THE CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY:

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APPROVED:

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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Denton, Texas
August, 1966
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CHAPTER I

THE CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY:
THE EARLY MODERNS

During the Renaissance, man came to realize that the characteristics of his culture had been determined much earlier than he had been aware. New archeological discoveries uncovered the artifacts, documents, and literary masterpieces of Rome and Greece, and ultimately the Renaissance man became curious about these past cultures. Eventually, after struggle, he began to learn Greek (Latin had been preserved by the Church), and he pieced together the histories of Rome and of Athens. In the process, the Renaissance man became conscious of a kinship with the classical writers; the classical tradition was encouraged, especially in literature. With greater effort, improved techniques, and a growing reservoir of knowledge, man grew more intimately acquainted with his past. The interest in Athens and Rome reached an apex in the nineteenth century, "a century of scholarship" as Gilbert Highet calls it. Reaching an apex suggests that a decline is imminent, and supposedly the twentieth century is not as aware of the ancient past and especially ancient literature as was the nineteenth century. In spite of the decline, twentieth-century man still aspires for the same
idealistic goals which the Greeks and the Romans desired. Among the goals are the desire for homonopia, or concord, the establishment of one great world-wide "city," and the "hellenization" of a barbaric world.¹

The scholar is especially interested in the past and perhaps should accept the responsibility of being the guardian of the past, particularly in an age which may appear to be less "enlightened" than the ages before it. From the past, and specifically the ancient past, the scholar or the student of history

securities his freedom by keeping hold always of the past and treasuring up the best out of the past, so that in a present that may be angry or sordid he can call back memories of calm or of high passion, in a present that requires resignation or courage he can call back the spirit with which brave men long ago faced the same evils. He draws out of the past high thoughts and great emotions; he also draws the strength that comes from communion or brotherhood.²

The feeling of communion or of brotherhood was, and still is, greatly felt by many writers. In a sense, these writers become scholars in their own right; in their search for poetic expression, poets ransack the literature of the past for examples and models for their own poetry. English and American poets, of course, are no exception.

The influence of the classics is well acknowledged, especially by men such as Gilbert Highet, Gilbert Murray, and J. A. K. Thomson. Each has published works concerning the classical influence or the classical tradition in poetry, and all point out the existence of the "tradition" in English literature. The influence of the classics has existed for a long time and, in the opinions of the scholars, will not cease since the tradition is a necessary and vital part of literature. The classical influence may decline; it has suffered declines before in eras like the Dark Ages when men were ignorant of the ancient past and were unable to read the classic languages. However, the classical influence probably will not disappear entirely, but merely "go under-ground" or become a secondary influence. Other scholars are more optimistic, especially those scholars who lived during the First World War. These earlier scholars, such as Viscount Bryce, believe that Greece and Rome "are the well-springs of the intellectual life of all civilized modern peoples," that ancient classical literature is the common possession of all civilized people, that ancient history is the basis of all political, philosophic, and religious history, and that the classical writers "set before us a world superficially most

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unlike our own." Even Thomson, who strongly believes in the imminent decline of the classical tradition, acknowledges the fact that modern man is still as curious about classical history as were the Victorians. Nevertheless, there is a distinction between the importance of the classics to the Victorians and to twentieth-century writers.

Higher education in the nineteenth century was markedly classical. Bryce, who had a nineteenth-century education, reveals that the classics were important in his daily life, and he is concerned that the delight and the strength of the classics might be preserved for the twentieth century. In spite of this interest, not only on Bryce's part, of course, but also on the part of classical scholars in general, Latin and Greek ceased to be a mandatory part of the common education. The modern languages and literatures, especially those of France and Germany, became more important. The struggle to learn Latin and Greek seemed foolish, and those who did learn the classical languages began to feel resentment because reading Virgil and Aeschylus did not "benefit" them. Highet finds the reasons for the decline of classical literature in the fact that science, industrialism, and international trade advanced rapidly, that the growth of universal

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5 Thomson, p. 244.

6 Ibid., p. 254.
education through the advancement of democracy caused many to frown on the classical aristocracy (supposedly the classical scholars formed their own peculiar elite), and that the classics were badly taught. Hight also records the fact that even A. E. Housman, himself a classical scholar, in his inaugural address at London University admitted, perhaps ironically, that there was no justification for classical scholarship, that such knowledge was not useful, nor was it applicable to daily life; Housman also inserted, however, that classical study did satisfy man's desire for knowledge, but in a materialistic world such a satisfaction is regarded as eccentric.

Even in literature, novelists and poets begin their apprenticeship by imitating French, German, English, Russian, or American writers instead of using the classics as models. French literature especially attracted many English and American writers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. However, many of those writers who are most influential are inadvertently, but perhaps unconsciously, perpetrators of the classical tradition. The process is characteristic, since throughout English literary

8Ibid., p. 496.
history, the Greek influence has been received through medieval Latin, Italian, or French translations.\(^9\)

The idea of Greece, and of Rome, captures the imagination of many writers. T. G. Tucker insists that English literature has depended more and more on Greece every generation since Chaucer, and he thinks that the ideal for which English writers grope is the literary ideal of classical Greece.\(^10\) Louis MacNeice uses "Greek" as an adjective describing what he considers "economical expression of an emotion which is not egocentric."\(^11\) But English scholars and poets are not the only ones fascinated by the classical; continental symbolist and realist writers also re-interpreted, re-worked, and adapted classical themes and myths in their revelations of life.\(^12\) Such adaptations, however, need not necessarily be innovations since each century and each individual views antiquity in different ways. As Werner Friederick sees it,

the neo-classicists tended to regard the literature of antiquity through their own eyes and to emphasize the Apollonian serenity, plasticity, and clarity which they


\(^12\)Werner P. Friederick, *Outline of Comparative Literature* (Chapel Hill, 1954), p. 342.
wanted to find in it. The romantics tended to emphasize the Dionysian frenzy, mystery, and dark complexity which they wanted to find. Post-romantic authors . . . restrained somewhat by the discoveries of exact scholarship, recognized that ancient literature embodies both the Apollonian and the Dionysian . . . . Almost any significant poet of the last one hundred years can be studied in his relationship to some lyric poet of antiquity . . . .

