns to society, his fundamental isolation takes the form of an absence of comprehension. Despite Pound’s insistence that the speaker speaks only for his ‘own self’, it is clear that he does want to be understood, ‘Lest man know not / That he on dry

---

University of California Press, 1980), 187. My emphasis.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 186–187. As Morgan argues, ‘Pater is drawn on the one hand to the materialist notion that personality is nothing more than the confluence of elements, but on the other to the possibility that, with enough struggle, an autonomous version of the self might be redeemed’, Morgan, ‘Aesthetic Freedom’, 731.

land loveliest liveth' (*P* 61). This is an oddly didactic desire for a figure who, in Pound's hands at least, seems intended as a figure for individual and aesthetic autonomy. Yet the speaker has little hope that his 'Journey's jargon' will be comprehensible, and he complains that the comfortable burgher 'little believes' (*P* 61) and 'knows not' (*P* 62) of the hardships of life at sea. Pound later described the moment of the poem's creation as being when 'a man believing in silence found himself unable to withhold from speaking'.<sup>122</sup> Thus, for Pound, the poem owes its very existence to this dialectic of autonomy and determination: the poem is paradoxically an involuntary declaration of autonomy.

Nevertheless, as Morgan stresses, Pater is not always so pessimistic about consequences of the the fundamental isolation which seems to be attendant upon any notion of autonomy. Such isolation, imagined, not as a prison but as a radical purity of self and differentiation from society, is, in fact, essential for great art—an argument which, as Hugh Witemeyer has shown, provided Pound's immediate inspiration for the concept of *virtù*.<sup>123</sup> '[B]eauty exists in many forms', Pater argues. '[A]ll periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal' and 'In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done'.<sup>124</sup> The question the critic must ask, however, is 'In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself?'.<sup>125</sup> Pater writes that 'Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work cleanly, casting off all *débris* and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed', and it 'require[s] great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination'.<sup>126</sup>

This was heavily influential on Pound, as the following passage, from 'I gather the

<sup>122</sup> Ezra Pound, 'This Constant Preaching to the Mob', *Poetry* 8, no. 3 (1 June 1916): 145.

<sup>123</sup> Hugh Witemeyer, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908–1920* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1969). See also Richard Parker's recent study of imagism's Paterian roots, 'Walter Pater—Imagism—Objectivist Verse', *Victorian Network* 3, no. 1 (2011): 22–40.

<sup>124</sup> Pater, *The Renaissance*, xxi.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

Limbs of Osiris', makes clear:<sup>127</sup>

The soul of each man is compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls, but in each soul there is some one element which predominates, which is in some peculiar and intense way the quality or *virtù* of the individual; in no two souls is this the same. It is by reason of this *virtù* that a given work of art persists. It is by reason of this *virtù* that we have one Catullus, one Villon; by reason of it that no amount of technical cleverness can produce a work having the same charm as the original, not though all progress in art is, in so great degree, a progress through imitation.

. . . . It is the artist's business to find his own *virtù*.<sup>128</sup>

The word 'element' is the crucial term here for both Pound and Pater, as they imagine the self within a schema of purity and mixture, in an analogy with material substance (or at least, material substance as it was viewed by nineteenth-century science). True individuality is that which stands apart, unsullied by the '*débris*' of society and other people's personalities. In fact, Pound's notion of *virtù* even retains traces of Pater's extreme solipsism, though shorn of its pejorative, carceral tone: 'the discovery and expression of his virtue [*sic*]' allows the artist 'to proceed to the erection' not of his phenomenological prison cell, but of 'his microcosmos'.<sup>129</sup> But although Pound's theory of the indivisible artistic self is undeniably Paterian, Pound is not regurgitating Pater as slavishly as it initially seems. As Morgan insists, Pater is ambivalent at best about the link between the detached, isolated aspect of autonomy, purified of '*débris*', and the aspect characterized by self-assertion and agency. One way Pound signals his divergence from this Paterian equivocation is in his very visible choice of the Italian form, *virtù*. Pound's use of this term is not merely a pretentious flourish designed to cover his Paterian tracks. Substantively, it is an allusion to the vital significance of the concept of *virtù* within Italian renaissance thought—particularly within renaissance political philosophy.

<sup>127</sup> On Pound's relationship to Pater, Mary Ellis Gibson offers a detailed analysis, with a slightly different focus to mine, in her *Epic Reinvented: Ezra Pound and the Victorians* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell U.P, 1995), esp. 28–35. Interestingly, Gibson suggests that the other major theoretical category which Pound outlines in in 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'—namely, the 'Luminous Detail'—is also heavily influenced by Pater's thought (32–33).

<sup>128</sup> Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. VI. On Virtue', *The New Age* 10, no. 10 (4 January 1912): 224.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

According to J. R. Hale, the meaning of *virtù* to renaissance humanists was that of ‘virtue’, in the sense of ‘efficacy’; but in Machiavelli particularly, it was blended with the Latin *vertus*, a term meaning ‘excellence’ and strongly connoting ‘virility’.<sup>130</sup> The Italian humanists conceived ‘the *vir virtutis* as a creative social force, able to shape his own destiny and remake his social world to fit his own desires’.<sup>131</sup> As such, ‘*virtù* could be used’, writes Hale, ‘to convey an inherently gifted activism especially in statecraft or military affairs; to possess *virtù* was a character trait distinguishing the energetic, even reckless (but not feckless) man from his conventionally virtuous counterpart’.<sup>132</sup> For Skinner, ‘the proposition that *virtù vince fortuna*—that *virtù* serves to overcome the power of fortune to control our affairs’—is ‘[p]erhaps the most central motif of renaissance humanism’.<sup>133</sup> ‘The humanists’, Skinner writes, ‘had always acknowledged the extent of fortune’s sway, but insisted at the same time that a man of *virtù* will always find the means to limit and subdue her tyranny’.<sup>134</sup> A pointedly political and martial sense of the word emerges in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, where *virtù* is a question not simply of agency but of political power and mastery over territory and population. Rulers may win territory either by their own *virtù*, Machiavelli argues, or they may win by *fortuna* and reliance on external support and patronage. States won or established on *virtù* are of course far more durable than those based upon the whims of *fortuna*.<sup>135</sup>

These two senses of *virtù*/virtue—the Paterian and the renaissance—do not combine easily. Paterian aestheticism purports to seal off the aesthetic sphere from the political with the same ‘thick wall’ that isolates the aestheticist self. In his detailed study of Pound’s Paterian inheritance, Richard Parker suggests that this division remains intact for Pound throughout his imagist phase, and that ‘the passivity of Pater’s

<sup>130</sup> J. R. Hale, ed., ‘Virtù’, *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).

<sup>131</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Vol. I: The Renaissance* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 94.

<sup>132</sup> Hale, ‘Encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance’, 338.

<sup>133</sup> Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Vol. I: The Renaissance*, 186.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>135</sup> See especially, chapters 6 and 7 of Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20–30.



aestheticism is expunged from Pound's poetics' only when the *Cantos* reach their fascist peak in the 1940s.<sup>136</sup> But as this thesis sets out to demonstrate, this is not always straightforwardly the case. Even when Pound imports into his work an aestheticist theory of artistic creation, he guards against that theory's attendant receptiveness and passivity by combining it with an aggressively assertive, highly masculine claim to political efficacy. The collocation of these concerns—the Paterian dichotomy of materialism and autonomy, the renaissance admiration for the force of personality—can be seen again in a remark Pound makes in 'Patria Mia', measuring Whitman against the Anglo-Saxon speaker: 'one cannot call a man an artist until he has shown himself capable of *reticence and of restraint*, until he shows himself in some degree *master of the forces which beat upon him*'.<sup>137</sup> Pound's language here ('beat upon him') construes these forces as being like ocean waves which the artist-mariner must conquer if he is to avoid becoming 'the TOY of circumstance'.

In his concept of *virtù*, Pound wanted to retain the indivisibility and autonomy of the aestheticist self, but to find a way to configure that autonomy as a form of active agency. In *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), the eponymous aesthete is depicted—in language that suggests a sardonic parody of the heroic Anglo-Saxon mariner—as a castaway, 'delighted with the imaginary / Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge' (P 200), who had 'Drifted . . . drifted precipitate' (P 197), on a 'Coracle of Pacific voyages' to 'The unforecasted beach' (P 201). Very similar imagery is used, to quite similar ends, to describe the diffuse subject of the earlier 'Portrait d'une Femme', which was published in *Ripostes* (1912). Pound also reproduced 'The Seafarer' in *Ripostes* only a few short lyrics after 'Portrait d'une Femme', and the two poems seem to form an intentionally binary pairing—the latter expressing a passive, feminine and diffuse character; the latter an active, masculine individual of *virtù*.

'Portrait d'une Femme' employs an extended metaphor of a calm and temperate

<sup>136</sup> Parker, 'Walter Pater—Imagism—Objectivist Verse', 29.

<sup>137</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. VIII', *The New Age* 11, no. 26 (24 October 1912): 611. My emphasis.

ocean, teeming with flotsam—‘Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea’ (*P* 57)—which immediately presents a counterpoint to the ‘dire sea-surge’ (*P* 60) that the seafarer tells of having contended with as his ship ‘tossed close to cliffs’ (*P* 60). The subject of the ‘Portrait’ may be, as the poem tells us, ‘a person of some interest’ (*P* 57) but she is depicted, nonetheless, as aimless and resignedly submissive to the ocean’s gentle currents. Indeed, at times she is indistinguishable from them, the metaphor itself being so drifting and unfocused: in the first line, she is identified with the sea; later it seems that she is likened to a port, receiving ships and their cargoes; still later she appears to be an object herself adrift upon the sea.

Quotation from ‘Portrait d’une Femme’, lines 3–4 & 11–12 (*P* 57). See supplementary volume, p. 2–3.

The protagonist lacks the essential individuating quality that Pound called ‘*virtù*’: ‘there is nothing!’ Pound exclaims, ‘In the whole and all, / Nothing that’s quite your own. / Yet this is you’ (*P* 58).

When this poem is set alongside ‘The Seafarer’, what stands out immediately is the heavily gendered quality of the contrast. ‘The Seafarer’ seems almost like a corresponding *portrait d’un homme*. Pound’s contemporary heroine is firmly at the centre of metropolitan society, welcoming cultured visitors and lovers. The Anglo-Saxon hero is by turns an outcast from, and a wilful refuser of, the life of the city. The blank verse of ‘Portrait d’une Femme’ seems soft and pliable in comparison with the alliterative caesura of Pound’s mock Anglo-Saxon metre. The title ‘Portrait d’une Femme’ announces the poem as something of a genre-piece, alluding to Henry James’s novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, and reinforcing the understanding of its subject as a ‘type’. Conversely, ‘The Seafarer’, as a major part of the relatively tiny corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry, not only signifies rarity, if not uniqueness; it also signifies genesis

and originality, in both senses of the latter term. Even the French of the title seems calculated to suggest an effete, romance femininity beside the stereotypically Germanic hardness and concreteness of the Old English—though the use of such national-linguistic stereotypes to signify a fierce individuality has obvious contradictions.

As if to encourage the comparison between the two poems, the first lines of each echo each other. They share an abundant sibilance; and the word ‘mind’—the first stressed syllable of ‘Portrait’—palpably echoes the sound of ‘May I’ and ‘my own’ in the first line of ‘The Seafarer’. But while the latter is a momentous gesture of agency, self-assertion, and self-possession, the former is, of course, abstract, passive, and symbolically possessed by others: ‘you are *our* Sargasso Sea’. What is more, the slight enunciative pause required to properly pronounce ‘are our’ (the difficulty of which was, Pound reported, one reason the poem was originally rejected for publication<sup>138</sup>) seems fiddly and genteel compared to the five pounding, consecutive stresses which mark the first line of ‘The Seafarer’, and the insistent patterns of alliterative stresses (‘Journey’s jargon’, ‘Corn of the coldest’, and so on) which characterize that poem as a whole. The effort to articulate the difference between ‘are’ and ‘our’, mimics the failure of Pound’s female protagonist to differentiate her identity from the metaphorical swells and currents of London. The city’s determining force is asserted audibly in the trochee at the beginning of the second line which pointedly inverts the prevailing iambic rhythm: ‘*London* has swept about you’.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. V’, *The New Age* 11, no. 23 (3 October 1912): 540. See also Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, 473.

<sup>139</sup> My emphasis.

### *Part three: the difficulty*

#### Intellectual and manual labour

Pound's ideal of the self-sufficient, autonomous individual, who gains recognition—as we saw in Pound's description of the 'expert'—by demonstrating an easy, intimate knowledge of the particular, shares a great deal in common with what Theodor Adorno identifies in the work of Paul Valéry—namely, the ideal of 'the whole man',<sup>140</sup> or what Adorno calls, in relation to the work of art, 'that good universality that does not leave the particular out but rather preserves it and drives it, with the force of its own movement, to cogency'.<sup>141</sup> For Adorno, however, the 'paradox' of this position is that although

the whole human being and the whole of humankind is intended in every artistic utterance and every piece of scientific knowledge, . . . this intention can be realized only through a self-denying division of labor ruthlessly intensified to the point of the sacrifice of individuality, the self-surrender of the individual human being. . . . Valéry's aim is the undivided human being, whose capacities and modes of response have not been ripped apart, alienated from one another and congealed into valorizable functions in accordance with the schema of the social division of labor.<sup>142</sup>

The point is made succinctly in Valéry's claim that Edgar Degas 'was and wished to be a specialist, of a kind that can rise to a sort of universality'<sup>143</sup>—or, as Pound put it, 'the truth is the individual'.<sup>144</sup> Since the industrial revolution, thinkers as diverse as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Ruskin and Friedrich Nietzsche, among numerous others, had remarked on the apparent destruction to the individual wrought by an intensifying division of labour in industrial society. Marx, for example, felt that modern manufacturing practices placed the worker 'face to face with the intellectual potentialities of the material process of production as the property of another and as a

---

<sup>140</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Artist as Deputy', in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 101.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–102.

<sup>143</sup> Valéry, *Degas, Dance, Drawing*, quoted in *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>144</sup> Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IX. On Technique', 298.

power which rules over him'.<sup>145</sup> Disempowered in this way and separated from intellectual input into his work, the worker becomes, for Marx, a mere 'fragment of himself'; and, what is more, 'a crippled monstrosity'—implying that the intellectual impoverishment of modern manufacture necessarily entails also physiological impairment.<sup>146</sup> Nietzsche, for instance, scoffed at the 'factory slaves' who 'do not feel it to be in general a disgrace to be thus used, and *used up*, as a part of a machine and as it were a stopgap to fill a hole in human inventiveness'.<sup>147</sup> Against this pervasive intellectual backdrop, what Pound is reaching for in the pre-war period, and what Valéry—at least in Adorno's eyes—articulates too, is the possibility of a technical specialism so complete that it wholly encompasses, rather than dividing or destroying, the individual. Of course, the terms Adorno employs are by no means explicit in Pound's work. As we will see, Pound largely evades any discussion of the division of labour. Nonetheless, it will be the task of the remainder of this chapter to show, firstly, that such terms are highly pertinent to a discussion of Pound's pre-war work, 'The Seafarer' in particular; and, secondly, that the state, conceptually and institutionally, is a crucial element in this discussion.

As we have seen, Pound placed enormous importance on craft and technique in his early articles for *The New Age*. Similarly, in that first contact with a new audience, Pound very consciously adopts the persona of an expert scholar and translator, loudly hailing his 'New Method in Scholarship'.<sup>148</sup> And, just as in Adorno's reading of Valéry, Pound's deployment of this specialist expertise is linked very closely to an 'intention' (to use Adorno's term) towards the integral individual or 'whole human being'. This is clearly theorized, as we saw above, in Pound's description of 'the expert'. But perhaps

---

<sup>145</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin in association with *New Left Review*, 1990), 481.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 482.

<sup>147</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 126 (§206).

<sup>148</sup> This scholarly pose is not unusual; throughout his career, as Michael North observes, 'Pound comes before his public first as a scholar', North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 132–33.

the best practical example of this conjunction between expertise and the individual is found in Pound's 'Philological Note', appended to his translation of 'The Seafarer':

The text of the poem is rather confused. I have rejected half of line 76, read 'Angles' for angels in line 78, and stopped translating before the passage about the soul and the longer lines beginning 'Mickle is the fear of the Almighty, amen'. There are many conjectures as to how the text came into its present form [sic]. It seems most likely that a fragment of the original poem, clear through about the first thirty lines, and thereafter increasingly illegible, fell into the hands of a monk with literary ambitions, who filled in the gaps with his own guesses and 'improvements'. The groundwork may have been a longer narrative poem, but the 'lyric', as I have accepted it, divides fairly well into 'The Trials of the Sea', its Lure and the Lament for Age.<sup>149</sup>

Primarily, Pound uses this note to outline relatively candidly some of his controversial translation decisions. The note illustrates Pound's intent to secularize the text—to employ his technical expertise in stripping away what he regarded as dubious religious platitudes that instrumentalized the poem and its speaker in the service of a religious orthodoxy and, crucially, to restore both poem and protagonist to an autonomous and putatively authentic condition.

The secularizing aspect of Pound's translation has attracted considerable comment from scholars. What has been less remarked upon, however, is that in assuming the task of redeeming the protagonist's autonomy, Pound positions himself in direct opposition to the figure of the 'monk with literary ambitions'. This latter figure deserves proper scrutiny. It would be a mistake, I think, to regard Pound's monk as a serious historical-philological hypothesis. Rather, the monk is a device that allows Pound to bracket all of the complex philological uncertainties which surround the text, and grant himself the space to properly inhabit the persona of the speaker as a coherent and cohesive ego. And, of course, it is not just Pound-as-translator to whom the monk stands in polar opposition; there is also a clear dichotomy between the monk and the speaker. Where the Anglo-Saxon mariner embodies Poundian *virtù* and autonomous individualism, the monk (we suppose) surrenders his autonomy and individuality to a rigid ecclesiastical institutionalization. While the speaker is a dissident voice against the values of his age

<sup>149</sup> Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. I. [The Seafarer]', 107.

(and, in Pound's reading, firmly agnostic) the monk enforces a prescriptive orthodoxy through what Pound ironically describes as his "improvements". And where the speaker stands for immediate experience of the harsh, sensuous world—and, by extension, for Pound's category of 'the expert'—the monk is cloistered and abstracted from the world.<sup>150</sup> In both of these overlapping binaries—the monk versus Pound, the monk versus the speaker—the former figure becomes a metonym not only for the generalized conditions of medieval textuality and pre-mechanical reproduction, but also, crucially, for prudishness and ideological censorship in all ages.

Another way of putting this would be to argue that the monk is an archetypal symbol of the division of intellectual labour as divorced from manual labour—a division which, at least according to Marx and Engels, is the most primal fundamental aspect of the social division of labour as a whole.<sup>151</sup> Engels provides a broad sketch of the how the entire edifice of modern society and the state may well be built upon this one basic division, arguing that in early civilization,

any increase of the productive forces, extension of trade, development of the state and of law, or foundation of art and science, was possible only by means of a greater division of labour. And the necessary basis for this was the great division of labour between the masses discharging simple manual labour and the few privileged persons directing labour, conducting trade and public affairs, and, at a later stage, occupying themselves with art and science. The simplest and most natural form of this division of labour was in fact slavery.<sup>152</sup>

Again, I perhaps risk facing the objection that these concepts are alien to Pound's work.

---

<sup>150</sup> From Chaucer and the medieval Robin Hood ballads to Daniel Lewis's gothic novel *The Monk*, the English literary tradition has, of course, offered numerous depictions of monks who are anything but cloistered, humble and chaste. But these figures acquire much of their appeal precisely through their deviation from, and defiance of, the fundamental monastic principle of seclusion and withdrawal from society and worldly life, and are, thus, in the truest sense of the cliché, the exceptions that prove the rule. We have no reason to assume that Pound's 'monk with literary ambitions' is anything other than typically monastic.

<sup>151</sup> Provisional divisions of labour based upon the contingencies of child-bearing and, *ad hoc*, from differences in physical strength may precede it, but the '[d]ivision of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears', Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Part One: With Selections from Parts Two and Three, Together with Marx's 'Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy'*, ed. C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 51.

<sup>152</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, trans. Emile Burns (Moscow: Progress, 1947), 222.

But Pound need not have been a Marxist to have intuited, in whatever terms, the significance of this absolutely fundamental aspect of social life, and for that intuition to manifest itself in his writing.

What is more, a writer very close to Pound was pondering these issues very closely. In *The Soul of London*, Ford Madox Ford's 1905 portrait of the city—a work which, it seems highly likely, Pound would have read with interest—there is a striking passage in the chapter 'Work in London', describing the typical experiences of commercial mariners reaching the final stages of their voyages to London. As soon as Ford's imaginative voyage reaches the city on the busy, working river, he offers the observation that 'Workers in London divide themselves, roughly, into those who sell the labour of their bodies and those who sell their attentions'.<sup>153</sup> The former dig trenches, lay cables, scatter gravel, and so on, while, 'If walls would fall out of offices[,] you would see paler men and women adding up the records of money paid to these others. That, with infinite variations, is work in London'.<sup>154</sup> At the docks, Ford observes these two types of labour united in one individual, who 'hurried very fast, with a masterful and engrossed step, . . . dodging mechanically the pools of greasy water and the fat black mud between the sleepers'.<sup>155</sup> This individual was 'the chief officer of the liner that was coaling and he had a pencil behind his ear'.<sup>156</sup>

He was uniting as it were the labours of the men shovelling in the buckets of coal, of the men uttering melancholy wails as they swung-in a white boat, of the men hooking up long planks for the painters to sit on, and of the painters themselves on the upper decks. With that pencil he controlled all their labours, as if he were twisting them into an invisible rope which passed through that tin office and up, far away into town where other pencils and other pens recorded these things on large pages, digested them into summaries and finally read them out to Boards of Directors.<sup>157</sup>

Ford sees 'these two great camps set one against the other' as being separate in almost every respect, even geographically—the office worker's 'London of breathing space'

<sup>153</sup> Ford Madox Hueffer [Ford], *The Soul of London: A Survey of A Modern City* (London: Alston Rivers, 1905), 68.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 70.



being the west of the city, the manual labourer's 'London of elbow room' being the east.<sup>158</sup> The imaginary 'ropes', Ford argues, 'seem to be the only tie', though 'they are strong enough in all conscience'.<sup>159</sup> It seems highly suggestive that not only does Ford offer such an evocative consideration of the division of labour in London; he also chooses a seafarer as the representative individual who transcends the division.

To return to the figure of the monk in Pound's 'Note', however, we should observe that, in early medieval Europe, it was in monasteries and royal courts that literate intellectual culture first emerged.<sup>160</sup> For much of the period, monks, together with other ecclesiastics and the tiny elite around the monarch, enjoyed a near monopoly on literacy as well as dominance over the reproduction and transmission of written texts.<sup>161</sup> Antonio Gramsci writes that 'for a whole period of history, which is partly characterised by this very monopoly', ecclesiastical intellectuals (of which monks are a major subset) had 'held a monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, *that is the philosophy and science of the age*, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc'.<sup>162</sup> Although, according to Gramsci, 'traditional' rather than 'organic' intellectuals (that is, not emerging directly from within a particular class, and thus maintaining a nominal or superficial autonomy within the class structure),

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307*, 3rd ed (Chichester, West Sussex, UK ; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 1-2.

<sup>161</sup> On medieval literacy, see, in particular, C. P. Wormald, 'The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and Its Neighbours', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)* 27 (1977): 95-114. M. T. Clanchy stresses that medieval notions of literacy differed markedly from our own, and were not simply based upon the ability to read and write. Nonetheless, and despite offering examples of limited lay literacy, his point that *clericus* was often used to mean *litteratus*, and *laicus* to mean *illiteratus* (and vice versa) demonstrates quite clearly the extreme ecclesiastical dominance over 'intellectual' affairs. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*. One further point is that in so far as lay literacy was a reality in the Middle Ages, it increased over time, particularly after the Norman Conquest. *The Seafarer* pre-dates the Conquest, originating in a time when literacy would have been the almost exclusive preserve of the ecclesiastical sphere. To be sure, as Susan Kelly shows, evidence from Latin land charters, wills, leases and other documents relating to property and land, dating back as early as the 670, provides evidence of non-ecclesiastical literacy in medieval Britain ('Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 36-62), but there is no question that literacy, in the early Middle Ages especially, was overwhelmingly an ecclesiastical privilege.

<sup>162</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 7. My emphasis.

ecclesiasticals were nonetheless ‘organically bound to the landed aristocracy’ and ‘had equal status juridically’ with it, sharing ‘the exercise of feudal ownership of land, and the use of state privileges connected with property’.<sup>163</sup> Seen against this backdrop, Pound’s monk is an enemy of Poundian individualism to a much greater extent than simply the particular case of his meddling “‘improvements’” to the *Seafarer* text; he represents, in fact, a ubiquitous structural mechanism which everywhere works to diminish the individual by prying apart the intellectual and physical faculties. Moreover, as Gramsci’s description makes clear, the monk is positioned at the nexus of intellectual labour and state power, in its feudal form.

The division of intellectual and manual labour is never absolute, however. As Gramsci writes, ‘There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded’.<sup>164</sup> In a very important sense, Gramsci famously argues, ‘All men are intellectuals’.<sup>165</sup> The crucial caveat, however, is that because of the way labour is divided, ‘not all men *have in society the function* of intellectuals’.<sup>166</sup> Thus, for Gramsci, a manual labourer is one whose work tends ‘towards muscular-nervous effort’ rather than ‘intellectual elaboration’.<sup>167</sup> Gramsci’s evocative descriptions of these two forms of labour return us almost inescapably to ‘The Seafarer’, and reveal that the monk is not merely a foil to Pound as translator but also to the poem’s protagonist. The fervid cerebral activity of the poem is certainly enough to establish the speaker’s claim to be an intellectual, and aligns with Gramsci’s assertion of the basic inalienability of mental and manual functions. For example the speaker tells in lines 35 and 37 of his ‘heart’s thought’ and ‘mind’s lust’. Here, it is the heart, as visceral as the poem makes it, to which thought is attributed, while basic physical desire—typically, at least in Judeo-Christian culture, associated with the body or ‘the flesh’—is located in the abstraction

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

of the mind. Moreover, in many ways, the speaker formally resembles the figure of the monk. He stands apart from society even when physically in its midst, forswears ‘world's delight’, and scorns both wealth and sexuality. We might also liken the confines of his lonely vessel to a monastic cell, his ‘Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head’ mimicking a kind of devotional observance.

However, recalling Gramsci's caveat, it is clear that the social relations in which the speaker is inextricably caught have confined him to a life of ‘muscular-nervous effort’. The physical suffering of his voyage and the condition of slave labour are conflated in the clause, ‘Chill its chains are’ (*P* 61), whose antecedent is only implicitly the ‘frost’ of the previous line. The poem consistently foregrounds physicality, placing particular emphasis on the human body. The word ‘breast’ appears twice in the poem; ‘feet’, ‘blood’, ‘face’, ‘hand’, ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ also appear. Several of the eight occurrences of the word ‘heart’ problematize the affective metaphor conventionally tied to it. For example, ‘chafing sighs / hew my heart round’. Even more strongly, in the line ‘So that but now my heart burst from my breast-lock’, not only does the evocation of the rib-cage emphasize the corporeality of the image; the stuttering accumulation of unstressed syllables quicken the rhythm in the first half of the long line, pointing to the palpable physiological aspects of emotion—in this case the raised heart-rate and breathlessness resulting from increased adrenaline.<sup>168</sup> And as Ce Rosenow notes, Pound's idiosyncratic decision to end the poem at line 99 places very great emphasis on the ‘unlikely treasure horde’ of the ‘buried *bodies*’ of the speaker's ‘born brothers’ (*P* 63), forcing the reader to focus upon the mortal, corporeal body.<sup>169</sup>

What, then, of the speaker's status as an autonomous individual, an archetype of

<sup>168</sup> As Chris Jones points out, the alliteration of the unstressed ‘but’ is a notable deviation from Old English verse conventions. For Jones this is simply a sign of Pound's ‘overzealousness’ with ‘decorative alliteration’; but I think that this deviation in fact contributes quite markedly to the mimetic suggestion of breathlessness I have described. Chris Jones, *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>169</sup> My emphasis. Even of those translators who, like Pound, chose to excise the poem's closing religious sentiments, Pound is the only one to end the poem here. Ce Rosenow, “‘An Unlikely Treasure Hoard’: The Beginning of Ezra Pound's Poetics and the Conclusion of “The Seafarer””, *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 4 (12 January 2008): 473–74.

Poundian *virtù*? Does Pound, in ‘The Seafarer’, overcome the ‘paradox’ Adorno describes, or does his protagonist simply reproduce the division of labour, and its division of the individual? Provisionally, it seems the speaker’s individual autonomy is in some ways tied to the aesthetic autonomy of the poem. It is perhaps too obvious to note that if we read the poem in a formalist way, we tend towards the kind of interpretation Pound seems to have strongly favoured; but if we consider the poem’s textual history—even if only in Pound’s abridged and apocryphal version of it—and social reference, the speaker seems more and more to be embedded in complex and restrictive social and textual relations.

### Serious artist or state functionary?

The tensions and contradictions I have been describing in relation to ‘The Seafarer’ are indicative of broader problematics within Pound’s work as a whole. To elucidate these issues, I want to consider more closely the question of the intellectual-manual division of labour—in particular its theorization in work of the twentieth-century Greek political theorist Nicos Poulantzas. Primarily a theorist of the state, and situated firmly within the Western Marxist tradition, Poulantzas emphasizes the absolutely critical, symbiotic relationship between intellectual labour and the modern state. ‘*In all its apparatuses*’, he argues, ‘(that is, not only in its ideological apparatuses but also in the repressive and economic ones) *the State incarnates intellectual labour as separated from manual labour*’.<sup>170</sup> He stresses, moreover, that

it is within the capitalist State that the organic relationship between intellectual labour and political domination, knowledge and power, is realized in the most consummate manner. Separated from the relations of production [i.e., in contrast to the intertwining of political and economic relations that characterized feudalism], the State takes up position alongside an intellectual labour that has itself been divorced from manual labour: it is the corollary and the product of this division, and at the same time plays a

<sup>170</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1978), 56. Poulantzas’s emphasis.

specific role in its constitution and reproduction.<sup>171</sup>

That is to say, the relation of state to society formally mirrors the relation of management and administration to manual labour. More than this, the state acts to secure and reproduce this division within its own sphere, and throughout society as a whole.<sup>172</sup> State apparatuses such as the judicial system, military institutions, the police, and the sprawling bureaucracy, all ‘involve the practical supremacy of a knowledge and discourse . . . from which the popular masses are excluded’.<sup>173</sup> It is easy to list a few of the myriad ways in which this exclusion might be realised: the vast and often secret accumulation of data by the state; its training of technical experts; its proliferation of opaque, euphemistic jargons; and so on. As Poulantzas notes, even the institutions of representative democracy reproduce this exclusionary effect under the very guise of participation; parliaments, political parties, and elected representatives monopolize intellectual labour within the ‘public’ sphere, defining and delimiting the terms of public political discourse.<sup>174</sup>

For Poulantzas, this exclusivity and dispossession (analogous, though not identical, to the dispossession of workers from the means of production) is what defines the distinction between mental and manual labour.<sup>175</sup> Poulantzas argues that the division is, at root, more complex than an ‘empirical or natural split between those who work with their hands and those who work with the heads’.<sup>176</sup> For Poulantzas, the distinction is

---

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Poulantzas’s reference to the ideological state apparatus (alongside the economic and repressive), and the clear collocation of knowledge and power in his work, signal his engagement with the work of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault respectively. Poulantzas is considerably influenced by both these figures but also differs on key matters. At risk of significant oversimplification, we might suggest that Poulantzas’s most fundamental quarrel with Foucault involved the latter’s refusal to take the state seriously as an object of theoretical study. Foucault, of course, focused on the ‘capillary’ forms of power and likened state theory to ‘an indigestible meal’. Poulantzas did not discount the vital importance of micro-operations of power, but, equally, his work insists that the state cannot simply be theorized away. Though much closer, intellectually and personally, to Althusser, Poulantzas’s conception of the state is almost incomparably more nuanced and flexible than that which Althusser evokes in his well-known essay ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’.

<sup>173</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 56.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 56, 60.

<sup>175</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, trans. David Fernbach (London: NLB, 1975), 239.

<sup>176</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 55.

instead characterized by exclusion: ‘every form of work that takes the form of a knowledge from which the direct producers are excluded, falls on the mental labour side of the capitalist production process, irrespective of its empirical/natural content’.<sup>177</sup> Even those forms of intellectual labour which amount to no more than empty managerial rituals ‘are still legitimized, and not by chance, as being invested with a knowledge which the workers do not possess’.<sup>178</sup> Emphatically, for Poulantzas, the division of intellectual and manual labour is not a mere technical question; it represents the point at which domination and ideology intersect.

One major way in which this mode of domination is legitimized, Poulantzas argues, is via a scientistic ideology, which construes power ‘as if it flowed automatically from a rational scientific practice’.<sup>179</sup> This ideology, he claims, first took the form of political and legal studies conceived as ‘scientific’—prominently, for example, in the work of Machiavelli and Montesquieu—in opposition to pre-modern ‘natural’ or ‘sacred’ forms of knowledge which had provided legitimacy for feudalism and absolutism.<sup>180</sup>

The specific separation of mental and manual labour that the establishment of the bourgeois state and its agents as a body ‘separate’ from society involved, was founded on the encasement of knowledge in legal/political ideology in the form of ‘science’.<sup>181</sup>

Ultimately, Poulantzas writes, political and legal discourses have been superseded in their position as pre-eminent areas of bourgeois ideology, by economics. From this latter discipline has arisen a scientific ideology of ‘technocratic’ politics, where state officials are no longer politicians but managers, who ‘appear as bearers of a specific knowledge and an intrinsic rationality’, rather than policies based upon particular contestable values.<sup>182</sup>

Poulantzas goes further, however, to argue that by organizing scientific discourse

---

<sup>177</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 238.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 55.

<sup>180</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 238–39. . Poulantzas’s Gramscian influence is again evident here. See Gramsci on ‘Sociology and Political Science’, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 243–45.

<sup>181</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 239.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 389. Poulantzas reiterates these points in a slightly different form in *State, Power, Socialism*, 57.

through funding and institutions, the state ‘regiments the production of science in such a way that it becomes, in its innermost texture, a *state science* locked into the mechanisms of power’.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, in doing so, ‘it subordinates and marks down for itself the *intellectual-scientific corps*’.<sup>184</sup>

Intellectuals have been constituted as a specialized professional corps through their reduction to functionaries or mercenaries of the modern State. In the universities, institutes, academies and societies of learning, these bearers of science-knowledge have become state functionaries through the same mechanism that made intellectuals of this State’s functionaries.<sup>185</sup>

Just as state personnel become, by definition, intellectual labourers, Poulantzas argues, by the same token, many scientific intellectuals become, in effect, state personnel. We should probably interpret this passage in a limited way. The reference here to ‘institutes, academies and societies of learning’ suggest that Poulantzas was thinking in particular of the relatively greater centralization of education in France. Poulantzas is not arguing that all intellectuals, or even all scientists have been assimilated by the state, just that state influence over intellectual labour extends well beyond the conventionally understood boundaries of the state.<sup>186</sup>

The division of intellectual and manual labour has distinct relevance for any conception of the role of the artist within society—as Pound realised. We can observe this in his emphasis on the poetic craft, which seems a refusal to allow the work of the poet to be split in half—whether into a spontaneous, romantic expressivism reliant on the inspiration of individual genius, or a classicist traditionalism burdened with the weight of the whole Western canon: for Pound, learned technique, not spontaneity, is the mark of the unique individual. Nevertheless, with the birth of imagism, Pound’s focus on craft, though it remained as vital as ever in his poetic practice, solidified in his critical work into a list of ‘Don’ts’, which he declared it an ‘immediate necessity . . . to

---

<sup>183</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 57.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* Poulantzas’s emphasis.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> I am grateful to Bob Jessop of Lancaster University for his generous advice regarding the interpretation of this passage, provided via personal email correspondence to the author, 23 Apr 2014.

tabulate' (expressing regret he could 'not put all of them into Mosaic negative').<sup>187</sup> As the busy critic and impresario, Pound thus mimes a form of the intellectual-manual division within poetic production, assuming a role analogous to a factory supervisor who pins a proscriptive list of rules to the shop-floor noticeboard. Indeed, in an aptly bureaucratic turn of phrase, Hugh Kenner has labelled Pound's proscriptions 'specifications for technical hygiene'.<sup>188</sup> Rebecca West discerned this industrial impetus from the very start: 'Just as Taylor and Galbraith want to introduce scientific management into industry', she wrote in her preface to an abridged version of Pound's 'Contemporania' in *The New Freewoman*, 'so the *imagistes* want to discover the most puissant way of whirling the scattered star dust of words into a new star of passion'.<sup>189</sup>

In his involvement with imagism, Pound seemed to be auditioning for the role of what he had earlier described as the 'donative' writer, as opposed to the 'symptomatic'. In works by the latter type, Pound writes,

we find a reflection of tendencies and modes of a time. They mirror obvious and apparent thought movements. They are what one might have expected in such and such a year and place. They register.

But the 'donative' author seems to draw down into the art something which was not in the art of his predecessors. If he also draw from the air about him, he draws latent forces, or things present but unnoticed, or things perhaps taken for granted but never examined.<sup>190</sup>

In drawing this distinction, Pound reproduces, within the sphere of literary production, a form of the manual-intellectual division—in exclusionary terms similar to those by which Poulantzas understands it. 'Donative' authors, in Pound's schema, have access (for whatever reason) to knowledge from which merely 'symptomatic' authors are excluded; and this knowledge gives them executive power over the development of literature.

We should recall that Pound rejected imagism not when it became a minor industry

<sup>187</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*', *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 201.

<sup>188</sup> Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', 186.

<sup>189</sup> Rebecca West, 'Imagisme', *New Freewoman* 1, no. 5 (August 1913): 86.

<sup>190</sup> Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IV. A Beginning', *The New Age* 10, no. 8 (21 December 1911): 179.