Some twentieth-century poets, like poets throughout Western literary history, particularly are conscious of the classical expression and respond to it more readily than others. These poets especially acknowledge the modernity of the classics. G. S. Fraser has stated that the feeling of modernity is really the feeling that the work "comes home" or speaks to one in one's own particular situation; of course, the situation varies considerably, often causing the affinity for ancient works to be drastically different from one individual to another. The feeling of modernity in the ancient classics may also extend from the fact that one becomes interested in history for its own sake. In essence, this growing interest in ancient history and, therefore, ancient literature helped bring about the nineteenth-century interest in Progress and Utopia. In the twentieth century, however, the poet generally is aware of an overwhelming feeling of estrangement or of alienation from his world, and

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he too becomes conscious of the "modernity" of the past.  

Murray explains the occurrence and its result in Tradition and Progress.

Man is imprisoned in the eternal present; and what we call a man's religion is, to a great extent, the thing that offers him a secret and permanent means of escape from that prison, a breaking of the prison walls which leaves him standing, of course, still in the present, but in a present so enlarged and enfranchised that it is become not a prison but a free world. Religion, even in the narrow sense, is always seeking for εὐθεία, for escape, for some salvation from terror to some or some deliverance from the body of this death.  

Frequently, and quite naturally perhaps, the poet with his feeling of isolation finds comfort not only in an escape to the idyllic past, but also in a denunciation, approaching in some cases an antagonism toward or a venomous attack on the attitudes, philosophy, and ideals expressed in the literature of those writers who immediately preceded him. In order, therefore, to fully understand the early twentieth-century writers, one should be conscious of what was happening in the literature of the latter nineteenth century.

Many of the nineteenth-century English poets such as Tennyson and Arnold were classical scholars, but simply because they were Greek and Latin scholars did not mean that they were strict classicists. In general, the tenor of nineteenth-century poetry was romantic, not classical, and

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16 Ibid., p. 32.
17 Murray, Tradition, p. 12.
the classical influences were limited to subject matter and allusions. For instance, both Keats and Browning used Apollo in a unique sense. For Keats, Apollo is the ideal poet who rises above egoism and vanity in order to develop social consciousness; for Browning, the figure of Apollo, recurring in the early books of *Sordello*, stands for Sordello "in the harmonious but shallow completeness of the mere artist isolated from his fellow men." But the classical is revealed not only in subject matter and allusion, but also in the search by some poets in the nineteenth century for the exact word, the perfect embodiment of the object discussed, itself a task with which the classical writers were concerned. Keats, though of course a Romantic, was concerned with the correct word, but the Pre-Raphaelites were as a group also overtly conscious of the search for the correct word and the precise image.

The Pre-Raphaelite poets could not ever be mistaken for classical poets; they were not indebted to Greece or to Rome. In fact, the Pre-Raphaelites were essentially Romantics. Especially important influences on the Pre-Raphaelites were


Samuel Taylor Coleridge and, less obviously, Edgar Allen Poe.\textsuperscript{20} Grigson records William Michael Rossetti’s statement concerning the purpose of establishing the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood:

"I will ... take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this--1. To have genuine ideas to express; 2. To study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3. To sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4. and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues."\textsuperscript{21}

The Pre-Raphaelite poet sought to make his reader see and feel what he wished the reader to see and feel, regardless of the technique used.\textsuperscript{22} The Pre-Raphaelites were acutely aware of the fact that the poets before them blindly followed traditions; therefore, the brotherhood pledged themselves to using their own eyes and forgetting the tradition in order to communicate to their readers.\textsuperscript{23} When they did begin using their own eyes, they became conscious of details which they conveyed with freshness and intensity.\textsuperscript{24}

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was accepted as the leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Primarily a painter, Rossetti was also a poet. He had been influenced by Robert Browning; the

\textsuperscript{20}Cornelius Weygandt, \textit{Time of Tennyson} (New York, 1936), pp. 58, 64.


\textsuperscript{22}Housman, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 7.
fact that Browning was more interested in Renaissance Italy did not seem to thwart Rossetti, who believed that the only true art was that which had been painted before Raphael. But both Browning and Rossetti were interested in details, especially those details which helped convey, either in painting or poetry, emotion. Rossetti, though, was little influenced by the classical; in fact, William Sharp believed that work more opposite to the Greek spirit than Rossetti's could not be found. Nevertheless, Rossetti did use classical subject matter; one poem is entitled "Troy Town," a ballad, which is written not in a classical style but as a medieval poet would have written a poem about the burning of Troy. He uses archaisms, also. Rossetti influenced English poetry, but few look to him for classical models.

Another Pre-Raphaelite was William Morris. Beers states that he loathed classical art and literature and that whenever he succumbed to the temptation of writing about classical legend or fable, he invariably re-interpreted the myth in a medieval manner. The Life and Death of Jason, according to Weygandt, is set in a rather English countryside, and the

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28 Beers, p. 315.
characters appear to be Englishmen instead of ancient Greeks; Medea, especially, appears as an English country girl who develops into an English witch-wife from some old folk-fable.\(^{29}\)

Both Rossetti and Morris feel a reverence for the past, not necessarily the ancient past but more characteristically the medieval past. In viewing the changes which the Industrial Revolution had prompted, these Pre-Raphaelites felt that man had desecrated the beauty of Nature; the same emotions recur in subsequent English poetry.\(^{30}\) The rejection of the present and the turning to the past in reaction to the frustration felt in the present is a precedent which the Pre-Raphaelites established for modern poets. And, in spite of the fact that the Pre-Raphaelite "revolt" was essentially a romantic revolt, there were evidences that the Pre-Raphaelites were not totally Romantic; they certainly were interested in the conveyance of details as expression of self-discovery, and they treated their romantic subjects individualistically, but at times the treatment of the romantic "sacred" subjects was realistic or blasphemous. The Pre-Raphaelites felt the same restlessness and frustration that modern poets feel. They, according to Pinto, "had instinctively foreseen the

\(^{29}\) Weyganit, p. 222.

coming crisis and had tried to carry out an aesthetic
revolution. . . . They failed because they underestimated the
forces which were opposed to them and misunderstood their
nature. 31

Victorian poetry was dominated by Tennyson and Browning,
of course, and they too chose classical subjects for their
poetry. One of Tennyson's most moving poems is Demeter and
Persephone, which captures the reunion of the Greek goddesses.
Browning also used classical subjects, although not as much
as did Tennyson, in the form of allusions to substantiate his
historical and love poetry. The two chief Victorian poets
were influenced greatly by the classics since both, especially
Tennyson, were good Greek and Latin scholars. The period
between 1840 and 1890 was actually dominated by the writing
of these two poets. By 1885, however, both had written their
major works and were old men. Although the artists who
succeeded Tennyson and Browning published lesser works, to
this study these later poets are perhaps more important than
the leaders of the Victorian era.