—as indeed it did, producing four anthologies in four years;<sup>191</sup> he rejected it when he could no longer enforce technical discipline among its practitioners. In ‘A Retrospect’, his 1917 debriefing on the imagist movement, Pound very clearly casts himself in this ‘donative’ role, but seems to doubt whether the movement’s subsequent ‘followers’ even qualify for ‘symptomatic’ status, as they have shown themselves unable to follow instructions:

This school has since been ‘joined’ or ‘followed’ by numerous people who, whatever their merits, do not show any signs of agreeing with the . . . specification [to ‘use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation’]. Indeed *vers libre* has become as prolix and as verbose as any of the flaccid varieties that preceded it. . . . The actual language and phrasing is often as bad as that of our elders without even the excuse that the words are shovelled in to fill a metric pattern or to complete the noise of a rhyme-sound. Whether or no the phrases followed by the followers are musical must be left to the reader's decision. At times I can find a marked metre in ‘vers libres’ [*sic*], as stale and hackneyed as any pseudo-Swinburnian, at times the writers seem to follow no musical structure whatever. But it is, on the whole, good that the field should be ploughed. Perhaps a few good poems have come from the new method, and if so it is justified.<sup>192</sup>

Pound castigates the later imagists for not properly adopting his modern methods of poetic production, focusing particularly on their neglect of concision and musical rhythm. He adopts the language of manual labour: Victorian poets ‘shovelled’ words into their poems to pad out their metrical patterns and rhyme-schemes, while efforts of the later imagists are likened to the ploughing of a field. In either case, these lesser writers are imagined as hired hands performing repetitive manual labour at the direction of others; in the latter case, one might even wonder whether Pound was equating the imagists less with the agricultural labourers than with horses or oxen.

Far from Pound’s earlier veneration of the labourer’s orderly organization and direct physical experience, the category of manual labour here is employed in a distinctly pejorative sense. But what of Poulantzas’s insistence of the crucial link between intellectual labour and the state apparatus? In fact, in his 1913 manifesto, ‘The

<sup>191</sup> All four anthologies—*Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (1915), *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (1915), *Some Imagist Poets, 1916: An Anthology*, and *Some Imagist Poets, 1917: An Anthology*—are freely available via the Modernist Journals Project: <[http://modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp\\_object&id=ImagistCollection](http://modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=ImagistCollection)>

<sup>192</sup> Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, 3.

Serious Artist', Pound seems to foreshadow Poulantzas's analysis, by not only identifying the arts with the kind of instrumentalized scientific labour Poulantzas sees as quintessentially state-assimilated, but he goes further to openly enlist the artist as a state functionary. Pound defines the arts as

a science, just as chemistry is a science. . . . The arts give us a great percentage of the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of man . . . of man considered as a thinking and sentient creature. They begin where the science of medicine leaves off or rather they overlap that science. The borders of the two arts overcross.<sup>193</sup>

The instrumental value of art's 'data', Pound argues, arises from the fact that 'we must know what sort of animal man is, before we can contrive his greatest happiness'; or, expressed in even more starkly utilitarian terms, 'the good of the greatest number cannot be attained until we know in some sort of what that good must consist'.<sup>194</sup> The essay signals that Pound recognized quite clearly the closeness of science to state power described by Poulantzas, and that he wanted to attain for poetry some of this supposed influence. Ann L. Ardis has situated Pound's essay alongside the early ethnographic work of Beatrice Webb, the prominent Fabian socialist, and read both as indices of residual uncertainties stemming from 'a moment in the late nineteenth century when new disciplinary regimes and the professionalization of intellectual life more generally threatened the epistemological authority of literary writing'.<sup>195</sup>

The corollary of Pound's instrumentalist, apodictic model of artistic value is that 'Bad art is inaccurate art. It is art that makes false reports'.<sup>196</sup> 'If a scientist falsifies a report either deliberately or through negligence we consider him as either a criminal or a bad scientist according to the enormity of his offence, and he is punished or despised accordingly'.<sup>197</sup> The same ethical reasoning applies, Pound writes, in the case of the artist:

---

<sup>193</sup> Pound, 'The Serious Artist [I & II]', 161.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ann L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2002), 16 Ardis devotes a chapter to this fascinating conjunction between Webb and Pound: 'Beatrice Webb and the "Serious" artist', pp. 15-45.

<sup>196</sup> Pound, 'The Serious Artist [I & II]', 161.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 162.

If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, as to the nature of his ideal of this, that or the other, of god, if god exist, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, . . . of the degree in which he suffers or is made glad; if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the taste of his time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies.<sup>198</sup>

Falsification in art is identified here with the loss of autonomy—the conformity to popular taste, power or morality. But in a wider sense, Pound's schema subordinates art to an instrumentalized agenda and positions the artist as, essentially, a gatherer of state knowledge. The hunting of falsehood, of course, was a major motivation behind Pound's translation of 'The Seafarer', the monk being the personification of that conformity to taste, power and morality. And Pound continued to police interpretation of the poem for years afterwards. He reacted furiously when John Masefield claimed that Old English poetry 'was made by a rude war-faring people for the entertainment of men-at-arms, or for men at monks' tables'.<sup>199</sup> 'Time and again the old lie', Pound retorted in *Poetry*, calling Masefield a 'demagogue' and his words 'charlatanry'.<sup>200</sup> '[H]as the writer of this sentence read *The Seafarer* in Anglo-Saxon?' he demanded; 'Will the author tell us . . . for whose entertainment were they made?'.<sup>201</sup>

Pound may have been drawing on Dante when he wrote with such harshness of artists who 'make false reports'. In the *Inferno*, only Satan and the other 'traitors' are punished more severely than the 'falsifiers', who are cast into the eighth layer of Hell and tormented with a disease resembling leprosy.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, in 'The Serious Artist'—and here the statist assumptions of the essay become very clear—Pound is clear that such 'bad' artists should be punished. Whether the artist lies of out 'carelessness', 'laziness', 'cowardice' or 'negligence', Pound insists, 'he nevertheless lies and he

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> This is how Masefield's remarks were paraphrased by Alice Corbin Henderson in *Poetry*. See Henderson, 'Mr. Masefield's Lecture', *Poetry* 7, no. 6 (1 March 1916): 301.

<sup>200</sup> Pound, 'This Constant Preaching to the Mob', 144, 145.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>202</sup> In his so-called Hell Cantos (XIV and XV), written in the 1920s, Pound would damn 'the perverters of language, / the perverts, who have set money-lust / Before the pleasures of the senses' to swim eternally in faeces (XIV, 61).

should be punished or despised in proportion to the seriousness of his offence'.<sup>203</sup> Not only ought art to function as a quasi-state apparatus, gathering 'data'; Pound imagines, and on occasion plays the role of, a state-like juridical regime policing artistic 'truth' and punishing 'falsehood'.

### A 'foreign fastness': 'The Seafarer' and European colonialism

Another example of Pound's effort to police interpretation of 'The Seafarer' can be seen in his 'Patria Mia' series for *The New Age* in 1912. This instance is certainly more subtle than the outburst directed at Masfield but it may have implications which further erode the poem's supposed anti-statist individualism. In the course of what is ostensibly an account of American attitudes to business, Pound asserts that each generation divides into two 'elements': those that are 'static' and those that are 'nomadic, or at least migratory'.<sup>204</sup> While the static portion 'was marooned and left inert', the migratory portion 'pushed on to new forests, to mines, to grazing land'.<sup>205</sup> The nomadic, migratory type is, of course, 'The sort of man who made America', and represents Pound's vision of the true individual.<sup>206</sup>

The type of man who built railways, cleared the forest, planned irrigation, is different from the type of man who can hold on to the profits of subsequent industry. Whereas this first man was a man of dreams, in a time when dreams paid, a man of adventure, careless—this latter is a close person, acquisitive, rapacious, tenacious. The first man had personality, and was, 'god dam you' himself, Silas P. Hacker, or such like. The present type is primarily a mask, his ideal is the nickel-plated cash register, and toward the virtues thereof he does continual [*sic*] strive and tread.

The first men dealt with men, the latter deals with paper. Apart from 'business' he is a man 'of little comfort' and lacking in conversation.<sup>207</sup>

The 'man who built railways, cleared the forest, planned irrigation' is fairly transparently based upon Pound's beloved grandfather, Thaddeus Pound, who was

<sup>203</sup> Pound, 'The Serious Artist [I & II]', 162.

<sup>204</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. IV', *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912): 515.

<sup>205</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. IV', *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912), 515.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

president of a railway company and had interests in the lumber industry in frontier-era Wisconsin. But there is also self-evident resonance, between this nomadic individual and the Anglo-Saxon seafarer, with his distaste for settled bourgeois life and his desire to ‘fare forth . . . [and] afar hence | Seek out a foreign fastness’ (*P* 61, ll. 37–38). The ‘static’, petty bourgeois figure clearly resembles the hated burgher, but also contains elements of the monk—‘a close person’, piously pursuing ‘virtue’ (of a sort), and ‘deal[ing] with paper’.

We have seen that the speaker of ‘The Seafarer’ is in many ways an analogue for the poet. It is, moreover, clear that Pound wants very much to identify his poetic vocation with the heroic frontier individualism he ascribes both to his ‘nomadic’ type and to the Anglo-Saxon mariner. The self-reliance, and perseverance (and, indeed, though it is not factored in here, the proximity to political power) which Thaddeus Pound is perceived by his grandson to represent, were qualities the younger Pound tried to appropriate in his poetic career, in his stress on the importance of the individual unmoored from class and milieu; his sustained effort to defy staid conventions of diction, form and propriety; and his pose of the isolated, embattled voice. (This attitude was no less real for all Pound’s self-parody: ‘For one man I strike there are ten to strike back at me. I stand exposed. It hits me in my dinner invitations, in my weekends, in reviews of my own work. Nevertheless it’s a good fight’, he wrote to Harriet Monroe, on the topic of his reviews of contemporary letters).<sup>208</sup>

Nevertheless, there is palpable anxiety on Pound’s part, in the passage I have quoted, about what social status followed from his vocation as a poet. What is striking about the portrait of the petty-bourgeois, philistine, *anti*-individual he describes as the ‘static’ type, is just how many shades of Pound that figure seems to contain. This is a figure who consolidates the achievements of earlier pioneers, who ‘deals with paper’ rather than ‘men’, and who is ‘primarily a mask’. One wonders what to make of these

<sup>208</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 47.

apparently pejorative terms when they are offered by a poet who made such extensive use of personae, and who, moreover, placed such considerable weight upon a comparative study of literary history, seeing himself as refining and developing its supposedly cruder impulses ('Mentally, I am a Walt Whitman who has learned to wear a collar and a dress shirt').

One pivotal moment in 'The Seafarer' most closely aligns the protagonist with Pound's 'nomadic' type:

Quotation from 'The Seafarer', lines 36–38 (*P* 61). See supplementary volume, p. 3.

But these lines mark a dramatic shift in the poem's register. If Pound, in his description of the 'nomadic' and 'static' types, betrays a certain self-doubt, so too does the speaker's fiercely self-assertive individualism fade from view at precisely this point of the poem. After the repeated 'I' of line 37, the first-person pronoun disappears almost entirely; the forceful personal testimony of seafaring hardship and desire is replaced by an assertion of a more pervasive attitude:<sup>209</sup>

Quotation from 'The Seafarer', lines 36–38 (*P* 61). See supplementary volume, p. 3.

In these lines, the speaker is less an individual intimately attesting his experience, in the manner of Pound's 'expert', and more a metonymic symbol for cultural expectations about a certain kind of masculinity. What is more, the first three of these lines are also much longer than average in this poem, line 40 being the joint-longest at fifteen

---

<sup>209</sup> Prior to the terminal period in line 38, the word 'I' appears ten times; there are also nine occurrences of either 'me' or 'my' up to that point. In the remaining 62 lines, 'I' appears only once; 'me' or 'my' occur four times—all five pronouns closely preceding the sceptical dismissal of 'any earthweal' in line 68 (*P* 62).

syllables. And in their rhythm, these lines dramatically reverse what had, up to this point, been the tendency for stressed syllables to outnumber unstressed.<sup>210</sup> Even as these lines tell of a defiance to the will of ‘his lord’, the withdrawal from a particular ‘I’ to a generalized ‘he’ is undeniable.

Indeed the ‘he’ may be more than generalized; it may in fact be normative—a characteristic which we see again in the passage from ‘Patria Mia’. Pound’s pseudo-anthropological division of society into a class of heroic, entrepreneurial pioneers, and a class of acquisitive, narrow-minded shopkeepers occludes huge areas of social and economic life. Most glaringly, of course, it ignores the working classes. Whether consciously or not, Pound is echoing Nietzsche’s admonition to the ‘factory slaves’ to go abroad rather than become ‘the slave of the state or the slave of a party of disruption’ (i.e., socialism).<sup>211</sup> Such a worker, Nietzsche argues,

ought to say to himself: ‘better to go abroad, to seek to become master in new and savage regions of the world and above all master over myself; to keep moving from place to place for just as long as any sign of slavery seems to threaten me; to shun neither adventure nor war and, if the worst should come to the worst, to be prepared for death: all this rather than further to endure this indecent servitude, rather than to go on becoming soured and malicious and conspiratorial!’<sup>212</sup>

We saw above that Pound did venerate aspects of working-class life; but it seems industrial workers are only even visible within Pound’s view of society in so far as they escape their class identity. Nietzsche puts this more clearly when he urges workers ‘to declare themselves *as a class* a human impossibility’.<sup>213</sup> But such pervasive migration can only occur in particular political conditions—most particularly in a colonizing culture with clear ideological demarcations between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ society. Though Nietzsche’s advice to the proletarian is hardly novel, he does at least acknowledge clear-sightedly that such migration is rarely emancipatory but simply

---

<sup>210</sup> Up to line 38 (‘foreign fastness’), stressed syllables had made up almost 6 in every ten. In the five lines I quote, however, stresses account for four in ten syllables—not an overwhelming statistic, but one which does confirm the very palpable shift in rhythm at this point in the poem.

<sup>211</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 126, 127 (§206).

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 126 (§206).

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 127 (§206).

entails at best a displacement of oppression onto a peripheral population.<sup>214</sup> Pound, writing thirty years later, seems overcome with nostalgia for the vanished American frontier, which bounded American society from landscape mythologized as empty and virgin—a theme we will return to in chapter three. Neither writer, however, acknowledges that whatever autonomy was won by those who ‘pushed on to new forests, to mines, to grazing land’, in a broader historical sense, such action simply served the territorial interests and carried out the colonial will of a particular states.<sup>215</sup>

---

<sup>214</sup> For a discussion of Nietzsche’s remarks on labour and selfhood in the broader context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, see Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour, and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chapter two, esp 47–48.

<sup>215</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. IV’, *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912), 515.



## Imagism's 'fellow rebels': Ezra Pound and the Balkan Wars

The autumn of 1912 was a significant moment in Ezra Pound's career and in the history of Anglo-American modernism. October saw the publication of what is arguably Pound's first mature volume *Ripostes* and, with it, the first published reference to 'Les Imagistes'.<sup>1</sup> The same month, or possibly in late September, Hilda Doolittle showed some of her poems to Pound during one of the gatherings they, along with Richard Aldington, held in the British Museum's tea room. Impressed, Pound christened Doolittle 'H.D. Imagiste'<sup>2</sup> and quickly dispatched the poems to Harriet Monroe, the editor of the fledgling Chicago magazine *Poetry*, for which Pound had recently become "foreign correspondent" or "foreign edtr." or something of the sort'.<sup>3</sup> In *Poetry*, it seemed to Pound, America might finally have a magazine 'which is not an insult to the serious artist and to the dignity of his art'.<sup>4</sup> H.D.'s poems supplemented work by Aldington which Pound had already sent to Monroe.<sup>5</sup> This was a period of renewed

<sup>1</sup> The reference to 'Les Imagistes' appears in Pound's 'Prefatory Note' to 'The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme', which was published as an appendix to *Ripostes*. Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*, ed. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 266. Helen Carr discusses the *Ripostes*' publication in detail, deducing that the 'Prefatory Note' must have been inserted at the final proofing stages in August (*The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and The Imagists* [London: Jonathan Cape, 2009], 487–88), not in March, as Lawrence Rainey has argued (*Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998], 29). Carr's slightly later dating is significant because it weakens Rainey's claim that imagism was conceived during F. T. Marinetti's London visit, as a direct response to Futurism.

<sup>2</sup> H.D. recounts Pound's reaction to her poetry in H.D., *An End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1980), 18. For further details, and efforts at establishing a precise chronology of the birth of imagism, from which much of the detail in this paragraph are drawn, see Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, and Cyrena N. Pondrom, 'H.D. and the Origins of Imagism', in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 86–88.

<sup>3</sup> Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear, Their Letters, 1909-1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 161. The appointment was announced in the November 1912 issue of the magazine ('Notes and Announcements', *Poetry* 1, no. 2 [1 November 1912]: 64).

<sup>4</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 43.

<sup>5</sup> 'I've had luck again, and am sending you some modern stuff by an American, I say modern, for it is the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic. At least H.D. has lived with these things since childhood, and knew them before she had any book-knowledge of them', *ibid.*, 45.

creative energy for Pound as well as for his two friends. Whereas in August he had been able to offer only two of his own poems to Monroe (his time, he wrote, having been taken up with translations and prose work),<sup>6</sup> on 13<sup>th</sup> October he sent a new batch of several, with further pieces following in December.<sup>7</sup> These new poems would form the ‘Contemporania’ series, which he described (somewhat ambivalently) as ‘ultra modern, ultra effete’. The series marked an important stage in his career; they were his first work to be published under the banner of imagism.<sup>8</sup> The movement’s momentum was quickening.

Despite Pound’s excitement at the new movement, his attention was not so absorbed by poetry that he paid no attention to current events. Imagism did not develop in an aesthetic vacuum. Lawrence Rainey’s influential study characterizes the movement as a response to the insurgent manifesto-driven success of futurism.<sup>9</sup> Robert von Hallberg discusses imagism’s attention to libertarian and anarchist political movements and its attitudes towards the Suffragette movement.<sup>10</sup> One important historical context to imagism’s development, however, has so far gone unnoticed. In the autumn of 1912, the major international news event was a war in the far south-eastern corner of Europe between the Ottoman Empire and an alliance of small Balkan nation states. The conflict, which would become known as the First Balkan War, was one of the final crises of the so-called ‘Eastern Question’, the name given in Europe to the instability arising from the attrition and decline of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Journalists

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>8</sup> For Pound’s description of ‘Contemporania’, see his letter to Monroe, 13 Oct 1912, *ibid.*, 45. As Rebecca West noted, when announcing the new movement in the *New Freewoman*, these were ‘poems written by Mr. Ezra Pound since becoming an *Imagiste*’ (‘Imagisme’, *New Freewoman* 1, no. 5 [August 1913]: 87). Bruce Fogelman provides a detailed study of how this series took shape, and of its significance within Pound’s *oeuvre*, see Fogelman, ‘The Evolution of Ezra Pound’s “Contemporania”’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1 July 1988): 93–103.

<sup>9</sup> Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, 11–41.

<sup>10</sup> Robert von Hallberg, ‘Libertarian Imagism’, *Modernism/modernity* 2, no. 2 (1995): 63–79.

<sup>11</sup> The Second Balkan War commenced the following spring when Bulgaria attacked its former allies in a dispute about the territorial spoils of the first war. The ‘Eastern Question’ was the name used in Europe, from around the end of the eighteenth century onwards, to denote the consequences arising from the Ottoman Empire’s gradual attrition and decline—in particular its destabilizing effect on the European balance of power.

from across the world reported on events in the Balkans in fine detail, daily, for many months. And, the war also provided the occasion for Pound's first venture into published commentary on public affairs. This consisted of a pair of letters he wrote in *The New Age* which intervened, with Pound's characteristic outspokenness, in the magazine's coverage of the conflict.

Pound's letters are of considerable significance not only for the insight they provide into his early political instincts, but also, as this chapter will show, for their relationship to his evolving poetics. Yet the letters have been scarcely noticed by Pound scholars. Tim Redman briefly mentions them as an index of Pound's uneasy relationship with the *New Age*.<sup>12</sup> And although Helen Carr, in an essay published in 2000, notes the first letter as an illustration of Pound's early political positions, her recent 800-page group biography of the imagists makes no mention of the letters at all.<sup>13</sup> The most extended analysis appears in a footnote to David Roessel's study *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination*.<sup>14</sup> This relative neglect in the scholarship is surprising because the letters do not just give us an insight into Pound's early political positions; they reveal a number of startling convergences between those positions and his emergent modernist poetics. Pound, for a brief moment at the end of 1912, identified the nationalist self-assertion and military success of the Balkan states with the insurgent force of modernism. Though short-lived, this enthusiasm for Balkan nationalism left clear traces on the canon of imagist poetry. In this chapter, my first aim is to establish convincingly that Pound's attitudes about the Balkan conflict are indeed entwined with his development and theorization of imagism. My second is to outline the ways in which Pound's writing about the conflict can significantly contribute to, and

<sup>12</sup> Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> Helen Carr, 'Imagism and Empire', in *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890–1940*, ed. Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 79; Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*.

<sup>14</sup> David E. Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English & American Imagination* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 321 n. 36. I will discuss Roessel's observations below.

perhaps alter, our understanding of the beginnings of Anglo-American modernist poetics—their style, thematic concerns, and ideological affiliations. As I will show, Pound's brief interest in the Balkan conflict was not merely concurrent with certain formative events in the history of imagism. It ought, in fact, to be considered an important part of that history.

### The Balkan Wars as background to imagism

The association in Pound's mind between events in the Balkans and the development of imagism was strong enough for him to allude to the conflict in the most definitive and best known imagist manifesto, 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*', which appeared in *Poetry* in March 1913. It is in this piece that Pound gives his famous definition of the image as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'.<sup>15</sup> This essay also includes those numerous practical prescriptions regarding what Hugh Kenner calls 'technical hygiene' such as the assertion that 'the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol', and the injunctions that poets should 'Go in fear of abstractions', and 'Use no superfluous word'.<sup>16</sup> At the end of this catalogue of pithy admonitions, Pound offers an illustration (one of very few in this piece) of the kind of writing he is trying to discourage. The example is taken from the writing of 'A Turkish war correspondent' who, he claims, 'was recently caught red-handed babbling in his despatches of "dove-grey" hills, or else it was "pearl-pale", I cannot remember'.<sup>17</sup> To present-day readers this attribution is somewhat vague, not least because the grammatical ambiguity of the phrase leaves the reader unsure whether it is the correspondent or the war that is Turkish. But it would have been immediately understood by Pound's contemporary audience to mean a correspondent reporting on

<sup>15</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*', *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 201.

<sup>16</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*', *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (March 1913): 200. Pound's emphasis. Kenner's phrase is found in *The Pound Era* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 186.

<sup>17</sup> Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*', March 1913, 202.

the ongoing Balkan War, which, six months after it began, was still the subject of daily reports in the press.<sup>18</sup> This is a very Poundian device, one we are more familiar with seeing in the *Cantos*, or his later prose work, such as *Guide to Kulchur*. Pound does not just quote examples of bad writing; he gives enough accompanying detail to establish a sense that these words were actually written at a particular time and in a particular context. The words then become a form of documentary evidence, indicative symptoms of some broader ill or tendency.

It is not simply arbitrary, however, that the supposed source for what he felt to be a particularly egregious example of poor writing is a newspaper report on the Balkan War. The allusion to this particular historical event is deliberate and significant. In following up the quotation I have been unable to locate its source in any newspapers from the period. We might note that the minor lapse of memory which accompanies this detail —‘. . . or else . . . I cannot remember’—is also highly characteristic of Pound. As he writes in *Guide To Kulchur* (1938), ‘culture begins when one HAS forgotten-what-book’.<sup>19</sup> It seems almost certain that Pound’s source for these lacklustre adjectives was not a newspaper report at all. Rather, it was W. B. Yeats’s famous early poem, ‘The Wanderings of Oisín’ (1889), whose speaker tells in the opening lines of having ‘found on the dove-grey edge of the sea / a pearl-pale, high born lady’.<sup>20</sup> We know from ‘The Flame’ (originally part of the series ‘Und Drang’) that Pound was familiar with this poem: ‘And all the tales they ever tell of Oisín / Say but this: / That man doth pass the net of days and hours’ (*P* 48). Either Pound was genuinely mistaken about where he had read these adjectives, which would suggest he was heavily pre-occupied with news on the Balkan War, or (as seems more likely) he was quietly teasing Yeats in his essay, in

<sup>18</sup> And not only in newspapers. That same issue of *Poetry* features a report on a talk given by Madame Slavko Grouitch, the wife of the Serbian ambassador to London, on the subject of ‘Poetry as the inspiration for the Balkan war’ (Harriet Monroe, ‘The Servian Epic’, *Poetry* 1, no. 6 [March 1913]: 195–98). It should be noted that Serbia was commonly spelt ‘Servia’ in Anglophone publications at this time.

<sup>19</sup> Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 134. Pound’s capitalization.

<sup>20</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 355, ll. 18–19.

which case the fictive reference to Balkan War journalism was conscious and deliberate. Two points follow from this. Pound's quite sudden reference to the Balkan War in this seminal document of modern poetics, suggests, I think, that his own writing on the conflict deserves much closer consideration than it has yet received. Furthermore, the misattribution of those Yeatsian adjectives to an imagined war correspondent suggests not only a particularly close association, in his mind, between poetry and the war, but also that he desired to associate the new movement, in however quiet a fashion, with this particular historical event. We could even infer that Pound is quietly suggesting that aspiring imagists should pay more attention to the Balkan War than to Yeats.

Let us consider, then, the context of Pound's letters. A certain level of detail here is necessary if Pound's full meaning is to be understood. It is a lack of familiarity among Pound scholars with the events of the war that has allowed this episode to remain so under-discussed.<sup>21</sup> Orage's editorial policy at *The New Age* was famously egalitarian. Wallace Martin writes that 'When writers found themselves with no medium for publication, or when they were willing to submit the theories of the coterie to public discussion, the columns of *The New Age* were open to them'.<sup>22</sup> Orage was, Martin notes, 'particularly receptive to writers with little popular appeal and those just beginning their careers'.<sup>23</sup> As Pound himself put it in the first of his Balkan War letters, *The New Age* was 'a free forum where every man is allowed to speak his mind'.<sup>24</sup> This open-minded approach led to lively exchanges in the magazine's pages and to fairly frequent acrimony among contributors. Orage even printed articles by Beatrice Hastings that satirized the perceived pretensions of Pound's articles about new French writing, while Pound's series was still running.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Where the letters have been mentioned, there sometimes seems little critical interest in the events to which they refer. Carr, for instance, simply repeats Pound's improvised and misleading name for the conflict, the 'Turco-Bulgarian war'. The use of such a misnomer suggests an indifference to the historical events. Carr, 'Imagism and Empire', 79.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace Martin, *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', *The New Age* 12, no. 3 (21 November 1912): 69.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed discussion of the exchange between Pound and Hastings, see Ann L. Ardis, 'The

Like the rest of the British press, *The New Age* devoted considerable page space to events in the Balkans. For two months, the magazine's regular 'Foreign Affairs' column discussed nothing but the war and its ramifications, and even thereafter frequent updates were given while the war continued.<sup>26</sup> In early November, the magazine began printing a series of articles by the prolific novelist and Oriental travel writer, Marmaduke Pickthall, entitled 'The Black Crusade'. It was Pickthall's work which provoked Pound's intervention. Pickthall had spent considerable time travelling in the Middle East and felt great sympathy for that region's peoples and cultures.<sup>27</sup> At the outbreak of the war, he had written in the *Daily Mail*, in support of the Ottoman cause and Islam.<sup>28</sup> It seems that his opinions proved unpopular (Pound, at any rate, concedes that Pickthall had been "muzzled" by other papers') and by November, *The New Age* was the only publication that would print his increasingly marginal, pro-Ottoman views.<sup>29</sup> Large sections of the mainstream British press were vocally supportive of the Balkan League, often focusing on the obvious religious aspect in a war between tiny Christian states and a vast Islamic empire.<sup>30</sup> Admiring the co-operation of the Balkan states at the outset of the conflict, the liberal weekly the *Nation* speculated that 'If the same loyalty had inspired the Christian peoples of the East when first the Turks set foot in Europe, the history of half a continent might have been changed'.<sup>31</sup> In the Balkans themselves, the

Dialogics of Modernism(s) in *The New Age*, *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007): 407–34.

<sup>26</sup> S. Verdad [J. M. Kennedy], 'Foreign Affairs', *New Age* 11:25–12:5 (Oct–Dec 1912).

<sup>27</sup> Pickthall (1875–1936) was best known at this time for his novel, *Saïd the Fisherman* (1903), which, by 1913 was in its ninth edition (Peter Clark, *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim* [London; New York: Quartet Books, 1986], 77–78). His Oriental novels and his journalism were informed by two years' travel in the Middle East in his late teens (ibid., 9–12). Later, in 1917, he would announce publicly his conversion to Islam, and he published a respected English translation of the Qur'an in 1930 (ibid., 62–68). For Pound's remark, see his partially conciliatory second letter, 'The Black Crusade [letter 2]', *The New Age* 12, no. 5 (5 December 1912): 116. Pickthall was not the only British writer with pro-Ottoman views to be censored: Aubrey Herbert, a Conservative Member of Parliament, found that British newspapers refused to print his letters in support of the Ottomans. In frustration, he turned to writing poetry. See Eugene Michail, *The British and the Balkans: Forming Images of Foreign Lands, 1900–1950* (London: Continuum, 2011), 82–83.

<sup>28</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'Holy Warfare', *Daily Mail*, 14 October 1912, 6; 'The Doomed City', *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1912, 8.

<sup>29</sup> S. Verdad [J. M. Kennedy], 'Foreign Affairs', *New Age* 11:25–12:5 (Oct–Dec 1912); Marmaduke Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade', *New Age* 12, no. 1–5 (December 1912).

<sup>30</sup> Eugene Michail, 'Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912–91', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (1 April 2012): 222–224.

<sup>31</sup> 'Politics and Affairs', *Nation*, 12 October 1912.

value of such support seems to have been appreciated. According to Leon Trotsky (then working as a war correspondent in Sofia), when news reached the city of a major early victory for the Bulgarian army ‘The crowd raised shoulder-high . . . the Sofia correspondent of the London *Times*, Mr Bouchier, who occupies here the position of a sort of “Lord Protector of the Bulgarian People”’.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, Pound’s arch-rival, F. T. Marinetti, the prominent Italian Futurist, was also a correspondent during the war; the artillery bombardments during the Bulgarian siege of Adrianople inspired his poem *Zang Tumb Tumb*.<sup>33</sup>

When news of the first decisive victory for the Balkan League, at Kumanovo, reached London at the beginning of November, even the bulwark of the Conservative, pro-Ottoman establishment, *The Daily Telegraph*, relented, offering an obituary (somewhat premature, as events were to prove) for the Ottoman presence in Europe:

In the great battle which has apparently shattered the fortunes of the Turkish cause we seem to discern the long-anticipated close of a marvellous chapter in European history. Founded in blood, the Turkish Empire now appears to be perishing in blood. It took 200 years to consolidate; it has taken just three weeks to reach the edge of destruction. Through four centuries and a half—for Constantinople was captured by Mahomet II in 1453—the Ottoman Power has persisted with no little success, exercising its imperious and unmerciful sway over some of the fairest lands of Eastern Europe. Its best gifts were those of pride and conscious strength, and the possession of a military aptitude proved by innumerable conquests. In literature and art its record is singularly meagre. It has bred a race of soldiers, for only by soldiers could its Empire be maintained, and all its early virtues were concentrated in the lust of domination and the self-confidence begotten by many triumphant battles.<sup>34</sup>

I quote at length to illustrate the convergence here—as in so much discussion of these events—of history, geo-politics and cultural achievement. Pound’s minor intervention, though idiosyncratic, is not aberrant in this respect.

---

<sup>32</sup> Leon Trotsky, ‘Observations and Generalizations’, 19 Oct, 1912, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-13: The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky*, ed. George Weissman and Duncan Williams, trans. Brian Pierce (New York; Sydney: Monad Press; Pathfinder Press, 1980), 158.

<sup>33</sup> Marinetti was, of course, for Pound both a major influence and a rival. The controversy caused by the Italian’s presence in London earlier in 1912 had made Pound rather envious (Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, chapter 1, esp. 28–29). It is highly unlikely, however, that Pound would have known about Marinetti’s presence in the Balkans when writing his letter. Marinetti’s poem did not begin to appear until 1913, in Italian Futurist magazines. Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 179–80.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Foundation of the Ottoman Empire’, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 November 1912.



*The New Age*, in typically contrarian spirit, took a very different position from most of the mainstream press. Kennedy and Pickthall both, in their different ways, wrote in support of the Ottoman cause. Kennedy, a Nietzsche scholar and former *Telegraph* journalist, echoed the conventional nineteenth-century Conservative view regarding the Ottoman Empire, arguing that '[i]t is all to the interest of this country . . . to have a strong Turkey in the Balkans'.<sup>35</sup> And although ostensibly objective in his reporting, he consistently underestimated the League's unity and military capabilities, remaining confident throughout the early stages of the conflict, that early Ottoman losses were merely tactical concessions, despite mounting evidence to the contrary.<sup>36</sup>

Pickthall understood Britain's relationship with the Ottoman Empire in deeply paternalistic terms; later in his life he explained that he had been 'brought up to admire . . . Disraeli's Oriental policy by which England was to become the mentor of the Islamic world, to foster and assist its revival, using Turkey as interpreter and intermediary'.<sup>37</sup> In his *New Age* article he claimed that 'The Turks are by far the most advanced of Moslem races. . . . They are mentally capable of attaining to the highest civilisation, and their prestige and influence among Mohammedans are almost boundless'.<sup>38</sup> Condemning the 'Christian war-whoops in the English press', he argued that atrocities were being committed on both sides, not just by the Ottoman troops.<sup>39</sup> He also exhorted readers to remember the 'radical and comprehensive' concessions to religious tolerance and democracy made by the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP, better known as the 'Young Turks'). The CUP had effectively overthrown the Sultan, Abdulhamit, in 1908, promising sweeping, Western-style constitutional

<sup>35</sup> [J. M. Kennedy], 'Foreign Affairs', 17 October 1912, 582. The best source of information about J. M. Kennedy is found in David Thatcher's study of the early British reception of Nietzsche's thought, *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 234–293.

<sup>36</sup> For Kennedy's confident claim about Ottoman strategy, see 'Foreign Affairs', *The New Age* 11, no. 27 (3 October 1912): 629.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Clark, *Marmaduke Pickthall*, 20. Clark cites *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, April 1936, XXII, p. 221.

<sup>38</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade. [I]', *The New Age* 12, no. 1 (7 November 1912): 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

reforms.<sup>40</sup>

The Treaty of Berlin, signed by all the imperial powers in 1878, had guaranteed Ottoman borders, but since then the Empire had endured the indignity of the Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece's annexation of Crete, and, just prior to the Balkan states' invasion in 1912, Italy's seizure of Ottoman Tripoli. The reforms of the Young Turks—restoration of Parliament and the constitution, equality irrespective of religion, due legal process, and other curtailments of arbitrary rule—which were intended in part to placate demands from the Western powers, seemed powerless to prevent further imperial humiliation and territorial loss.<sup>41</sup> In the words of two historians of modern Turkey, the Empire's powerful neighbours 'proved to be as hungry for democratic, constitutional, Young Turk territory as they had been for that of the despotic Abdulhamit', despite their prior insistence on the very reforms the new government was implementing.<sup>42</sup> In reaction to these acts, Pickthall argued, the other signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, particularly Britain, France and Germany, simply 'frowned, shook their heads, then blandly talked of compensation'.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, when the Balkan states declared war, the Powers, paralysed by the competing international demands which the crisis presented and desperate to prevent a continental war, did nothing to prevent the astonishingly self-directed action of these minor nations.<sup>44</sup> Given these affronts to Muslim pride, Pickthall argued, 'Europe and not Asia is to blame if Moslems everywhere are now exasperated'.<sup>45</sup>

Their indignation has been growing ever since the revolution, as blow on blow was treacherously dealt at Turkey. . . . More than Bulgar arms [the moderate Turks] dread an outburst of Old Moslem rage, so violent and general as to ruin all their hopes and

<sup>40</sup> Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade. [I]'; On the Young Turk revolution, see Stanford J Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol. 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1977), 265–67, 273–79.

<sup>41</sup> On the Young Turk reforms, see Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol. 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975*, 274–75.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>43</sup> Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade. [I]'.

<sup>44</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*, 1987, reprint (London: Abacus, 2010), 321.

<sup>45</sup> Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade. [I]'.

plunge their country into utter barbarism.<sup>46</sup>

If liberal Turkish reformers were weakened by the conflict, Pickthall contended, the primary beneficiaries would be Islamic extremists. Readers of *The New Age* would have understood the implications of such ‘Moslem rage’ for the stability of British rule in India.<sup>47</sup>

### Pound’s intervention

Pound had no time for Pickthall’s Ottoman sympathies: ‘of all the silly sentimentalism which I have met in post-Victorian England’, he declared, ‘this silly pro-Turkish sentimentalism is the silliest’.<sup>48</sup> Pound insisted that the Balkan League’s assault on the Ottoman Empire should be celebrated, and that it promised to accomplish something that was long overdue. ‘The disgrace to Europe is not that Turkey is about to be sent from Europe’, he argued, ‘but that she was not long since driven out’.<sup>49</sup> Closing his letter, he hailed the Balkan states not in religious terms (“Fellow Christians” and the rest of the cant be hanged!’) but in terms of a common struggle: “Fellow rebels” if you like. “Fellow fighters for fair play and an open game”, we greet you and we wish you well’.<sup>50</sup> From this letter alone, it is unclear precisely what Pound felt the nature of this fellow-feeling to be. Other writings of the time, however, give us a clear picture of what drew Pound so instinctively to the Balkan cause. In the fifth instalment of his ‘Patria Mia’ series, published in *The New Age* the previous month, we can see that he was beginning to draw a link between political change and developments in aesthetics.

A Risorgimento means an intellectual awakening. This will have its effect not only in the arts, but in life, in politics, and in economics. If I seem to lay undue stress upon the

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> On British anxieties over Muslim opinion in India at this time, see Max Beloff, *Britain’s Liberal Empire, 1897–1922*, Imperial Sunset (London: Methuen, 1969), 163.

<sup>48</sup> Pound, ‘The Black Crusade [letter 1]’, 69. I quote from Pound’s Balkan War letters throughout this chapter, but the full text of both letters is reproduced in the appendix at the end of this thesis.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

status of the arts, it is only because the arts respond to an intellectual movement more swiftly and more apparently than do institutions, and not because there is any better reason for discussing them first.<sup>51</sup>

This 'Risorgimento' will concern us more fully in the following chapter. But it is crucial to note, here, Pound's claim that 'A Risorgimento implies a whole volley of liberations; liberations from ideas, from stupidities, from conditions and from tyrannies of wealth or of arms'.<sup>52</sup> The last of these liberations, it seems, was what he felt the Balkan states were accomplishing so remarkably. In his apostrophe to the Balkan states in his first letter he wrote that 'we wish we could throw off the subtle strands of the hidden tyrannies of the monopolists as swiftly and as cleanly as you are throwing off the yoke of a tyranny of arms'.<sup>53</sup> Pound clearly saw in the Balkan states' assault on the Ottoman Empire a parallel with his own cultural project.