Miles states that Greek was the resource of the decadent
poets of the "nineties," 32 and characteristically the decadent

31 Vivian de Sola Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry, 1880-

32 Josephine Miles, Eras and Modes in English Poetry
(Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 146.
poets would turn to classical lyrics since they were attracted to anything which they considered poetical.\textsuperscript{33} The Decadent, or Aesthetic, revolt, as the movement in the 1890's was tagged, was a violent reaction against everything Victorian. The influence of the French Aesthetes and Symbolists and of the Pre-Raphaelites caused the Decadents to fervently advocate an "art for art's sake" doctrine of literary theory. Universal truth and beauty were forgotten in an attempt to experience sensuous ecstasy as an end in itself.\textsuperscript{34} The Decadents, too, were primarily Romantics who were living during the decline of Romantic ideals. The English Decadents patterned their attitudes, behavior, and poetry after the French Decadents, whom they greatly admired. They, like the French, were perverse, artificial, egoistic, and curious as a result of decay and ennui, and they affected a blase attitude.\textsuperscript{35} In submitting to every temptation, the Decadent soul became surfeited, and began the search for new experiences; the process led quickly into degeneration, which of course was frowned upon by the Victorian common man. Each satisfied desire led to the uncontrollable need for discovering new desires, and the result was an instability caused by physical maltreatment resulting in interesting, though abnormal,

\textsuperscript{33}MacNeice, p. 146. \textsuperscript{34}Bush, Mythology, p. 397. \textsuperscript{35}Holbrook Jackson, \textit{The Eighteen Nineties} (New York, 1922), p. 64.
mental conditions. To themselves, as to the reading public, the Decadents did appear to be madmen bent on self-annihilation. Their poetry, though, is significant besides being interesting. In spite of the rather drastic way they went about their reform, the Decadents were concerned with the artistic situation in England. Seeing lame, ineffectual writing, and particularly poetry, led them to affect an egoistic dandyism which though artificial nevertheless called attention to itself and was in its own way sincere. In accepting the persona, or mask, of the Decadent dandy, the poets of the 1890's shocked all who came in contact with them. 36

The art of shocking was a French import also, and the shocking was carried on at an individual and at a social level. The "individual shockers" frequently died young of diseases which could have been avoided by careful living; they also suffered maladies which, if they did not die young, led them to commit suicide. They were innately addicted to caprice, were whimsical and irresponsible, were fond of experimentation, and were basically unconforming. All, of course, were not poets, but the main leaders of the individual shockers were Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Symons, and Max Beerbohm. 37 The "social shockers" were reformers and political revolutionaries with a well-developed social consciousness. They demanded changes in state policy, wider

36 Ibid., p. 111. 37 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
limits to personal freedom, and better and more comfortable living conditions. The chief social shockers were George Bernard Shaw and Grant Allen, who had a foreign prototype in Henrik Ibsen.

The Decadent poets, oddly enough, were experiencing a spiritual awakening which led them to excesses of despair in search of salvation from sin.\textsuperscript{38} In their need to shock they were only broadcasting in Victorian England the soul-sickness (the French called it "ma\'i du si\'cle") which all of Europe had been experiencing for almost a century. After a wave of humanism, belief in Progress, Utopia, and the innate goodness of man, the Decadents brought to the attention of rather complacent readers the fact that a century of Progress had got them little but more frustration and more machines, that Utopia was as far away as it had been at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that man had shown no signs that he was any less evil in spite of all the preachments concerning the underlying goodness of all men. The Decadents, in turning from the state, declared that the highest of all things was not politically united mankind but the individual self.\textsuperscript{39}

Literature quite naturally became the tool of the Decadents. The prose became more epigrammatic and was charged with explosive ideas. The poets, perhaps influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, began searching for unique words.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 132. \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., pp. 132-133.
which carried many connotations; they began to value personal style and to delight in "purple patches." And the poets, too, were not above surprises in the form of paradoxes. As Jackson states,

... surprise found expression in the use of strange words, the result of resurrections from old books or from scientific and technical sources, the jargon of special sections of humanity, and the slang of the streets. French words and phrases were also in great favour. Several of the most striking verbal effects of the time were obtained by the transposition of words from one set of ideas to another, after the manner of Baudelaire's theory of correspondences.

The desire to shock is again apparent in the Decadents' use of strange words and exotic images.

Another characteristic of the Decadents is the obscurity of their expressions, the reason being that they gloried in their complexity. These aesthetes became conscious of suggestiveness, the shadowy approximation of the real object, essentially an impression of the object, and they tried to capture atmosphere and temperament as the essence of their creations. They were also interested in wit, and the most witty was Oscar Wilde.

Decadence was the culmination of the art for art's sake movement. As strong supporters of the individual vision, they were destructive, but without their destructive results the poetry which succeeded them would not have been the same.

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40 Ibid., p. 143.  
41 Ibid.  
42 Ibid., p. 144.
They were in a minority, but the minority was lively and energetic in spite of dissipation.\textsuperscript{43} In denunciation of Victorian Romanticism, the Aesthetes called attention to classical models.\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, as Jackson implies, they were conscious of a muse, Cynara, who was a symbol of the unattained and perhaps unattainable joy and peace which is the eternal dream of man. The decadents of the Nineties, to do them justice, were not so degenerate as either to have lost hope in future joy or to have had full faith in their attainment of it. Coming late in a century of material pressure and scientific attainment they embodied a tired mood, rejected hope, beyond the moment, and took a subtle joy in playing with fire and calling it sin; in scourging themselves for an unholy delight, in tasting the bittersweet of actions potent with remorse. They loved the cleanliness of unclean things, the sweetness in unsavoury alliances; they did not actually kiss Cynara, they kissed her by proxy of some "bought red mouth." It was as though they had grown tired of being good, in the old accepted way; they wanted to experience the piquancy of being good after a debauch. They realised that a merited kiss was not half so sweet as a kiss of forgiveness, and this subtle voluptuousness eventually taught them that the road called decadence also led to Rome.\textsuperscript{45}

The English Decadents, like the French Decadents, frequently withdrew into an "ivory tower" of irrational behavior and existence.\textsuperscript{46} Within the boundaries of this personal poetic world, the poets severed all connections with the outside world. Through this personal withdrawal, they learned to detach themselves also from their poems, and,

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 70. \textsuperscript{44}\textit{Miles}, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Jackson}, pp. 65-66.