Before addressing Pound's remarks about 'the subtle strands of the hidden tyrannies of the monopolists', and the seemingly curious link he assumes in his letter between the Ottoman Empire and European capitalism, it is worth pausing to note that there are definite literary precedents for Pound's stance. By writing his letter in support of the Balkan states and against what he saw as Ottoman oppression, Pound is, quite self-consciously, placing himself within a tradition of literary figures who either supported Balkan independence, particularly in Greece, or who opposed the Ottoman Empire. Lord Byron is the most famous of these, dying shortly before he was to command a unit in the Greek army during the war of independence from the Ottoman Empire. But the figure from whom Pound seems to have taken the most immediate inspiration is William Morris. Morris's first public political gesture, made several years before he announced his embrace of socialism, was a letter in the *Daily News*, headed 'England and the Turks'. In the letter, Morris attacked the Conservative government's threats to go to war against Russia should the latter invade the Ottoman Empire.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. V', *The New Age* 11, no. 23 (3 October 1912): 539.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', 69.

<sup>54</sup> Morris's letter is reprinted in William Morris, *News From Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 2004), 395–98. For an account of Morris's attitude toward the Ottoman

Ottoman atrocities against Bulgarians had at the time recently been revealed and had drawn considerable condemnation—most prominently in a pamphlet by William Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*—and Morris did not want to see British forces fighting in aid of an Ottoman government which he described repeatedly as ‘a gang of thieves and murderers’.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, Morris became treasurer of the Eastern Question Association.<sup>56</sup> For Pound, Morris was a major early poetic influence, forming part of the canon he and H.D. read together in Philadelphia, and leaving a mark on his early verse.<sup>57</sup> Morris’s ideas about the importance of beauty and craft also helped to shape Pound’s long-held distaste for a state of affairs where, as he laments in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, ‘We see τὸ καλόν [beauty] / Decreed in the market place’.<sup>58</sup> Morris was also an important figure for many of contributors to *The New Age*, who felt themselves heirs to a tradition of British thought which stretched from Morris back through John Ruskin to Thomas Carlyle.<sup>59</sup> Though Morris was still essentially a liberal in 1876, his letter concerning British foreign policy on the Eastern Question shows a clear respect for the convictions and potential of the organized working class.<sup>60</sup> He would shortly write his ‘Appeal to the Working Men of England’, concerning the campaign to prevent Britain’s involvement in a pro-Ottoman war.

Placing Pound in the tradition of Byron, Morris, and indeed Gladstone, is not unproblematic. But, as David Roessel notes, though Pound is ‘not generally thought of as someone in the camp of Gladstone’, his letter indicates the desire to attach ‘a new kind of revolutionary meaning’ to a pro-Balkanism or Philhellenism, ‘which had been

---

Empire and his involvement with the Eastern Question Association, see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 1955, 3rd edn. (London: Merlin, 1977), 202–225.

<sup>55</sup> William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: John Murray, 1876). Morris uses the phrase ‘theives and murderers’ three times in his letter (*News From Nowhere and Other Writings*, 395–398).

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 211.

<sup>57</sup> Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, 59–61.

<sup>58</sup> Pound, *Personæ*, 187.

<sup>59</sup> Darrow Schecter, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 103–105; Martin, ‘*The New Age*’ Under Orage, 198–99, 205–206.

<sup>60</sup> Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 207–208.

comfortably Christian and middle class'.<sup>61</sup> The connection to Morris, moreover, helps to explain, the seemingly paratactic leaps Pound makes in his own letter, from the Ottoman Empire to European monopoly capital, and then to the interests of British workers.

If Turkey has been maintained in the 'unspeakable' status quo, I should like to know by what force if not by the force of the allied monopolies of Europe. If it has not been in the interest of European capital to maintain the Turk, why has he persisted?

If an Oriental despotism is not lock, stock, and barrel of our matter with the industrial tyrannies of Europe, to what is it allied? To the freedom of the individual? To equal opportunity for all? To the conservation of human energy and dignity? To any of the one and fifty causes to which we are pledged? No!

What has the labourer to gain by letting continue a model of tyranny more disgraceful than that whereunder he sweats? Turkey means monopoly. In her trouble she has asked loans of the monopolists of Europe and America.<sup>62</sup>

The vague assumptions in this letter concerning what the journal's mission was, and the references to 'the conservation of human energy and dignity' and to workers' interests represent, in part, an attempt by Pound (rather misjudged, it would turn out) to wield the esteem in which Morris was held by many among the journal's contributors and readership.

Moreover, Pound seems to have been alluding in his letter to an ongoing debate in *The New Age*. Throughout the spring and early summer of 1912, *The New Age* had published a series of articles by S. G. Hobson, in collaboration with Orage, which offered a critique of the system of industrial wage labour. The articles had been inspired by the industrial militancy which, as we have seen, had been growing in Britain during the Edwardian period. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Orage, Hobson and, indeed, Pound—were particularly animated by the mass miners' strike which involved over a million workers and halted production at every mine in England.<sup>63</sup> The miner's primary demand was for the establishment of a minimum wage, and this did in fact force the state to legislate for minimum wages which would be set district by district.<sup>64</sup>

These new measures were accepted by the union; though a majority (244,000 to

<sup>61</sup> Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow*, 321 n. 36.

<sup>62</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', 69.

<sup>63</sup> For details of the national coal strike, see Jason Benson, 'Coalmining', in *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875–1914*, ed. Chris J. Wrigley (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 202–203.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

201,000) voted to reject them, it fell short of the two thirds deemed to have been necessary for the continuation of the strike.<sup>65</sup> To Orage, therefore, the agreement revealed ‘the marks of capitulation in every clause’.<sup>66</sup> While the strike had shown so much promise, it had ended in ‘a complete defeat’.<sup>67</sup> Hobson and Orage, writing in *The New Age*, now began to examine the entire system of wage labour, dismissing it as no better than slavery:

[F]undamentally wage serfdom (seldom if ever more than a month from starvation) is in no way an advance upon chattel slavery. . . . The slave-owner brutally and without any shame claimed the power of life and death over his slave; today the same power is cloaked in the hypocritical observance of humanitarian laws that effectually mask brutal powers equally brutally exercised. Then the revolting or incompetent slave was done to death; today he is starved to death.<sup>68</sup>

The critique of wage labour as slavery seems to have filtered into Pound’s reasoning for taking sides in the Balkan conflict. The Ottoman Empire, he notes, had taken loans from European capitalists, and was therefore, in his view, haplessly complicit in capitalist exploitation and wage slavery. ‘Turkey’, as he puts it, succinctly, ‘means monopoly’.<sup>69</sup>

The failure of the strike and the seeming ineluctability of the wage system fed into the *New Age* writers’ libertarian fears of about the rise of a totalitarian state controlled by capital—Belloc’s ‘Servile State’, or the ‘Oligarchy’ of Jack London’s *The Iron Heel*. Pound is eager to attack the Ottoman Empire not only for allowing ‘the monopolists’ to profit from its decadence, but also for providing a model of authoritarian governance, writing it off as an ‘Oriental despotism’. Pound tries to show just how closely Ottoman rule is related to the condition of British industrial labourers. Pickthall, for all of his racist assumptions about the intellectual superiority of Turks over Arabs, had at least attempted to present a nuanced picture of the Empire’s internal politics and knew the

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>66</sup> “Notes of the Week,” *New Age* 10, no. 23 (April 4, 1912): 529.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> A. R. Orage, ‘Emancipation and the Wage System’, *The New Age* 10, no. 26 (25 April 1912): 606.

<sup>69</sup> Pound was not wrong about Ottoman loans. Since the Crimean War, the Ottoman state had indeed become spectacularly indebted to Western financial institutions. ‘The Turkish Debt’ was one of the most profitable investments to be found in on the bourses of London, New York, Paris and elsewhere during this period. Misha Glenney, *The Balkans, 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta, 1999), 85–90.

Islamic world not to be one homogeneous bloc. He had also drawn attention to what he felt were the British media's distortions and simplifications of the situation. Pound countered Pickthall's assessment not by disputing any of his claims, however, but by simply overriding them with mockery ("haw dem'me! El Islam!!" and the rest of it') with the designation of the Empire as an 'Oriental despotism'.<sup>70</sup> Edward Said places this flattening, ahistorical characterization of Eastern governance alongside similar notions, such as 'Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality', and 'fatalism', as stock examples of European Orientalist discourse.<sup>71</sup> The concept of 'Oriental despotism' can arguably be traced back as far as Aristotle's *Politics*.<sup>72</sup> By the nineteenth century, however, the notion had acquired a more or less definite content, deriving principally from the work of Niccolò Machiavelli and Montesquieu, though it continued to be developed in the work of numerous major figures in Western political thought.<sup>73</sup>

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli uses a model of social stratification to differentiate between two types of polity.<sup>74</sup> European monarchies such as France had complex class hierarchies whose aristocracies possessed material means and power which were, both by formal legal convention and their de facto social influence, largely independent of the monarch. To such societies, Machiavelli contrasted the Ottoman Empire, whose sultan held power solely and absolutely: even the Vizier exercised his power at the arbitrary mercy of the Sultan. As Lucette Valensi has argued, Machiavelli's argument carried little ethical or ethnocentric judgement; whatever its sociological accuracy, it was intended as an analysis to be of political use in the calculations of statecraft.<sup>75</sup> It was

<sup>70</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', 69.

<sup>71</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* ([1978] London: Penguin, 2003), 4, 102.

<sup>72</sup> For discussions of the evolution of the idea of Oriental despotism, see Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: NLB, 1974), 397–408, 462–472; and Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). It is Anderson (463) notes Aristotle's reference, in his *Politics* to the servility of Asiatic populations, which, 'endure Despotic rule without protest'.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson provides a useful schematization of the content of the idea of despotism in ten important thinkers, including Bacon and John Stuart Mill, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 472.

<sup>74</sup> The passage I summarize here is found in *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16–18.

<sup>75</sup> Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot*, 57–60.



the later innovation of Montesquieu, however, to adapt Machiavelli's pragmatic distinction into a generalized account of the difference between European and Oriental forms of government. Montesquieu called the latter form 'despotism', where 'one alone, without law and without rule, draws everything along by his will and his caprices'.<sup>76</sup> In despotic societies 'all [are] equal, [and] one cannot prefer oneself to others; as *men in them are all slaves*, one can prefer oneself to nothing'.<sup>77</sup> Montesquieu thus defines a putative condition of European freedom against an Oriental society characterized by what Perry Anderson glosses as 'a condition of denuded, egalitarian servitude' to an absolute ruler.<sup>78</sup> The connection that Pound draws between these two perceived forms of slavery—that of wage labour, and that of 'Oriental despotism'—though implicit, is the central political point of his first letter. 'If we cannot break the close ring in our own countries', he wrote, 'the next best thing is to see it broken elsewhere'.<sup>79</sup> The equation between wage slavery and despotism seems quite a targeted and deliberate attempt on Pound's part to appeal to the particular readership of *The New Age* but it was not entirely opportunistic. The notion of slavery, on one hand, and the Orientalist lens through which Pound approaches the Ottoman Empire, on the other, are not confined to Pound's letter. As I will show, they inform the poetry he was writing at this time.

### 'the silly sentimentalism of post-Victorian England'

The clearest indication that Pound discerned an intimate connection between his poetic project and his commentary on the Balkan crisis, however, occurs at the very beginning of the first letter, where he dismisses Pickthall's views as 'sentimental': 'of all the silly sentimentalism of post-Victorian England, this silly pro-Turkish sentimentalism is the

<sup>76</sup> Montesquieu also distinguishes republican government (as does Machiavelli, though he brackets them from consideration in *The Prince* [p. 7]), 'in which the people as a body, or only a part of the people, have sovereign power', Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, [1748], Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 27. My emphasis.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 464.

<sup>79</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', 69.

silliest'. Pound's attack here fuses poetic and geopolitical concerns. Firstly, within the immediate context of the letter, 'pro-Turkish sentimentalism', refers to Pickthall's outdated colonial paternalism, modelled as it was upon Victorian-era Conservative foreign policy. This period represented British imperial power at its peak, when the United Kingdom felt no need to enter into formal alliances with other major European powers. Britain's support for the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century was predicated on a mutual enmity with Russia: Britain opposed Russia out of imperial rivalry, the Ottomans because of Russian designs on Ottoman territory.<sup>80</sup> And Britain's costly and unpopular involvement in the Crimean War of the 1850s was the direct result of the the government's calculation that Ottoman interests coincided with its own, and that the Ottoman Empire should therefore be defended against Russian aggression. By 1912, however, the geopolitical situation had changed considerably. Britain was now Russia's ally along with France under the 'Triple Entente'. And the Ottoman Empire's reputation in Britain had been severely tarnished by the campaigns of the likes of Gladstone and Morris. Pound was aware of the historical baggage surrounding this situation, with all its attendant 'sentimentalism', as well as of the contemporary tensions, all of which made the Balkan War of such interest in Britain and throughout Europe. He took care in his letter to declare himself 'an alien, and a man detached from immediate concern in the situation in so far as it concerns England'.<sup>81</sup>

Secondly, however, if the complaint about Pickthall's 'silly sentimentalism' sounds familiar in the context of Pound's *oeuvre*, it is because those are precisely the terms in which Pound attacks Victorian poetry. Indeed, 'sentimentalism', for Pound, is chiefly a quality of poetry and culture, not of foreign policy. 'As for the nineteenth century', he

<sup>80</sup> This historical detail in this paragraph is largely drawn from Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*, 313–15. Hobsbawm writes that 'the British and Tsarist empires had been permanent antagonists in the Balkan and Mediterranean zone of the so-called "Eastern Question", and in . . . Afghanistan, Iran and the regions opening on the Persian Gulf. The prospect of Russians in Constantinople—and therefore in the Mediterranean—and of Russian expansion towards India was a standing nightmare for British foreign secretaries. The two countries had even fought in the only nineteenth-century European war in which Britain took part (the Crimean War), and as recently as the 1870s a Russo-British war was seriously on the cards' (314).

<sup>81</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', 69.

wrote in the proto-imagist manifesto, 'Prolegomena', published early in 1912, 'I think we shall look back upon it as a rather blurry, messy sort of a period, a rather sentimentalistic, mannerish sort of a period'.<sup>82</sup> When Pound describes Pickthall's views on the Ottoman Empire as the 'silly pro-Turkish sentimentalism' of a 'post-Victorian England', he is casting those views as residual traces of the sentimentalism which, he felt, typified Victorian society generally, and its poetry in particular.

The connection Pound draws here between the Victorian poetry and Pickthall's 'sentimental' views on the Balkan crisis was not entirely opportunistic. There are prominent precedents in nineteenth-century literature of poetry's entanglement in the concerns of foreign policy and warfare. Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', probably the best known English poem of the Victorian era, was, of course, written to memorialize a disastrous military manoeuvre made by British cavalry during the Crimean War, in which Britain and the Ottoman Empire were allies. Tennyson's association with the Crimean War and the Eastern Question, his support for British imperialism, and his closeness to the British establishment would surely have been at the front of Pound's mind when he was writing his retorts to Pickthall on the subject of the Balkan War.<sup>83</sup> Pound knew Tennyson's work well; he parodied it at length in the 1930s, and, as Ira B. Nadel notes, Tennyson's rhythmic innovations had Pound's grudging respect.<sup>84</sup> Tennyson, nonetheless, represented, for Pound, the 'blurry, messy' character of nineteenth-century poetry that he criticized in 'Prolegomena'. In 1918, Pound recounted a second-hand anecdote of Tennyson being 'so muzzy that he tried to go out through the fireplace'.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, for Pound everything most insipid about

<sup>82</sup> 'A Retrospect', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 11.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Faulkner explicitly contrasts William Morris's leftward and anti-imperialist political trajectory with Tennyson's rightward imperialist one during the late nineteenth century. See 'Morris and Tennyson', *Journal of William Morris Studies* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2009): esp. 34–35.

<sup>84</sup> Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 265–282 (later editions omit this series). For observations about Pound's familiarity with Tennyson's work, and his qualified admiration for it, see Ira B. Nadel, 'Ezra Pound: Two Poems', *Journal of Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1 July 1988): 141–45.

<sup>85</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Swinburne Versus Biographers', *Poetry* 11, no. 6 (March 1918): 323. This piece is reprinted in *Literary Essays*, pp. 290–294.

Victorian British culture seemed to be embodied in Tennyson's work:

The British public liked, has liked, likes and always will like art, music, poetry, literature, glass engraving, sculpture, etc. in just such measure as it approaches the Tennysonian tone. It likes Shakespear [*sic*], or at least accepts him in just so far as he is 'Tennysonian'. It has published the bard of Avon expurgated and even emended. There has never been an edition of 'Purified Tennyson'.<sup>86</sup>

Tennyson is, for Pound, the epitome of respectable, genteel British culture. Unlike Shakespeare's, Tennyson's work required no bowdlerizing to accommodate it to British notions of propriety. Pound's sardonic inclusion of 'glass engraving' among the list of arts susceptible to 'the Tennysonian tone' underscores his sense not just of the total cultural diffusion of Tennyson's influence, but also of its genteel banality. If Pound saw himself, however naively, as an emergent radical figure, in the mould of William Morris, he appears to have seen the 'sentimental' Pickthall as a proxy for the complacent, establishment politics and artistic imprecision of which Tennyson was the clearest symbol.

It is important to remember that Pound's attack on Victorian poetry and the pervasiveness of 'the Tennysonian tone' is not simply a negative complaint. The opposition to a supposedly 'Victorian' aesthetic is an integral part—perhaps *the* inaugural gesture—of Pound's formulation of a modernist poetic mode. What his exchange with Pickthall in *The New Age* reveals, however, is that the contrast between a residual Victorian culture and a nascent modern movement—the contrast which granted that movement its self-identity—was not conceived purely in aesthetic and moral terms. The Balkan War letters show Pound's early political views emerging not only contemporaneously with his modernist poetics, but in the same terms, and with cognate targets.

---

<sup>86</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The Rev. G. Crabbe, LL. B.', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 276. This piece was originally published in 1917.

## Imagism's harem

If imagism's self-definition depended to a considerable extent on a contrast with a 'sentimental' Victorian aesthetic, it now needs to be shown how that contrast was enacted in the poetry and manifestos. One very clear example occurs in 'Prolegomena' only a few paragraphs after the dismissal of the nineteenth century as 'sentimentalistic' and 'mannerish'. Here Pound ventures a definition of modern verse: 'the poetry I expect to see written during the next decade or so', he writes,

will . . . move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be . . . 'nearer the bone'. It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretive power. . . . [I]t will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither.<sup>87</sup>

The strikingly phallic character of Pound's imagist writings has not gone unnoticed by critics, though there has been less written on the subject than one might expect. Edward Larrissy notes that Pound, in his imagist work, consistently associates the quality of clarity, and 'the directing intelligence' with the male—and their obverse with the female.<sup>88</sup> Critics such as Andrew Thacker and Cyrena Pondrom have sought to offset what Thacker calls Pound's 'muscularly masculine . . . rhetoric' by focusing on the prominent female protagonists of the imagist movement, most notably H. D., Amy Lowell and Harriet Monroe.<sup>89</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis characterizes Pound's attitudes to gender as 'shifting and often recipient-dependent', making them 'hard to reconstruct'.<sup>90</sup> At times, she notes, this shifting character surfaces as a use of 'bisexually fertile images'.<sup>91</sup> This is not a true androgyny, however, but rather a male speaker

<sup>87</sup> Pound, 'A Retrospect', 12.

<sup>88</sup> Edward Larrissy, *Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry: The Language of Gender and Objects* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 32. See 20–50 *passim*.

<sup>89</sup> Andrew Thacker, 'Amy Lowell and H.D.: The Other Imagists', *Women: A Cultural Review* 4, no. 1 (March 1993): 50; Pondrom, 'H.D. and the Origins of Imagism'.

<sup>90</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olson, Creeley, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry*, Contemporary North American Poetry Series (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>91</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'Propounding Modernist Maleness: How Pound Managed a Muse', *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 3 (2002): 393.

appropriating such aspects of femininity as he deems desirable.<sup>92</sup>

It is probably not an overstatement to argue that, at least in terms of its prose propaganda (such as the passage above), imagism's signature mode of self-definition is to imagine itself in masculine terms, and to reject, in feminine terms, whatever it felt itself not to be. To be sure, this is a fairly familiar charge against so-called high modernism.<sup>93</sup> But it is important nonetheless to articulate just how this dynamic functions in these formative documents of the imagist movement—not only to enhance our understanding of gender in Pound's work, but also to demonstrate how gender intersects with Pound's other preoccupations while imagism was taking shape and the Balkan War was capturing headlines across Europe.

Pound's characteristic charge of 'sentimentalism' functions within a familiar gendered structure which sees the feminine as governed by emotion and sentiment rather than by rationality. Set against this irrational element, the unmistakably masculine 'force' of Pound's prophesied modern poetry would, he wrote, 'lie in its truth, its interpretive power'.<sup>94</sup> But the gendered structure of this passage from 'Prolegomena' goes much further. Victorian verse is also characterised here by 'rhetorical din' and 'luxurious riot', gendering it yet further with the derogatory female stereotype of loquacity and the patriarchal fear of rampant, subversive female sensuousness. Within the register Pound uses, these qualities suggest quite an anxious relationship with a particular idea of femininity. This was, after all, the moment at which the Suffragette movement was entering its more militant phase—something about which Pound would write quite dismissively in the early part of 1913.<sup>95</sup> In what is probably the most overt example of this highly gendered register, however—the desire to see 'fewer painted

<sup>92</sup> On Pound's attitudes to gender, see also Ronald Bush's introductory essay, 'Ezra Pound', in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 353–59.

<sup>93</sup> See, for instance, the chapter 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other', in Andreas Huyssen's *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Theories of Representation and Difference (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 45–62.

<sup>94</sup> Pound, 'A Retrospect', 12.

<sup>95</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Through Alien Eyes. IV', *The New Age* 12, no. 14 (6 February 1913): 324.

adjectives' in poetry'—Pound imagines the nineteenth-century poem as a woman whose skin is thick with adjectival cosmetics. 'Painted lady' is a euphemism for a prostitute.<sup>96</sup> And if we look at the rest of the sentence in which it appears, we see that this feminized figure is seen as 'impeding the shock and stroke' of the kind of poetry Pound would like to see. Pound, then, not only differentiates a nascent modernism from its nineteenth-century precursor through a familiar gendered binary; he imagines the breakthrough of his masculine modernism in terms of gendered violence. What is more, there a callous deflection of blame: to 'imped[e] the . . . stroke' is passive; the woman here is portrayed not as a target but as an obstruction. It is like saying *she got in the way of my hand*.

Pound seems to have reached for this gendered language quite frequently when carving out a distinct identity for his own work. Victorian poetry was not his only target, moreover; he was apt to use the same tactic against his contemporaries. Take the example of imagism itself. The movement, he felt, under Amy Lowell's stewardship, had strayed too far from the second of his three original strictures—"To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation".<sup>97</sup> It had become 'prolix', 'verbose' and 'flaccid'.<sup>98</sup> 'Amygism', Pound's mocking epithet for this later phase of the movement, was not simply a pun on Lowell's first name. In addition to singling her out for scorn, the pun specifically emphasizes the gendered change in the movement's leadership. As Aaron Jaffe has pointed out, however, the epithet also suggests semen (*Amygism*)<sup>99</sup>—a connotation which, given the post-coital penis connoted by Pound's use of the word 'flaccid', for example, seems to have been quite intentional. (Certainly the slang term, 'jism', in this sense, was current in North America by the turn of the

<sup>96</sup> This sense of the phrase appears in Ben Jonson's work, and was used by Virginia Woolf in 1915. (The phrase did not come to refer to a particular style of nineteenth-century architecture popular in San Francisco and other American cities until the late 1970s). Oxford English Dictionary, 'Painted Lady, N.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2005), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/239227>.

<sup>97</sup> Pound, 'A Retrospect', 3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 130.

century.<sup>100</sup>) But far from contradicting or off-setting the diminutive quality of the label ‘Amygism’ as a marker of femaleness, the dual gendering it contains in fact seems intended as doubly pejorative. Late imagism’s supposed inferiority to its Poundian beginnings is registered by gendering it female through association with Amy Lowell; yet that femininity is itself simultaneously and jeeringly undermined by the crude masculine connotations of ‘-gism’. Lowell, who lived in a long-term relationship with her female partner, had felt from childhood ill-at-ease with her body, and with conventional notions of femininity, especially in the upper-class Bostonian setting of her upbringing.<sup>101</sup> Pound’s mocking term seems aimed not simply at a broad female gender category, but, in fact, quite vindictively, at the particular gender position of Amy Lowell.

I mention these misogynistic elements of imagist rhetoric because Pound’s polemical use of gender polarities also colours his assessment of European politics. In the same way that Pound’s objection to Victorian sentimentalism is carried over into his response to Pickthall’s appeal for sympathy with the Ottoman Empire, this remarkably overstated gender framework I have outlined reveals itself as a major part of the structure underpinning Pound’s emergent political thinking. This is most visible in his characterization of the Ottoman Empire.

At first glance, the Empire seems not to be meaningfully gendered in Pound’s letter. It is referred to both as ‘she’, in the form of ‘Turkey’; and as ‘he’, in the form of ‘the Turk’.<sup>102</sup> Pronouns, however, are something of a distraction here. Pound’s conception of

<sup>100</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Jism, N.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 1976), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/101367>.

<sup>101</sup> Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, 566–569.

<sup>102</sup> Pound was not outside the norm in referring to ‘the Turk’ rather than ‘Turkey’. The term remained in frequent use at this time, particularly in the more liberal, and therefore more anti-Ottoman, press, such as the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Nation* (not to be confused with the left-leaning American magazine), but elsewhere too. Sometimes it was used, perhaps less objectionably, to indicate the ethnic Turks within the Ottoman Empire; mostly though, it is simply an essentializing metonym for the Ottoman Empire. For a particularly egregious example of the essentialist use of this word see ‘The Troubles of the Turks’, *Times*, Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, which dwells on the martial prowess Turks had historically shown, and tries to determine ‘the true causes of their decline as a race’ (7). Similarly, in ‘The First Tricks. Turk’s Weak Opening’, the commentator in *The Daily Mail*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct, remarks that ‘the methods of the Turk show all his typical inscrutability. He is as silent as the moon, his own symbol; but it is to



the Eastern Question was, as we have seen, that ‘Turkey has been maintained’ in its European holdings ‘by the force of the allied monopolies of Europe’. ‘If it has not been in the interest of European capital to maintain the Turk’, Pound repeats, ‘why has he persisted?’. There is a submersed metaphor within these remarks very similar to the motif of prostitution contained in the phrase ‘painted adjectives’. The forces of what Pound variously calls ‘the allied monopolies of Europe’, ‘European capital’, and ‘the industrial tyrannies of Europe’ are imagined as *maintaining* the Empire’s presence, at their leisure and for their convenience, in the way a mistress or a courtesan might be ‘kept’ in luxury, in exchange for sex and discretion. Emphasizing the moral assumptions of this analogy, Pound uses adjectives such as ‘disgraceful’ and “‘unspeakable’”.<sup>103</sup> The focus on Ottoman debts might also be understood as forming part of this allusion, suggesting the kind of financial relationship which might exist between prostitute and pimp—and the differential power relationship which structures it.

Underpinning this figure of the Ottoman Empire as a courtesan or prostitute is an ingrained Orientalist association of ‘the East’ with a languorous, licentious sexuality. This stereotype is very clearly expressed in any number of nineteenth century European paintings of Oriental *seraglios*, by artists such as Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Théodore Chassériau and Jean-Léon Gérôme (something Pound perhaps had in mind when he described Pickthall’s attachment to the Ottoman Empire as ‘picturesque’).<sup>104</sup> Indeed Pound seems at that moment to have been dwelling on scenes very much like those found in these French paintings. Pound’s poem ‘Dance Figure, for the marriage in Cana of Galilee’, from the ‘Contemporania’ series, is redolent, too, of the passages from

---

be remembered that[,] in the case of the Oriental[,] silence implies literally nothing. It is neither pregnant with intention nor “the best resolve of him who distrusts himself”. It is merely habit’ (7).

<sup>103</sup> It is unclear why Pound uses quotation marks around ‘unspeakable’. It is most likely for emphasis, not quotation, since this word is not taken from Pickthall’s articles, nor, as far as I can determine, from any other discussions of the issue in *The New Age*.

<sup>104</sup> For a wide selection of European Orientalist painting, see the catalogue for the 1984 Royal Academy exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, European Painters In North Africa and the Near East* (London: Royal Academy of Arts in association with Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984). Pound’s remark about Pickthall is found in ‘The Black Crusade [letter 2]’.

Flaubert's Egyptian travel writings on which Said focuses.<sup>105</sup> The scene of the poem is explicitly an Oriental scene. The 'Dark eyed' dancer's otherness is emphasized by her being cast not as a corporeal person but as a dream figure. She is described in similes which yoke together the sensuousness of imagist language with the sensuality of a sexualized Orient. At first the visual is foregrounded—

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark (*P* 92);

Quotation from 'Dance Figure', lines 11–13 (*P* 92). See supplementary volume, p. 3.

Touch and sound follow—

As a rillet among the sedge are thy hands upon me (*P* 92);

Quotation from 'Dance Figure', lines 20–22 (*P* 92). See supplementary volume, p. 3.

Pound quite clearly imagines undressing the dancer, describing first her bare arms, and then her shoulders, 'stripped'. The image of a 'rillet' (a small stream) 'among the sedge' is a modestly veiled allusion to intercourse. These two-line couplets stand out from the rest of the poem firstly in that they describe the dancer as present—indeed as physically possessed—if only to the imagination, whereas the rest of the poem describes her absence ('I have not found thee among the tents, / In the broken darkness') (*P* 92). Secondly, these lines stand out for their use of the semi-colon. In joining the two lines of each couplet, the semi-colon powerfully enacts the sexual contact being allusively described.

The use of the semi-colon to separate a pair of lines, moreover, recalls the final version of 'In A Station of the Metro':

---

<sup>105</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 102–103, 184–88.

Quotation of 'In a Station of the Metro', (*P* 111). See supplementary volume, p. 3.

The original 'Contemporanea' version of 'In A Station of the Metro', printed alongside 'Dance Figure' in 1913, employs a colon in that position (*P* 251). Only later did Pound substitute the semi-colon, making the questions of equation and priority between the two lines much more richly ambiguous. Thus it seems that Pound was first convinced by the effectiveness of this device in 'Dance Figure'—where it acquired what I think is an undeniably charged, Orientalist sexuality—before he employed it in his famous imagist anthology piece. Reading the latter poem in this way, I believe, reveals a tactile sensuality in the second line that is otherwise not always apparent. I will consider 'In a Station of the Metro' more fully below. But it is important to note here that 'Dance Figure' informs the formal structure of the much more famous and more subtly Orientalist poem. The relationship between the two poems offers further evidence of the entanglement of imagist poetics with a view of the Orient highly charged with both eroticism and sexual moralizing. We see this in *Prolegomena* and Pound's first Balkan War letter, as well as in 'Dance Figure' and 'In A Station of the Metro'.

Unlike later critics and editors, Pound seems to have considered 'Dance Figure' to represent an important formal principle in his work. When looking back at his manifesto, 'A Few Don'ts', four years later ('what is there now, in 1917, to be added?'), he seconded Eliot's view that 'No *vers* is *libre* for the man who wants to do a good job', and offered 'Dance Figure' to illustrate the principle.<sup>106</sup> The poem, he wrote, was an example of 'vers libre with accent heavily marked as a drum beat', and cautions poets against moving too far 'in the other direction', as he fears himself to have done at times: 'I do not think one can use to any advantage rhythms much more tenuous and imperceptible than some I have used'.<sup>107</sup> It may be, as Pound remarked in a letter to

<sup>106</sup> Pound, 'A Retrospect', 12.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 12–13.

Harriet Monroe, that the poem ‘has little but its rhythm to recommend it’.<sup>108</sup> But such a crude distinction between form and content seems slightly disingenuous; the poem makes fairly clear that the dancer is a sexualised metaphor for innovation in poetic rhythm. The couplet, ‘There is none like thee among the dancers; / None with swift feet’, occurs twice, once in the first verse paragraph, and again at the end of the poem (though in the first instance with a comma in place of the familiar semi-colon), thus forming a refrain.

Another aspect of this little-studied imagist poem illustrates Pound’s reliance on the Orientalist tradition. The lines, ‘They guard thee not with eunuchs; / Not with bars of copper’, refer to the sexual slavery which was supposed to have been imposed in the *seraglios* of the Ottoman Empire, and to the class of eunuchs understood to oversee it. Again then, in this poem, we can see the constellation of oppressive power, sexuality, and an Orientalist imagination in Pound’s figurative repertoire. In imagining a way in which ‘free’ verse might be symbolized, Pound establishes an opposition between Oriental sexual slavery and the freedom of the Western imagination—‘O woman of my dreams’.

There is a contradiction in this attitude, however. Discussing the association ‘between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex’, Said argues that ‘the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe’, where sex ‘entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations’.<sup>109</sup> The ‘quest’ of European writers to find ‘a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden’ was, in Said’s judgement probably not misguided. Yet, ‘even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did) become as regulated and uniform as [Orientalist] learning itself’.<sup>110</sup> Said writes that ‘Oriental sex’ became ‘as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with the result that readers and

<sup>108</sup> Pound, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 11.

<sup>109</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 190.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient'.<sup>111</sup> Something of this commodified notion of 'Oriental sex', a fixed and stale collocation of particular attitudes to gender and to the East, seems to have been detected by Marianne Moore in Pound's early *Draft of XXX Cantos*. Moore, quoting details from Pound's reflections on gender in Canto XXIX, asks with some irony, 'is not the view of woman expressed by the Cantos [*sic*] older-fashioned than that of Siam and Abyssinia? knowledge [*sic*] of the femaleness of "Chaos", of the "octopus", of "Our mulberry leaf, woman", appertaining more to the Grand Turk than to a Roger Ascham?'.<sup>112</sup> Moore perceives a refrain running through Pound's early *Cantos*—'Books and arms'; 'Books, arms, men'.<sup>113</sup> This is an observation that could apply equally to much of Pound's imagist writing.

### Wooden bullets and luminous details

The week following his first letter on the Balkan War, Pound encountered some derision in the *New Age* letters pages. Pickthall responded to Pound's attacks in an offended but reasonable manner, methodically answering each of Pound's rhetorical questions.<sup>114</sup> Referring to the Young Turk government, Pickthall wrote that 'we are not discoursing of a despotism, but of a people just emerging from the chaos of an epoch-making revolution, and desirous of developing on natural lines'.<sup>115</sup> Beatrice Hastings, who would become Pound's regular antagonist on the magazine's staff, penned a pseudonymous satire of Pound's style.<sup>116</sup> If Orage received any letters sympathetic to

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Marianne Moore, 'The Cantos', *Poetry* 39, no. 1 (1 October 1931): 44.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 41–42.

<sup>114</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'The Black Crusade [Letter]', *The New Age* 12, no. 4 (28 November 1912): 93.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> [Beatrice Hastings] T. K. L., 'The Black Crusade [Letter]', *The New Age* 12, no. 4 (28 November 1912): 93. Whatever the mutual antagonism between Hastings and Pound, Hastings would later claim in her memoir of the period that it was she who insisted resolutely upon Pound's inclusion in the magazine, against Orage's better judgement. See her *The Old 'New Age.'* *Orage—and Others*. (London: Blue Moon Press, 1936), 6–7.

Pound's position, he did not print them. Since the letters page of *The New Age* was usually fairly well choreographed (the practice of staff-members or regular contributors writing pseudonymous letters was common), it seems that Pound's attempt to yoke his views to the political priorities of the magazine and to ingratiate himself with its milieu had not had much success. In his subsequent letter, printed the week after Pickthall's and Hastings's responses, Pound changed his approach. He was conciliatory, at least in his opening sentences, apologizing for his earlier tone and for his mockery of Pickthall's style—no doubt having been made aware that of he and Pickthall, the latter writer was of far greater repute.<sup>117</sup>

Just as in his poetry at this time, Pound's second letter demonstrates a desire to focus on particulars over generalities. He shifted his tactics to focus on undermining the credibility of the Young Turk government, based upon its conduct of the war. 'I cannot be brought to believe in the fibre of a government that sends out starving troops and furnishes them with wooden bullets', he wrote.<sup>118</sup>

To argue that a government has been cheated out of its eye teeth by thieving neighbours is not to argue well its favour. It is the business of a government not to be so cheated. When a government becomes susceptible to such fraud it has become archaic, and is a danger to itself and everyone else, and incompetence in high places is in itself a crime.

. . . [A]ny man who would put faith in the given word of England or of any other European Power is utterly unfit to govern a modern state. He is the sort of man that would serve out wooden bullets.<sup>119</sup>

This argument differs markedly from his first letter in its underlying values and political priorities. The polarity of liberty versus slavery and tyranny is replaced here by quite different oppositions: competence versus incompetence, credulity versus circumspection, integrity versus corruption. As Pound writes towards the end of the letter, with quite pointed irony, 'I have a stupid prejudice in favour of straight roads and of public order'.<sup>120</sup> Thus with his concern for good governance comes an intimation of a

<sup>117</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 2]', 116. For biographical details on Pickthall, see note 29, above.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 2]'.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 116.

recourse to state authority, and a further opposition between order and disorder which is quite at odds with the seemingly libertarian stance he took just two weeks before.

For Pound, the corruption of Ottoman rule is encapsulated in the wooden bullets which had apparently been issued to Ottoman troops. Reports that boxes of useless wooden training ammunition had been found after the battle of Kumanovo, discarded by retreating Ottoman soldiers, were first made by *Daily Mirror* correspondent, Frank Magee, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1912. The *Mirror*'s front page that day was dominated by a photograph of the bullets Magee had brought back from the battlefield.<sup>121</sup> The report noted that although the boxes in which the German-made blanks were supplied were similar to those used for live ammunition, they were nonetheless clearly labelled, in Turkish, as 'wooden manoeuvre cartridges'.<sup>122</sup> The wooden tips of the bullets themselves were painted red.<sup>123</sup> Enquiries by the *Mirror* among British and German munitions manufacturers produced responses ranging from a 'charitable' assumption of 'a terrible mistake' to an insistence on 'desperate and wicked' corruption.<sup>124</sup> 'These dummy cartridges were ordered from Germany', one authority said; 'Turkish officials in Constantinople have passed them as war service cartridges and pocketed the difference in price between the real and the dummies'.<sup>125</sup> Magee described the bullets in some detail: 'Opening some of the cartridges I found that they were half filled with smokeless powder, while the bullets were of soft, red-painted wood, which I easily cut with my pocket-knife'.<sup>126</sup> He wrote that he was keeping the bullets he had picked up 'as tragic souvenirs of Turkish inefficiency and criminal negligence'.<sup>127</sup>

It is not hard to see why this report caught Pound's attention. In the previous chapter, I discussed the importance Pound placed upon direct physical experience—

<sup>121</sup> 'Cartridges with Wooden Bullets "Made in Germany" Used by the Turks: One of the Reasons They Lost Kumanovo', *Daily Mirror*, 27 November 1912, 1; 'In Battle with Bullets of Wood', *Daily Mirror*, 27 November 1912, 5.

<sup>122</sup> 'In Battle with Bullets of Wood', 5.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

such as that gained through skilled physical labour—as well as his conception of the ‘expert’, who ‘does not . . . sling generalities; he gives the particular case for what it is worth’.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, the reason Pound preferred the ‘precision’ and ‘explicit rendering’ of Arnaut Daniel and Guido Cavalcanti, to the Victorian era’s ‘blurry, messy’ and ‘sentimentalistic’ aesthetics, was the immediacy of the former writers’ work: ‘Their testimony is of the eyewitness’, Pound claimed; ‘their symptoms are first hand’.<sup>129</sup> The powerful symbolism of the discarded wooden bullets as metonyms for corruption and decadence corresponds with his political thinking and poetic technique in a number of ways. Firstly, the intimacy and immediacy of Magee’s account resonates with these valued poetic and epistemological qualities. Magee fits the role of Pound’s expert, offering the wooden bullets as ‘the particular case’, the concrete particular (to mix material metaphors) which indicts Ottoman maladministration. These were qualities Pound liked to imagine in himself. He had pictured himself as eye-witness and war correspondent when discussing his new role at *Poetry* in a letter to Harriet Monroe:

I can give you my honest opinion from the firing line, from the ‘inside’. I’m the kind of ass that believes in the public intelligence. I believe your ‘big business men’ would rather hear a specialist’s opinion, even if its wrong, than hear a rumor, a dilutation.

[. . .]

I’ve got a right to be severe. For one man I strike there are ten to strike back at me. I stand exposed. It hits me in my dinner invitations, in my weekends, in reviews of my own work. Nevertheless it’s a good fight.<sup>130</sup>

From the latter paragraph (with which he ends the letter), we can see that Pound is clearly aware of the incongruity and humour of the conceit; yet here the martial metaphor nonetheless becomes much bolder as Pound shifts his imagined role from correspondent to combatant, from observer to participant.

The second respect in which Magee’s report must have struck Pound as closely corresponding to his evolving poetics is that it employs a device very similar to the device he was then calling the ‘luminous detail’. Luminous details, Pound writes, in ‘I

<sup>128</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’, in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 33.

<sup>129</sup> Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Pound to Monroe, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1912, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 46–47.



Gather the Limbs of Osiris', stand out from the 'drudgery and minutiae' of the mass of historical fact; when found, they 'give one sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence and law'.<sup>131</sup> They 'govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit'.<sup>132</sup> This was the crux of Pound's 'New Method in Scholarship' which formed the central thread of his articles. The method, he wrote, was 'most vigorously hostile to the prevailing mode of today—that is, the method of multitudinous detail, and to the method of yesterday, the method of sentiment and generalization'.<sup>133</sup> Here, once again, we come across 'sentiment', linked to imprecision and vagueness, to 'generalization'. The link remains when Pound employs his 'method' in his second Balkan War letter. The luminous detail of the wooden bullets is intended to give the reader 'sudden insight' into the corruption of the Ottoman state, in the face of Pickthall's supposedly 'sentimental' apologia for the Young Turk reformers. Essentially, luminous details are a radical form of metonymy. They promise an absolutely efficient abridgement or abbreviation. Despite the hint of mysticism accompanying Pound's outline of the 'method', it is also quite openly a fairly prosaic reaction against the exhaustiveness of the philological tradition in which he was trained: 'If on no other grounds than this, namely, that the eye-sight is valuable, we should read less, far less than we do'.<sup>134</sup> William Carlos Williams, in the preface to *Kora In Hell*, relates a telling anecdote of Pound's selective reading:

Before Ezra's permanent residence in London, on one of his trips to America—brought on, I think by an attack of jaundice—he was glancing through some book of my father's. 'It is not necessary', he said, 'to read everything in a book in order to speak intelligently of it. Don't tell everybody I said so', he added.<sup>135</sup>

In his later prose, he took to calling luminous details 'gists'.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', 22.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>133</sup> Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', 21.

<sup>134</sup> Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. [I & II] A Rather Dull Introduction', *The New Age* 10, no. 6 (6 December 1911): 130.

<sup>135</sup> William Carlos Williams, 'Prologue' (1918) to *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*, rpt. in *Imaginations*, ed. Webster Schott (New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1971), 11.

<sup>136</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Gists', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 324–25.

Scholars have long noticed the continuity between the luminous detail and Pound's evolving conception of the poetic image—from imagism's 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', via vorticism's 'radiant node or cluster . . . from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing', to the 'ideogrammatic method' he derived from Ernest Fenollosa.<sup>137</sup> Michael Andre Bernstein, traces the development of the luminous detail through Pound's ideogrammatic phase, and explores the scientific parallels Pound often makes when discussing his method.<sup>138</sup> The luminous detail also represents the germ of the paratactic method of his later prose, particularly *Guide to Kultur* (1938), and, as Hugh Kenner argues, provides one of the central formal devices of the *Cantos*.<sup>139</sup> Kenner glosses luminous details as 'the transcendental in an array of facts', which 'when transferred out of their context of origin retain their power to enlighten us'.<sup>140</sup> Michael North, focusing on the device's ideological significance, interprets it as an attempt, typical of so-called High Modernism, to reconcile the dialectic of the particular and the general, in political terms.<sup>141</sup> 'Thus the luminous detail stands against a good deal more than just its intellectual rival the multitudinous detail', he argues. Moreover, for North, the device has a clear political significance, serving 'as a counterexample to the multitude itself, the atomistic crowd and its political counterpart the authoritarian state'.<sup>142</sup> North's latter point becomes clearer if we consider the oppositional relationship in 'In a Station of the Metro' between the detail and the crowd. The 'petals' are figuratively (if not literally) luminous against the 'black bough'

<sup>137</sup> These definitions of the image are taken from 'A Retrospect', 4, and Pound's *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*, 1916. rpt. (Hessle, E. Yorks: Marvell, 1960), 106, respectively. In addition to those I discuss in what follows, Cary Wolfe identifies the luminous detail with the image (*The Limits of American Literary Ideology in Pound and Emerson* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 57); as does Robert Kern (*Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 146). Kern also interprets Pound's specific emphasis on the luminous detail as a method of scholarship as being part of a rejection of the philological tradition in which he was trained at the University of Pennsylvania (146).

<sup>138</sup> Michael André Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 36–41.

<sup>139</sup> Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 323–25.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>141</sup> Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 132.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

and their analogue, the ‘faces’, gain their peculiar salience precisely by their instantaneous and mystical self-differentiation from the subterranean ‘crowd’.

Pound claims to have found his inspiration for the theory of luminous details in Jacob Burckhardt’s work, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). In one passage, Burckhardt describes the birth of modern statistical administration in Venice during the fifteenth century, and the political and economic advantages this brought for the Venetians.<sup>143</sup> Pound seizes on one of these advantages in particular as his primary example of a luminous detail:

[W]hen in Burckhardt we come upon a passage: “In this year the Venetians refused to make war upon the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither”, we come upon a portent, the old order changes, one conception of war and of the State begins to decline. The Middle Ages imperceptibly give ground to the Renaissance.<sup>144</sup>

This example is not just a formal model for the luminous detail. The specific content of this ‘detail’ is also of crucial importance for Pound. Burckhardt’s characterization of Venice’s astute and scrupulous administrators also firmly influences his view of the state. Indeed, it corroborates the link that North identifies between the state and the luminous detail—but perhaps not in the way one might expect. Pound’s isolation of this passage has been read by Dennis Brown as a moment in Pound’s ‘developing opposition to the commercial spirit of contemporary London, an opposition that would result in his attack on usury and all that went with it’.<sup>145</sup> But Brown fundamentally misreads Pound’s use of Burckhardt. Far from expressing a horror at the idea of ‘the deathly spirit of the “made to sell and sell quickly” triumphing over the notion of the just war, the ban on interest, etc’, as Brown claims, it is quite evident from the text that Pound shares Burckhardt’s delight in this detail, and that he employs it as an index of the emergence of an enlightened form of modern governance. As Pound writes of the Ottoman government’s unhappy relations with Britain and France, ‘It is the business of a

<sup>143</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 2004 (London: Penguin, 1990), 63–64.

<sup>144</sup> Pound, ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’, 22.

<sup>145</sup> Dennis Brown, ‘The Translation of History in the Early Cantos’, in *Ezra Pound and History*, Ezra Pound Scholarship Series (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1985), 57.

government not to be so cheated'.<sup>146</sup> But there is a considerable contradiction in Pound's attitude to Burckhardt. The radically abbreviated metonymy implied by his notion of luminous details represents an epistemological antithesis to the Venetian approach to statecraft, which, as Burckhardt puts it, 'cannot be imagined without a systematic oversight of the whole, without a regular estimate of means and burdens, of profits and losses'.<sup>147</sup> The Venetian model of government that Pound seizes on depends upon nothing so much as what Pound only a few paragraphs earlier dismisses as 'multitudinous detail', a method he insisted was 'too cumbersome to be of much use to the normal man wishing to live mentally active'.<sup>148</sup> What is more, on the very next page, Burckhardt remarks that Venice's administrative proficiency was not matched by its artistic output; 'the literary impulse, in general, was here wanting'.<sup>149</sup>

Herein lies a central, irresolvable contradiction concerning the idea of the state in Pound's thought. The kind of state he praises is the ordered, efficient state, a master of its own fortune through the (masculine) ingenuity and *virtù* of its leaders. But this state, embodied in the Burckhardt passage by Venice, turns out to have a number of startling similarities to the state that he fears: the sprawling bureaucracy, obsessed with enumeration and 'multitudinous detail'. This is the state as intellectual labour; it is the state embodied for Pound in the Fabianism of the Webbs and George Bernard Shaw; in the philology of the German universities; and in 'the idea that the man is the slave of the State, the "unit", the piece of the machine'.<sup>150</sup> Thus Pound's original, definitive 'luminous detail' is, somewhat paradoxically, the historical moment in which its opposite, the 'multitudinous detail'—and the particular configuration of state power and knowledge that it entails—is seen as having come into being.

---

<sup>146</sup> Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 2]', 116.

<sup>147</sup> Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 63.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>150</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 162.

## Imagism and warfare: ‘the swift contraposition of objects’

For Burckhardt, the Venetians’ avoidance of conflict was a marker of their rational, enlightened mode of governance. But unlike Burckhardt, and unlike William Morris also, Pound’s Balkan War letters openly celebrate the warlike nationalism of the Balkan states. While Pound’s engagement in the Balkan question mirrors Morris in crucial ways, the divergence in this respect may have been a reflection of Pound’s waning enthusiasm for the Pre-Raphaelites. Much later, in a 1922 letter, Pound drew a direct contrast between Morris’s ‘tapestry treatment of the Middle ages’—implicitly ‘sentimental’, we might imagine—and the authentic medieval poetry of Bertran De Born, who ‘writes songs to provoke real war, and they were effective’.<sup>151</sup> ‘This is very different’, he added, ‘from Romantic or Macauley-Tennyson praise of past battles’.<sup>152</sup> This conjunction of Morris, Tennyson and the bellicose de Born may provide some indication of what lay behind Pound’s earlier celebration of war in the Balkans.

Pound, indeed, seems to derive from the conflict a general political principle. In his first article for *The New Age* following his Balkan War letters, he offers his perspective on a debate about pacifism being conducted among the contributors. ‘Of course I am a pacifist’, he wrote, ‘every American is a pacifist’.<sup>153</sup> Just fourteen years after the United States’ seizure of Puerto Rico, Guam and Cuba as the spoils of the Spanish-American War, this seems a surprising claim to make. We will examine this imperial legacy in the following chapter. From Pound’s immediately subsequent remarks, it is difficult to tell whether the irony was lost on him or not:

War is a mess and a bother. It is, between nations of equal civilisation, an anachronism. . . . As we have seen in the past few weeks, an Oriental despotism has no show against a constitutional government; and between such dissimilar organisations there is but the one argument, force.<sup>154</sup>

This was not mere bluster. The belligerent attitude Pound had developed during the

<sup>151</sup> Pound to Felix E. Schelling, 8 July 1922, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 246.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Through Alien Eyes. I’, *The New Age* 12, no. 11 (16 January 1913): 252.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

Balkan crisis colours his imagist poetry, as we will see in the following sections. It seems Pound had looked to John Stuart Mill's essay, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', for support in his depiction of civilizational conflict:

To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another, and between civilized nations and barbarians, is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into, however it may be with those who, from a safe and irresponsible position, criticise statesmen.<sup>155</sup>

Pound makes very clear what, in Mill, is only implicit: that the perceived superiority of the West justifies its use of force against the non-Western world.

Pound's eagerness to celebrate or advocate organized coercion registers also in his literary writing, through his quick recourse to bellicose language and imagery. Looking back at the pre-war London literary scene in a 1937 article entitled 'D'Artagnan Twenty Years After', Pound described the group involved in the publication of the first issue of *BLAST* in 1914 as having 'a two barrelled art and a gift for verbal invective'.<sup>156</sup> Metaphor, Pound asserts, was one major technical concern of the period, but in interesting terms:

Aristotle spoke the true word about metaphor, the apt use whereof is the true hall-mark of genius.

The hokku is the Jap's test. If *le style c'est l'homme*, the writer's blood test is his swift contraposition of objects.<sup>157</sup>

Of course, this article reflects the changed circumstances of the late 1930s; in his 1916 essay on vorticism, he uses 'super-position', rather than 'contraposition'.<sup>158</sup> But this later piece nonetheless provides some very useful terms for thinking anew about the imaginative climate of imagism in late 1912 and early 1913, as conflict continued in the Balkans and Europe's two vast alliances edged closer to war. Matthew Hofer, in his

<sup>155</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', in *Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, ed. John M. Robson, vol. 21, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 118.

<sup>156</sup> Ezra Pound, 'D'Artagnan Twenty Years After', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 422.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 103.

study of Pound's use of polemic, has charted 'a proliferation' in Pound's work 'of modes of linguistic assault and means of attributing enemies'.<sup>159</sup> As he notes, polemic comes from the Greek *polemos* (war).<sup>160</sup> Hofer's focus on the polemic mode, however, leads him to look no earlier than *Blast* for such 'linguistic assault'. It is my contention that a distinctly martial attitude enters Pound's work much earlier, concurrently with his interest in the First Balkan War.

The notion of the 'swift contraposition of objects' does not connote any of the stereotypes of 'stillness' and 'passivity' which we know Pound associated with 'Eastern' cultures—despite the reference to haiku.<sup>161</sup> Rather it seems to conceive of imagist metaphor as a particularly active, confrontational juxtaposition. 'From dead thesis, metaphor is distinct', Pound writes wrote; 'Life comes in metaphor'.<sup>162</sup> The term 'contraposition' has a meaning within formal logic, denoting the restatement of a proposition in negative terms: 'All S is P' can be *contraposed* as 'All not-P is not-S' or 'No not-P is S'.<sup>163</sup> This sense of a logical equation is not wholly distinct from what is felt to occur in a typical imagist metaphor, but it fails entirely to capture the arresting transformation so quintessential of the mode. Much more immediately, however, 'contraposition' suggests the placing of two objects in direct opposition or contradiction. 'Swift' was one of Pound's keywords at this time. He uses it to describe the response of the arts to the 'intellectual movement' of his hoped for 'Risorgimento'; he applies it also to the feet of the dancer in 'Dance Figure' (and by extension, to that poem's rhythmic

<sup>159</sup> Matthew Hofer, 'Modernist Polemic: Ezra Pound v. "the Perverters of Language"', *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 3 (2002): 464.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> In an effusive 1913 review of Rabindranath Tagore's work, Pound writes that 'There is in him [i.e., Tagore] the stillness of nature. . . . He is at one with nature, and finds no contradictions. And this is in sharp contrast with the Western mode, where man must be shown attempting to master nature if we are to have "great drama"', 'Rabindranath Tagore', in *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, ed. James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler, vol. 1 (New York; London: Garland, 1991), 126. The link with haiku in the passage I quote above suggests that Pound was thinking right back to his meetings with F. S. Flint and T. E. Hulme at the Tour d'Eiffel restaurant in 1909, where Japanese poetry was much discussed as a model for the renovation of English poetry.

<sup>162</sup> Pound, 'D'Artagnan Twenty Years After', 423.

<sup>163</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, 'Contraposition, N. 2', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 1893), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40427>.

feet); and, of course, he describes the decisiveness and rapid progress of the Balkan military assault on the Ottoman Empire as ‘swift’. In ‘The Serious Artist’, he cites Aristotle’s claim that, as Pound puts it, ‘The apt use of metaphor, being as it is, the swift perception of relations, is the true hall-mark of genius’. He is quick to clarify that ‘By “apt use”, I should say it were well to understand, a swiftness, *almost a violence*’.<sup>164</sup> The word ‘object’ itself can mean a goal, an ‘objective’, with all of the military resonance of that latter term. Louis Zukofsky, one of Pound’s most astute students, noted this sense of the cognate word ‘objective’ in an essay published several years prior to Pound’s 1937 retrospective: ‘(military use)—that which is aimed at’.<sup>165</sup> It is interesting to ask whether these themes of conflict, violence and martial force resonate in Pound’s imagist practice.

Daniel Albright touches on something similar, I think, when he notes the frequency in Pound’s work of what he calls ‘the *failed* image—intentional failure, often turned to good account’.<sup>166</sup> Pound, Albright writes, ‘quickly discovered that deliberately incongruous superimpositions could be used as a potent satirical tool’.<sup>167</sup> (We should remember that, for Pound, satire was a particular kind of violence, being the literary equivalent of ‘surgery, insertions and amputations’.<sup>168</sup>) Albright cites examples from poems in the ‘Contemporania’ series, ‘The Garden’ (‘Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall / She walks’) and ‘Les Millwin’ (‘the little Millwins/ . . . /Like so many unused boas’), and traces this tendency forward through Pound’s critical interest in Surrealism, the Ovidian metamorphoses in Canto II, and the sadistic, Bosch-esque deformations in his so-called ‘Hell Cantos’ (XIV and XV).<sup>169</sup> The acknowledgement of Pound’s tendency to ironize the metaphor in this way—to use it as what we might think of as a meta-trope—is very useful. When considering imagist poetics in the immediate

<sup>164</sup> My emphasis. Ezra Pound, ‘The Serious Artist—IV’, *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 11 (15 November 1913): 213–14.

<sup>165</sup> Louis Zukofsky, ‘Program: “Objectivists” 1931’, *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (1 February 1931): 268.

<sup>166</sup> Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144. Albright’s emphasis.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>168</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Serious Artist [I & II]’, *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 9 (15 October 1913): 163.

<sup>169</sup> Albright, *Quantum Poetics*, 145–47.



historical context of the First Balkan War and Pound's fascination with it, we might focus less on those metaphors which seem like 'intentional failures', however, and more on those which potentially produce a 'sound like to swords swords opposing', as he writes in the famous pre-imagist poem, 'Sestina: Altaforte' (*P* 27).

Returning to 'The Garden', which Albright mentions, we see also in that poem the juxtaposition of the respectable woman and 'the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor' (*P* 85). These 'filthy' and 'sturdy' children, contrast the 'loose silk' that represents the female figure (*P* 85). They contrast her more profoundly in that they need no simile. Certainly the equation with vermin is clear, as is the allusion to the Sermon on the Mount, but grammatically at least, they are described directly in terms of themselves. Even the somewhat un-Poundian catalogue of modifiers seems not to detract from their potency. The trochees of 'filthy' and 'sturdy' seem, in themselves, to share these children's physical robustness; these are not emasculating 'painted adjectives'. Moreover, 'unkillable' implies something is trying to kill these children. (Obvious alternatives such as 'invincible' or 'immortal' would not have carried such an implication). One clear point of conflict in the poem is class. The line 'In her is the end of breeding' is deeply ambiguous, suggesting on the one hand, an aristocratic lineage, and, on the other, some literal or figurative infertility, or degeneracy. As such, the poem plays on turn-of-the-century anxieties in the wake of the Boer War, concerning imperial decline, competition from Germany, and the ideology of 'national efficiency'.<sup>170</sup> Most strikingly, though, this line evokes class conflict in terms more appropriate to a slow Darwinian competition between different species. 'They shall inherit the earth' seems to suggest a scene that is post-apocalyptic in a colloquially ecological, rather than a biblical sense.

Similar analyses can be made of other imagist poems. For example, although the overlaying of 'Eastern' imagery upon a Western, urban, industrialized setting in 'In A

<sup>170</sup> See G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971).

Station of the Metro’ would seem to suggest cultural intercourse, trade and exchange between European and Asian cultures, does it not also unavoidably suggest centuries of conflict and discord? Such a reading would sit uneasily with, but not entirely contradict, the practice of ‘subject rhymes’ that Pound elaborated in *The Cantos*, where, for example, medieval Chinese history is set alongside the history of the post-revolutionary United States.<sup>171</sup> In *The Cantos*, Pound may well be searching for historical patterns and analogues, but ‘In A Station of the Metro’ is a poem of intense contrasts: the individual is set against the popular mass; beauty, too (the faces/petals), is set against the mass crowd; the urban contrasts with the pastoral; and, more reflexively, sound and print are set against silence and white space.<sup>172</sup> Perhaps the most significant binaries within the poem, however, are those of East-West, and subject-object. As Jahan Ramazani has observed, Pound compresses these two dyads; in his account of writing the poem—of ‘trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective’—he associates the East with the ‘inward and subjective’ and the West with, as Ramazani puts it, ‘the historicized, materialized objectivity of the urban crowd scene’.<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless, for Ramazani, the poem’s ‘jagged’ contrasts in fact accommodate it to a progressive ‘transnational’ schema:

by refusing connectives that would discursively paper over the gap between the Western urban scene and Eastern ideality, [and] by formally alluding to the three-line haiku without flattening its differences from this generic paradigm, the poem represents an orientalism [*sic*] that is also antiorientalist, that is cross-cutting and counterdiscursive.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>171</sup> As Rupert Richard Arrowsmith shows, Pound very probably learned this device from the Orientalist lectures of Laurence Binyon in 1909, Arrowsmith, ‘The Transcultural Roots of Modernism: Imagist Poetry, Japanese Visual Culture, and the Western Museum System’, *Modernism/modernity* 18, no. 1 (2011): 30.

<sup>172</sup> This final contrast could of course be said of any poem. But the first version of ‘In a Station of the Metro’, with its typographical spacing, does call particular attention to this feature of literature. It is a concern of the later version too in the sense that the petal on the bough might easily be read as the word upon the page.

<sup>173</sup> Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 113. Pound’s account can be found in *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 103.

<sup>174</sup> Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 113.

There is much that is attractive in Ramazani's reading. He echoes the view of Zhaoming Qian, who argues that 'From his initial engagement with the Orient, [Pound] took a stance that was drastically different from his predecessors and peers' by 'look[ing] to China for an alternative to modernity'.<sup>175</sup> More recently, Rupert Richard Arrowsmith has enhanced our understanding of this process by presenting a great deal of new archival evidence which details the influence of East Asian art upon modernist Anglophone poetry, via Pound's friend Laurence Binyon, in the years leading up to the First World War.<sup>176</sup> Nonetheless, I do not believe that readings such as those by Ramazani and Qian can entirely erase the subtext of conflict 'In A Station of the Metro'. But even if Pound's famous poem finally attests to his belief in the 'equal civilisation' of Europe and China, thus making conflict between them, in his words, 'an anachronism', we must still account for Pound's views on the Islamic world and its supposedly 'despotic' and backward culture.

We could ask, for instance, whether the underworld of the Paris Metro is not, after all, Homer's Hades, but rather Dante's Hell: the medieval site of Eurocentric judgement and punishment, where each sin finds equation with its appropriate punishment, much like a 'swift' imagist metaphor. Certainly, the 'faces in the crowd' immediately suggest book 11 of the *Odyssey*, but could apply equally to Dante's and Virgil's encounters with the damned. We noted in the previous chapter Pound's Dantescan taste for hunting frauds and falsifiers. In Dante's Hell, the Prophet Mohammed and his son-in-law Ali—fraudulent heretics, to Dante, and the ultimate personifications of Oriental difference—are physically cleft in two (in punishment for sowing schism), just as the semi-colon and line-break bifurcate Pound's intensely Manichean poem.<sup>177</sup> The couplet and semi-colon originated in 'Dance Figure' as an intensely erotic device. But are the West's

<sup>175</sup> Zhaoming Qian, 'The Orient', in *Ezra Pound in Context*, ed. Ira Bruce Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 340.

<sup>176</sup> Arrowsmith, 'The Transcultural Roots of Modernism'.

<sup>177</sup> This episode occurs in Canto 28 of the *Inferno*. See Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 1: Inferno*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 433–35.

sexual fetishization of the Orient and its sadistic fantasies not perhaps quite closely related within imagist poetics?

This may be to press the poem too roughly. Its formal model is clearly a Far-Eastern, not a Middle-Eastern or Islamic one. Yet, the poem also owes a tremendous amount, formally and in its sensuous imagery, to the explicitly Levantine ‘Dance Figure’. What is more, the Dantescan scene I describe above is an unavoidable part of the Western tradition that Pound invokes in ‘In a Station of the Metro’, and seems considerably more apt to the transcultural encounter of the poem than is Homer’s largely mono-cultural underworld.

Of course, Pound does not straightforwardly identify with ‘the West’ or with supposed Western values, particularly Christianity. His apostrophe to the belligerent Balkan states, part of which I have already quoted, is worth noting at greater length:

“Fellow Christians” and the rest of the cant be hanged!

What could be more inane than Europe pretending to be Christian? “Fellow rebels”, if you like. “Fellow fighters for fair play and an open game”, we greet you and we wish you well. . . .

Uncivilised Montenegrans, Servians, decadent Greeks, pestilent Bulgarians, I wish you well, and I pray that you conserve your ideal of freedom better than men have done in my own “free country” or in constitutional England.<sup>178</sup>

In mocking what he sees as Europe’s shallow pretence of Christianity, Pound distances himself from the pious, Gladstonian tradition of pro-Balkan (and anti-Ottoman) feeling in Britain.<sup>179</sup> In describing the Balkan nations as ‘uncivilised’, ‘decadent’ and ‘pestilent’, Pound is positioning them as the antithesis to this comfortable liberal constituency—a move which, as David Roessel notes, would have been unlikely to have gained the approval of the Balkan people, who ‘were not, at this stage, interested in defining themselves against England or America’.<sup>180</sup> Pound’s characterization of the Balkan states here reproduces the tone he uses to describe his own ‘songs’ in some of the poems from ‘Contemporania’ such as ‘Salutation the Second’:

<sup>178</sup> Pound, ‘The Black Crusade [letter 1]’, 69.

<sup>179</sup> See Roessel, *In Byron’s Shadow*, 321 n. 36.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

Quotation from 'Salutation the Second', lines 16 & 20–22 (*P* 87). See supplementary volume, p. 3–4.

Pound had, very recently, discovered the work of the French Parnassian writer, Théophile Gautier. In the preface to his *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier mocks Christianity and French Republicanism alike as the mere fashionable trappings of bourgeois respectability. Famously, Gautier rejects the application of any moral category to art, and attacks 'monstrously virtuous' journalists, whose 'Every article turns into a sermon'.<sup>181</sup> In adopting Gautier's aestheticist position here, Pound associates the Balkan states with his own pursuit of aesthetic autonomy.

Pound's appropriation of Balkan energies, however, was ultimately highly opportunistic. Helen Carr, in her sketch of Pound's attitudes about imperialism during his years in London, and his relationships with various anti-imperialist figures and non-Western art movements cites the remarks, quoted above, as evidence that 'Although Pound was not interested in nationalism as such (it was too collectivist), he was drawn to rebels'.<sup>182</sup> There is evident truth to this reading. But Pound's celebration of militant Balkan nationalism has another, quite contrary dimension. Pound's fondness for rebels is expressed in remarkably chauvinistic and Orientalist terms. He casts the Balkan states as righteous embodiments of Western 'constitutional government' (notably, not of 'democracy') battling the 'Oriental despotism' of the Ottoman Empire. When Eugene Michail writes (noting the fickleness and fluctuation of Western European impressions of the Balkans) that 'Through the Balkans, Europe expanded its political and cultural

<sup>181</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupain*, trans. Helen Constantine, 1835 (London: Penguin, 2005), 3, 4.

<sup>182</sup> Carr, 'Imagism and Empire', 78.

borders eastwards, and for a few months [in 1912–13] the Balkan armies were the vanguard of European projected self-identifications’, he captures very clearly the spirit in which Pound was participating.<sup>183</sup> The war allowed Pound to have things both ways. He could identify with the fledgling Balkan states as ‘Fellow rebels’ as they defied the Ottoman Empire, in the same way that he personified his own poems as projections of his own wish to flout and thumb his nose at social convention. The Ottoman Empire was, as saw it, ‘lock, stock, and barrel of our matter’ with an oppressive bourgeois capitalism and its attendant social norms and niceties. Yet it is important to note that in adopting this position of the supposed outcast, he in fact sacrificed nothing. The oppositional pose he struck, his support for the apparent historical underdog, allowed him, simultaneously and paradoxically, to delight in Occidental dominance and cultural superiority in the contest with the Islamic Ottoman other.

### ‘Tenzzone’ and modernism

I want to conclude this chapter with a reading of a poem that draws together many of the diverse themes that arise from Pound’s Balkan War letters: war, gendered violence, the desire for autonomy, the fear of tyranny, the resentment of respectable middle-class values, and, moreover, the pursuit of innovation in poetic form. ‘Tenzzone’, the opening piece of the 1913 ‘Contemporania’ series, seems to have been included in the second batch of poems, sent to Monroe in December 1912, meaning it was written more or less concurrently with Pound’s Balkan War letters.<sup>184</sup> I quote Pound’s ‘Tenzzone’ in full:

---

<sup>183</sup> Michail, ‘Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912–91’, 224.

<sup>184</sup> For a detailed account of how ‘Contemporania’ took shape throughout the Autumn of 1912, which draws on materials in the Harriet Monroe archive, see Fogelman, ‘The Evolution of Ezra Pound’s “Contemporania”’, esp., 94–97.

Quotation of ‘Tenzzone’, (P 83). See supplementary volume, p. 4.<sup>185</sup>

Critics have had little to say about the poem, despite the fact that when Pound chose the ‘Contemporania’ series to head up his collected edition, *Lustra* (1917), ‘Tenzzone’ retained its position as the very first poem, giving it the status, I would suggest, of a manifesto poem, of sorts. When the poem refers to ‘these songs’, it means the whole contents of that volume, including all of his imagist work, *Cathay*, and selected earlier poems.

‘Tenzzone’ openly toys with an equation between Pound’s new style—‘ultra modern’, as he described it, or what John Reed called ‘Aggressively Contemporary’—and the idea of martial force, as his ‘songs’ are likened to a Roman centurion.<sup>186</sup> We might question whether the trope is intended entirely seriously, given the somewhat slapstick image of Pound’s audience ‘flee[ing], howling in terror’. But this bathos is itself undercut by the sexual violence suggested both in the figure of the centaur and in the frustrated seduction of the line, ‘Their virgin stupidity is untétemptable’. The stressed second syllables of ‘stupídity’ and ‘untétemptable’ seem not so much to be spoken as spat. After such an outburst, the speaker’s address to his ‘friendly critics’ in the following line has the air of one trying, and not quite managing, to regain their composure, leading to the short vowels and stuttering /t/ sounds (‘Do not set about to’), and supercilious

<sup>185</sup> The version which headed up the ‘Contemporania’ series omitted the first stanza break, had ‘truth’ in place of ‘verisimilitudes’, and also featured a typographic error (‘centurian’ [sic]).

<sup>186</sup> John Reed, ‘A Word to Mr. Pound’, *Poetry* 2, no. 3 (1 June 1913): 112.

diction ('procure') of line 9. In the first two stanzas, then, the 'swift contraposition of objects', with all of the conflict that notion entails, seems to be between Pound's persona and his audience.

In the third stanza of the poem, however, this tension vanishes. This part of the poem is unmistakably imagist, in fact programmatically so. Pointedly austere, the stanza creates a setting of hard 'crag's', and, with remarkable economy, foregrounds the sensuousness of sound, temperature, and the contrast of light and darkness. Moreover, it calls attention to its own music—'the echo of my heels'—and there is indeed an echo of hard /k/ sounds in 'kind', 'echo', 'cool', 'darkness', and in 'crag's' (whose /g/, too, is just a /k/ that is voiced rather than unvoiced). There is also a group of much softer /h/ sounds: 'hidden, 'have heard' and 'heels'. There is a straightforward and very effective mimesis in these repeated sounds; they suggest the ambience of a cool, damp cave with its resonant drips and echoes. This, surely, is one of the 'verisimilitudes' Pound feels his feminized audience too 'stupid' to detect. But the stanza is also intensely reflexive. The echoes in the 'hidden recesses' represent the attainment, if only imaginatively, of some form of seclusion and autonomy from the insipid demands of the mass audience. The artist and his 'free kind' are released from the proprieties of respectable society and, like Piere Vidal, descend into a bestial state.

I want to raise the possibility, though I cannot prove it conclusively, that the tropes of this poem were fundamentally inspired and shaped by the Balkan conflict. At the height of the war, in November 1912, the London publishing house William Heineman rather opportunistically reissued Ivan Vazov's 1888 novel, *Under the Yoke: A Romance of Bulgarian Liberty*, which told of nineteenth-century Bulgarian struggles against Ottoman oppression. On 28<sup>th</sup> November (a week after Pound's first letter on the Balkan War, and a week before his second) the *Times Literary Supplement* published a review of this reissue, which opened with a reflection on the historical possibilities of nationalism under conditions of occupation:



When a nation is conquered by a foreign foe it has several courses open to it. It may amalgamate with its conquerors to form a new nation, as did the Saxons with the Normans, or it may withdraw into some *impenetrable fastness* and retain an alpine independence *on crags too desolate to tempt the conqueror*, as in the case of Montenegro or the Visigoths in Asturias; or it may go to sleep and forget its past and its future in remembering the rule, 'The sword does not strike the bowed head'. This last course was that pursued by the Bulgarians [. . .]<sup>187</sup>

To 'withdraw into some impenetrable fastness and retain an alpine independence on crags too desolate to tempt the conqueror'—this seems too close the imagery of 'Tenzon' to be a coincidence. And note also the resonance to 'The Seafarer' in the word 'fastness' which, as we saw in the previous chapter, serves a pivotal function in the poem. Note also how the Saxons, too, are mentioned, again increasing the likelihood that, had Pound happened to have picked up the *TLS* that week, this passage would have caught and retained his attention. Pound certainly did read the *TLS* on occasion as his letters demonstrate, though how regularly he did so is difficult to say.<sup>188</sup> But we know that Pound was writing 'Tenzon' around the time he was corresponding about the Balkan War in *The New Age*. The precise conjunctions of time, subject and diction between that poem and the *TLS* review of Vazov's novel, are surely very strong evidence that, firstly, Pound did indeed read this passage and that, secondly, the programmatic imagist ideal of artistic autonomy depicted in the 'crag' of 'Tenzon' was in fact inspired by Pound's fascination with Balkan resistance to Ottoman rule.

To be sure, the particular form of this conception of the artist's antagonistic position in modernity is a stock trope of what we might call the ideology of canonical modernism. Andreas Huyssen, in his attempt to 'construct an ideal type notion of what the modernist artwork has become as a result of successive canonizations', suggests that one characteristic would be the belief that 'Only by fortifying its boundaries, by maintaining its purity and autonomy, and by avoiding any contamination with mass

<sup>187</sup> 'The Turk in Bulgaria', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 November 1912, 548. Emphasis added. Note that the article uses a now-obsolete transliteration from Russian, and thus spells Vazov's name as 'Vazoff'.

<sup>188</sup> The *TLS* is mentioned five times in Pound's selected letters, though the earliest of these references is in 1917. See *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 172.

culture and with the signifying systems of everyday life can the art work maintain its adversary stance'.<sup>189</sup> Although Huyssen is characterizing a critical commonplace rather than generalizing about modernist artwork itself, his description seems fairly pertinent to the attitude expressed in Pound's 'Tenzzone'. Yet two factors subtly resist the attempt to reduce the poem to such a straightforwardly 'high modernist' position. The first is generic: 'tenzone', deriving from the Provençal for 'tension',<sup>190</sup> is the name of a medieval genre of often irreverent duel poems, exchanged between rival poets. Dante, in his adolescence, exchanged several such poems with his friend and competitor, Forese Donati.<sup>191</sup> Until the early twentieth century, scholars of Dante's work felt his *tenzone* to have 'no artistic value' and the poems were relegated to the footnotes of his *oeuvre*.<sup>192</sup> But as Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde note, Dante's contemporary audience would have understood perfectly well the literary conventions his *tenzone* observed; these were secular, and, one might say, demotic poems, in contrast to Dante's later, more devout writing.<sup>193</sup> Pound may express hostility in 'Tenzzone' to the modern form of mass audience and the critics and magazines who constitute its mediating institutions; in fact, if we credit the link to the *TLS* review, there is a sense in the poem that this mass public is conceived as an occupying power. Nevertheless, Pound's identification with the *tenzone* genre suggests at least an affiliation with the vulgar, in its true sense.

The second factor that prevents an easy reduction of 'Tenzzone' to a predictable statement of high modernist elitism is the political trope Pound uses. The 'free kind' with which he finds seclusion on the 'crag' is, it seems, aligned in some way with a

<sup>189</sup> Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 53, 54.

<sup>190</sup> K. K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae* (1926) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 232.

<sup>191</sup> These poems can be found in *Dante's Lyric Poetry. Volume 1, The Poems: Text and Translation*, ed. Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 148–55.

<sup>192</sup> Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, eds., *Dante's Lyric Poetry. Volume 2, Commentary*, vol. 2: *Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 243. The example of the prevailing earlier critical view of Dante's *tenzone* is quoted from the 1906 Temple Classics edition of Dante's collected lyrics (p. 354) which omitted the *tenzone* series.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Teodolinda Barolini and Rachel Jacoff, 'Dante and the Lyric Past', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27.

national grouping. Again, the figure of Dante seems central in this respect, being so closely associated with the development of vernacular Italian—a language which assumed a vital role in the nineteenth-century claims for Italian nationhood. The centaur, too, is a potent symbol. Pound argued that ‘Poetry is a centaur’, referring to its difficult union of thought and music.<sup>194</sup> And though, in ‘Tenzzone’, the violent connotations of this analogy are exploited to the full, we must also take account of the centaurs’ role in the *Divine Comedy*, where they guard the river of blood in which tyrants such as Alexander the Great and Attila the Hun are punished. It is not only Dante’s national significance that is utilized in here, then, but also the juridical-penal system of his great religious epic. ‘Tenzzone’ is, in this respect, a fantasy of a kind of imagist state, inspired by the tenacity and insurgency of Balkan nationalism.