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Fraser, The Modern Writer}, p. 42.
therefore, in the opinion of one critic at least, "the poets of the 1890's, though they are often called 'the last of the romantics,' might also be called the first neo-classics. The best of them . . . tended to have a passion for Latin poetry." 47

The dispensers of the French Art for Art's Sake and Decadent Movements were Swinburne and Pater. 48 Arnold, too, stimulated the Decadents' Hellenism; however, the most influential remained Swinburne, representing the troubled, Romantic element in Aestheticism, and Pater, who held up the Hellenic as being noble, admirable, and refined. Of the two, Pater's influence was more widespread, and he influenced many poets who succeeded him. 49 With the French, Pater believed that the highest art form was music, which "at its most exquisite, expressed the essence of ultimate reality more perfectly than any other art, and he saw all art as aspiring towards the state of music . . . ." 50

Swinburne, a good Greek scholar, sympathized with the Hellenic spirit as he understood it, although many of his interests and his style were not classical; however, his knowledge of the classics was invaluable to him, and some of

47 Ibid., p. 189.
49 Ibid., p. 57.
50 Ibid., p. 54.
his best works are concerned with classical subjects.\textsuperscript{51} Beers states that Swinburne could write easily in both Greek and Latin and that one of his main interests was mythology.\textsuperscript{52} Certainly the titles of his poems, "Hymn to Proserpine," "Garden of Proserpine," "Hesperia," and \textit{Atalanta in Calydon}, substantiate Beers' statement. Although Swinburne is not limited to classical Hellenism (he often indulged in romanticism or Hebraism or Oriental abandon), he did feel a kinship with the Greeks to whom he was instinctively drawn.\textsuperscript{53} Among the Greek poets whom he admired is Sappho, but he also respected the Latin poet, Catullus. In his "Hymn to Proserpine," a tale about a Roman Epicurean living at the time when Christianity was declared the state religion by the emperor, Swinburne sensitively catches the despair of the Roman citizen forced to denounce his belief in the old religion and the old gods by re-creating the bitterness and scorn of the old man and his hope that Christianity will experience the same impermanency that the older gods experienced; the old man is particularly upset by the fact that the Christians, repulsive barbarians that they are, are destroying the works of art and literature which should be cherished. In the "Hymn" Swinburne quotes Epictetus.\textsuperscript{54} "Laus Veneris" re-interprets the story of Tannhäuser, who stays with Venus for

\textsuperscript{51}Thomson, pp. 242-243. \hfil \textsuperscript{52}Beers, p. 350.  
\textsuperscript{53}Weygandt, p. 231. \hfil \textsuperscript{54}Hearn, pp. 151-161, passim.
seven years and who, upon his return to Rome for forgiveness, is rejected by the Pope; after Tannhäuser departs to return to Venus, the Pope's staff bursts into bloom signifying that God, if not Christians, forgave Tannhäuser. The story was shocking to Victorian Christians, who apparently were not aware that the tale was an old French legend dating to 1530.55

Atalanta in Calydon, published in 1865, is in reality a Greek tragedy; the style and lyrical passages influenced Gilbert Murray's translations.56 Although, according to Grierson, Swinburne did not add anything of importance in thought or form, he did utilize classical subjects, and he exerted influence on younger poets.57 If he did not create new forms, he did revive old French stanzaic forms such as the ballade, sestina, and rondel.58

In 1891, Arthur Symons founded the Rhymers Club along with W. B. Yeats, Rolleston, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Rhys, John Davidson, Le Gallienne, Ernest Dowson, John Gray, and Wratilslaw.59 These poets rejected even more strenuously than did the Aesthetes the common Victorian life of money-making and creative stagnation. They pledged themselves to abstain from money-making and to write good poetry reflecting their cultivated emotions, which deliberately had no connection with

55Ibid., pp. 165-167.  
56Grierson, p. 491.  
57Ibid., p. 494.  
58Beers, p. 350.  
59Starkie, p. 108.
the Victorian public. For the Rhymers art was a religion. Perhaps only Yeats lived up to his pledge, for Dowson, Johnson, and most of the rest were more self-conscious in their role as cultivators of the inner life in order to create new poetic languages.  

The Rhymers were linked to the Pre-Raphaelites by Wilde, according to Grierson, not in virtue of his early poems, full of echoes of Keats and Tennyson and Arnold and Rossetti and Morris, but of these later things and the whole tenor of his cult of beauty, his discipleship to Pater, and the doctrine of burning with a hard, clear, gem-like flame. In one way or another this was the conscious or semi-conscious ideal of such poets as Lionel Johnson, Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, and . . . W. B. Yeats . . .

Yeats, a strong poet, did not revert to perversion or alcoholism in his search for a more universal and enduring art enriched by his own experience and by his unique creative power. He, of all the Rhymers who were essentially Decadent, emerged from Decadence and Aestheticism into Symbolism under the influence of the French Symbolists; he is, therefore, never classified as a Decadent. Of his association with the Rhymers, Yeats says, "We tried to write like the poets of the Greek Anthology, or like Catullus, or like the Jacobean lyricists, men who wrote while poetry was still pure. We did not look forward or look outward, we left that to the prose writers; we looked back." 

60 Pinto, pp. 17-18.  
61 Grierson, p. 519.  
62 Pinto, pp. 21-22.  
More characteristic of the Rhymers was Arthur Symons, who was influenced more by French Decadence and by French Symbolism than by the classical writers. He published an article in Harper's Magazine in 1893 entitled "The Decadent Movement in Literature" which was merely a restatement of the theories of Gautier, Baudelaire, and Huysmans. Its importance, however, is that it is the announcement to the English that French Symbolism was an influence on the contemporary poets. He further discussed the influence of the French in a book entitled The Symbolist Movement in Literature.

Ernest Dowson's poetry, influenced by Verlaine, is characterized by vagueness, gentleness, musicality, nostalgia, wistfulness, and a slight sentimental sensuality; there is less humanity and versatility in his work than in other poems of the Rhymers. His most famous work, Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarum, does not reflect a classical influence, but an influence of the French Decadents.

Lionel Johnson also turned to the French for models, and in an essay entitled "A Note upon the Practice and Theory of Verse at the Present Time Obtaining in France" published in The Century Guild Hobby Horse in 1891, he finds that English technique, execution of detail, excellence of language, verbal precision and serious choice of word for visual or

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64 Starkie, p. 109. 65 Pinto, p. 10.
audial effect cannot compare to the more advanced French technique. Johnson was a fine and precocious scholar, but his poetry, like Dowson's, reveals a self-pity which would not be found in classical lyrics. Yeats discusses both Dowson and Johnson in the following manner:

two members of the Club are vivid in my memory: Ernest Dowson, timid, silent, a little melancholy, lax in body, vague in attitude; Lionel Johnson, determined, erect, his few words dogmatic. . . . His thought dominated the scene and gave the Club its character. Nothing of importance could be discovered, he would say, science must be confined to the kitchen or the workshop; only philosophy and religion could solve the great secret, and they said all their say years ago; a gentleman was a man who understood Greek.

English Decadence subsided for many reasons. Many of the young Decadents died or committed suicide, but aside from this reason, England changed. The Boer War and the death of Queen Victoria caused an upsurge of patriotism verging on jingoism. The foreign influences, even in literature, appeared to be unpatriotic and were therefore shunned. But as Thomson believes, the continuity of literature was not affected by the coming of the twentieth century; in fact, the smooth transition was made possible because the literature did not change at all. One poet spans the change of the century, Robert Bridges, and certainly there are classical influences in his poetry.

66 Starkie, p. 38. 67 Yeats, p. 491. 68 Starkie, p. 128.
At the end of the Victorian era, most poets rejected Romantic humanitarianism. Keats and Shelley had used classic myths to symbolize the coming Utopia and the new heroic man. Swinburne accepted a rather mythic humanity as a pose, whereas Rossetti and Morris refused to become involved except to express an abhorrence for industrial England and to immediately escape into the historic past. By the latter nineteenth century, however, classic myths came into their own right again, but in a slightly different manner. Under the influence of Max Müller, the study of etymology led to a scientific investigation of comparative mythology, thereby drawing attention again to the ancient folk-tales and legends. Re-interpretations of myths became almost faddish, as many who felt the urge to write began with this genre. Serious poets were stimulated to re-write myths like Robert Bridges' dramas: The Return of Ulysses (1890), Achilles in Scyros (1890), and Demeter (1905). The plays, except for Nero, were meant to be staged, but since they are defective in stagecraft and characterization, they are quite impossible to produce. The poetry is mostly Elizabethan idiom in blank verse, but the choral lyrics, according to Bush, are among the greatest of modern poetry. One of Bridges' dramas, Prometheus the Firegiver (1883), approaches the Greek tragedies more than

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69 Bush, Mythology, pp. 397-398.
70 Ibid., p. 440.
71 Ibid., p. 437.
any of the other dramas, and it, like the others, has a
prologue and a chorus. The dramas are linked to The Testament
of Beauty, and Prometheus the Firegiver, like the Testament,
ends with a shift in scene from Greece to Judaea; in both, the
overthrow of Zeus is foreshadowed, and the new deity is
predicted as ruling in mercy, truth, love, and peace. In
prosody, Bridges also was interested in the classical; he
attempted re-working classical meters to fit the English
language. Some of his later poems reveal the resulting loose
adaptation of an iambic hexameter alexandrine line similar to
verse libre.

One other nineteenth-century poet was important at the
turn of the century. Gerard Manley Hopkins, although he died
quite some time before the twentieth century began, was an
important influence on the early twentieth-century poets. At
times his poetry sounded Miltonic, or Keatsian, and at times
Greek "in its most un-Roman sense of unreasoned power." He
disregarded when possible English particles, connectives,
and sometimes classical syntax in order to convey his
impression of "one sentence as one word" in the Greek manner.

The first major movement of the twentieth century was led
by Sir Edward Marsh, who called his movement the "Georgian"

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72 Ibid., p. 439.
73 A. C. Ward, Twentieth-Century Literature, 1901-1950 (New
74 Miles, p. 159.
75 Ibid.
but which is also known as the "Edwardian." The Georgians were not revolutionaries; they upheld Victorian poetic ideals which prevailed as the Decadent movement died out. They wrote of England and of the English countryside, but the movement was also a Hellenistic movement. Hardy, Bridges, and Yeats were the dominating figures in literature during the 1901-1914 period. However, two relatively minor figures, Laurence Binyon and T. Sturge Moore, were influenced by the classical tradition. Two of Binyon's poems are *The Sirens* and *The Idols*, both of which, in Grierson's opinion, are verse symphonies. *The Sirens* was suggested by Brown and Alcock's first transatlantic flight, and the subsequent poem is "expanded into a hymn to the spirit of adventure, which lures man on to conquer Nature and his fellow-men, to defy Space and the old opposition of Time, till he achieves the last conquest of all, to stand erect before utter calamity, and, having nothing, is free of all the Universe . . . ." If Grierson's analysis is true, the Romantic qualities of the poem are obvious, but there are also elements of the classical ode which may not be overlooked. *The Idols* is also an ode portraying the false gods "whom man has projected out of his own terrors"

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76 Grierson, p. 540.
78 Grierson, p. 533.
79 Ibid., p. 548.
and superstitions and blind desires, before whom he lies in chains of his own forging, till at a vision of beauty in common things a spring of love wells up in his heart, and he sees the phantasmas as they are . . . ."30 The psychological overtones are inescapable, but there are also recurrent mythic images re-calling such heroes as Prometheus or Hercules. By far the greatest influence on Binyon was Dante, whose Divina Commedia Binyon spent ten years translating into true Dantesque terza rima, and the resulting North Star (1941) and Mediterranean Verses reflect his intense study of the Italian poet.31

The titles of T. Sturge Moore's poems--The Vinedressers, The Centaur's Booty, The Rout of the Amazons, Pan's Prophecy, To Leda, and Theseus--reflect the Greek influence, and Moore certainly attempted revivifying and re-interpreting the Greek myths and legends.32 Moore's purpose, however, was not to conventionally retell the Greek myths but to create his own original work using the Greek figures as his characters and Greek themes for his subjects. In essence, Moore is a genuine mythmaker by right of his ingenuity in creating original tales; his myths are not pedantic, but living, imaginative productions given great depth by Moore's graphic visual technique.33

30 Ibid., p. 549. 81 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 535. 82 Bush, Mythology, p. 446.
The mythological dramas picture characters struggling through crises which reveal their individual strengths and weaknesses in character, and the use of myths is particularly suitable for such revelations since, as Bush observes,

they favor the isolation of essential things, and having acquired traditional outlines, they make a familiar and substantial basis for the author's inventions and implications. These implications are sometimes so riddling and oracular that one hazards guesses at their precise "meaning" with more trepidation than confidence, and with a memory of the author's remark about the freezing effect of explanations. An additional difficulty is that many generalized gnomic passages have no inevitable dramatic relevance but would be equally apposite in plays other than those they appear in.  