To be clear, I do not suggest that the identification with nationalism is necessarily any more progressive or desirable than the anti-popular, canonical, ‘modernist’ ideology Huyssen describes. And it is not clear, or indeed likely, that Pound felt any great investment in Balkan nationalism itself; Carr is quite right that such ideologies were ‘too collectivist’ for him. It may be that he adopts nationalism as a trope only out of an inability to imagine the people of the Balkans as individuals. There is an obvious and powerful symmetry between the pursuit of ‘purity’ and avoidance of ‘contamination’ which Huyssen describes and many, if not most, strains of nationalism. All these factors ought to give us pause, particularly given what we know about Pound’s later political commitments (though, it should be noted, the nationalist aspect of Fascism was never particularly important to Pound). Even despite all this however, Pound does seem to be attempting to grasp not something antithetical to the modern mass public, but some kind of alternative form for it. It may be that, as Eric Hobsbawm stresses throughout his study of the phenomenon, the idea of the nation as a genuinely popular form is simply a mythology; put simply, ‘Nations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way

---

<sup>194</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Serious Artist—III: Emotion and Poesy’, *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 10 (1 November 1913): 195.

around'.<sup>195</sup> And, moreover, vernacular Italian was important to Italian nationalism not because it was widely used—only a tiny minority actually used it—but rather because it was the literary and administrative language of the elite class.<sup>196</sup> But Pound did not see it like this. For him, Dante was to Italy what Whitman was to America—‘the first great man to write in the language of his people’.<sup>197</sup> The connection Pound draws between national identity in Italy and the United States forms the basis of the following chapter.

---

<sup>195</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–38.

<sup>197</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘What I Feel about Walt Whitman’, in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 116.

## ‘[O]ur American Risorgimento’: Pound, The United States and the conception of modernism

The carefully negotiated reconciliation with Whitman in ‘A Pact’ is just one manifestation of an important but understudied tendency in Pound’s pre-war work—his turn towards America. This period from late 1912 to the end of 1913—roughly the period of his involvement with imagism—saw Pound produce a great deal of writing concerned broadly with the literary culture and political project of the United States. The theme of America as an idea and a political project would reappear very clearly much later in the so-called Jefferson Cantos (XXX–XLI) of the early 1930s. But, as I will show, it was at this early stage very closely intertwined with his thinking about what it would mean to create radically modern poetry and to ‘make it new’.

The question of Pound’s identity as an ‘American’ poet has been addressed in some detail by scholars such as Wendy Stallard Flory, Daniel Katz, James J. Wilhelm, and Cary Wolfe, as well as the contributors to a special issue of *Paideuma* in 2005.<sup>1</sup> But, with the notable exceptions of Katz and Wolfe, this work pays little or no attention to the brief but intense period of contemplation and writing about America which occurred in the pre-war period, just as imagism was taking shape. Wolfe’s study argues that Pound’s work shares with Emerson’s philosophy what he calls an ‘American literary ideology’ concerning the logic of private property and the commodity form. My study differs in focusing on Pound’s engagement with the development of American political power, internally and externally. In so far as I address the dual sense of the United

---

<sup>1</sup> See Flory, *The American Ezra Pound* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Katz, ‘Ezra Pound’s American Scenes: Henry James and the Labour of Translation’, chapter 3 of *American Modernism’s Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 53–70; Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound* (New York: Garland Pub, 1985); Wolfe, *The Limits of American Literary Ideology in Pound and Emerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). *Paideuma*, vol. 32, no. 2–3, ‘Ezra Pound and American Identity’ (winter 2005), includes valuable contributions by Tim Redman on Pound’s populism (cited below), Burton Hatlen on the American character of Pound’s epic mode, and Ronald Bush on the influence of Emerson and Thoreau on Pound.

States' colonial status—that is, as self-consciously a 'provincial' former colony but also as a developing colonial power in its own right—I am perhaps closer to Jeffrey W. Westover's study, *The Colonial Moment: Discoveries and Settlements in Modern American Poetry*. However, Westover limits himself to poets who 'retained their citizenship and remained in the United States instead of permanently moving to Europe'.<sup>2</sup> That what I am calling Pound's 'American turn' took place while he was in London, accords with Katz's important observation that, for Pound (as for Henry James and others), 'expatriation is not a flight *from* American identity, but rather becomes the means for a displaced and dialectical encounter with it'.<sup>3</sup> That is, Pound 'claim[ed] to grasp more firmly his "American" identity thanks to his geographical estrangement from the fatherland, rather than despite it'.<sup>4</sup>

The 1912 American turn in Pound's work was quite sudden. Prior to this, he had been concerned primarily with the rediscovery and preservation of salient but neglected poets and forms from the past, almost exclusively the European past. His major prose works—*The Spirit of Romance* and 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'—were also heavily focused on the European tradition, particularly the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* and the work of Arnaut Daniel and Guido Cavalcanti. To be sure, he glances to America briefly in *The Spirit of Romance*, but this is only so as to compare Whitman unfavourably with François Villon, and to satirize Whitman's famous 'yawp': 'Lo, behold, I eat water melons. When I eat water melons the world eats water melons through me'.<sup>5</sup> Aside from this the only sign prior to 1912 of Pound's critical or artistic interest in America is his brief 1908 note, 'What I feel about Walt Whitman', written shortly after arriving in London.<sup>6</sup>

In 1912 and 1913, however, a concentration of American themes begins to appear

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey W. Westover, *The Colonial Moment: Discoveries and Settlements in Modern American Poetry* (Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, 2–3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Dent, 1910), 178–79.

<sup>6</sup> Ezra Pound, 'What I Feel about Walt Whitman', in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 115–16.

in Pound's work, especially in his prose. 'Patria Mia', his series of articles on American culture and society, was published in the *New Age* in the autumn of 1912, and, as Katz demonstrates, 'shows him adopting with relish the Jamesian position of the "restored absentee" which James had defined in *The American Scene*'.<sup>7</sup> The series had been roughed out during his trip to the United States in 1910. And having established a regular outlet at *The New Age*, he wrote to his father to request the drafts. The process of preparing 'Patria Mia' for serial publication seems to have been the catalyst for this brief but significant American turn. 'Patria Mia' was followed by 'Through Alien Eyes', a series of parallel reflections on British society, which self-consciously call attention to his expatriate American persona. Still further, he published a series entitled 'America: Chances and Remedies', which proposed changes to the relationships which existed in the United States between the arts, the universities and the press. He concluded this concentrated burst of Americana with an ostensibly positive yet deeply patronizing review of Robert Frost's work, which construed the older writer as a quaint provincial naïf who wrote 'folk poetry'.<sup>8</sup> Pound recycled an anecdote relayed to him by the Irish poet, Joseph Campbell, who told of 'meeting a man on a desolate waste of bogs', who, upon the suggestion that his locale was 'rather dull' retorted 'Faith, ye can sit on a middan [rubbish heap] and dream stars'.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, Frost was offended by the comparison; and, after further overbearing conduct on Pound's part, the brief friendship between the two poets soon came to an end.<sup>10</sup>

Expressions of Pound's new-found national consciousness were not limited to his journalism. 'A Pact' is only the most notable of a number of poems written during this period which address American themes. Critics such as Hugh Witemeyer and Bruce

<sup>7</sup> Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Review of A Boy's Will by Robert Frost', *Poetry* 2, no. 2 (1 May 1913): 73.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Pound reviewed Frost for a British audience with much less condescension in Ezra Pound, 'In Metre: "Love Poems and Others" by D. H. Lawrence, "Peacock Pie" by Walter de La Mare, and "A Boy's Will" by Robert Frost', *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 6 (1 September 1913): 113. Ezra Pound, 'Modern Georgics', *Poetry* 5, no. 3 (1 December 1914): 127–30. A good account of the brief friendship between Frost and Pound, and their subsequent estrangement can be found in Jeffrey Meyers's *Robert Frost: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1996), 103–110.

Fogelman have detected a Whitmanic presence in the rhythms and themes of the 'Contemporania' series as a whole.<sup>11</sup> But three poems in particular from this brief period take American society and literature as their themes, constituting a kind of triptych of explicit 'America' poems. Of these, 'A Pact' forms the central panel; on the left is 'To Whistler, American', published in the first issue of *Poetry* in October, 1912; and on the right is 'The Rest', which was first published (as a section of the 'Lustra' series) in November 1913.<sup>12</sup>

Pound's American turn in 1912–13 is organized around his committed belief in the imminence of a golden era for the United States. In *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, published in 1920, we read that Pound's eponymous poet was 'born / In a half-savage country, out of date' (P 185). Setting aside the ultimately tiresome debate about the extent to which we can identify the character of Mauberley with the person of Pound,<sup>13</sup> the fact remains that Pound himself was born, in 1885, in a mining town in Idaho territory—a place which, if not exactly 'half-savage' (whatever we might understand that to mean), was nonetheless still a federal 'territory', becoming a state of the Union only five years later,

<sup>11</sup> Hugh Witemeyer, 'Clothing the American Adam: Pound's Tailoring of Walt Whitman', in *Ezra Pound among the Poets: Homer, Ovid, Li Po, Dante, Whitman, Browning, Yeats, Williams, Eliot*, ed. George Bornstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 81–105; Bruce Fogelman, 'The Evolution of Ezra Pound's "Contemporania"', *Journal of Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1 July 1988): 93–103.

<sup>12</sup> In isolating these three poems, I am do not claim that they are the only poems of Pound's outside of *The Cantos* which address American themes. Certainly there are other poems written during the pre-*Cantos* period which do this: two which stand out are 'Cantico Del Sole' ('The thought of what America would be like / If the classics had a wide circulation / Troubles my sleep'), and the third section of 'Moeurs Contemporaines' (in which, upon learning that several members of a particular family all have literary ambitions, a 'Young American pilgrim' exclaims—perhaps ironically—"This is a darn'd clever bunch!"). But these two poems are much later than the three I focus on in this chapter. Both were first published in the *Little Review* in 1918, 'Cantico del Sole' in March (vol. 4, no. 11), p. 35; 'Moeurs Contemporaines' in May, (vol. 5, no. 1), p. 27. In designating 'To Whistler, American', 'A Pact' and 'The Rest' as an 'American triptych', I want to call attention to Pound's sudden concentration of attention on America just at the moment these three earlier, imagist-era poems were written.

<sup>13</sup> The *Mauberley* debate was sparked by Donald Davie's essay, 'Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*', in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, ed. Boris Ford (Baltimore: Penguin, 1961), and was taken up by critics such as Jo Brantley Berryman and John J. Espey. No consensus has arisen among these critics as to which sections of the poem are spoken by which persona. A more recent exchange between heavyweight Poundians, Ronald Bush and Peter Nicholls, provides a relatively enlightening conclusion to the debate: see Bush, "'It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted': *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*", *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1 April 1990): 56–78; and Nicholls, "'A Consciousness Disjunct': Sex and the Writer in Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*", *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 01 (1994): 61–75.



in 1890, the same year that the US Census declared that the North American frontier had effectively closed. Within the imperial and racial discourses that give it meaning, ‘savage’ denotes a wild, primitive quality but also a potential for development; what is savage is yet to be ‘civilized’. This seemingly contradicts the phrase ‘out of date’, which denotes something whose time has definitely passed. But *Mauberley* suggests that these qualities co-exist in the United States, or that the speaker is ‘out of date’ precisely because of the savageness of his birthplace. The literary instincts of the United States, *Mauberley* suggests, are ‘out of date’ because its provincial culture relies upon the shop-worn literary and artistic cast-offs of the Old World metropolises; yet, for all its backwardness, it has a ‘savage’ virility at odds with Europe’s tired decadence. It is not clear whether it is Europe or the British Empire (or possibly the legacy of Queen Victoria) that is dismissed elsewhere in *Mauberley* as ‘an old bitch gone in the teeth / . . . a botched civilization’, but either way, the image is of the *Old World*, attacked both as moribund and—with the same vindictive misogyny we saw in the previous chapter—as female.

*Mauberley*, a poem firmly of the inter-war period, offers little confidence in the New World either. But I hope to show in this chapter that, prior to the war, Pound’s faith in the United States was not only very firm, but also a significant aspect of his artistic motivation and self-imagining. H. L. Mencken seems to have detected Pound’s positive utilization of an American ‘savageness’, describing the poems of Pound’s *Provença*, in unmistakably Whitmanic terms, as ‘rough, uncouth, hairy, barbarous, wild’.<sup>14</sup> Mencken immediately associates these qualities with the force of renewal:

once the galloping swing of them [i.e., the poems] is mastered, a sort of stark, heathenish music emerges from the noise. One hears the thumping of a tom-tom. Dionysos and his rogues are at their profane prancing. It is once more the springtime of the world’.<sup>15</sup>

As Helen Carr has noted, although ‘The word “primitivist” is not usually associated

<sup>14</sup> Eric Homberger, ed., *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1972), 73. Originally published in *Smart Set*, no. 33, April 1911, pp. 166–67.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

with Pound[,] . . . he so often looked back to the openings and the vigorous beginnings of civilisation to escape what he saw as the diluted and decayed present'.<sup>16</sup> This impulse, I think, also helps to explain his complex relationship with America during this period. In a letter to Harriet Monroe, which we will discuss in more detail below, Pound emphatically heralded what he called 'our American Risorgimento'.<sup>17</sup> We should consider carefully the implications of the precise coincidence of Pound's American turn with his investment in a nascent modernism. During this period the emergent impulse to be 'modern' is very closely interconnected in Pound's work with American identity and, in particular, with an Emersonian-Whitmanian pursuit of an American national literature — 'an original relation to the universe' — that does not exist in a peripheral relationship with European metropolitan sensibilities.<sup>18</sup>

What I am arguing in this chapter is that there is an underlying analogy in Pound's early work between two phenomena: on the one hand, the self-conscious emergence of modernism, or, at least, of the self-consciously 'new', in literature, and, on the other, the intertwined development of national consciousness and imperial power in the United States. Pound draws freely upon the American mythology of the United States as a young, virile, plain-spoken nation, a mythology which, like the martial spirit of the Balkan states, provided a strong counterpoint to the rigid social protocols of bourgeois, 'Post-Victorian' Britain. One manifestation of this is the emergence after the war of the folksy, ornery, mid-western persona that appears so often in Pound's letters and, to a lesser extent, in his prose. But even before the war, we get a hint of this persona in the retort, which Pound reproduces in 'Patria Mia', supposedly made by an old cowboy when faced with disapproving glances from a Bostonian gentleman in a restaurant: 'See here, young feller, I got manners, but I ain't got time to use 'em'.<sup>19</sup> This persona differs

<sup>16</sup> Helen Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender, and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789-1936* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1996), 222.

<sup>17</sup> 18 Aug 1912, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 44; See also, Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. I', *The New Age* 11, no. 19 (5 September 1912): 445.

<sup>18</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature', in *Nature and Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 35.

<sup>19</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. X', *The New Age* 12, no. 1 (7 November 1912): 12.

markedly from that of the idle bog-dweller he assigned to Frost. Both are defined against a metropolitan sensibility, but while the latter is a static object of curiosity, a parody of Wordsworth's leech gatherer in 'Resolution and Independence', the persona Pound adopts is kinetic, self-aware and anti-sentimental. This particular configuration of American identity, then, dovetails with Pound's emergent modernism. 'America' becomes an enabling metaphor, a trope for what it might ultimately mean to 'make it new'.

The tentative, provisional equation of 'America' and 'modernism' also applies in the opposite direction. There is, in fact, a discernible thread of American exceptionalism running through Pound's imagist-era work. By foretelling an 'American Risorgimento', Pound locates the revolutionary impulse of an as-yet inchoate modernism within a youthful, virile United States, a country on which, it might be hoped, the effect of Europe's sclerotic sentimentalism was only temporary and superficial. There is a dual significance to 'American' in Pound's work at this time, then: in one sense it helps Pound to conceptualize modernism, and is to this extent a subordinate trope; in another sense, Pound binds his hope for a modernist renaissance to the dynamism of the American national project. When Pound writes, in his early essay on Whitman, that 'I should like to drive Whitman into the old world[:] I sledge, he drill—and to scourge America with all the old beauty', he captures something, personified in the person of Whitman, and triangulated via Pound's own position in Europe, of this dual movement of an American modernism and a modernist America.<sup>20</sup> The former is the Whitmanian 'drill' pounded (*Pounded?*) into the European rock; the latter is an American national awakening catalysed by the 'all the old beauty' which, in its present 'savage', 'provincial' condition it neglects.

---

<sup>20</sup> Pound, 'What I Feel about Walt Whitman'. My emphasis.

## ‘our American Risorgimento’

At the close of his effusive letter written in response to Harriet Monroe’s proposals for a new magazine, *Poetry*, Pound wrote that

Any agonizing that tends to hurry what I believe in the end to be inevitable, our American Risorgimento, is dear to me. That awakening will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot! The force we have, and the impulse, but the guiding sense, the discrimination in applying the force, we must wait and strive for.<sup>21</sup>

Elaborating on this theme in ‘Patria Mia’, Pound characterized Whitman, in his achievements and in his failings, as the embodiment of this national condition; ‘He was the time and the people’, ‘not an artist but a reflex, the first honest reflex’—that is, forceful but unguided, even involuntary.<sup>22</sup> Pound explained, as we saw in chapter one, that ‘one cannot call a man an artist until he has shown himself capable of reticence and of restraint, until he shows himself in some degree *master of the forces* which beat upon him’.<sup>23</sup> We see again, in this analysis of American potential, Pound’s tendency to divide intellectual from manual faculties, and, inevitably, to claim the intellectual faculty, and the authority it entails, as the prerogative of the arts.

When he evokes the idea of the poet’s mastery of ‘the forces that beat upon him’ the influence of the renaissance concept of *virtù* is evident, that rare personal capacity which allows an individual to overcome fate: ‘*virtù vince fortuna*’.<sup>24</sup> The coming ‘awakening’ would bring *virtù* to America. Why, then, did Pound choose the ‘Risorgimento’ over ‘Renaissance’ when foretelling his awakening? To be sure, in a subsequent article, he did cast out for, as he says, ‘*le mot juste*’, auditioning ‘Renaissance’ as well as ‘*Risvegliamento*’ instead.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the initial specificity

<sup>21</sup> Pound to Monroe, 18 Aug 1912; *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. IV’, *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912): 516.

<sup>23</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. VIII’, *The New Age* 11, no. 26 (24 October 1912): 611. My emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> This renaissance sense of *virtù* is distinct from the Paterian sense, which Pound gives to that term in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’, of an absolutely individuating essence or ‘element’. But as I outlined in the second part of chapter one, the renaissance sense of the term remains an important (if implicit) counter, for Pound, to Pater’s deterministic resignation and impressionism.

<sup>25</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘America: Chances and Remedies. I’, *The New Age* 13, no. 1 (1 May 1913): 9.

and historical connotations of 'Risorgimento' are highly suggestive of Pound's thinking at this time. Though he doesn't acknowledge it (he focuses simply on the literal Italian meaning of *risorgimento* as 'awakening'), the word has an inescapable association with the nineteenth-century unification of Italy, which resulted in the creation of an Italian monarchy and the emergence of the modern nation state of Italy.

The immediate link, here, between Pound's American Risorgimento and the Italian *Risorgimento* of the late nineteenth century, is (as in so many other aspects of Pound's modernist development) the rival presence of Italian Futurism. Pound's utopian promise of a Risorgimento resonates with the fashion for artistic manifestos inaugurated by Marinetti's aggressively nationalistic 'Founding Manifesto of Futurism' in 1909, a document which drew its strength not from Italy's ancient imperial past but from the national present bequeathed by the Italian *Risorgimento*.<sup>26</sup> Marinetti and his Futurist peers had directed a high-profile theatrical campaign, 'Against Past-Loving Venice', as the title of the pamphlet they dropped from a belltower declared.<sup>27</sup> Keen to undermine Futurist theatrics, Pound made a direct challenge to Marinetti in the third installment of his 'Patria Mia' series. Beside New York, Pound wrote,

Venice seems like a tawdry scene in a play-house. New York is out of doors.  
And as for Venice; when Mr. Marinetti and his friends shall have succeeded in  
destroying that ancient city, we will rebuild Venice on the Jersey mud flats and use the  
same for a tea-shop.<sup>28</sup>

Pound implies here that whether or not the Futurists ever accomplished Marinetti's ambition of toppling 'the old Venice' into 'its little reeking canals',<sup>29</sup> such an achievement would already have been eclipsed by the modern spectacle of the United States, 'the only place where contemporary architecture can be held to be of any great interest'.<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere in the article there are several other implicit barbs aimed at the

<sup>26</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 39–44.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–58.

<sup>28</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. III', *The New Age* 11, no. 21 (19 September 1912): 492.

<sup>29</sup> Marinetti, *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Pound, 'Patria Mia. III', 492.

Futurists. In New York City, Marinetti's airy dream of 'the reign of holy Electric Light' was an almost quotidian reality, whose skyline at night Pound describes as 'Squares upon squares of flame, set and cut into the æther'.<sup>31</sup> From an American's point of view, Pound is suggesting, Marinetti's predilection for automobiles and light-bulbs seemed rather quaint.<sup>32</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, Pound's competitive assault on Futurism continued in *Blast*, where he attacked the rival movement for abdicating agency in the face of the 'circumstance' of rapid technological change. Correspondingly, he is careful in 'Patria Mia' to stress that American society is the master of its technology as the poet is master of the line: of the lights in the New York skyline he writes, 'Here is our poetry, for we have pulled down the stars to our will'.<sup>33</sup> Italy, like England and France, may have a literary and cultural tradition immeasurably richer than that of the United States. But, in the passage I quote above, Pound characterizes Italian Futurism as essentially little more than a cargo cult, fetishizing the trappings of an American modernity.

As this defence of American achievement suggests, Pound's use of the term 'Risorgimento' points to phenomena well beyond the literary or cultural spheres. Two weeks after his put-down to Marinetti, he set out what his own movement would entail:

A Risorgimento means an intellectual awakening. This will have its effect not only in the arts, but in life, in politics, and in economics. If I seem to lay undue stress upon the status of the arts, it is only because the arts respond to an intellectual movement more swiftly and more apparently than do institutions, and not because there is any better reason for discussing them first.

A Risorgimento implies a whole volley of liberations; liberations from ideas, from stupidities, from conditions and from tyrannies of wealth or of arms'.<sup>34</sup>

The arts, then, provide an index of a wider 'intellectual awakening' or 'intellectual movement' touching numerous dimensions of social reality. The implication of this passage is that even at this early stage Pound felt that his own art had privileged access

<sup>31</sup> Marinetti, *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, 55; Pound, 'Patria Mia. III', 492.

<sup>32</sup> Despite the somewhat sneering remarks, Pound is quite right to imply that Futurism arises as much out of the technological and economic backwardness of Italian society as it does out of its cultural advancement.

<sup>33</sup> Pound, 'Patria Mia. III', 492.

<sup>34</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. V', *New Age* 11, no. 23 (3 October 1912): 539.

to intellectual developments which would ultimately determine political change. As he would write, famously, much later, ‘Artists are the antennae of the race’.<sup>35</sup> But Pound certainly envisages these developments to lead to social change.

Pound conceives of ‘liberation’, here, in a very broad sense, ranging from what we might call intellectual enlightenment to political and economic liberation. He explicitly predicts the fall of ‘tyrannies . . . of arms’, and there are overtones of violence in the word ‘volley’—as in the simultaneous discharge of firearms.<sup>36</sup> But despite such apparent militancy, Pound turns his rhetorical fire not upon the government, the Federal Reserve, or even the ‘monopolists’ against whom he railed in the first of his Balkan War letters. Rather, he excoriates the ‘highly respected and very decrepit’ literary magazines since these are ‘the means by which [ideas] are transported and kept in circulation’. His complaint is that the style of poetry desired and promoted by the magazines was 40 years out of date.

‘It is well known that in the year of grace 1870 Jehovah appeared to Messrs. Harper and Co. and to the editors of “The Century”, “The Atlantic”, and certain others and spake thus: “The style of 1870 is the final and divine revelation. Keep things always just as they are now”’.<sup>37</sup>

The magazines show ‘no interest whatever in the art of poetry, as a living art, an art changing and developing, always the same at root, never the same appearance for two decades in succession’. They are ‘like the carpenter who sawed off the books’ in their desire for regularity, and are not concerned with ‘ascertaining whether new things, living things, seeking for expression, have found themselves new and fitting modes wherein to be expressed’.<sup>38</sup>

As with the paratactic associations in his first Balkan War letter, Pound’s leap from the somewhat esoteric generality of his ‘Risorgimento’ to the relatively banal specificity

<sup>35</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Teacher’s Mission’, in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 58. Originally published in *English Journal* 23, no. 8 (1 October 1934).

<sup>36</sup> The use of the word ‘tyrannies’ here points to Pound’s immersion in the language of the American Revolution, which will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>37</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. V’, *The New Age* 11, no. 23 (3 October 1912): 539.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 540.

of genteel American magazines and their conservative literary taste, seems rather abrupt. It creates the impression that, in Pound's analysis, the most powerful reactionary forces in the United States were the editors of *Harper's* and *The Atlantic*. Yet in a definite sense his aesthetic criticisms are prescient and seminal. As much recent scholarship in modernist studies has strongly emphasized, literary modernism took shape, to a considerable extent, in the 'little magazines' which emerged, mostly in the early decades of the twentieth century, in reaction to the dominance of publications like those Pound attacks.<sup>39</sup> He closes his article by hailing the launch of one such little magazine, *Poetry*, and declaring, in a footnote, that 'This article was written some weeks before I had any notion that I should be made foreign representative of this new periodical'.<sup>40</sup> Though the mention of *Poetry* in 'Patria Mia' seems little more than a cautious and qualified afterthought, Monroe's intentions for the magazine were in fact a chief contributory to Pound's faith in America's coming risorgimento, as is clear in the letter I quote at the start of this section.

In that letter, Pound is careful to discriminate between the demands of a national literature and the demands of poetry itself. 'Are you for American poetry or for poetry?', he enquires, explaining that 'The latter is more important, but it is important that America should boost the former, provided it don't mean a blindness to the art'.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, he adds, 'The glory of any nation is to produce art that can be exported without disgrace to its origin'.<sup>42</sup> We have already noted Pound's notion of literary diplomacy—his insistence that 'Letters are a nation's foreign office'. Here, however, he affects the outlook of a political economist, equating poetry with a manufactured

---

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Ann L. Ardis, 'The Dialogics of Modernism(s) in *The New Age*', *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007): 407–34, and *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2002); as well as Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), and Faith Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde: Reading Rhythm, 1910–1914*, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Pound, 'Patria Mia. V', 540.

<sup>41</sup> Pound, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 43–44.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.



commodity, and fretting about its ‘export’.<sup>43</sup> This approach reappears forcefully in a subsequent letter to Monroe, by which point Pound’s role at the magazine seems secure, and he is able to offer a quite specific ‘policy’ recommendation on this matter:

My idea of our policy is this: We support American poets—preferably the young ones who have a serious determination to produce master-work. We *import* only such work as is better than that produced at home. The *best* foreign stuff, the stuff well above mediocrity, or the experiments that seem serious, and seriously and sanely directed toward the broadening and development of The Art of Poetry.<sup>44</sup>

Pound here treats *Poetry* like a moderately protectionist national economy, employing the logic of import tariffs, or carefully restricted work permits for foreign workers (only granted to those who can offer ‘such work as is better than that produced at home’). Tariff reform, in particular, was a major political issue in Edwardian Britain, a shibboleth dividing the pro-free-trade Liberals from the protectionist Conservative party.<sup>45</sup> In his policy memo for *Poetry*, Pound aligns himself tentatively with the latter. What is to be imported, in other words, is work that will benefit American writing by providing good examples of innovation and experimentation. Pound’s foreign ‘imports’ in the first few issues of *Poetry* included of Richard Aldington and Joseph Campbell, as well as the major names of W. B. Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore.

Pound’s concern with this kind of national literary accountancy is at its most pronounced in ‘To Whistler, American’—one of the two poems he had published in the first issue of *Poetry*, and the first piece of what I am calling Pound’s American triptych.

<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, during this period, Pound imagined himself a mercantilist privateer, looting on behalf of his country like Sir Francis Drake: ‘I bring you the spoils, my nation, / I, who went out in exile, / Am returned to thee with gifts’; *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, ed. Michael John King (New York: New Directions, 1976), 209. This poem, ‘An Epilogue’ was initially to have been included in the ‘Contemporania’ series, but was withdrawn by Pound.

<sup>44</sup> Pound to Monroe, 24 Sept 1912, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 45. As Paige clarifies in a footnote, this passage was italicized to stress its importance when the letter was reproduced in Monroe’s autobiography. The emphasis was preserved in Paige’s edition of Pound’s letters. For clarity, I have removed the italics from the paragraph as a whole, but preserved Pound’s added emphasis on ‘import’ and ‘best’.

<sup>45</sup> Ian Packer, *Liberal Government and Politics, 1905-15* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 122–23. In the 1920s, as Robert Spoo and Tim Redman, among others, have shown, Pound would become closely concerned with issues of policy—particularly import tariffs and copyright law—in so far as these affected the livelihoods of artists and the availability of literature. See Robert E Spoo, ‘Ezra Pound’s Copyright Statute: Perpetual Rights and the Problem of Heirs’, *UCLA Law Review*, Vol. 56, 2009, 2008, and Tim Redman, ‘Pound’s Politics and Economics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 254–55.

Prompted by an exhibition at the Tate Gallery in September 1912, the poem praises Whistler's artistry, versatility and tenacity, describing him as 'our first great' (P 249). In its final, two-line stanza, the poem strikes a confrontational tone with the exclamation that 'You and Abe Lincoln from that mass of dolts / Show us there's chance at least of winning through' (P 249). Whistler's example is important for those, like Pound, 'Who bear the brunt of our America / And try to wrench her impulse into art' (P 249). As Bartholomew Brinkman perceptively notes, 'Pound places the titles of the paintings themselves in the poem, mimicking the gallery presentation of works of art'.<sup>46</sup> In doing so he insists by analogy that the 'poem can itself become a work of art physically presented on the page'.<sup>47</sup> An exhibit, of course, is a curated display but it can also denote a piece of evidence. 'To Whistler, American' contributes to Pound's *Risorgimento* by holding up evidence of American cultural achievement.

Brinkman also argues that 'To Whistler, American' 'intervenes in the not-so-old Whistler/Ruskin debate, taking the side of the former and choosing art for art's sake over didactic utilitarian aims'.<sup>48</sup> As I have suggested elsewhere in this thesis, however, Pound's relationship with aestheticism and art for art's sake is rarely unambiguous. I would argue that Brinkman is right that Pound is promoting Whistlerian aestheticism in 'To Whistler, American', but that, in pursuit of his *Risorgimento*, he is doing so, paradoxically, for didactic purposes. As Rebecca Beasley has shown, unpublished essays reveal that Pound's negotiation of his artistic relationship to Whistler had always been closely bound up with a desire to emulate what he saw as the painter's antipathy to a mass audience.<sup>49</sup> Whistler's aestheticism stands in symbolic opposition to the populism of Whitman in Pound's American pantheon of the arts. Beasley writes that early in his career, Pound

---

<sup>46</sup> Bartholomew Brinkman, 'Making Modern Poetry: Format, Genre and the Invention of Imagism(e)', *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 2 (2009): 28.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 27–28.

<sup>49</sup> 'Ezra Pound's Whistler', *American Literature* 74, no. 3 (2002): 493–94.

identifie[d] himself with Whistler's anti-establishment, antipopular stance on the assumption that Whistler's aestheticist views are shocking to the public and the art establishment alike. But by 1907 aestheticism had become both popular and, for the most part, critically secure. So while Pound wants to align himself with the ethos of aestheticism, whereby the appreciation of art for art's sake acts as a tool of social separation, he is also conscious that aestheticism is no longer the preserve of the elite.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, while no doubt sincere, Pound's remark about 'that mass of dolts' therefore seems highly stylized and acquires a self-conscious irony. Pound was trying to provoke, in 'To Whistler', but not *necessarily* to exclude.

Monroe's editorial handling of the poem is also significant. The poem, a self-consciously occasional piece, was significant as an occasion in itself—announcing that the new magazine would not back away from controversy. As John Timberman Newcomb has argued, Monroe exploited Pound's confrontational work to announce that *Poetry* would, from the outset, follow an avant garde path and provoke a deliberate generational rivalry with the magazine's more genteel Chicago neighbour, *The Dial*, anticipating the welcome publicity that magazine's retaliation would bring.<sup>51</sup> Newcomb argues that Monroe aimed at forging 'not only a single magazine's identity but an entire American avant-garde sensibility'.<sup>52</sup> Pound's first batch of verse to appear in *Poetry*, the 'Contemporania' series, was equally provocative. From John Reed, it earned him the somewhat scathing title 'Mr Aggressively Contemporary Pound'.<sup>53</sup> And an appalled correspondent to the *Nation* called the series 'futurist verses' that were 'guiltless of form'.<sup>54</sup> Wallace Rice, writing in the *Dial*, expressed mock 'regret' that '*Poetry* is being turned into a thing for laughter'.<sup>55</sup> '[T]he practical identification of *Poetry* and Mr.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 493–94.

<sup>51</sup> John Timberman Newcomb, 'Poetry's Opening Door: Harriet Monroe and American Modernism', *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 15, no. 1 (2005): esp. 12–15.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>53</sup> John Reed, 'A Word to Mr. Pound', *Poetry* 2, no. 3 (1 June 1913): 112. Reed was offended that Pound had used lines from his poem dedicated to Lincoln Steffens, 'Sangar', as an epigraph to 'Pax Saturni' in the 'Contemporania' series. Pound had, indeed, rather spectacularly mistaken Reed's ironic reference to 'fair, peaceful, happy days' for sincere praise of the United States, counting Reed (named only as 'a contemporary') among the 'smooth flatterers' attacked in 'Pax Saturni'. Reed's poem appeared in *Poetry* vol. 1, no. 3 (Dec 1912), pp. 71–74.

<sup>54</sup> Homberger, *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*, 100. Originally published in the *Nation*, 7 April 1913, 386–7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 101. Originally published in the *Dial*, 1 May 1913, 370–1.

Pound', he wrote 'involves not only a lowering of standards, but a defense of the thesis, unusual in "A Magazine of Verse", that poor prose must be good poetry'.<sup>56</sup> When indignant readers of *Poetry* objected to being dismissed by Pound as 'that mass of dolts', Monroe wrote a forceful defence, declaring Pound an 'Ezekiel', and suggesting that

we should . . . step down from our self-erected pedestals long enough to listen to this accusation. . . . Mr. Pound is not the first American poet who has stood with his back to the wall, and struck out blindly with clenched fists in a fierce impulse to fight. Nor is he the first whom we . . . have forced into exile and rebellion.<sup>57</sup>

'In some respects', Monroe argued, 'we Americans are a "mass of dolts", and in none more than our huge, stolid, fundamental indifference to our own art'.<sup>58</sup>

What Monroe's admonition to her readers draws our attention to is that 'To Whistler, American' does in fact strive to provide, in miniature, all the necessary requirements for artistic development: the exhibit of Whistler's work, the guidance on method—to experiment, 'tr[y] all ways', 'stretch[] and tamper[] with the media' (P 249)—and the provocative spur to self-refinement. All of which added to the poem's own avant garde attitude. In accordance with Pound's dream of a *Risorgimento* in America, and within the specific context of the inauguration of *Poetry* magazine, its dismissal of the mass becomes a didactic provocation aimed at American society.

When read closely, 'To Whistler, American' also attests to the potential Pound saw in the country of his birth. Certainly, at first, the poem seems to represent an American background as a burden. Pound and Whistler are among those few artistic individuals 'Who bear the brunt of our America'. But it seems unlike Pound to employ a cliché such as this in a poem without some more subtle purpose. To 'bear the brunt' typically implies some form of victimization or inequitable treatment. But if *to bear* may mean 'to endure', it is also 'to carry' or 'to convey'—as in 'to bear arms'. And *brunt* means physical or figurative force or strength, or the chief stress of a particular movement or

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Harriet Monroe, 'That Mass of Dolts', *Poetry* 1, no. 5 (1 February 1913): 169.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

blow. America's 'force' and 'impulse' was evident, as he remarked to Monroe in his original remarks about his *Risorgimento*. But, he felt, as we have already seen, the country lacked 'the discrimination in applying [that] force'. When Pound writes of artists, such as Whistler and himself, 'Who bear the brunt of our America', he is not only painting his American background as a hindrance; he is simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically claiming the role of 'the guiding sense' behind that national force, and the role of bearing that force into the old world. 'I should like to drive Whitman into the old world. I sledge, he drill'.

### Pound's transnational nationalism?

A potential counter-argument to what I am calling the American turn of Pound's modernism is that his urbane cosmopolitanism, his openness to (some) non-Western cultures, and his expatriate lifestyle outside of the United States, seem firmly at odds with the American exceptionalist agenda I have been arguing is intertwined with his emerging modernism during this period. To what extent can Pound be called an 'American' artist? The same question has been asked of Pound's heroes, Whistler and Henry James—both, like Pound, expatriates. As Beasley notes in her valuable study of Pound's evolving attitudes towards Whistler, the painter's identity as an American is problematic as Pound conceives it. For Beasley,

Pound claims that the strength of Whistler's personality enabled him to produce art not circumscribed by national boundaries. Unlike Whitman's poems, Whistler's paintings are not American. It is conspicuous that the poem's heroes (Whistler, Lincoln, Pound himself) are American but that the painting is European, variously evocative of Germany, Greece, and France.<sup>59</sup>

While Walt Whitman's American-ness is, in Pound's mind, both the source of his genius and of his imperfection, it is Whistler, Beasley argues, whom Pound favours—not for a loudly declaimed American identity, but for his ability to assimilate European

---

<sup>59</sup> Beasley, 'Ezra Pound's Whistler', 501.

aesthetics. Moreover, Beasley contends that within this comparison, there is a broader relative estimation of these two media—poetry and painting—as they stand in the United States, circa 1912. The argument of ‘To Whistler, American’, Beasley writes,

is predicated on its own failure, since in the context of the Whistler and Whitman distinction Pound was making almost simultaneously in ‘Patria Mia’, the poem clearly values the achievements of American painting over those of American poetry. Pound highlights the distinction by voluntarily adopting what he saw as Whitman’s main fault, that is, the identifiably American voice. In this poem, writing is in no danger of achieving the internationality it craves: the American speaker is measuring the distance he has to go.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, for Beasley, notwithstanding the poem’s anti-populist bluster about ‘that mass of dolts’, Pound is ventriloquizing Walt Whitman in ‘To Whistler, American’, as a gesture of poetic humility and critical self-awareness, American poetry (embodied by Whitman) possessing a lesser stature than that of American painting (embodied by Whistler).