Moore also re-situated the classic myths by using the Japanese Nō plays as models for Medea (1920) and Psyche in Hades (1930), indicating his adventurous nature and the flexibility of his subjects.  

A. E. Housman, a classical scholar with an international reputation, frequently indicated that he had a definitely unclassical side to his nature. He seldom used myths as subjects for his poetry, yet classical idiom and allusion add much to his individual poems. Bush observes that To an Athlete Dying Young begins, perhaps, in Shropshire but concludes in a region similar to the Elysian Fields, a shadowy place where even the earthly strong are weak, and that Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries is a bitter modern irony.

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84 Ibid., pp. 443-449.  
disguised by the lyrics and the atmosphere of the Greek world; he also wrote *Fragment of a Greek Tragedy*. Housman, classical scholar that he was, seemed to believe that poetry is perceived by "physical sensation" and not by intellect, and, as Thomson states, "no classical critic, no classical poet, would have accepted that. He would have agreed rather with Dr. Johnson that poetry should always mean something." 87

Thomas Hardy's novels are mainly Realistic or Naturalistic, whereas his poetry is Romantic, the expression of disillusionment which had been undercurrent in English poetry for some time. 88 *The Dynasts*, perhaps the culmination of the central theme in Hardy's poetry, is reminiscent of the Greek, however; in the poem, the Spirit of the Pities yields partially to hope, and in the Chorus of the Pities, hope becomes more than mere suggestion. 89 Although Hardy wished to dispense with Greek and Hebrew theology, the form in which *The Dynasts* appears suggests that of Greek poetry in spite of Hardy's attempt to create an original "supernatural system acceptable to modern minds . . . ." 90

In 1914, the First World War began, and the poetry of the 1914 to 1918 period was dominated by soldier-poets such as Charles Sorley, Wilfred Owen, Julian Grenfell, Francis

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86 Ibid., p. 475.  
87 Thomson, p. 262.  
88 Grierson, p. 531.  
89 Ward, pp. 157-158.  
90 Ibid., p. 163.
Ledwidge, Rupert Brooke, and Edward Thomas; with the exception of Owen, the war poets were mainly Romantic and traditional. Brooke, one of the more well-known war poets, at first was influenced by the Aesthetes of the 1890's, but eventually he reacted violently to their philosophy and forcefully demonstrated his dislike for their "pretty poetry." One of his works, *Menelaus and Helen*, a sonnet-series, rejects the Romantic view of classical heroes by picturing "the perfect knight" and "the perfect queen" as degenerating into a senility which is repulsive and disgusting.

Shortly before and concurrent with the First World War, the Georgian Revolt took place in English poetry. The English public which had for a long time been disinterested readers became conscious of poetry, perhaps encouraged by the fact that the poetry was changing and becoming more palatable. The Georgian Revolt was a spiritual revolution resulting in the poets' rejection of the ennui of the *fin de siècle* poets; the Georgian denounced Flaubert, Ibsen, and Hardy in the process. The poetry of the Georgians was smooth, rural, shapely, emotional, and intense, and the poets were especially interested in and modelled their poems after the eighteenth-century Georgians. They declared themselves enemies of

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91 Grierson, p. 542.  
92 Ward, p. 172.  
93 Ross, p. 11.  
95 Miles, p. 159.
brassiness and pedantry.\textsuperscript{96} Because of the attitude of later poets toward the Georgians, they are often considered ineffectual, meek poets, but, as Bush suggests, the poets such as Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, John Drinkwater, and Siegfried Sassoon, represented in Edward Marsh's Georgian anthologies published between 1911 and 1922, do not fit one precise mold and therefore cannot honestly be labelled according to the pejorative descriptions of those who did not appreciate Georgian poetry.\textsuperscript{97} In general, however, much of their poetry reflected Pre-Raphaelite Romanticism and rhetoric, in spite of the decision to promote freshness and variety.\textsuperscript{98} The poets who most disliked Georgian poetry were the Imagists who originated in T. E. Hulmes's Poets Club in 1908, but in order to fully understand the Imagists, one must first be aware of the theories of the French Symbolists of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By the end of the nineteenth century, French Symbolism dominated the poetry of France.\textsuperscript{99} The English, however, were especially attracted by the Symbolists' poetry.\textsuperscript{100} Basically the movement was a constructive one which originated in the French Decadent movement.\textsuperscript{101} Gautier, one of the leaders of

\textsuperscript{96}Fraser, p. 196.
\textsuperscript{98}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 190.
\textsuperscript{99}Pinto, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{100}Starkie, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{101}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 81.
the Art for Art's Sake movement, established the tenets of the Symbolists in his novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, published in 1835; Gautier attacked the later Romantic writers who had stated that poetry should have a moral or a useful purpose. Gautier also defined Decadence as being

"art arrived at that point of extreme maturity yielded by the slanting suns of aged civilizations ... struggling to render what is most inexpressible in thought, what is vague and most elusive in the outlines of form, listening to translate the subtle confidences of neurosis, the dying confessions of passion grown depraved, and the strange hallucinations of the obsession, which is turning to madness ... The style of Decadence is the ultimate utterance of the Word, summoned to final expression and driven to its last hiding place.

The Decadent in both France and England was usually an aesthete who withdrew into his own world of depravity and artificiality. There were, however, some "idealistic Decadents" who did not indulge in vice and sensual experience; the idealists tended to be mystical and religious, and they withdrew from the materialistic life, which frightened them, apparently, into a dream-like world.