Beasley’s reading of the poem is important, and her attention to early unpublished prose reveals a great deal about the place of Whistler in Pound’s self-conscious development as an artist. Nonetheless, I think Beasley misreads what the poem is saying about America. To begin with, her positioning of Whitman in the poem is problematic on two counts. Firstly, I do not think it is quite right that Pound judged Whitman’s ‘main fault’ to be his use of ‘the identifiably American voice’. On the contrary, Whitman was, to Pound, ‘The first great man to speak in the language of his people’.<sup>61</sup> Pound explicitly placed Whitman into the vernacular tradition of Dante and the Anglo-Saxon elegists.<sup>62</sup> We should not conflate an ‘American voice’ with what Pound did indeed find so ‘nauseating’ about Whitman, that is, the latter’s perceived verbal excess and imprecision. This is a flaw Pound was as apt to ascribe to Tennyson, whose voice can hardly be called ‘identifiably American’. When Pound, in his short early essay on Whitman, writes that ‘Whitman’s crudity is an exceeding great stench, but it is

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>61</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘What I Feel about Walt Whitman’, in *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1975), 115–116.

<sup>62</sup> Pound associates Whitman with Dante in *ibid.*, 116, and with *The Seafarer* in Ezra Pound, ‘Patria Mia. XI’, *New Age* 12, no. 2 (14 November 1912): 33–34.

America', he is making a broad and abstract claim about the nature of 'America', not a characterization of American speech patterns.<sup>63</sup> Pound, after all, echoed Wordsworth in his insistence that poets should write 'nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say'.<sup>64</sup> And as we see in the *Cantos*, it becomes increasingly important to Pound that his work should document the specificities of language, dialect, and manners of speech.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is by no means certain that the voice Pound adopts in 'To Whistler, American' is that of Whitman anyway. Pound's poem affects plain speech with its contemporary lexicon; but has neither Whitman's long lines, nor what we might call his practised indiscrimination. The poem also veers in and out of iambic pentameter in a most un-Whitmanic way. Certainly, the poem addresses national themes and praises Lincoln. But the claim that it does so in a Whitmanic voice is not, I think, entirely convincing.

Moreover, I do not think it is at all clear that the voice in the poem is ironic and deprecatory. On the contrary, if the voice in 'To Whistler, American' establishes a poetic genealogy, its line runs less directly to Whitman than it does to the Roman poet, Gaius Valerius Catullus. The poem resonates in particular with Catullus' dedicatory tribute to the historian Cornelius in the lyric known as Catullus 1: 'you dared—the lone Italian!— / that great three-decker treatment of past ages: scholarly stuff, my god, and so exhaustive'.<sup>66</sup> As well as employing Catullian irreverence and plain-spokenness, Pound also echoes three thematic aspects of Catullus' poem: firstly, the admiration for his dedicatee's commitment to his craft; secondly, the national superlative he bestows ('the

<sup>63</sup> Pound, 'What I Feel about Walt Whitman', 115.

<sup>64</sup> Pound to Harriet Monroe, Jan. 1915, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 91.

<sup>65</sup> As D. S. Carne-Ross puts it, 'It is a cardinal principle of the poem that the materials it presents must be presented exactly as they are or were. A man's actual words, and as far as possible even the sound of his words, must be reported. . . . As Pound sees it, this is part of the *evidence*', (quoted in Marjorie Perloff, *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996], 9).

<sup>66</sup> '[A]usus es unus Italorum / omne aevum tribus explicare cartis / doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis'; Gaius Valerius Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus*, trans. Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 44–45. Emphasis on 'so' is Green's.

lone Italian!’, ‘our first great’); and, thirdly, the three-fold citation of works (Cornelius’ three volumes, Whistler’s three paintings). Pound would go on to channel Catullus again, using the first line from this same lyric to dedicate his volume *Lustra* (*P* [81]).<sup>67</sup> And there is evidence in a 1911 letter to Margaret Cravens that Pound was already thinking of Catullus and Whistler in conjunction with one another.<sup>68</sup>

If Pound is primarily ventriloquizing Catullus rather than Whitman in ‘To Whistler, American’, we need to reconsider what the poem suggests about the relationship between literature and national identity. ‘To Whistler, American’ was representative of Pound’s effort to use contemporary speech in his work, in response to his being mocked by Ford Madox Ford for the archaic diction of *Canzoni*.<sup>69</sup> His modernizing efforts culminated in the ‘Contemporania’ series, published in April 1913, but mostly written in late 1912. It is difficult to sustain the claim that an ‘American voice’ functions in the poem as a signifier of inferiority. Rather, Pound adopts a Classical model of plain speech to praise Whistler—celebrating American modernity, while simultaneously equating the United States with Rome. (If anything, there is a possibility that Catullus’ humility towards Cornelius is playfully ironic, pointing to the brevity of his own ‘mere trifle’ in comparison to the historian’s three ‘exhaustive’ volumes.<sup>70</sup>) To be sure, this accords with Beasley’s observation that Pound praises Whistler in terms of European standards (‘as perfect as Dürer’; ‘these sketches in the mood of Greece’). But the desire to ‘import’ and apply the best cultural models is fully compatible with—indeed is the practical consequence of—his belief in an American Risorgimento and his brief but important link between American ‘force’ and a modernist imperative in the arts.

Pound’s composition of ‘To Whistler’ overlapped with his redrafting of ‘Patria Mia’. In part VIII of the series, he considers what Whistler’s achievement means to him:

<sup>67</sup> ‘Cui dono lepidum novum libellum’.

<sup>68</sup> Omar S. Pound and Robert E. Spoo, eds., *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship, 1910-1912* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 14–16.

<sup>69</sup> Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and The Imagists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 347–48.

<sup>70</sup> Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus*, 45.



I have to say, that while I had taken deep delight in the novels of Henry James, I have gathered from the loan exhibit of Whistler's paintings now at the Tate (September, 1912), more courage for living than I have gathered from the Canal Bill or from any other manifestation of American energy whatever.<sup>71</sup>

Pound refers here to the construction of the Panama Canal, which was to conclude in 1914. The comparison seems highly significant. Pound sees Whistler's work, like the canal project, in nationalist terms, as a 'manifestation of American energy'. But the canal was also much more than this; by dramatically reducing the journey between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the canal was also a major step towards the more closely integrated global relations which to a great extent characterize modernity. In some ways, then, as a symbol, the canal might be understood as undermining the crude patriotic tone of Pound's approach to Whistler. The theme of transport would become a major presence in his wartime writing. He called for the construction of a tunnel between Great Britain and France, believing that it would strike against what he called 'provincialism'.<sup>72</sup> And he quoted with approval Rudyard Kipling's words in 'The Night Mail' that 'Transportation is civilization'.<sup>73</sup> But the national and the global are not necessarily opposites, particularly with regards to the twentieth-century United States. The dream of an isthmian canal linking Pacific and Atlantic oceans had, since the 1850s, been a source of considerable United States interference in Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>74</sup> The need for naval bases to defend the proposed asset lay behind the

<sup>71</sup> Pound, 'Patria Mia. VIII', 612.

<sup>72</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—IV', *The New Age* 21, no. 14 (2 August 1917): 309. A detailed discussion of this rich series of essays, 'Provincialism the Enemy', lies just beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say, however, that Pound's assault on 'provincialism'—which he defined as '(a) An ignorance of the manners, customs and nature of people living outside one's own village, parish or nation, (b) A desire to coerce others into uniformity'—did not preclude his own occasional tendencies towards American exceptionalism, nor his attention to national differences, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—I', *The New Age* 21, no. 11 (12 July 1917): 244. Chris Baldick cites Pound's attack on the German university system in this series as typical of the jingoistic anti-German propaganda composed by writers in Britain during the war. Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848–1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 106. For discussions of the complex contradictions of Pound's thought in these essays, see Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129–34, and Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, 72–74.

<sup>73</sup> Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—IV', 308.

<sup>74</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 218–21, 259.

United States' acquisition of ex-Spanish Caribbean territories in the Spanish-American War. What is more, to secure American control and perpetual sovereignty over the route of the canal at a bargain price, President Roosevelt had openly supported the breakaway of Panama from Columbia in 1903.<sup>75</sup> All these acts were also very much 'manifestation[s] of American energy'. Thus we see that Pound's estimation of Whistler's achievement—something so critical both to Pound's own inward self-perception as an American artist, and outward persona as an iconoclastic modernist—was framed in terms that straddle the intersection of globalization and US imperialism.

If Pound's remark about the Panama Canal seems too isolated to possess the significance I have placed on it, consider that the project of *Poetry* magazine, too, was conceived in a comparable way. Earlier we discussed Pound's prescription of an editorial policy for the magazine in terms of national trade policy. In the November 1912 issue, just above the note announcing Pound's appointment as 'foreign correspondent', Monroe set out her own 'policy' vision for the magazine:

The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine—may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his ample genius! To this end the editors hope to keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school. They desire to print the best English verse which is being written today, regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art it is written. Nor will the magazine promise to limit its editorial comments to one set of opinions. Without muzzles and braces this is manifestly impossible unless all the critical articles are written by one person.<sup>76</sup>

In place of Pound's economic metaphor, Monroe employs tropes from American foreign policy. For one thing, she alludes to George Washington's parting warning against permanent foreign alliances.<sup>77</sup> I will return, towards the end of this chapter, to a discussion of this foundational principle of American foreign policy and its resonance in Pound's poem, 'A Pact'. Here, though, we must note that Monroe's declaration of an 'Open Door' policy is a direct allusion to contemporary American diplomatic rhetoric: the 'Open Door Policy' with regard to China. This policy, set out by Secretary of State,

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 368–69.

<sup>76</sup> Harriet Monroe, 'The Open Door', *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1 November 1912): 64.

<sup>77</sup> See George Washington, *Writings*, ed. John H. Rhodehamel, The Library of America (New York: Library of America, 1997), 975.

John Hay, in his 1899 ‘Open Door Note’, urged the other Western powers who were then carving up China into respective spheres of influence, not to adopt protectionist trade policies which would disadvantage any other power. Hay’s policy allowed the United States to pose as the opponent of ravenous European imperialism while at the same time insisting, as Eric Hobsbawm puts it, that it ‘had as much right to booty as earlier imperialists’.<sup>78</sup> By appropriating this language to signal *Poetry*’s purported eclecticism and neutrality, Monroe demonstrates how closely related in her mind are the worlds of poetry and geopolitics—just as they are in Pound’s. While Pound, in his mock tariff system, adopts the pose of a protectionist, Monroe presents herself as a free-trader.

We have seen above, how, even within Pound’s complaint that he and Whistler ‘bear the brunt’ of America, there is a paradoxical belief in that country’s ‘force’ and potential. There are further contradictions of this kind within what I am calling Pound’s American triptych. ‘To Whistler, American’ and ‘A Pact’, the first two poems in the trio, both mediate Pound’s feelings towards ‘America’ by addressing an earlier American artist: Whistler and Whitman, respectively. These two poems look to those artists as examples and precedents. Pound tells the dead Whistler that ‘You and Abe Lincoln from that mass of dolts / Show us there’s chance at least of winning through’, and though he is far more equivocal about Whitman, the point remains the same—to learn what one can from the earlier poet. The third poem of the triptych, however, reverses the model of the previous two. This poem, ‘The Rest’, is addressed to all artists and ‘lovers of beauty’ in America, struggling, as he saw it, against America’s cultural backwardness and provincialism. Pound urges them this ‘helpless few’ to look not, in this case, to a forebear like Whistler or Whitman, but to his own example:

Take thought:  
I have weathered the storm,  
I have beaten out my exile. (P 94)

---

<sup>78</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*, 1987, reprint (London: Abacus, 2010), 281.

This injunction would appear to be paradigmatically transnational. Not only does it stress Pound's literal cosmopolitanism and his resistance to narrow nationalist perspectives. It also participates in his work's consistent veneration of the figure of the migrant exile—a privileged figure within transnationalist discourse—embodied, for Pound, in the mariner Christ of 'the Ballad of the Goodly Fere', the Anglo-Saxon seafarer, and in the Odyssean motifs in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* and the *Cantos* (Canto I, in particular).

But in 'The Rest', the notion of exile and of its attainment is profoundly ambiguous. To have 'beaten out [one's] exile' might, again, mean two very different things. It might mean to achieve or attain it—to have beaten it out as a blacksmith might fashion a metal implement. Conversely, it might mean to have defeated it or to have endured its full extent—a combination of *to have beaten it* and *to have seen it out*. Are we to understand Pound's exile to be a literal, geographical condition that has been attained—biographically speaking, his successful escape from his 'half-savage' birthplace to the cultural-imperial metropolis of London—or should we understand it more psychologically and culturally, as a condition he has overcome? In a poem from several years previously, 'In Durance', he writes, 'I am homesick / After mine own kind that know, and feel / And have some breath for beauty and the arts' (P 20). In this latter sense, Pound's exile appears to refer to America as a kind of natal debarment from what he felt to be his rightful inheritance of beauty and civilization.

Clearly the poem can sustain both of these meanings simultaneously. But Pound's repudiation of the American cultural scene is expressed in what we might consider to be a startlingly 'American' way. The emphasis in the poem is upon Pound's individualism. His is a self-made exile—he has, we might say, exiled himself by his boot straps, 'beaten out' an exile like a frontier tract wrested from the wilderness.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> This point echoes Daniel Katz's argument, which I quote in my introduction, that Pound's expatriation is fully a part of his 'American' identity, not a contradiction or diminution of it. See the chapter 'Ezra Pound's American Scenes: Henry James and the Labour of Translation', in *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, 53–70.

In the previous poems of the triptych, Pound defers to an antecedent American artist, making the content nominally American. But the poems nevertheless depend upon what is arguably an Old World gesture of formulating one's identity upon tradition and continuity—a model given perhaps its most famous modern expression several years later by T. S. Eliot in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. By contrast, when Pound places himself and his exile at the centre of 'The Rest', he is perhaps truer to Emerson's injunction that the American writer should reject the retrospective view of culture, and develop instead 'an original relationship to the universe', 'a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition'.<sup>80</sup>

### Pound's anti-democracy and American imperialism

During his eight-month return to the United States between June 1910 and February 1911, Pound spent some time in New York, seeking out artists and poets in Greenwich Village. This pursuit seems to have been largely frustrating ('I found no writer and but one reviewer who had any worthy conception of poetry'<sup>81</sup>), but he did visit Coney Island with John Butler Yeats (father of William) and John Quinn. While in America he also seems to have explored with some seriousness the possibility of pursuing certain business ventures. Pound proposed, for example, to William Carlos Williams that they should move to North Africa and sell anti-syphilitic arsenical medication to wealthy Western colonials.<sup>82</sup> Helen Carr has even suggested that Pound may have considered the possibility of abandoning London and remaining in the United States indefinitely.<sup>83</sup>

He did, of course, return in the end to London. For the next year, while he travelled around Europe on the trails of the troubadours and began publishing regularly in *The New Age*, he seems to have pushed any thoughts of America from his mind.

<sup>80</sup> Emerson, 'Nature', in *Nature and Selected Essays*, 35.

<sup>81</sup> Pound to Harriet Monroe, 18 Aug 1912; *Letters of Ezra Pound*, 43.

<sup>82</sup> William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1948), 92–93.

<sup>83</sup> Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, 323–24.

Nonetheless, he brought with him from America drafts of his ‘Patria Mia’ essays which he eventually reworked for publication in *The New Age*. It seems to have been this process of redrafting in late 1912, coupled with his new-found impulse to be ‘modern’ which focused his mind on ‘America’ and its potential. ‘Patria Mia’ appeared in the *New Age* between September and November 1912, concluding the week before the publication of Pound’s first letter on the Balkan War. The series is of great interest as a guide to Pound’s opinions, enthusiasms and aversions—detailing, among other things, his views about the pernicious influence of the US magazine industry, his taste in architecture, and his racist theories about the determining effect of climate on racial characteristics. Early in the first part of the series, however, Pound sets out his brief and grapples with contested condition of the term ‘America’ itself:

I am, in the course of about 10,000 words, expected to set forth the simplicity of America and its people—all its people; but I am expected simultaneously to bring my fatherland to self-consciousness, to cause America to see its face in the glass, to create a new Uncle Sam, clothed, I presume, in such garments as the late Graham Philips [sic] would have selected for his own personal adornment. I am to endow this creature with the delicacy of Whistler, the financial ability of Morgan, the rapacity of Elihu Root, the insincerity of Aldritch [sic], the virtues of Abraham Lincoln, the precipitate and precipitating enthusiasms of Roosevelt, and the stupid provincialism of ten thousand nameless lights of nameless villages, of nameless nations hidden within America, and of which no rumour has escaped.<sup>84</sup>

This passage is particularly rich in allusion and rhetoric, and I want to look at it in some detail in this section and the next, before turning to look in more detail at the central poem of Pound’s America triptych, ‘A Pact’.

The catalogue Pound presents in the second sentence of the passage contains a clear dichotomy between powerful individuals and the popular mass. That Pound held deeply anti-democratic views is no revelation. But I want to discuss briefly the reactionary and indeed imperialistic implications of this passage, before going on to suggest that there may in fact be an oddly, and perhaps involuntarily, democratic undercurrent in Pound’s reflection on America. In the passage I quote, Pound firstly names certain notable

---

<sup>84</sup> Pound, ‘Patria Mia. I’, 445.

individuals whose salient qualities—desirable or undesirable—reveal something about America. The list consists of an artist (James McNeill Whistler), a financier (J. P. Morgan), two leading senators (Nelson Aldrich, a Republican; and Elihu Root, a Democrat—the latter having also served in senior cabinet posts under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt), and two presidents (Lincoln and Roosevelt). At the end of the list, however, following these prominent individuals, Pound lists the ‘stupid provincialism’ of the masses, who, by contrast to the preceding figures, remain ‘nameless’. In one respect, then, the passage is a very good illustration of Pound’s inability to think beyond a dichotomy of distinct individual agents and an indistinguishable, ‘nameless’ mass. And it seems typical of Pound that he should try to depict a whole nation in terms of individuals, even as he denies the possibility of that effort. An Andersonian ‘imagined community’, this very clearly is not.<sup>85</sup>

The anti-democratic elitism of Pound’s individualism is a common sentiment both in his prose and his poetry at this time. Two of the three poems I have identified as forming his America triptych express similar thoughts. In ‘To Whistler, American’, as we have seen, he singles out Whistler and Lincoln for praise, dismissing the remainder of the population as ‘that mass of dolts’. Similarly, the very title of ‘The Rest’ (in the sense of ‘remainder’) implies this contempt for the popular masses. In 1914, he took offence at *Poetry* magazine’s use of an aphorism by Whitman—‘To have great poets, there must be great audiences, too’—on the magazine’s back cover. In his deeply anti-popular, anti-democratic retort he again employs this pointed use of the word ‘rest’:

It is true that the great artist has in the end, always, his audience, for the Lord of the universe sends into this world in each generation a few intelligent spirits, and these ultimately manage the rest. But this rest—this rabble, this multitude—does not create the great artist. They are aimless and drifting without him. They dare not inspect their own souls.<sup>86</sup>

It is clear Pound counted great artists among the governing elite (though he is elusive on

<sup>85</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1983 (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Audience’, *Poetry* 5, no. 1 (1 October 1914): 30.

the question of how artists might actually exercise such authority). He expressed similar sentiment with specific reference to American democracy in 1918:

The term democracy means nothing more than government by the people; it is described also, by certain optimists, as for the people. . . .

Democracy is also called government of the people, perhaps with justice, since there is, so far as I know, no record of the peoples ever having governed their officers, aristocrats, plutocrats, artists, or other obtruding features.<sup>87</sup>

In this passage, Pound draws his elite from the arts, commerce, and from the established ruling class. His use of ‘officers’, where he presumably means ‘politicians’ seems like the result of the dissonance between his admiration for strong leaders like Lincoln and Roosevelt and his contempt for the democratic basis on which their authority of their office is at least nominally based. It is important, I think, to note that Pound is not specifically celebrating the power of this hypothetical elite as such. His phrase ‘obtruding features’, rather, imbues its position (as far as Pound sees it) with an almost geological irrevocability—a pre-ordained givenness in response to which the idea of celebration or protest make little sense. Thus this latter passage, above, is not simply anti-democratic and elitist, but, more specifically, a fiercely reactionary construal of social structures as eternal forms.

Another aspect of the anti-democratic elitism expressed in the passage I quote above from ‘Patria Mia’, is Pound’s objection to what he calls ‘provincialism’. Pound does not direct his anti-popular feelings at the swelling urban masses—as we might expect of a so-called ‘high’ modernist writer. The target of his derision is characterised more as a dispersed provincial population. For Pound ‘provincialism’ is both a geographical and an intellectual category. And his attitude resonates with the class-tinged metropolitan prejudices encapsulated to some extent in present-day terms like ‘fly-over country’, the Bible Belt and ‘white trash’. For Pound, it is the city, not the land, that is the source of social value, because it provides a greater concentration of artistic intellect and thus promotes innovation. ‘The value of a capital or metropolis’, he

---

<sup>87</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘What America Has to Live Down. I’, *The New Age* 23, no. 17 (22 August 1918): 266.



wrote, 'is that if a man in a capital cribs, quotes or imitates, someone else immediately lets the cat out of the bag and says what he is cribbing, quoting or imitating'.<sup>88</sup> Slightly later, in 1917, he would write that

Ultimately, all of these things proceed from a metropolis. Peace, our ideas of justice, of liberty, of as much of these as are feasible, the immaterial, as well as material things, proceed from a metropolis. Athens, Rome, the Cities [*sic*] of the Italian Renaissance, London, Paris, make and have made us our lives. New York distributes to America. It is conceivable that in a few centuries the centre may have shifted to the west side of the Atlantic, but that is not for our time.<sup>89</sup>

(The doubt expressed in the last sentence here, seems to have been less potent during his agitation for an American *Risorgimento*). Whatever his later admiration for Thomas Jefferson and, indeed, the populist, Jeffersonian ideals that can often be detected in his poetry,<sup>90</sup> the importance Pound places on the metropolis and his attendant disdain for the 'provincial' population is profoundly anti-Jeffersonian. Jefferson held the agrarian smallholder to be the pinnacle of moral virtue whom he contrasted with city dwellers and those working in manufacturing.<sup>91</sup> Great cities were, in Jefferson's eyes, 'pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man'.<sup>92</sup> And while he conceded that 'they nourish some of the elegant arts', he nonetheless felt that 'the useful [arts] can

<sup>88</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The Renaissance: I—The Palette', *Poetry* 5, no. 5 (1 February 1915): 227.

<sup>89</sup> Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy.—IV', 308.

<sup>90</sup> For a comprehensive elucidation of the Jeffersonian basis of Pound's later work, see Alec Marsh, *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998). Marsh, however, focuses primarily on the economic aspects of 'populistic Jeffersonianism', and on the corresponding economic priorities of Pound's later career; he has very little to say about the pre-war writing.

<sup>91</sup> Consider the famous passage from Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*: 'Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God . . . whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. . . . Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. This, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances: but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts. . . . The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body'; Thomas Jefferson, *The Essential Jefferson*, ed. Jean M. Yarbrough, The American Heritage Series (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2006), 132–33.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Jefferson to Benjamin Rush (27th Sept, 1800). See, Thomas Jefferson, *Political Writings*, ed. Joyce Oldham Appleby and Terence Ball, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28.

thrive elsewhere', being quite content to compensate 'less perfection in the others, with more health, virtue & freedom' in society at large.<sup>93</sup>

Pound, by contrast, wrote in the first instalment of 'Patria Mia' that 'America, my country, is almost a continent and hardly yet a nation, for *no nation can be considered historically as such until it has achieved within itself a city to which all roads lead, and from which there goes out an authority*'.<sup>94</sup> In an analogy with the Roman Empire, it is the metropolitan centre from which the nation, for Pound, gains its coherence and integrity. After a nation has 'achieved an "urbs"', he writes,

people forget that what seems one nation had aforetime been many. Only within the nation itself is there left any consciousness of its parts of Castille, Arragon, Leon, of Valencia, of Navarre, for instance, or of Burgundy, and Aquitaine. We say now 'Spain' and 'France'.<sup>95</sup>

This statement is perhaps the clearest parallel between Pound's rather vague foretelling of an American Risorgimento, and the nineteenth-century unification of Italy into a single nation state. His belief in the importance of the city for the establishment of culture and of nationhood would later find its expression in Cantos IV and V, in the form of the ancient Persian city of Ecbatana, with its carefully 'gilded tower' and its streets carefully 'plotted' (IV, 16) and 'patterned' (V, 17). But the negative corollary of this view—contempt for 'provincialism' conceived as a dated, derivative and closed-minded intellectual culture—can be seen clearly here in his pre-war writing on American society. It helps to explain his remark about the 'nameless villages' which exist within America but which are not constituent parts of it—somehow being dubious 'nations' in themselves. Facetiously, Pound implies that these nameless communities have only a hypothetical existence, their cultural value being so negligible ('no rumour [of them] has escaped').

This metropolitan prejudice is, however, more complex and problematic than it

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony* (London: Peter Owen, 1962), 9. Pound revised the 'Patria Mia' manuscript for publication as a book in 1913. I quote the revised and more emphatic version of this passage, with which Pound chose to begin his book.

<sup>95</sup> Pound, 'Patria Mia. I', 445.

might appear. In Pound's derogatory references to 'villages' and 'nations' there seems to be an allusion to Native American tribes, set apart beyond a frontier that is both literally spatial and figuratively cultural. The spatial or topographical quality of these remarks ('lights', 'hidden', 'escaped') reinforces the reductive drama of hostility between civilisation (figured as European) and nature (figured as Native American). Here, though, the supposed backwardness of Indian society is used as an implicit analogy to express the provincialism of the United States' interior periphery. In 1915 Pound used a similar ontological conceit in an article entitled 'The Non-Existence of Ireland'. The moralizing attitude of the Irish press to J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, coupled with the city of Dublin's apparent hesitation in accepting Sir Hugh Lane's bequest of impressionist paintings provoked Pound to write that he was not certain Ireland could be said to exist—rather 'that there is an incredible bog or slum or inferno of blackness somewhere in the swamps off Liverpool which produces the "Irish Papers"''.<sup>96</sup> The crass chauvinism of this article is all the more pointed when we realise the seriousness of the Home Rule question at that moment, midway between the beginning of the First World War and the 1916 Easter Uprising.

It is, in part, this 'provincialism' of scattered, detached and 'nameless nations' which Pound imagines his American Risorgimento will overwhelm, erecting a true 'nation' in their place, just as the many principalities of the Italian peninsula were united as the nation state of Italy during the nineteenth century. But that historical process has been seen by some historians less as a 'unification' than as a straightforward conquest of the rural south by the wealthy, industrialized northern state of Piedmont. Correspondingly, if the imperialistic overtones of Pound's 'Risorgimento' alarm us, they probably should. His derogatory allusion to Native Americans—a device which, in its

---

<sup>96</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Affirmations. VII. The Non-Existence of Ireland', *The New Age* 16, no. 17 (25 February 1915): 452. Dublin, in fact, protested when the London's National Gallery gained possession of the paintings. Eventually an agreement to share them was reached, and indeed remains to this day. It is unclear whether Pound was being intentionally malicious or simply careless in his false version of events.

very allusiveness and unspokenness, mirrors the various euphemistic and disingenuous juridical mechanisms which enabled the systematic dispossession, forced movement, and murder of untold numbers of Native people at the hands of European Americans—is as profoundly unpalatable as his rhetorical erasure of Ireland.

In the previous chapter, I noted the contradiction of Pound's claim to be, like 'every American', a pacifist (war being 'a mess and a bother') while he simultaneously espoused a chauvinistic, Eurocentric celebration of a war between civilised and uncivilized forces.<sup>97</sup> The other irony in these remarks is that Pound makes them only fifteen years after the United States went to war to secure its first overseas colonies, first against Spain and later against the revolutionary post-colonial government of the Philippines. One of the most well-known incidents during the war with Spain was the assault on San Juan Hill by Theodore Roosevelt, leading the 'Rough Riders', a volunteer cavalry unit he had assembled. Pound greatly admired Roosevelt. In 1915 he listed the former President among would-be beneficiaries of his hypothetical scheme to provide financial endowments for artists, in the hope of stimulating his American Risorgimento: 'If you so endow sculptors and writers you will begin for America an age of awakening which will over shadow the quattrocento', he argued.<sup>98</sup> Pound's idea may have been prompted by Andrew Carnegie's high-profile establishment of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in 1910, whose first president was Elihu Root. Roosevelt, having left the White House in 1909, had most recently been in the news for a 1913 Amazonian expedition to map a previously uncharted river, which was subsequently named after him.<sup>99</sup> When, on America's entry into the First World War, Roosevelt endeavoured to assemble a second regiment of Rough Riders to fight in France, Pound wrote eagerly to his patron, John Quinn, who knew Roosevelt, suggesting himself as an interpreter for

<sup>97</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Through Alien Eyes. I', *The New Age* 12, no. 11 (16 January 1913): 252.

<sup>98</sup> Pound lists Roosevelt alongside James Whitcomb Riley, George Santayana and Jack London as the suggested beneficiaries of his imagined scheme. The idea was not that these individuals would keep the money, but that they would use it to 'allot[] an income, sufficient to cover the bare necessities of life, to some active artist whom they believe in', 'The Renaissance: III', *Poetry* 6, no. 2 (1 May 1915): 88.

<sup>99</sup> For an account of Roosevelt's Amazonian expedition, see Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 430–39.

the proposed expedition.<sup>100</sup> In the event, before Roosevelt's militia could even assemble, it was disbanded on orders from President Wilson.<sup>101</sup> But Pound's enthusiasm for an enterprise that resonated so strongly with a peculiarly American imperialism places added significance upon his 'Risorgimento'.

### Pound's 'Alexander Hamiltons' and American democracy

As we have seen, Pound's suspicion of popular government and his metropolitan elitism both inform his attempt, in 'Patria Mia', 'to set forth the simplicity of America and its people'. Visible too in that passage are the frequently uncritical imperialist assumptions into which he often falls. These assumptions are sometimes outspoken, as in relation to Ireland; quietly alluded to, as regarding to Native Americans; or completely suppressed, as in his refusal to acknowledge the United States' openly colonialist policy following the Spanish-American War. Nevertheless, the passage from 'Patria Mia' that I quoted towards the beginning of the previous section demands closer scrutiny; it would be a mistake to read it solely as an expression of these reactionary tendencies. It is certainly not my aim, in this section, to recuperate Pound from the taint of imperialism or authoritarianism: even at this early point in his career, these currents are a sustained presence in his thought. What I want to argue, however, is that in trying seriously, during this period, to come to terms with an American heritage, Pound is forced—alongside, and in tension with, the elitism and chauvinism we have discussed—to engage in a clearer consideration of democratic principles and institutions than can be found almost anywhere else in his prose.

In a letter to his fiancée Dorothy, Pound referred to the 'Patria Mia' series as his

---

<sup>100</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn, 1915-1924* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 110.

<sup>101</sup> On Roosevelt's proposed volunteer unit, see J. Lee Thompson, *Never Call Retreat: Theodore Roosevelt and the Great War*, First edition (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 160–61, 166, 171–75, 178, 179.

‘Alexander Hamiltons’.<sup>102</sup> He alludes here to the *Federalist Papers*, penned mostly by Hamilton and James Madison during the national debate about the ratification of the proposed new United States Constitution. Although his remark to Dorothy is undoubtedly light-hearted, it signals the articles’ polemical intent and concern with the ‘high’ politics of state. Hamilton and the other authors of the *Federalist Papers* urged support for ratification of the Constitution, which would considerably strengthen the power of the federal government at the expense of the states. (There is thus a passing political resemblance between the struggle to ratify the Constitution and the Italian *Risorgimento* seventy years later). I have already suggested that despite Pound’s later Jeffersonian sympathies, ‘Patria Mia’ is in several respects anti-Jeffersonian. And when we consider the formal political divisions which emerged within the American ruling class around the time of the ratification debate, it is clear that Pound’s elitism, metropolitanism and disdain for what he called the ‘mass of dolts’ which constituted the common American citizenry, is certainly much closer to the Federalist faction of Hamilton—Jefferson’s arch-rival—than to Jefferson’s Republicans, even if Hamilton’s sensitivity to the interests of the major financial institutions was never something Pound shared. At the very least, this suggests that the very compelling characterizations of Pound’s politics, offered by Alex Marsh and Tim Redman, as arising largely out of Jeffersonian populism, need to be qualified to some extent with references to tendencies in Pound’s important statements on American society and politics in ‘Patria Mia’.<sup>103</sup>

Hamilton, however, is not the most significant American thinker in this passage. Pound’s engagement with American democratic ideas in fact centres on two other figures. One is the muckraking journalist and novelist, David Graham Phillips, whom Pound names directly (as ‘Graham Philips’). We will turn to Pound’s use of Phillips in a moment. The other figure, however, is a very conspicuous absence in the list of

<sup>102</sup> Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear, Their Letters, 1909-1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 161.

<sup>103</sup> See Marsh, *Money and Modernity*; and Timothy Redman, ‘Ezra Pound and American Populism: The Enduring Influence of Hailey, Idaho’, *Paideuma* 34, no. 2–3 (Winter 2005): 13–36.

individuals who, in Pound's mind, embody 'America'—namely, Walt Whitman. Like Phillips, Whitman was also a professional journalist. As I will show, Whitman stalks this passage, unnamed but inescapable.

Pound's relationship with Whitman is famously ambivalent. As we have already noted, in *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound resorts to mocking parody of his prominent forebear; he also argues that although 'The disciples of Whitman cry out concerning the "Cosmic Sense", . . . Whitman, with all his catalogues and floundering, has never so perfectly expressed the perception of Cosmic Consciousness as does Dante'.<sup>104</sup> And in the early essay, 'What I Feel about Walt Whitman', Pound's acknowledgement of Whitman's achievement—'The first great man to write in the language of his people'—is continually qualified with distaste at his 'nauseating' style.<sup>105</sup> Crucially though, in that essay, Pound also insists that 'He is America. . . . He is the hollow place in the rock that echoes with his time'.<sup>106</sup> Accordingly, we can see that Whitman is absent from the 'Patria Mia' list of America's luminaries because he is so representative as to be invisible; he was, as Pound argues, 'so near the national colour that the nation hardly perceived him against that background'.<sup>107</sup> And Pound does, in an important sense, remain true to his characterization of Whitman as a hollow conduit for 'America'. The catalogue itself is a Whitmanic inheritance, and when Pound calls forth his many-headed American 'creature', he invokes Whitman by employing that formal device. Whitman is indeed, in this sense, the 'hollow place', in which Pound's idea of America resonates.

Within poetry and criticism, and indeed within the wider culture, the identification of Whitman with American democratic ideals was ubiquitous enough for Whitman to have become, even by 1913, a signifier for democracy.<sup>108</sup> And there is a

<sup>104</sup> Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 163.

<sup>105</sup> Pound, 'What I Feel about Walt Whitman', 116, 115.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>107</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. XI', *The New Age* 12, no. 2 (14 November 1912): 33.

<sup>108</sup> As Patrick Redding notes, 'Whitman's authority on democracy and poetry has rarely been called into question', Redding 'Whitman Unbound: Democracy and Poetic Form, 1912–1931', *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (2010): 670.

clear irony in Pound's use of the quintessential Whitmanic catalogue to express such anti-democratic sentiments. A phrase like 'stupid provincialism' is as unlikely ever to have occurred to Whitman as it was to Jefferson, both of whom romanticized the 'common man'. And if Whitman did not share Jefferson's distrust of the city it was not because he shared Pound's belief that cities offered a concentration of the best minds, libraries, art galleries and architecture, but because he saw democratic potential in the concentrated urban populous and the urban setting, celebrating 'The blab of the pave' and 'The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes'.<sup>109</sup> For Whitman, the poetic catalogue, like the city, was a representation of radical democracy, the expansiveness of his great lists gesturing towards the idea of a social whole.<sup>110</sup> Whatever the necessary and self-conscious shortfall of that gesture (even Whitman's lists are finite and can never reflect every aspect of society), each element of the catalogue nonetheless gains the strictly formal democratic equality bestowed by liberal political theory.<sup>111</sup> 'All men, in law, are equals', as Pound writes dryly in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*.<sup>112</sup>

Writing about Whitman, Pound had earlier claimed that 'his message is my message', and he vowed that 'we will see that men hear it'. On one hand, it seems that Pound invokes the radical democratic equality suggested in Whitman's catalogues not to affirm it but to demonstrate its contradictions. Yet, paradoxically, within that critical gesture there seems to be not a straightforward rejection of Whitman's democratic values, but rather a sense of disappointment at their failure. The individuals in Pound's own list do enjoy the purely formal equivalence granted by that device. Whether praised or damned, each stands as an equally viable metonym for 'America'. Yet there is no

<sup>109</sup> Whitman, §8 of *Leaves of Grass*, in *The Portable Walt Whitman*, ed. Michael Warner, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin, 2004), 11.

<sup>110</sup> David S. Reynolds argues that radical democrat journalism had a profound effect on Whitman's style. In particular, Reynolds argues that he drew the catalogue device from George Foster's *New York Slices*. See Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 317, 310–18 *passim*.

<sup>111</sup> For a discussion of the 'Cartesian' uniformity inherent in American democratic thought, and of Whitman's relation to it, see Philip Fisher, 'Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency', *Representations*, no. 24 (1 October 1988): 60–101.

<sup>112</sup> Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*, ed. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 187.



effort here to reach for the ideal, albeit finally unattainable, social inclusiveness we see in ‘Song of Myself’—gestured to, for example, in the long catalogue of section 15, where Whitman lists side by side ‘The opium eater reclin[ing]’, ‘The prostitute [who] draggles her shawl’ and ‘The president holding a cabinet council’.<sup>113</sup> Whether intentionally or not, the intersecting forms of racial, gender and class domination which characterized American democracy from its beginning—crystallized in the United States Constitution’s reticence regarding voting rights and slavery (referring to the latter only in coded terms of ‘three fifths of all other persons’)—are reflected also in that the individuals Pound lists here are all white, male, and (with the arguable exception of the middle-class Whistler) members of the ruling elite.

There is a further ironic Whitmanic echo in Pound’s remarks about ‘the stupid provincialism of ten thousand nameless lights of nameless villages, of nameless nations hidden within America, and of which no rumour has escaped’. This mimics Whitman’s declaratory ‘Viva’ to ‘the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known’.<sup>114</sup> But Pound’s ‘nameless lights’ are precisely *not* equal to the named ‘heroes known’ that he lists above them. The final section of Pound’s Whitmanic catalogue—though in some ways the most Whitmanic in its lyricism and rhetorical excess—makes a mockery of the catalogue-form’s supposed levelling, democratic significance. This final position in the catalogue, though possessing a nominal formal equivalence, is made to carry a weight it simply cannot bear. American poets have often struggled to escape Whitman’s example in their efforts to develop new forms of democratic poetics.<sup>115</sup> Pound’s mission in this rich passage from ‘Patria Mia’, however, seems to be to show that Whitman’s signature formal devices are not intrinsically as ‘democratic’ as they seem. Pound subverts the democratic equality of the catalogue by emphasizing the obvious disparity between, on the one hand, an elite expressed in terms of individuals,

<sup>113</sup> Whitman, §15 of *Leaves of Grass*, in *The Portable Walt Whitman*, 18.

<sup>114</sup> Whitman, §18 of *Leaves of Grass*, in *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Redding, ‘Whitman Unbound’.

and, on the other, the undistinguished and indistinguishable mass.

The rhetorical flourish with which the catalogue ends is uncharacteristic for Pound. Given its content, moreover, it is highly ironic, emphasizing the discrepancy between theory and actual material circumstances. It might, indeed, be read as a satirical reflection on the high rhetoric and profound compromises of the United States' founding documents. In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, for example, the slave-owning Jefferson accuses King George III of waging 'cruel war against human nature itself', and of

violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither.<sup>116</sup>

Needless to say, this passage did not appear in the final document. Certainly, Pound would later be sensitive to these contradictions. In Canto LXV, Pound quotes John Adams speculation that this 'philippic against / negro slavery' was the reason that 'J's first draft has not / been published' (367). Even here, however, Pound is primarily concerned not with the legacy of slavery, nor with Jefferson's hypocrisy, but with obstructions to the availability of such important literature. We see a similar move in 'The Rest', which opens with the lines 'O helpless few in my country / O remnant enslaved' (P 93). The implication here is that as African Americans had been emancipated, it was now aesthetes, 'Lovers of beauty' who are most oppressed —'Thwarted by systems' and 'Helpless against the control'. The 'volley of liberations' which were to follow Pound's *Risorgimento* clearly did not encompass an end to Jim Crow rule.<sup>117</sup>

Nevertheless, it does seem from 'Patria Mia', that Pound was in some way trying to address American democratic ideology and to take seriously his own status as 'a citizen

<sup>116</sup> See Jefferson, *Political Writings*, 99.

<sup>117</sup> As Aldon Lynn Nielsen shows, Pound's attitude in *The Cantos* to African Americans is contradictory. He is broadly scornful of slavery and yet he frequently indulges in often very crude stereotypes. See Nielsen, *Reading Race: White American Poets and the Racial Discourse in the Twentieth Century*, South Atlantic Modern Language Association Award Study (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 65–72.

of a free State, a member of the sovereign people', as he put it later.<sup>118</sup> To detect such critical democratic undertones in Pound's 'Patria Mia', however, may seem to be pressing the text too hard. But Pound's suggestion that he wished 'to present a new Uncle Sam, clothed . . . in such garments as the late [David] Graham Phil[l]ips would have selected for his own personal adornment', helps us to see another aspect of the highly ambivalent engagement with American democratic principles in this early text. Phillips, who died during Pound's 1910–11 trip to the United States, was a prolific journalist and novelist, probably best known for his muckraking work, *The Treason of the Senate* (1906). Initially published serially in William Randolph Hearst's *Cosmopolitan* newspaper, *The Treason of the Senate* exposed serious corruption involving US legislators.<sup>119</sup> Senators were not, at that time, democratically elected but were appointed by their state legislatures. Phillips argued that many senators were entirely beholden to the wishes of the corporate interests who funded their respective party machines, and who, Phillips wrote, 'make sure of getting their money back, with interest, compound upon compound'.<sup>120</sup> A direct legacy of Phillips's work was the Seventeenth Amendment, mandating the popular election of senators. The amendment was making its way through Congress as Pound was revising 'Patria Mia' in 1912. That Pound makes sympathetic remarks about Phillips here and elsewhere in 'Patria Mia' strongly suggests, I believe, that he was also sympathetic towards the amendment.<sup>121</sup> Two names in Pound's catalogue, Elihu Root and Nelson Aldrich, will seem less recognizable than the others to most readers; but they are pertinent to the debates around the Seventeenth Amendment and its expansion of popular democracy. The second chapter of *The Treason of the Senate*, titled 'Aldrich, Head of It All', claimed that the senator was 'the organizer of this treason'.<sup>122</sup> Root was a highly influential figure in the

<sup>118</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Through Alien Eyes. II', *The New Age* 12, no. 12 (16 January 1913): 275.

<sup>119</sup> Phillips was not the only Progressive-Era muckraking journalist whose work was important to Pound. Lincoln Steffens would later become an significant presence in the *Cantos* (see, for example, *Cantos* XVI, XIX and XXVII).

<sup>120</sup> David Graham Phillips, *The Treason of the Senate*, 1906 (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), 85.

<sup>121</sup> The other mention of Phillips's work is found in 'Patria Mia. VIII', 612.

<sup>122</sup> Phillips, *The Treason of the Senate*, 79.

Democratic Party, and although in no way implicated by Phillips (he was Roosevelt's Secretary of State when *The Treason of the Senate* was published, becoming a Senator in 1909), he was a pivotal member of the Republican Party establishment and the leading voice of resistance to the passage of the amendment.<sup>123</sup> He refused to stand for election under the new amendment, retiring from the Senate at the end of his term in 1915.<sup>124</sup>

During Pound's 'American turn', then, his hostility to popular democracy seems to have been mitigated by two other intellectual factors. The first of these is his republican faith in the essential rightness of the United States' political institutions.<sup>125</sup> He may not have believed in democracy, but as we saw in his tirade against the Ottoman government's supposed incompetence, he valued the proprieties of 'constitutional government' and able governance very highly, even at this pre-Confucian stage of his career. The second intellectual factor, seemingly at odds with the elitism so evident in his work, is his populist predisposition towards a conspiratorial mode of political analysis.<sup>126</sup> The confluence of these two factors leads to a tendency to perceive any failure in state institutions to be, as Paul Morrison puts it, the result of 'a villainous conspiracy from without rather than a structural necessity from within'.<sup>127</sup> This mode of thinking would reach its nadir in the putrid anti-Semitism of his 1940s polemics.<sup>128</sup> But in 'Patria Mia', Pound's attraction to Phillips's revelations of conspiracy and corruption

<sup>123</sup> See Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, vol. 2 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938), 468–69.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:238–42; William H. Riker quotes Root's speech to the Senate in 'The Senate and American Federalism', *The American Political Science Review* 49, no. 2 (1 June 1955): 468–69.

<sup>125</sup> This republican faith seems to have been bound up with his idolization of his grandfather, Thaddeus Pound, who served in Congress and as Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin, and who provided Pound with the archetype of the honest and virtuous public servant. See Flory, *The American Ezra Pound*, 21.

<sup>126</sup> On the Western populism that Pound internalized from childhood and which so colours his later politics, see above, note <sup>103</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> Paul Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 54.

<sup>128</sup> A good example of the asinine extremes to which the conspiratorial mode would lead him is his claim that a Jewish conspiracy was responsible not only for the excesses of finance capitalism but also for Soviet Communism—insisting that the revolution of October, 1917, was financed by 'New York Jew millionaires'; see Daniel Pearlman, 'Ezra Pound: America's Wandering Jew', *Paideuma*, Winter 1980, 466. See also Leon Surrutte's chapter on 'The Jewish Conspiracy', in his *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 239–260.

in the Party machines—embodied in the figures of Aldrich and Root—manoeuvres him into a position of appearing to support the expansion of popular electoral democracy. Nonetheless, even here, the two sides of Pound’s individualism—his beliefs firstly in the definitive agency, or *virtù*, of major historical figures, and secondly in the power of conspiracy to pervert otherwise noble structures—clash with an implicit critique of political institutions. Cary Wolfe identifies a very similar contradiction when he discusses the problems with Pound’s (purportedly Confucian) reduction of economics to ethics: ‘The kind of ethical awakening needed to build and maintain a just economy would seem to render structural economic changes unnecessary in the first place’.<sup>129</sup> It is interesting to note, though, that Pound seems more apt to approach and interrogate structural—rather than ethical and conspiratorial—explanations when he is thinking in terms of poetic form and the material properties of language. As I hope I have shown in my analysis of this fairly short passage in ‘Patria Mia’, the form of Pound’s writings often entails an intellectual and literary complexity which belies the frequently off-handed, blunt and ethically unequivocal nature of his remarks.

### An imagist national portrait: ‘one sap and one root’

In his seminal 1931 essay, ‘Sincerity and Objectification’, Louis Zukofsky claimed that ‘American poetry circa 1913’ had typically presented ‘mere pretty bits’.<sup>130</sup> By way of a direct contrast to this supposed aesthetic, Zukofsky quoted a section of a poem by Charles Reznikoff:

Showing a torn sleeve, with stiff and shaking fingers the old man  
Pulls off a bit of baked apple, shiny with sugar,  
Eating with reverence, food, the great comforter.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Wolfe, *The Limits of American Literary Ideology in Pound and Emerson*, 173.

<sup>130</sup> Louis Zukofsky, ‘Sincerity and Objectification: With Special Reference to the Work of Charles Reznikoff’, *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (1 February 1931): 273.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Reznikoff’s poem can be found in Charles Reznikoff, *Poems 1918–1936. Volume 1 of the Complete Poems of Charles Reznikoff*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press,

For Zukofsky, Reznikoff's poems 'suggest entire aspects of thought: economics, beliefs, literary analytics, etc'.<sup>132</sup> Zukofsky's observations on Reznikoff's work are justly renowned; 'Sincerity and Objectification' launched objectivist poetics, such as it was. But it is somewhat mischievous of Zukofsky to trivialize 'American poetry circa 1913' in the way that he does. However much Zukofsky may have preferred the epic ambition of Pound's *Cantos*, 1913 was the year in which the imagist poetics of Pound and H. D. emerged; without imagism, the objectivist poetics of Zukofsky, Reznikoff and others are unimaginable.

There are undoubtedly substantive differences between imagist and objectivist poetics—not least the Marxian materialism which underpins the latter, in contrast to Pound's idealism.<sup>133</sup> Nonetheless, I want to show that Zukofsky's description of Reznikoff's work here—its concentration of 'entire aspects of thought' into a few short lyric lines—can also provide an excellent way of understanding much of Pound's imagist work, 'circa 1913'. In particular, I want to consider the central poem of Pound's America triptych 'A Pact', the original 1913 version of which I quote in full:

#### A PACT

I make a truce with you, Walt Whitman—<sup>134</sup>

---

1976), 30. Zukofsky's quotation deviates very slightly from either of Reznikoff's versions of 1920 or 1927. See Cooney's appendix on textual variations (196).

<sup>132</sup> Zukofsky, 'Sincerity and Objectification', 273.

<sup>133</sup> Despite the privileging of the particular and concrete in Pound's work, there is an underlying tendency to attribute causality to abstract and often vague intellectual phenomena. Note, for example, how the 'intellectual movement' underpinning Pound's longed-for Risorgimento is described as if it existed in a realm apart from any actual intellectual work 'in the arts, . . . in life, in politics, and in economics', which might constitute or express it. Even the privileged field of the arts can only 'respond' to this immaterial development. Zukofsky, on the other hand, insists upon 'thinking with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody' ('Sincerity and Objectification', 273). His emphasis shows clear signs of Pound's influence, but shorn of Pound's idealist inclination.

<sup>134</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Pact', *Poetry* 2, no. 1 (1 April 1913): 11–12.

Quotation of lines 2–9 of ‘A Pact’ (P 90). See supplementary volume, p. 4.

As a part of the ‘Contemporanea’ series, ‘A Pact’ represents Pound’s determination to abandon the habit of stylized archaisms and Pre-Raphaelite medieval pretences of his earliest work, and to fully incorporate a modern, urbane vernacular into his work. Like the rest of London’s artistic elite, Pound was, after all, still readjusting following its introduction to Italian Futurism by F. T. Marinetti.<sup>135</sup> It is a mistake, however, to confuse the poem’s straightforward, monosyllabic style with, if not artlessness, at least depthlessness and singularity (or simplicity) of purpose. Save for the few exceptions whom I discuss below, critics have been content merely to gloss the poem’s surface meaning.

Nonetheless, it is understandable that this surface has been so widely elucidated; the poem conveys an important message with remarkable efficiency. We should outline briefly what the poem explicitly says. Pound acknowledges Whitman as a forebear, crediting him with creating a vernacular American literature liberated from the metrical strictures and prosaic themes of the dominant tradition. Whitman, that is, ‘broke the new wood’. Pound’s metaphor calls to mind his later declaration in the *Pisan Cantos*: ‘To break the pentameter, that was the first heave’ (LXXXI, 518). He is careful though, to qualify his praise for Whitman’s achievement by suggesting that any such foundational work must necessarily be crude. As Pound notes in his early essay on Whitman ‘I am a Whitman who has learned to wear a collar and a dress shirt’.<sup>136</sup> Accordingly, the poem argues, Pound’s role in this historical drama is to ‘carve’ Whitman’s ‘new wood’ into something more subtle and refined—for example, into the terse, concrete language of imagism. Despite the differences between them, Pound embraces the heritage (the ‘one sap and one root’) that he and Whitman share and concludes by framing it in the

<sup>135</sup> Lawrence Rainey offers a provocative account of Futurism’s effect on London’s literary and artistic elites, and on Pound in particular, in *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 10–41.

<sup>136</sup> Pound, ‘What I Feel about Walt Whitman’, 115.

(robustly ‘American’) mode of a commercial transaction.

Formally, too, the poem is hardly subtle in reinforcing its point about Whitman’s metrical liberations. It begins in a loosely but perceptibly iambic rhythm apt to the mock solemnity of the declaration—‘Ī máke | ă páct | wĭth yòu’—but this is indeed broken by the first syllable of the name ‘Wált Whítman’. And the refusal of this line to conform to metrical conventions is graphically illustrated by the terminal dash in the position where a final stress might have fallen.<sup>137</sup> The following line, as we can hear, makes clear Pound’s resolve to stick to the third of the three central imagist principles which had been published in the same magazine the month before—that is, ‘to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome’. This second line is not totally irregular; rather, it tends towards what, in musical terminology, is called compound time, that is, with a triple step to each beat:

Ī hăve dē- | téstēd yōu | lóng \_ ě- | nough. \_ \_

The implied ‘rests’ I have inserted (marked with underscores) are not necessarily audible when the poem is read. Few readers are likely to pause so emphatically after ‘long’. But I think that the first six syllables set the expectation of them, and the subsequent defiance of this musical expectation is perceptible at some affective level.<sup>138</sup> In imagist fashion, Pound is ‘compos[ing] in sequence of the musical phrase, not in

<sup>137</sup> A stressed tenth syllable could, retroactively, have restored the line’s claim to be pentameter. ‘I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman, sir!’, for example, may well be an awful line, but it just about conforms to blank verse, ‘Wált’ becoming a promoted syllable. The dashes Pound uses (in the first and eighth lines) are not at all characteristic of Pound’s work, nor of Whitman’s. However, they are strikingly reminiscent the work of Emily Dickinson, the only other nineteenth-century poet in the American canon who can rival Whitman’s influence. Certainly, in the original 1890s editions of her work (the only source that would have been available to Pound in 1912), Dickinson’s idiosyncratic typography was considerably bowdlerized. But enough line-ending dashes remain even here to allow speculation that Pound may have been evoking a Dickinsonian compression and formal control to temper Whitmanic excess. See Emily Dickinson, *Poems: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Original Volumes Issued in 1890, 1891, and 1896* (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967).

<sup>138</sup> Similarly, Ellen Staunder perceives an underlying rhythmic structure in Pound’s ‘In a Station of the Metro’ (weak-weak-strong-weak), and reads the spacing in the original version as implying the presence of ‘unsounded’ syllables in this pattern. See Ellen Staunder, ‘Poetics’, in *Ezra Pound in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 30.



sequence of the metronome'.<sup>139</sup>

Based on this surface reading of 'A Pact', three major concerns seem to arise: the creation of a national literary idiom, the development of free verse, and a somewhat un-Poundian 'anxiety of influence' regarding Whitman's role in that development.<sup>140</sup> The poem's pedagogical usefulness in discussing these major critical concepts must largely account for its widespread anthologization. And critical discussions of the poem have, with few exceptions, been contained within this limited literary-historical terrain.<sup>141</sup>

What I want to emphasize about 'A Pact', however, is the remarkable concentration of symbolism and allusion pressed into the poem's nine lines. In coming literally to terms with his uncomfortable Whitmanic inheritance, Pound tries numerous metaphors. There is the 'pact' or 'truce', with their connotations of international diplomacy and conflict. There is the domestic, generational drama of the 'grown child' and 'pig-headed father' (the latter being a metaphor within a metaphor). Next there is the idea of friendship. We are then faced with the overdetermined significance of wood, as both as raw material (for 'carving') and as living tree ('sap and . . . root'). Finally, there is the invocation of 'commerce' as an apt expression of inter-generational literary relations. Cary Wolfe, one critic who does read this poem with considerable care, writes that it 'has always seemed a crucial but puzzling moment in Pound's early career'.<sup>142</sup> For Wolfe, the poem must be understood in terms of Emersonian ethics.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> F. S. Flint, 'Imagisme', *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 199.

<sup>140</sup> The phrase 'anxiety of influence' is, famously, Harold Bloom's (see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997]). Christopher Beach has argued that Pound, and what he (along with Marjorie Perloff) calls 'the Pound tradition', counteract the antagonistic and repressive Freudian mechanisms which, Bloom argues, characterize literary influence. See Christopher Beach, 'Ezra Pound and Harold Bloom: Influences, Canons, Traditions, and the Making of Modern Poetry', *ELH* 56, no. 2 (1 July 1989): 463–83. A revised version of Beach's essay appears in his *ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 42–65.

<sup>141</sup> Hugh Witemeyer provides the most detailed treatment of Pound's relationship to Whitman ('Clothing the American Adam: Pound's Tailoring of Walt Whitman') but even this essay offers only a brief summary of the poem's surface content. Similarly, Guiyou Huang says curiously little about the poem in his *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America* (Selingsgrove, Penn.: Susquehanna University Press, 1997), see 23–24 on 'A Pact'.

<sup>142</sup> Wolfe, *The Limits of American Literary Ideology in Pound and Emerson*, 94.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

[W]hat must be “carved” is not only the wood of American culture but in fact the selves with whom the American promise rests. . . . This fashioning is a self-fashioning, and this carving, a self-carving: They themselves are “sap” and “root”.”<sup>144</sup>

It is this ethical basis which explains the rapid transition ‘from the ambiguity of the opening “pact” . . . to the relatively more “natural” relations of patrilineage, and then from there, by way of the mediating figure of the family tree, to the organicism of the “new wood”, of democratic self and American promise’.<sup>145</sup> Only in this socially and familially grounded ethical context, Wolfe argues, can we understand the recourse to ‘commerce’ as a resolution—so seemingly jarring in the work of a fiercely anti-bourgeois poet.<sup>146</sup>

I wish to push Wolfe’s careful reading of ‘A Pact’ further, however, and consider fully the complexity and implications of what he tacitly reveals the poem to be: an ensemble of social relations. Indeed, I want to argue that ‘A Pact’ is Pound’s most serious poetic attempt to conceptualize in verse his promised ‘American Risorgimento’. Recalling Zukofsky’s description of Reznikoff’s work, as ‘suggest[ing] entire aspects of thought: economics, beliefs, literary analytics, etc’, ‘A Pact’ is, I contend, an attempt to imagine a whole society in verse—not through the expansive Whitmanic ‘Yawp’ but through imagist compression.

Consider the ‘pact’ or ‘truce’ itself. As Wolfe suggests, this may refer to ‘a blood oath between metaphorical father and son or a trade agreement’;<sup>147</sup> equally, both terms draw on the language of international conflict and diplomacy. There is a continuum between these two possibilities. The undertaking not to kill one another is probably the most fundamental social relation. From a Hobbesian perspective, no society can be built until individuals are removed from the state of nature—the ‘war of all against all’—through a social contract. Indeed, regarding contractual relations, Josephine Nock-Hee Park rightly notes that while lines 2–8 (those enclosed within dashes) move from

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

‘filiality to friendship’, ‘the first and last lines are speech acts which have the tones of an official document’.<sup>148</sup> Thus the juridical, personal, political and martial connotations of ‘pact’ and ‘truce’ are all consistent with the poem being a foundational social gesture.

The next figurative relation in the poem is the Oedipal contest between the ‘grown child’ and his ‘pig-headed father’ in the third to fifth lines. The successful negotiation of this relationship grants the autonomy required to make an offer of friendship. The final four lines of the poem introduce productive and commercial relations. The transition from the raw material of Whitman’s ‘new wood’ to the refinement of Pound’s ‘carving’ suggests fundamental relations of labour, as well as the relation between hinterland and metropolis. Wood has an overdetermined significance in the poem, however. As timber, it is raw poetic material—language, voice, the line. Rough-hewn by Whitman, it is carved by Pound. But as living, vegetative matter, wood also represents the poets themselves; ‘We have one sap and one root’.

The one-word revision which separates the original, *Poetry* version of ‘A Pact’ from the final, *Lustra* version—the substitution of ‘pact’ for ‘truce’—seems significant. It is probably not surprising that, in 1916, Pound made the revision he did, given what had happened in Europe in the intervening period. As we saw in the previous chapter, there had been a period in which Pound’s work increasingly aestheticized conflict. This development reached its peak as the aesthetic for a whole avant garde movement in the first issue of *Blast*.<sup>149</sup> But Pound backed away very decisively from this tendency shortly after the war began, as James Longenbach’s study of this period in Pound’s career illustrates well.<sup>150</sup> In its place he offered the elegiac lyricism of *Cathay* with its grieving

<sup>148</sup> Josephine Nock-Hee Park, *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 28.

<sup>149</sup> As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Matthew Hofer has argued that *Blast* began ‘a proliferation of modes of linguistic assault and means of attributing enemies’ (464). In particular, he cites Pound’s so-called Hell Cantos (XIV and XV) from 1922. Hofer is right that Pound continues to make use of aggression and hostility in his work; but I only argue here that his overt, celebratory use of the imagery of war itself declines from 1914 onwards. See Matthew Hofer, ‘Modernist Polemic: Ezra Pound v. “the Perverters of Language”’, *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 3 (2002): 463–89.

<sup>150</sup> A telling detail perhaps marks the turning point. Pound contributed a parody of Rupert Brooke’s style to the second issue of *BLAST*. Brooke died of infection in Greece during service with the Royal Navy while the magazine was in print. Pound defended his piece, but the incommensurable difference

warriors and mournful farewells to departing friends. What is more, he disapproved very strongly of poets seeking to appropriate the emotive force of the war in ways which did not respect those fighting it. When *Poetry* devoted an entire issue to the best entries to its hundred-dollar war poem contest, he expressed his dismay in a letter to Monroe, declaring that 'Even [Maeterlinck] has the grace to say that those who aren't carrying rifles ought to keep quiet'.<sup>151</sup>

The original 1913 version of 'A Pact', however, which is more complex for the presence of these two not quite synonymous terms, 'pact' and 'truce', is importantly marked by the bellicose geopolitical climate of the pre-war world. The 'truce' of the first line draws out the military sense of the 'pact' of the title. By the same token 'pact' offsets the connotations of transience inherent in 'truce'. I would argue, then, that this version of the poem evokes the two grand alliances into which Europe had divided, and which would shortly be at war. Such an allusion would certainly be in keeping the frequent use of diplomatic and martial tropes by both Pound and Monroe during this period. In imaginatively negotiating such an alliance with Whitman, Pound recalls and transgresses the historical American suspicion of permanent foreign alliances and desire not to be drawn into European conflicts which were spelled out in George Washington's farewell address.<sup>152</sup> Given that Pound would vociferously campaign to persuade the United States to enter the War on behalf of Britain and France, Pound's poetic statecraft in this pair of allusions seems highly prescient.

---

between aesthetics and the dull misery of war must have moved him. See James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 115. This shift did not prevent Pound from placing the bellicose 'Tenzon' at the head of his 1917 collected edition *Lustra*, as I discussed in the previous chapter. But that decision perhaps reflects a determination not to honestly reflect the contours of his career.

<sup>151</sup> My emphasis. Quoted in *ibid.*, 113–14.

<sup>152</sup> Washington affirmed, in his farewell address, that 'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign world', see Washington, *Writings*, 975.

## Frontiers

When Pound writes of Whitman that ‘He *is* America’, we should, I think, take seriously the ontological force of that statement.<sup>153</sup> Pound’s poetic apostrophe to Whitman can be read as a compressed but detailed imagining of America’s unfolding social and political project. But this imaginative undertaking, like the project itself, has undeniable blind-spots. When Pound suggests to Whitman that ‘We have one sap and one root’ it seems, at first a restatement of his claim, in ‘What I feel about Walt Whitman’, that ‘The vital part of my message, taken from the sap and fibre of America, is the same as his’.<sup>154</sup> But the line nonetheless has racial and nationalistic connotations that are deeply problematic. ‘Sap’ is a metaphor for blood, and, by extension, for ethnic kinship. ‘Root’ might be understood as referring to heritage, but it is also a synecdoche for the physical soil, the land. This line, then, seems close to evoking a crude ‘blood and soil’ nationalism, not so different from the ethnic passion which underlay so much of the aggression in the Balkans. In using ‘root’ rather than ‘roots’, Pound alludes also to language. And when we consider the poem’s diction we can see that a significant proportion of the words in the poem are drawn from Old English, and very few from Latin or elsewhere. Ethnic kinship, shared territory and common language—all major components of popular nationalism and nativism—seem to inhere in Pound’s imagist social portrait. It is perhaps significant, however, that three words in the poem are drawn from not from Old English but from Latin roots. ‘Pact’ and ‘commerce’ represent vital moments of intercourse in the poem which may mitigate the apparent nativism. And although ‘detested’ might suggest the opposite, it is nonetheless in the past tense and stands out as the longest word in the poem.

Nonetheless, the identity politics of the poem remain problematic. We have already noted Pound’s rhetorical erasure, in ‘Patria Mia’, of native populations, and also his

<sup>153</sup> Pound, ‘What I Feel about Walt Whitman’, 115.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

minimization of continuing racial oppression against African Americans by describing American artists as the ‘remnant enslaved’. ‘A Pact’, too, participates in this ideological work. Whitman, the woodcutter, is imagined in an virgin land—indeed, in a land that seems fully Edenic when we recognize the pivotal significance of the tree. Whitman breaks ‘the new wood’ as if no one had done so before him, just as Frederick Jackson Turner imagines in his famous frontier thesis, ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, that the Western frontier of the United States was not, as were the frontiers of European states, a border with another power, but lay rather ‘at the hither edge of free land’—rhetorically erasing the inhabitants of that space beyond it.<sup>155</sup>

Neither is there any space on this poetic frontier for women. The poem is fiercely masculine, repressing any sense of femininity and female identity in all of its clipped declarative lines and with every shift of register and symbol—the martial allusions, the father-son tension, the homosocial friendship bonds, and the manly labour of woodcutting and carving.<sup>156</sup> There is no Eve in the American Eden Pound imagines for Whitman. (If anything, the desire inherent in the Oedipal father-son relationship only highlights and exacerbates the female absence.) As we know, this is hardly unique in Pound’s imagist *oeuvre*, but ‘A Pact’ seems to be especially heavily gendered. One way of reading this would be as a tacit remark on Whitman’s sexuality. In 1913 Whitman had scarcely been dead for two decades; the 1895 Oscar Wilde libel case would also still have been fresh in readers’ minds. Certainly, it is possible to read ‘sap’ and ‘root’ as veiled homoerotic signifiers. I think that Robin G. Shulze is more convincing, however, when he argues that the poem’s exaggerated masculinity is an overcompensation for Pound’s fear that his urbane London sophistication was also a feminization: ‘In making a “pact” with Whitman, Pound promises that his own artistic move “beyond the Yawp”

<sup>155</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921), 3.

<sup>156</sup> In my use of the word ‘homosocial’, I am thinking in particular of Michael Davidson’s use of this term (which he himself draws from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) in his *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

will not result in an effete, domesticated, and degenerate art fit only for an English lady's drawing room'.<sup>157</sup> These two readings need not be mutually exclusive; there may in fact be a close relation between them. There is a firm link between robust masculinity and a homosociality which stops just short of eroticism in Pound's irreverent maritime take on the Crucifixion, 'The Goodly Fere', in which it is said of Christ that 'Aye lover he was of brawny men, / O' ships and the open sea / . . . / No capon priest was the Goodly Fere'.<sup>158</sup> We saw, moreover, in chapter one, the potential links between a masculine individualism, such as that expressed in 'The Seafarer', and the colonialist 'migratory' sentiments of Pound and Nietzsche. It seems clear that in attempting to harness for his poetry the energy and potential of the United States, Pound also aligned his work with his native country's patterns of expansionism and exclusion.

---

<sup>157</sup> Robin G. Schulze, *The Degenerate Muse: American Nature, Modernist Poetry, and the Problem of Cultural Hygiene*, Modernist Literature & Culture (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 129.

<sup>158</sup> Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, 112.

## Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the emergence of what we now recognize as modernism in Pound's work during the pre-war period was closely intertwined with his thinking about the state. In demonstrating this, the thesis has situated Pound's pre-war work within historical and political contexts which have, until this point, been obscured to a greater or lesser extent. These include the highly contested development of the early welfare state in Britain under the Liberal Party, the European crisis arising from the Balkan Wars in 1912–13, and the rise of the United States as a global and imperial power. In particular, that the Balkan Wars had a major impact on Pound's pre-war thought is something that has not previously been observed. It is thus one of the major, original contributions that this thesis has made to our knowledge of Pound's work and of the early development of Anglophone modernism.

A focus on the vital and various importance of the state in Pound's pre-war modernism draws together many of the major characteristics of his work. Whether the state is conceived as an oppositional force, or as something to be seized by the artist, either as an apparatus or as a trope, the link between masculinity and autonomy remains central. We can see this in the gendered contrast between 'The Seafarer', with its anarchistic fantasies of escape from state power, and 'Portrait d'une Femme', whose subject is adrift in the lacklustre currents. It appears again when Pound appropriates the energies of the Balkan states, which he characterizes in savage terms as, 'pestilent' and 'uncivilized', while at the same time imaginatively assaulting a profoundly and conventionally feminized Orient.<sup>1</sup> Particularly in 'Tenzon'—which, as I have argued, is a much-neglected manifesto for a politicized, state-centric imagism—sexual violence and an imaginative attachment to state power are closely intertwined.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]', *The New Age* 12, no. 3 (21 November 1912): 69.



Another aspect of Pound's work which has been salient throughout this thesis is his journalistic approach to writing—something which would come more and more to affect his poetics in *The Cantos*. Taking inspiration from recent work by Ann L. Ardis, Mark Morrisson and others, who have stressed the formative importance for modernism of little magazines, I have tried to carefully situate Pound's pre-war work within the intellectual and artistic contexts of the magazines in which it originally appeared, most particularly *The New Age*, but also *Poetry*, *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*. 'The Seafarer' acquires a rich political resonance when read in this way, as pioneering work by Lee Garver and Adam Trexler has already suggested. Moreover, the fascination Pound developed with the Balkan Wars—which, as I hope I have demonstrated, had a profound effect on his poetry—developed in part out of Pound's desire to establish himself, as he says in his first letter, 'among the regular contributors' to that magazine.<sup>2</sup> But this journalistic imperative also feeds into his poetics. The wooden bullets handed out to hapless Ottoman troops, which Pound read about in Frank Magee's *Daily Mirror* report become luminous details, capturing what Pound felt was the depth of Ottoman corruption and decadence. Pound's American turn shows him in full journalistic flow, with the travel writing of his 'Patria Mia' series. And when Pound thinks seriously about American democracy in 'Patria Mia', he thinks about journalists. David Graham Phillips is the clearest example, but Alexander Hamilton, too, is a clear if unspoken presence in 'Patria Mia'—less as a politician than as a polemicist. That Whitman was also a working journalist for much of his life, and that this registers so clearly in his work, is something which associates him with Pound's journalistic work more closely than Pound may have appreciated. It is clear is that, for Pound, even at this early stage, the boundary between poetry and journalism is extremely porous. And the transfer occurs in both directions. Probably the most profound consideration of American political life in 'Patria Mia' occurs not in any of his outspoken discursive passages, but

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

in his highly complex and ambiguous manipulation of the Whitmanian poetic catalogue.

As this interweaving of poetics and journalism begins to suggest, the desire for autonomy so often expressed in Pound's work during this period is seldom straightforward. Already, in 'The Seafarer', heroic individualism is shown to be an impossible ideal. Even at sea, the Anglo-Saxon mariner remains 'a TOY of circumstance' (to use Pound's phrase from *Blast*),<sup>3</sup> 'tossed closed to cliffs' by the 'harsh sea' (*P* 60). Pound's understanding of the Paterian ideal of autonomy is, from the start, always combined with the notion of forceful, agile statesmanship, or *virtù*, he gleaned from Italian renaissance writers like Machiavelli. As such it points the way towards Pound's identification of his own aesthetic project with the military action of the Balkan armies. More conventionally, perhaps, with his American turn, he came to associate the idea of autonomy with frontier individualism, including its twentieth-century surrogate, the 'strenuous' imperialism typified by Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders.

Ascendant American imperial power provided an important trope for Pound to imagine the power of the new in his own art. He discussed Whistler and the Panama Canal in the same sentence as 'manifestation[s] of American energy';<sup>4</sup> and he and Harriet Monroe drew on American foreign policy for inspiration in their management of *Poetry* magazine. It seems, in fact, that wherever the idea of the state enters Pound's work, it is accompanied by a colonial impulse. The proud individualism of the seafarer persona commends him as an antagonist to the expansive Edwardian state. Yet this same individualism leads him to 'seek out a foreign fastness', marking him as what Pound described as the 'nomadic' or 'migratory' type, who set out in each generation to colonize new lands. Similarly, Pound may have celebrated the 'fellow rebels' of the Balkan states as heroic underdogs, attacking the sclerotic Ottoman Empire just as he was assaulting the 'sentimental' 'post-Victorian' establishment. But equally, the Balkan armies were simply the agents through which European civilization could finally defeat

<sup>3</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Vortex. Pound', *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 153.

<sup>4</sup> Ezra Pound, 'Patria Mia. VIII', *The New Age* 11, no. 26 (24 October 1912): 612.

its historic other.

Indeed, Pound's work during this period participates in an Orientalist discourse of the crudest kind. It is important to stress this aspect of his imagist work because he has so often been held up—even, perhaps, recuperated to some extent—as representative of modernism's cosmopolitan and transnationalist imperatives. In one respect, his sensitivity to the influence of East Asian literature, Chinese in particular, has been cited as a challenge to a unilateral model of cultural transmission, a model which sees the West as absolutely culturally dominant and impenetrable.<sup>5</sup> Helen Carr argues that rather than representing a cultural equivalent of imperialist pillaging in China, Pound's recourse to the East—his translations, stylistic borrowings, formal assimilations, and immersion in Confucian philosophy—is in fact indicative of a widespread tendency among certain sectors of the metropolitan elite towards 'an anxious loss of faith in the Western imperialist project'.<sup>6</sup> Zhaoming Qian agrees that 'Pound . . . did not seem to believe in Western cultural superiority', and contends that 'what attracted [Pound] toward the Orient was really the affinities (the Self in the Other) rather than the differences (the Otherness in the Other)'.<sup>7</sup> Pound's fruitful use of the ideogram within his poetics was also praised by Jacques Derrida as offering resistance to the 'entrenched Western tradition' of phonocentrism.<sup>8</sup>

In the work of some recent critics, Pound's cosmopolitan aspect has been deployed under the banner of transnational literary studies. Scholarship in this area is voluminous, but perhaps the most prominent recent study, and the most pertinent to this thesis, is Jahan Ramazani's *A Transnational Poetics*.<sup>9</sup> Ramazani argues that Pound's work—with

<sup>5</sup> The basis of the model under attack here is, of course, Edward Said's *Orientalism* ([1978] London: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Helen Carr, 'Imagism and Empire', in *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890–1940*, ed. Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 92.

<sup>9</sup> Transnationalism is a major thematic concern in both modernist studies and American studies. In terms of modernist studies, see, for example, Susan Stanford Friedman's self-conscious attempt to come to terms with the debate ('Planetary: Musing Modernist Studies', *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 3 [2010]: 471–99); Andreas Huyssen, 'Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World', *New*

its interweaving of ‘Euro-classicism and Chinese ideograms, . . . Confucius and Thomas Jefferson’—transcends geopolitical boundaries and cannot be sufficiently understood simply in terms of what he calls the conventional ‘national paradigm’ of literary studies.<sup>10</sup> ‘Pound’s imagism’, Ramazani adds, ‘is no less indebted to East Asian models than is Picasso’s cubism to African masks’.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Ramazani admits that Pound’s arrogation of minimalist Asian technique may not be innocent of American expansionism’.<sup>12</sup> But this concession may not go far enough; as I have suggested, there is a distinctly violent and Eurocentric aspect concealed within Pound’s imagist poetics, which unsettles the transcultural, hybrid quality for which imagism is so often celebrated.

Ramazani’s impassioned stress on the value of the transnational, for which Pound is an important model, is not only aesthetic, but also has a political-theoretical dimension. Literary studies’ reliance on national paradigms is, Ramazani insists, ‘a cultural nationalism that risks complicity in assertions of American political, economic, and military power’.<sup>13</sup> It seems, then, that Ramazani’s primary target is not nationalism in literature *per se*, but rather state power—specifically American state power: he argues that a transnational perspective on poetics is ‘especially urgent in an era when monoculturalist assumptions have sometimes underwritten violent confrontations between the United States and its supposed civilizational “others”’.<sup>14</sup> Ramazani is

---

*German Critique* 34, no. 1 100 (2007): 189–207; Anita Haya Patterson, *Race, American Literature and Transnational Modernisms*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 155 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Jessica Schiff Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Within American studies, see, for example, recent addresses to the American Studies Association such as Janice A. Radway, ‘What’s in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998’, *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 1–32, and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, ‘Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004’, *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 17–57; as well as the articles special 2008 ‘transnationalism’ issue of *American Quarterly*—in particular, Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way, ‘Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis’, *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008): 625–48.