The Decadent movement was influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson, and particularly by his theory of the nature of intuition and of the subconscious. In his belief

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102 Ibid., p. 27.
104 Starkie, p. 85.
105 Cargill, p. 228.
that memory and perception are the same, he influenced the
development of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique in
literature. 106

Between the time of the Art for Art's Sake poets and the
establishment of the Symbolist movement in the 1880's, a
period of ten years elapsed, and during that time, the writers
who were most prominent--Tristan Corbière and Arthur Rimbaud--
were essentially iconoclasts bent on destroying what they
considered the "false gods" of literature. 107 The Symbolists,
however, instead of attempting reform of either literature or
the social or political world, tended to retreat and to form
coteries of "secret" brotherhoods, writing only for each
other, completely disregarding the public. 108 They believed
in ideal beauty which could be realized through art. The
leaders were Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud, all
of whom accepted Symbolism as a kind of religion. Their
symbols varied with each individual, and, as Chiari explains
the meaning of symbol,

... one could define these symbols as a form of
indirect, metaphorical speech meant to carry or to
suggest a hidden reality. Therefore anything,
phenomenon or trait, which bears witness to the super-
natural or universal analogy in the world, any sign
which tradition has invested with a supernatural
meaning or powerful emotional resonance, any allegory,
any myth, fable or legend or poetic image indicative

106 Ibid., p. 229. 107 Starkie, p. 81.
108 Friederick, pp. 409-410.
of the poet's mental and affective preoccupations, is used as a symbol, a correspondence or a means of suggestion.\textsuperscript{109}

The symbols also frequently served as disguises for those ideas which the Symbolists did not wish the public to know.\textsuperscript{110}

Symbolist poetry is not narrative or descriptive but psychological and suggestive. The expression is one of "successive inner states" through a composition which resembles a musical composition in an attempt to capture the precise emotion or attitude.\textsuperscript{111} In some instances, the result of such a process appears to be the account of an hallucination or of a dream.\textsuperscript{112} Because the Symbolists were interested in psychology, they turned to psychologists for information, and Freud was a major influence. The philosopher to whom they turned was Nietzsche, who agreed with them that the materialistic, shallow, sentimental values of the nineteenth century should be rejected, and who encouraged the Symbolists' self-conscious feelings of superiority by stating that men are different and unequal and that the superior should not allow themselves to be shackled by the inferior. Nietzsche therefore supported the Symbolists in their


\textsuperscript{110}Edmund Wilson, \textit{Axel's Castle} (New York, 1931), p. 20.

\textsuperscript{111}Chiari, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{112}Cargill, p. 198.
rebellious individualism, their worship of intellectual superiority, and their mystical theory of knowledge.\textsuperscript{113}

The Symbolists' pride in being isolated from the bourgeois led to the dominant theme of the Symbolists—the lonely struggle of sensitive, individualistic heroes like themselves adjusting to society.\textsuperscript{114} Their poems, however, were hidden by symbols which were the earthly "correspondences" of their visions of a supernatural reality.\textsuperscript{115} Their aesthetic experiences were spiritual experiences which took place in the subconscious where arts were undifferentiated, and the artist was obligated to present the concrete earthly expression of his vision of the spiritual ideal, the Symbolists, because of their belief that the creation of art was centered in the subconscious, believed that all sensuous appeal could be united in a new all-encompassing art form.\textsuperscript{116} The resulting poems reveal an emphasis on synaesthesia, but, perhaps, a more important development was that of vers libre.\textsuperscript{117}

The interest of the Symbolists in the creation of a unified art form led them to an investigation of music, which they believed was more capable than words of expressing adequately their spiritual experiences. What the Symbolists

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Friederick, pp. 411-412.
\item[114] Ibid., p. 410.
\item[115] Starkie, p. 86.
\item[116] Ibid., p. 94.
\item[117] Ibid., p. 98.
\end{footnotes}
envied most in music was the power of evoking states of mind as opposed to language's limited power of communicating ideas.\textsuperscript{118} Music could express the fleeting, elusive, emotional experiences more readily than language, and it could be more suggestive, indefinite, and vague in expressing the inexpressible. The Symbolists' aim was to take from music what poetry had lost when it became more interested in literal communication of ideas. The Symbolists all differed in their conceptions of music, but most agreed that Wagner's musical dramas closely approached the total art which they sought in its use of decor, poetry, mime, music, and myth.\textsuperscript{119} The Symbolists' interest in music is, according to Chiari, nothing unique since

the pre-eminent position of music in the liberal arts is based on the position given to music by Plato, and, after him, by the Pythagoreans and by Aristotle. The metaphysical meaning of music in the construction of the universe and of man, and its moral and political value in the education of the citizen are to be found in The Republic and The Timaeus. Quintilian deals with that theme, which could be summed up as follows: Plato and the Pythagoreans teach us that the universe is musically constructed and that the human soul is similarly formed. Plato required music from his ideal statesmen and Lycurgus approved of it. Formerly the art of music and the art of letters were united, some even subordinating grammar to music.\textsuperscript{120}

The interest in the creation of a composite art form and the practice of correlating the arts, especially poetry and music,

\textsuperscript{118}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 95. \textsuperscript{119}Chiari, p. 54. 
\textsuperscript{120}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 127-128.
are characteristic of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they were of the Renaissance; the interest in new idiom and the interest in new harmony are closely related when observed in the compositions of Schönberg and Bartok and in the poems of the Symbolists. 121

The search for new and individual patterns in writing led the Symbolists to many different masters among whom were the poets of the Italian Renaissance, Villon, the Pléiade, the Elizabethan and Stuart poets, the Siglo de Oro poets, the Medieval poets, and the Baroque poets—Donne and Gongora; but the poets to whom the Symbolists turned to most often were the Roman Decadents—Juvenal, Martial, Lucan, and Apuleius. 122 The interest in classical antiquity led Leconte de Lisle to rewriting myths in such poems as Niobe, Hélène, Venus de Milo, the Poèmes antiques, the Iliade, the Odyssey, and Les Erinyes. 123 Fustel de Coulanges, though not a poet, reflected the classical influence in his study of the structure of Rome in La Cité Antique published in 1864. 124

Leconte de Lisle and Théophile Gautier, along with José-Maria de Heredia and Sully-Prudhomme, were Parnassians who believed in purging the moi from poetry, in restricting the poet’s revelations to implying his meaning through imagery instead of exposing his own heart, in making a poem hard and