<sup>10</sup> Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

unquestionably correct on this latter point; national and cultural difference is routinely exploited in a calculated fashion by state actors, and the outcomes from this process are frequently deadly. My reservation about his approach, one which I hope might point towards potential areas for future research, is that it does not look closely enough at the question of the state itself. This may well be because, as Eric Lott has suggested, not only does work under the transnational paradigm often depend upon assumptions that are conceptually and politically hostile to the state in general, but also that those assumptions are left implicit and unargued.<sup>15</sup>

Methodologically (not to say ideologically), I feel that this approach is problematic. Ramazani could say more, for instance, about how the mechanisms of potential ‘complicity’ between nationalist ideology in poetry (and poetry criticism) and state power actually function. This, to be fair, may not be his primary focus. And, indeed, it may require quite a profoundly interdisciplinary collaboration between literary studies and the social sciences. I have tried to gesture in this direction with my discussion of the relationship between intellectual labour—including, of course, poetic production—and state power, referring in some detail to the work of Nicos Poulantzas. Much more work is required, however, to adequately interface state theory with literary criticism. Working in a slightly different direction, one study which has focused very closely on the very concrete complicity between poetry and the state, is Juliana Spahr’s recent essay ‘Contemporary U.S. Poetry and Its Nationalisms’, which traces a collaboration between the George W. Bush Administration and the Poetry Foundation, in advancing a monolingual, pro-English agenda in American poetry.<sup>16</sup> Another approach is that of Michael Davidson, who has taken what might still be called a transnational approach to continental American poetics in examining how the work of three poets, one from Canada, one from the United States and one from Mexico, has registered the effects of

---

<sup>15</sup> Eric Lott, ‘*National Treasure*, Global Value, and American Literary Studies’, *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2 (20 March 2008): 108–23.

<sup>16</sup> Juliana Spahr, ‘Contemporary U.S. Poetry and Its Nationalisms’, *Contemporary Literature* 52, no. 4 (2011): 684–715.

NAFTA.<sup>17</sup> To be sure, Davidson is interested in critical poetics rather than complicity. But the seriousness with which he treats material issues of political economy such as housing and employment and their relationship to poetry reveals areas where Ramazani's transnational perspective could be strengthened.

Finally, as William J. Maxwell has argued, there are definite echoes between Ramazani's transnational perspective and what Maxwell calls 'the high-church cosmopolitanism of the old modernist studies', typified by the work of mid-century critics such as Hugh Kenner.<sup>18</sup> The idea that rootlessness and exile might in fact form a part of modernism's essential core is a fairly familiar thesis. As Raymond Williams argues, the fact that so many of the major modernists were immigrants can account for the thematic 'elements of strangeness and distance, indeed of alienation, which so regularly form part of the repertory'.<sup>19</sup> Importantly, though, 'the decisive aesthetic effect is at a deeper level':

Liberated or breaking from their national or provincial cultures, placed in quite new relations to those other native languages or native visual traditions, encountering meanwhile a novel and dynamic common environment from which many of the older forms were obviously distant, the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase found *the only community available to them: a community of the medium; of their own practices*.<sup>20</sup>

Quite in contrast to the transnational perspective on Pound's work, what we have seen in this thesis is that, for Pound, at least during this brief pre-war period, the awareness of this aesthetic community in the face of such productive alienation manifested in what we might call a form of artistic nationalism. Throughout this period—which was so formative for Anglo-American modernism—Pound was fascinated with the concept of the state, frequently drawing upon statist ideas and upon the actions of particular states

---

<sup>17</sup> Michael Davidson, 'On the Outskirts of Form: Cosmopoetics in the Shadow of NAFTA', in *On the Outskirts of Form: Practicing Cultural Poetics* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 23–50.

<sup>18</sup> William J. Maxwell, 'Global Poetics and State-Sponsored Transnationalism: A Reply to Jahan Ramazani', *American Literary History* 18, no. 2 (20 June 2006): 360–64.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* My emphasis.

when striving to legitimize the role of poetry and, more particularly, when trying to imagine how his work might develop. During this period, when Pound tried to conceive what the vital concept of autonomy might mean within a modernist aesthetic, he came to understand it less as autonomy from the state, and more in terms of an analogy with the autonomy *of* the state.

## Appendix: Pound's Balkan War letters in *The New Age*

### THE BLACK CRUSADE.

Sir,—If I did not know that THE NEW AGE was a free forum where every man is allowed to speak his mind I should be surprised at the appearance of "The Black Crusade" in its pages.

I write this lest the casual reader of the paper imagines that there is any unanimity in the matter, i.e., the Turco-Bulgarian war, among the regular contributors.

As an alien, and a man detached from immediate concern in the situation in so far as it concerns England, I would state my position in brief:

That of all the silly sentimentalism which I have met in post-Victorian England, this silly pro-Turkish sentimentalism is the silliest.

"Haw dem'me! El Islam!!" and the rest of it.

The disgrace to Europe is not that Turkey is about to be sent from Europe, but that she was not long since driven out.

If Turkey has been maintained in the "unspeakable" status quo, I should like to know by what force if not by the force of the allied monopolies of Europe? If it has not been to the interest of European capital to maintain the Turk, why has he persisted?

If an Oriental despotism is not lock, stock, and barrel of our matter with the industrial tyrannies of Europe, to what is it allied? To the freedom of the individual? To equal opportunity for all? To the conservation of human energy and dignity? To any of the one and fifty causes to which we are pledged? No!

What has the labourer to gain by letting continue a model of tyranny more disgraceful than that whereunder he sweats? Turkey means monopoly. In her trouble she has asked loans of the monopolists of Europe and America.

If we cannot break the close ring in our own countries the next best thing is to see it broken elsewhere.

"Fellow Christians" and the rest of the cant, be hanged!

What could be more inane than Europe pretending to be Christian? "Fellow rebels" if you like. "Fellow fighters for fair play and an open game," we greet you and we wish you well. And we wish we could throw off the subtle strands of the hidden tyranny of the monopolists as swiftly and as cleanly as you are throwing off the yoke of a tyranny of arms.

Uncivilised Montenegrins, Servians, decadent Greeks, pestilent Bulgarians, I wish you well, and I pray that you conserve your ideal of freedom better than men have done in my own "free" country or in constitutional England.

EZRA POUND.

Fig. 1: [letter1], *The New Age*, vol. 12, no. 3 (21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1912), 69.



### THE BLACK CRUSADE.

Sir,—I regret the haste and ill-considered phrasing of my letter of two weeks since. I regret its ambiguities. I have, it seems, been as much bored by uninformed pro-Turks as Mr. Pickthall has been by uninformed pro-Bulgars.

If, as I hear, Mr. Pickthall has been “muzzled” by other papers, I am very glad that THE NEW AGE should present his arguments. I meant no disrespect to his style which is certainly much better than my own. My dull shaft was aimed at other pro-Turkish articles which I had read, and I should have taken care enough with my letter to make this apparent.

My objection to Turkey is in no degree religious.

I am still unconvinced that a continuance of the Ottoman rule in Europe would have been of the slightest benefit to anyone.

I cannot be brought to believe in the fibre of a government that sends out starving troops and furnishes them with wooden bullets; that Sufism is preferable to Methodism I am quite ready to admit.

To argue that a government has been cheated out of its eye teeth by thieving neighbours is not to argue well in its favour. It is the business of a government not to be so cheated. When a government becomes susceptible to such fraud it has become archaic, and is a danger to itself and everyone else, and incompetence in high places is in itself a crime.

I have no doubt that there are charming personalities among the Turkish aristocracy, but any man who would put faith in the given word of England or of any other European Power, is utterly unfit to govern a modern state. He is the sort of man that would serve out wooden bullets.

If, as Mr. Pickthall contends, the heaviest burden of Turkish rule has fallen on Moslems, this must not be counted the least of Turkey's ill-doings.

I have a stupid prejudice in favour of straight roads and of public order.

I detest the established rights and capacities of capital as much as does Mr. Pickthall, but I have not yet rid my mind of the suspicion that he harbours a quaint and picturesque belief in the divine right of kings.

EZRA POUND.

Fig. 2 [letter 2], *The New Age*, vol. 12, no. 5 (5th Dec. 1912), 116.

## Bibliography

- Aaron, Daniel. *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism*. 1961. New York: Octagon, 1974.
- Adorno, Theodor W. 'The Artist as Deputy'. In *Notes to Literature*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen, 1:98–108. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Albright, Daniel. *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Alexander, Michael. 'Ezra Pound as Translator'. *Translation and Literature* 6, no. 1 (1 January 1997): 23–30.
- . *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1983. London: Verso, 2006.
- Anderson, Perry. *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. London: NLB, 1974.
- Ardis, Ann L. *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2002.
- . 'The Dialogics of Modernism(s) in *The New Age*'. *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007): 407–34.
- Arrowsmith, Rupert Richard. 'The Transcultural Roots of Modernism: Imagist Poetry, Japanese Visual Culture, and the Western Museum System'. *Modernism/modernity* 18, no. 1 (2011): 27–42.
- Baldick, Chris. *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848–1932*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Barolini, Teodolinda, and Rachel Jacoff. 'Dante and the Lyric Past'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2nd ed., 14–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Beach, Christopher. *ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- . 'Ezra Pound and Harold Bloom: Influences, Canons, Traditions, and the Making of Modern Poetry'. *ELH* 56, no. 2 (1 July 1989): 463–83.
- Beasley, Rebecca. 'Ezra Pound's Whistler'. *American Literature* 74, no. 3 (2002): 485–516.
- Belloc, Hilaire. 'The Servile State'. *The New Age* 7, no. 4 (26 May 1910): 77–79.

- . *The Servile State*. London: T. N. Foulis, 1912.
- Belloc, Hilaire, and J. Ramsay MacDonald. *Socialism and the Servile State: A Debate Between Messrs. Hilaire Belloc and J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P.* London: The South West London Federation of the Independent Labour Party, 1911.
- Belloc, Hilaire. 'The Three Issues'. *The New Age* 3, no. 1 (2 May 1908): 8–10.
- Beloff, Max. *Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897–1922*. Imperial Sunset. London: Methuen, 1969.
- Benson, Jason. 'Coalmining'. In *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875–1914*, edited by Chris J. Wrigley, 188–208. Brighton: Harvester, 1982.
- Berman, Jessica Schiff. *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Bernstein, Michael André. *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Bevir, Mark. 'The British Social Democratic Federation 1880–1885: From O'Brienism to Marxism'. *International Review of Social History* 37, no. 2 (1992): 207–29.
- Binckes, Faith. *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde: Reading Rhythm, 1910–1914*. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Boyer, George R. 'The Evolution of Unemployment Relief in Great Britain'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 3 (1 January 2004): 393–433.
- Brennan, Timothy. *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Briggs, Laura, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way. 'Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis'. *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008): 625–48.
- Brinkman, Bartholomew. 'Making Modern Poetry: Format, Genre and the Invention of Imagism(e)'. *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 2 (2009): 20–40.
- Brown, Dennis. 'The Translation of History in the Early Cantos'. In *Ezra Pound and History*, 53–62. Ezra Pound Scholarship Series. Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1985.
- Brownley, Martine Watson. *Deferrals of Domain: Contemporary Women Novelists and the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. 2004. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Bush, Ronald. 'Ezra Pound'. In *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, 353–59. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

- . “‘It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted’: *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*’. *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1 April 1990): 56–78.
- Carr, Helen. ‘Imagism and Empire’. In *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890–1940*, edited by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- . *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender, and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789–1936*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1996.
- . *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D. and The Imagists*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2009.
- ‘Cartridges with Wooden Bullets “Made in Germany” Used by the Turks: One of the Reasons They Lost Kumanovo’. *Daily Mirror*, 27 November 1912.
- Casillo, Robert. *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988.
- Catullus, Gaius Valerius. *The Poems of Catullus*. Translated by Peter Green. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Christ, Carol T. *Victorian and Modern Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Clanchy, M. T. *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*. 3rd ed. Chichester, West Sussex, UK ; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
- Clarke, Bruce. ‘Dora Marsden and Ezra Pound: *The New Freewoman* and “The Serious Artist”’. *Contemporary Literature* 33, no. 1 (1 April 1992): 91–112.
- Clark, Peter. *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim*. London; New York: Quartet Books, 1986.
- Cole, Sarah. ‘Dynamite Violence and Literary Culture’. *Modernism/modernity* 16, no. 2 (2009): 301–28.
- Cronin, James E. *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*. London; New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Dalton, Kathleen. *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*. New York: Vintage, 2004.
- Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910–1914*. 1935. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2011.
- Dante Alighieri. *Dante’s Lyric Poetry. Volume 1, The Poems: Text and Translation*. Edited by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- . *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 1: Inferno*. Edited and translated by Robert M. Durling. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Davidson, Michael. *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics*. Chicago,

- Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- . ‘On the Outskirts of Form: Cosmopoetics in the Shadow of NAFTA’. In *On the Outskirts of Form: Practicing Cultural Poetics*, 23–50. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011.
- Davie, Donald. ‘Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*’. In *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, edited by Boris Ford. Baltimore: Penguin, 1961.
- . *Purity of Diction in English Verse*. 1952. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Davies, Sam, and Ron Noon. ‘The Rank-and-File in the 1911 Liverpool General Transport Strike’. *Labour History Review* 79, no. 1 (1 January 2014): 55–81.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Dickinson, Emily. *Poems: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Original Volumes Issued in 1890, 1891, and 1896*. Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. ‘Propounding Modernist Maleness: How Pound Managed a Muse’. *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 3 (2002): 389–405.
- . *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olson, Creeley, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry*. Contemporary North American Poetry Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012.
- Easton, David. ‘The Political System Besieged by the State’. *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1 August 1981): 303–25.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature and Selected Essays*. New York: Penguin, 2003.
- Engels, Friedrich. *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science*. Translated by Emile Burns. Moscow: Progress, 1947.
- Faulkner, Peter. ‘Morris and Tennyson’. *Journal of William Morris Studies* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 15–51.
- Fernihough, Anne. ‘“Go in Fear of Abstractions”: Modernism and the Spectre of Democracy’. *Textual Practice* 14, no. 3 (2000): 479–97.
- Fisher, Philip. ‘Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency’. *Representations*, no. 24 (1 October 1988): 60–101.
- Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. ‘Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004’. *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 17–57.
- Flint, F. S. ‘Imagisme’. *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 198–200.
- Flory, Wendy Stallard. *The American Ezra Pound*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Fogelman, Bruce. ‘The Evolution of Ezra Pound’s “Contemporania”’. *Journal of*

- Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1 July 1988): 93–103.
- Foster, Kenelm, and Patrick Boyde, eds. *Dante's Lyric Poetry. Volume 2, Commentary.* Vol. 2: Commentary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* London: Allen Lane, 1977.
- . *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978.* Edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- 'Foundation of the Ottoman Empire'. *Daily Telegraph*. 2 November 1912.
- Fraser, Derek. *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. 'Planetary: Musing Modernist Studies'. *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 3 (2010): 471–99.
- Garver, Lee. 'Seafarer Socialism: Pound, *The New Age*, and Anglo-Medieval Radicalism'. *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 4 (2006): 1–21.
- Gautier, Théophile. *Mademoiselle de Maupain.* Translated by Helen Constantine. 1835. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Gibbs, Philip. *The Pageant of the Years.* London: William Heinemann, 1946.
- Gibson, Mary Ellis. *Epic Reinvented: Ezra Pound and the Victorians.* Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell U.P, 1995.
- Gilbert, Bentley B. *The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain: The Origins of the Welfare State.* London: Michael Joseph, 1966.
- Gladstone, William Ewart. *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East.* London: John Murray, 1876.
- Glass, S. T. *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of Guild Socialism.* London: Longmans, 1966.
- Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans, 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers.* London: Granta, 1999.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* Edited and translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.
- Hale, J. R., ed. 'Virtù'. *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1981.
- Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers.* Edited by Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

- Harris, José. 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy'. *Past & Present*, no. 135 (May 1992): 116–41.
- Hart, Matthew, and Jim Hansen. 'Introduction: Contemporary Literature and the State'. *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 491–513.
- Hastings, Beatrice. *The Old 'New Age.'* *Orage—and Others*. London: Blue Moon Press, 1936.
- H.D. *An End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1980.
- Helmholtz, Bastien von. 'On the Imbecility of the Rich'. *The Egoist* 1, no. 20 (5 October 1914): 389.
- . 'Suffragettes'. *The Egoist* 1, no. 13 (1 July 1914): 254–56.
- Henderson, Alice Corbin. 'Mr. Masfield's Lecture'. *Poetry* 7, no. 6 (1 March 1916): 301–3.
- Hennock, E. P. *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850-1914: Social Policies Compared*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Henry of Huntingdon. *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon, Comprising the History of England from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Accession of Henry II. Also, The Acts of Stephen, King of England and Duke of Normandy*. Edited and translated by Thomas Forester. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853.
- Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hinton, James. *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*. Studies in Social History. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1973.
- . 'The Rise of a Mass Labour Movement'. In *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875–1914*, edited by Chris J. Wrigley, 20–46. Brighton: Harvester, 1982.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by J. C. A. Gaskin. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- . *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*. 1987, reprint. London: Abacus, 2010.
- Hofer, Matthew. 'Modernist Polemic: Ezra Pound v. "the Perverters of Language"'. *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 3 (2002): 463–89.
- Holton, R. J. 'Syndicalist Theories of the State'. *The Sociological Review* 28, no. 1 (1 February 1980): 5–21.
- Homberger, Eric, ed. *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1972.
- Huang, Guiyou. *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America*.

- Selingsgrove, Penn.: Susquehanna University Press, 1997.
- Hueffer [Ford], Ford Madox. *The Soul of London: A Survey of A Modern City*. London: Alston Rivers, 1905.
- Hulme, T. E. 'Romanticism and Classicism'. In *Speculations*, edited by Herbert Read, 113–40. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
- Hutchinson, Frances, and Brian Burkitt. *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism. Theories of Representation and Difference*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- . 'Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World'. *New German Critique* 34, no. 1 100 (2007): 189–207.
- 'In Battle with Bullets of Wood'. *Daily Mirror*, 27 November 1912.
- Jaffe, Aaron. *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. 1938. London: Penguin, 2001.
- Jefferson, Thomas. *Political Writings*. Edited by Joyce Oldham Appleby and Terence Ball. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . *The Essential Jefferson*. Edited by Jean M. Yarbrough. The American Heritage Series. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2006.
- Jessup, Philip C. *Elihu Root*. Vol. 2. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938.
- [J. M. Kennedy], S. Verdad. 'Foreign Affairs'. *The New Age* 11, no. 27 (3 October 1912): 629.
- . 'Foreign Affairs'. *The New Age* 11, no. 25 (17 October 1912): 582.
- Jones, Chris. *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008.
- Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. London: Penguin, 2010.
- Kadlec, David. 'Pound, Blast, and Syndicalism'. *ELH* 60, no. 4 (1 December 1993): 1015–31.
- Katz, Daniel. *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Keenaghan, Eric. 'Life, War, and Love: The Queer Anarchism of Robert Duncan's Poetic Action during the Vietnam War'. *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 634–59.
- Kelly, Susan. 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word'. In *The Uses of Literacy*



- in *Early Medieval Europe*, edited by Rosamond McKitterick, 36–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.
- Kern, Robert. *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem*. Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Larissy, Edward. *Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry: The Language of Gender and Objects*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Lemke, Thomas. 'An Indigestible Meal? Foucault, Governmentality and State Theory'. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 43–64.
- Levenson, Michael. 'Novelty, Modernity, Adjacency'. *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 663–80.
- Levenson, Michael H. *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- London, Jack. *The Iron Heel*. New York: Regent, 1907.
- Longenbach, James. *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- 'Long Live the Vortex!'. *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): n.p. [7–8].
- Lord, Albert Bates. *The Singer of Tales*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Lott, Eric. 'National Treasure, Global Value, and American Literary Studies'. *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2 (20 March 2008): 108–23.
- Lyddon, Dave. 'Postscript: The Labour Unrest in Great Britain and Ireland, 1910-1914 – Still Uncharted Territory?'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, no. 33 (1 September 2012): 241–65.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Translated by Peter Bondanella. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- 'Manifesto'. *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 30–43.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Marinetti: Selected Writings*. Edited by R. W. Flint. Translated by R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. London: Secker & Warburg, 1972.
- Marsh, Alec. *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998.
- Marshall, Geoffrey. 'The Armed Forces and Industrial Disputes in the United Kingdom'. *Armed Forces & Society* 5, no. 2 (1 January 1979): 270–80.
- Martin, Wallace. *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967.

- Marx, John. 'Failed-State Fiction'. *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 597–633.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin in association with *New Left Review*, 1990.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology, Part One: With Selections from Parts Two and Three, Together with Marx's 'Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy'*. Edited by C. J. Arthur. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970.
- Maxwell, William J. 'Global Poetics and State-Sponsored Transnationalism: A Reply to Jahan Ramazani'. *American Literary History* 18, no. 2 (20 June 2006): 360–64.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. *Robert Frost: A Biography*. London: Constable, 1996.
- Michail, Eugene. *The British and the Balkans: Forming Images of Foreign Lands, 1900-1950*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- . 'Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912–91'. *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (1 April 2012): 219–39.
- Miller, Andrew John. *Modernism and the Crisis of Sovereignty*. Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Mill, John Stuart. 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention'. In *Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, edited by John M. Robson, 21:109–24. *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Monroe, Harriet. 'That Mass of Dolts'. *Poetry* 1, no. 5 (1 February 1913): 168–70.
- . 'The Open Door'. *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1 November 1912): 62–64.
- . 'The Servian Epic'. *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (March 1913): 195–98.
- Montesquieu. *The Spirit of the Laws*. [1748], *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Moore, Marianne. 'The Cantos'. *Poetry* 39, no. 1 (1 October 1931): 37–50.
- Morgan, Benjamin. 'Aesthetic Freedom: Walter Pater and the Politics of Autonomy'. *ELH* 77, no. 3 (2010): 731–56.
- Morrison, Paul. *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Paul de Man*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Morrisson, Mark S. *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.
- Morris, William. *News From Nowhere and Other Writings*. Edited by Clive Wilmer. London: Penguin, 2004.
- . 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil'. In *News From Nowhere and Other Writings*, edited by Clive Wilmer, 285–306. London: Penguin, 2004.
- Mussolini, Benito. *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*. Translated by Jane Soames. London: Hogarth P, 1933.

- Nadel, Ira B. 'Ezra Pound: Two Poems'. *Journal of Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1 July 1988): 141–45.
- Newcomb, John Timberman. 'Poetry's Opening Door: Harriet Monroe and American Modernism'. *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 15, no. 1 (2005): 6–22.
- Nicholls, Peter. "'A Consciousness Disjunct': Sex and the Writer in Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*'. *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 01 (1994): 61–75.
- . *Ezra Pound, Politics, Economics and Writing: A Study of the Cantos*. London: Macmillan, 1984.
- . *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995.
- Nielsen, Aldon Lynn. *Reading Race: White American Poets and the Racial Discourse in the Twentieth Century*. South Atlantic Modern Language Association Award Study. Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1988.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Niles, John D. 'The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet'. *Western Folklore* 62, no. 1/2 (1 January 2003): 7–61.
- North, Michael. *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- 'Notes and Announcements'. *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1 November 1912): 64–65.
- Orage, A. R. 'Emancipation and the Wage System'. *The New Age* 10, no. 26 (25 April 1912): 606–7.
- . , ed. *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System and the Way Out*. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914.
- . 'Notes of the Week'. *The New Age* 9, no. 2 (11 May 1911): 25–26.
- . 'Notes of the Week'. *The New Age* 9, no. 7 (15 June 1911): 145–46.
- . 'Notes of the Week'. *The New Age* 10, no. 1 (2 November 1911): 1–3.
- . 'Notes of the Week'. *The New Age* 10, no. 5 (30 November 1911): 97–100.
- Orchard, Andy. 'Looking for an Echo: The Oral Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Literature'. *Oral Tradition* 18, no. 2 (2003): 225–27.
- Orwell, George. 'Notes on the Way'. In *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, edited by Peter Hobbey Davison, Ian Angus, and Sheila Davison, Vol. 12: A Patriot After All, 1940–1941. London: Secker & Warburg, 1997.
- Oxford English Dictionary. 'Contraposition, N. 2'. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, 1893. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40427>.
- . 'Jism, N.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, 1976.

- <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/101367>.
- . 'Painted Lady, N.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/239227>.
- Packer, Ian. *Liberal Government and Politics, 1905-15*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Parker, Richard. 'Walter Pater—Imagism—Objectivist Verse'. *Victorian Network* 3, no. 1 (2011): 22–40.
- Park, Josephine Nock-Hee. *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*. Edited by Donald L. Hill. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Patterson, Anita Haya. *Race, American Literature and Transnational Modernisms*. Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 155. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Paulin, Tom. *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Pearlman, Daniel. 'Ezra Pound: America's Wandering Jew'. *Paideuma*, Winter 1980, 461–48.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996.
- Phillips, David Graham. *The Treason of the Senate*. 1906. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964.
- Pickthall, Marmaduke. 'Holy Warfare'. *Daily Mail*, 14 October 1912.
- . 'The Black Crusade'. *The New Age* 12, no. 1–5 (December 1912).
- . 'The Black Crusade. [I]'. *The New Age* 12, no. 1 (7 November 1912): 8.
- . 'The Black Crusade [Letter]'. *The New Age* 12, no. 4 (28 November 1912): 93.
- . 'The Doomed City'. *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1912.
- Poggi, Christine. *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- 'Politics and Affairs'. *Nation*. 12 October 1912.
- Pondrom, Cyrena N. 'H.D. and the Origins of Imagism'. In *Signets: Reading H.D.*, edited by Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Potter, Rachel. *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture, 1900-1930*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Poulantzas, Nicos. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: NLB, 1975.
- . *State, Power, Socialism*. Translated by Patrick Camiller. London: NLB, 1978.

- Pound, Ezra. 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*'. *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (March 1913): 200–206.
- . 'A Few Don'ts by an *Imagiste*'. *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1913): 200–206.
- . 'Affirmations. I. Arnold Dolmetsch'. *The New Age* 16, no. 10 (7 January 1915): 246–47.
- . 'Affirmations. VII. The Non-Existence of Ireland'. *The New Age* 16, no. 17 (25 February 1915): 451–53.
- . 'America: Chances and Remedies. I'. *The New Age* 13, no. 1 (1 May 1913): 9–10.
- . 'A Pact'. *Poetry* 2, no. 1 (1 April 1913): 11–12.
- . 'A Retrospect'. In *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T. S. Eliot, 3–14. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.
- . 'Bohemian Poetry'. *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1 November 1912): 57–59.
- . 'Bureaucracy and the Flail of Jehovah'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 187–91. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.
- . *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*. Edited by Michael John King. New York: New Directions, 1976.
- . 'D'Artagnan Twenty Years After'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 422–30. New York: New Directions, 1975.
- . *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare, Their Letters, 1909–1914*. New York: New Directions, 1984.
- . *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*. Edited by James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler. Vol. 1. 11 vols. New York and London: Garland, 1991.
- . *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*. 1916. rpt. Hessle, E. Yorks: Marvell, 1960.
- . 'Gists'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 324–25. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.
- . *Guide to Kulchur*. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 21–43. New York: New Directions, 1975.
- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. [I & II] A Rather Dull Introduction'. *The New Age* 10, no. 6 (6 December 1911): 130–31.
- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. I. [The Seafarer]'. *The New Age* 10, no. 5 (30 November 1911): 107.
- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IV. A Beginning'. *The New Age* 10, no. 8 (21 December 1911): 178–80.
- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. IX. On Technique'. *The New Age* 10, no. 13 (25 January 1912): 297–99.

- . 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. VI. On Virtue'. *The New Age* 10, no. 10 (4 January 1912): 224–25.
- . 'In Metre: "Love Poems and Others" by D. H. Lawrence, "Peacock Pie" by Walter de La Mare, and "A Boy's Will" by Robert Frost'. *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 6 (1 September 1913): 113.
- . 'Modern Georgics'. *Poetry* 5, no. 3 (1 December 1914): 127–30.
- . *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony*. London: Peter Owen, 1962.
- . 'Patria Mia. I'. *The New Age* 11, no. 19 (5 September 1912): 445.
- . 'Patria Mia. III'. *The New Age* 11, no. 21 (19 September 1912): 491–92.
- . 'Patria Mia. IV'. *The New Age* 11, no. 22 (26 September 1912): 515–16.
- . 'Patria Mia. V'. *The New Age* 11, no. 23 (3 October 1912): 539–40.
- . 'Patria Mia. VIII'. *The New Age* 11, no. 26 (24 October 1912): 611–12.
- . 'Patria Mia. X'. *The New Age* 12, no. 1 (7 November 1912): 12.
- . 'Patria Mia. XI'. *The New Age* 12, no. 2 (14 November 1912): 33–34.
- . *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1952.
- . *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*. Edited by Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz. Rev. ed. London: Faber and Faber, 2001.
- . 'Probario Ratio'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 177–79. New York: New Directions, 1975.
- . 'Provincialism the Enemy'. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 159–73. New York: New Directions, 1975.
- . 'Provincialism the Enemy.—I'. *The New Age* 21, no. 11 (12 July 1917): 244–45.
- . 'Provincialism the Enemy.—II'. *The New Age* 21, no. 12 (12 July 1917): 268–69.
- . 'Provincialism the Enemy.—III'. *The New Age* 21, no. 13 (26 July 1917): 288–89.
- . 'Provincialism the Enemy.—IV'. *The New Age* 21, no. 14 (2 August 1917): 308–9.
- . 'Rabindranath Tagore'. In *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals*, edited by James Longenbach, A. Walton Litz, and Lea Baechler, 1: (C75) 123–31. New York; London: Garland, 1991.
- . 'Review of A Boy's Will by Robert Frost'. *Poetry* 2, no. 2 (1 May 1913): 72–74.
- . 'Swinburne Versus Biographers'. *Poetry* 11, no. 6 (March 1918): 322–29.
- . 'The Audience'. *Poetry* 5, no. 1 (1 October 1914): 29–30.
- . 'The Black Crusade [letter 1]'. *The New Age* 12, no. 3 (21 November 1912):

69.

- . ‘The Black Crusade [letter 2]’. *The New Age* 12, no. 5 (5 December 1912): 116.
- . *The Cantos*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.
- . *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*. Edited by D. D. Paige. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.
- . ‘The New Sculpture’. *The Egoist* 1, no. 4 (16 February 1914): 67–68.
- . ‘The Renaissance: III’. *Poetry* 6, no. 2 (1 May 1915): 84–91.
- . ‘The Renaissance: I—The Palette’. *Poetry* 5, no. 5 (1 February 1915): 227–34.
- . ‘The Rev. G. Crabbe, LL. B.’ In *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T. S. Eliot, 276–79. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.
- . *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn, 1915-1924*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- . ‘The Serious Artist [I & II]’. *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 9 (15 October 1913): 161–63.
- . ‘The Serious Artist—III: Emotion and Poesy’. *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 10 (1 November 1913): 194–95.
- . ‘The Serious Artist—IV’. *The New Freewoman* 1, no. 11 (15 November 1913): 213–14.
- . *The Spirit of Romance*. London: Dent, 1910.
- . ‘The State’. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, 184–85. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.
- . ‘This Constant Preaching to the Mob’. *Poetry* 8, no. 3 (1 June 1916): 144–45.
- . ‘Through Alien Eyes. I’. *The New Age* 12, no. 11 (16 January 1913): 252.
- . ‘Through Alien Eyes. II’. *The New Age* 12, no. 12 (16 January 1913): 275–76.
- . ‘Through Alien Eyes. III’. *The New Age* 12, no. 13 (30 January 1913): 300–301.
- . ‘Through Alien Eyes. IV’. *The New Age* 12, no. 14 (6 February 1913): 324.
- . *Umbra*. London: Elkin Matthews, 1920.
- . ‘Vortex. Pound’. *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 153–54.
- . ‘What America Has to Live Down. I’. *The New Age* 23, no. 17 (22 August 1918): 266–67.
- . ‘What I Feel about Walt Whitman’. In *Selected Prose: 1909–1965*, edited by William Cookson, 115–16. New York: New Directions, 1975.
- Pound, Omar S., and Robert E. Spoo, eds. *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship, 1910-1912*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1988.
- Powell, David. *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain, 1901-14*. British History in Perspective. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996.

- Qian, Zhaoming. *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1995.
- . 'The Orient'. In *Ezra Pound in Context*, edited by Ira Bruce Nadel, 335–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Radway, Janice A. 'What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998'. *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 1–32.
- Rainey, Lawrence. *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Rasula, Jed. 'Make It New'. *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 4 (2010): 713–33.
- Redding, Patrick. 'Whitman Unbound: Democracy and Poetic Form, 1912–1931'. *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (2010): 669–90.
- Redman, Tim. *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- . 'Pound's Politics and Economics'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, edited by Ira B. Nadel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Redman, Timothy. 'Ezra Pound and American Populism: The Enduring Influence of Hailey, Idaho'. *Paideuma* 34, no. 2–3 (Winter 2005): 13–36.
- Reed, John. 'A Word to Mr. Pound'. *Poetry* 2, no. 3 (1 June 1913): 112–13.
- 'Reviews: The Iron Heel. By Jack London'. *The New Age* 4, no. 15 (4 February 1908): 308.
- Reynolds, David. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
- Reynolds, Stephen, Bob Woolley, and Tom Woolley. *Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics*. London: MacMillan, 1911.
- Reznikoff, Charles. *Poems 1918–1936. Volume 1 of the Complete Poems of Charles Reznikoff*. Edited by Seamus Cooney. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1976.
- R. H. C. [A. R. Orage]. 'Readers and Writers'. *The New Age* 17, no. 14 (5 August 1915): 332–33.
- Riker, William H. 'The Senate and American Federalism'. *The American Political Science Review* 49, no. 2 (1 June 1955): 452–69.
- Robbins, Bruce. 'Cosmopolitanism, America, and the Welfare State'. *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 19 (2003): 201–24.
- Robinson, Fred C. "'The Might of the North": Pound's Anglo-Saxon Studies and "The Seafarer."' *Yale Review* 71, no. 2 (January 1982): 199–224.
- Roessel, David E. *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English & American*



- Imagination*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Rose, Nikolas, and Peter Miller. 'Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (2010): 271–303.
- Rosenow, Ce. "'An Unlikely Treasure Hoard": The Beginning of Ezra Pound's Poetics and the Conclusion of "The Seafarer".' *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 4 (12 January 2008): 469–74.
- Royal Academy of Arts. *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, European Painters In North Africa and the Near East*. London: Royal Academy of Arts in association with Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984.
- Ruthven, K. K. *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae* (1926). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. [1978] London: Penguin, 2003.
- Schechter, Darrow. *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Schulze, Robin G. *The Degenerate Muse: American Nature, Modernist Poetry, and the Problem of Cultural Hygiene*. Modernist Literature & Culture. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Searle, G. R. *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1971.
- Shaw, George Bernard, ed. *Fabian Essays in Socialism*. London: Walter Scott, 1889.
- Shaw, Martin. *Theory of the Global State: Globality as Unfinished Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.
- . 'The State of Globalization: Towards a Theory of State Transformation'. *Review of International Political Economy* 4, no. 3 (1997): 497–513.
- Shaw, Stanford J, and Ezel Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol. 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1977.
- Shiach, Morag. *Modernism, Labour, and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Skaiff, William. 'Pound's Imagism and the Surreal'. *Journal of Modern Literature* 12, no. 2 (1 July 1985): 185–210.
- Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Vol. I: The Renaissance*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . 'The State'. In *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, edited by Terence Ball and James Farr. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Smith, Jeremy. 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third

- Home Rule Bill'. *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 01 (March 1993): 161.
- Spahr, Juliana. 'Contemporary U.S. Poetry and Its Nationalisms'. *Contemporary Literature* 52, no. 4 (2011): 684–715.
- Spoo, Robert E. 'Ezra Pound's Copyright Statute: Perpetual Rights and the Problem of Heirs'. *UCLA Law Review*, Vol. 56, 2009, 2008.
- Stark, Robert. *Ezra Pound's Early Verse and Lyric Tradition: A Jargoner's Apprenticeship*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Stirner, Max. *The Ego and Its Own*. Edited by David Leopold. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Stock, Noel. *The Life of Ezra Pound*. London: Routledge, 1970.
- Surette, Leon. *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Taplin, Eric. *Near to Revolution: The Liverpool General Transport Strike of 1911*. Liverpool: Bluecoat, 1994.
- . 'The Liverpool General Transport Strike, 1911'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, no. 33 (1 September 2012): 25–38.
- Thacker, Andrew. 'Amy Lowell and H.D.: The Other Imagists'. *Women: A Cultural Review* 4, no. 1 (March 1993): 49–59.
- Thane, Pat. 'The Working Class and State Welfare in Britain, 1880-1914'. *Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984): 877–900.
- Thatcher, David. *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- 'The Seamen's Strike'. *The Times*. 14 June 1911.
- 'The Turk in Bulgaria'. *Times Literary Supplement*. 28 November 1912.
- Thompson, E. P. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. 1955, 3rd edn. London: Merlin, 1977.
- Thompson, J. Lee. *Never Call Retreat: Theodore Roosevelt and the Great War*. First edition. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- T. K. L., [Beatrice Hastings]. 'The Black Crusade [Letter]'. *The New Age* 12, no. 4 (28 November 1912): 93.
- Traister, Bryce. 'The Object of Study; Or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?'. *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 2, no. 1 (30 March 2010).
- Trexler, Adam. 'Modernist Poetics and New Age Political Philosophy: A. R. Orage, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot'. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2006.
- Trotsky, Leon. *The Balkan Wars, 1912-13: The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky*. Edited by George Weissman and Duncan Williams. Translated by Brian Pierce.

- New York; Sydney: Monad Press; Pathfinder Press, 1980.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History'. In *The Frontier in American History*, 1–36. New York: Henry Holt, 1921.
- Valensi, Lucette. *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Von Hallberg, Robert. 'Libertarian Imagism'. *Modernism/modernity* 2, no. 2 (1995): 63–79.
- Wallace, Charles Harrison. 'The Central Crux of the Seafarer'. *Studia Neophilologica* 68, no. 2 (1996): 177–84.
- Washington, George. *Writings*. Edited by John H. Rhodehamel. The Library of America. New York: Library of America, 1997.
- Westover, Jeffrey W. *The Colonial Moment: Discoveries and Settlements in Modern American Poetry*. Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.
- West, Rebecca. 'Imagisme'. *New Freewoman* 1, no. 5 (August 1913): 86–87.
- Whitman, Walt. *The Portable Walt Whitman*. Edited by Michael Warner. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- Wilhelm, James J. *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*. New York: Garland Pub, 1985.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*. London: Verso, 1989.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Imaginations*. Edited by Webster Schott. New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1971.
- . *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*. New York: New Directions, 1948.
- Witemeyer, Hugh. 'Clothing the American Adam: Pound's Tailoring of Walt Whitman'. In *Ezra Pound among the Poets: Homer, Ovid, Li Po, Dante, Whitman, Browning, Yeats, Williams, Eliot*, edited by George Bornstein, 81–105. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- . *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908–1920*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1969.
- Wolfe, Cary. *The Limits of American Literary Ideology in Pound and Emerson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Wormald, C. P. 'The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and Its Neighbours'. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)* 27 (1977): 95–114.
- Yeats, W. B. *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Richard J Finneran. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.
- Zukofsky, Louis. 'Program: "Objectivists" 1931'. *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (1 February 1931): 268–72.

- . ‘Sincerity and Objectification: With Special Reference to the Work of Charles Reznikoff’. *Poetry* 37, no. 5 (1 February 1931): 272–85.