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cold, and in polishing the poem by making every detail sharp and clear.\textsuperscript{125} The Parnassians were interested in non-European cultures, and frequently chose material and verse forms from older ages.\textsuperscript{126} They perfected style, abolished sentimentality as much as they could, and sharpened and hardened the poetic idiom; these contributions were furthered by the Symbolists.\textsuperscript{127}

Gautier, of course, is also claimed by the Symbolists and greatly influenced both Daudelaire and Flaubert.\textsuperscript{128} He published \textit{Smaux et Camé}s in 1852, and \textit{L'Art} in 1857, but his most influential work was \textit{Mademoiselle de Maupin}, in which he, especially in the preface, announced his revolt against all socially-accepted doctrines and principles such as Christianity and Romanticism.\textsuperscript{129} He too acknowledged the importance of the Roman Decadents who had written at a time when language had become "mottled with the greenness of decomposition."\textsuperscript{130} Many of Gautier's images are taken from the plastic arts instead of music since he wished to approximate "the physical beauty of form and line . . . which could be realized through the sense of sight; he believed that poetry and sculpture had much in common, and many of his images are attempts at reproducing sculptural images in words."\textsuperscript{131} Repeatedly, Gautier

\textsuperscript{125}Ibid., p. 405.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., p. 406.
\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{131}Starkie, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{126}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128}Starkie, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{130}Cited in Jackson, p. 136.
stressed the doctrine that art should be an end in itself.\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.}

Flaubert, although somewhat sympathetic to the Romantics, also felt the Decadent and Symbolist isolation from and hatred for his contemporary society which he depicted in *Madame Bovary*, *L’Éducation Sentimentale*, and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; he was, however, interested in earlier history and reconstructed the pagan world and the piety of the early Christians in *Salammbô* and *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*.\footnote{Wilson, p. 100.} Flaubert’s recognition of the modern world as ignoble, sordid, or tame, summarized in *Trois Contes*, still influences twentieth-century writers.\footnote{Ibid., p. 17.}

One foreign influence, that of Edgar Allen Poe, was widely acknowledged by the Symbolists as a talent which they could admire and emulate. What particularly attracted the French Symbolists were Poe’s essays on literary theory—"The Poetic Principle" and "The Philosophy of Composition."\footnote{Ibid., p. 17.} Poe, like the Symbolists, was fascinated by the relationship of poetry to music; and, even though music was much more indefinite and suggestive for Poe than it was for the French Symbolists, his theory of music exerted great influence on Mallarmé despite some differences in the two poets’ theories.\footnote{Chiari, p. 100.}
Poe, in his essay entitled "The Rationale of Verse," states that, in music, melody is the most important single creation, and, in spite of the fact that Poe believed the most important act of creating poetry to be versification, the primitive rhythms which he achieves in his poems are what many other poets consider the most unforgettable and most valuable contribution of his poetry.\textsuperscript{137}

Poe greatly influenced Charles Baudelaire, who welcomed Poe's idea that poetry should not be morally didactic. Literally accepting Poe's principle, he used prostitutes, hoodlums, and eccentrics for characters.\textsuperscript{138} Baudelaire, as disgusted with the Romantics as any other poet of the Art for Art's Sake or Symbolist movements, did not, however, support the Hellenic revival but instead advised that poets turn to the modern world in search of beauty.\textsuperscript{139} He believed that music, of all the arts, had the power to express the spiritual or transcendent experience, and he attempted making his poetry approximate music which, to him, was a more essential quality of poetry than thought.\textsuperscript{140} His poetry resembles that of the Latin Decadents to whom Gautier compares him.\textsuperscript{141}

Baudelaire was concerned mainly in his poetry with the

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid., p. 112. \hfill \textsuperscript{138}Cargill, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{139}Starkie, p. 34. \hfill \textsuperscript{140}Ibid., p. 36.
\textsuperscript{141}Cargill, p. 185.
spiritual and moral ennui of an age which inspired discordant emotions and aspirations.\textsuperscript{142}

Stéphane Mallarmé was the leader of Symbolism.\textsuperscript{143} His best-known work is \textit{L'Apres-Midi d'un Faune}, the reminiscences of a satyr who recalls those nymphs whom he has attacked. When told that Debussy was composing music on the inspiration of the poem, Mallarmé insisted that he had already done it.\textsuperscript{144} Poe's theory that music be a part of poetry certainly influenced Mallarmé, although he did not believe that music in poetry should be an indefinite quality but a perfect fusion of music and word. Poe also led Mallarmé to serious study of English, and Mallarmé eventually visited England, after which he returned to France to teach English.\textsuperscript{145} Another poet who impressed Mallarmé was Robert Browning, whose obscurity Mallarmé envied, and certainly there are similarities in the frustration and futility which the faun expresses and that of "Andrea del Sarto."\textsuperscript{146}

Paul Verlaine was also a leader of the Symbolists, but eventually he disappointed the Symbolists because thinking and metaphysics meant little to him. Also, he took little interest in the spiritual concepts which preoccupied most of

\textsuperscript{142}Friederick, p. 415. \textsuperscript{143}Starkie, p. 91. \textsuperscript{144}Chiari, p. 131. \textsuperscript{145}Cargill, pp. 195-196. \textsuperscript{146}Ibid., pp. 201-202.
the Symbolists. His best poems are those which express the experience of sensation.\(^4\) He was convinced that poems should be read aloud, not seen on a page, and he also believed that strict prosody had little value, which led him to using the \textit{vers impair}, a line with an uneven number of syllables which enhanced the musicality of the language.\(^5\) Verlaine, like Poe, believed that life consisted of a dream-like existence, and this idea also was expressed in his poetry.\(^6\) Verlaine, in his scorn of sense, eloquence and logic, which he called "mere" literature, inspired the Dadaists and the Revolt against Literature in the twentieth century.\(^7\)

The poetry of Arthur Rimbaud is associational and obscure as a result of startling images, individualistic usage, and "supralogical" development.\(^8\) His prose poem \textit{Une Saison en enfer} and his \textit{Illuminations} influenced twentieth-century prose poems.\(^9\) Rimbaud believed that the poet should accept the role of a visionary or a prophet and thereby regain the role of \textit{vates} which the poet had lost since the decline of importance of the priest-poet of the Greeks.\(^10\) In the creation of Axel, Rimbaud, in Wilson's opinion, offers the modern poet a choice in the roles which he may play.

\(^4\) Starkie, p. 87. \(^5\) Ibid., p. 88. 
\(^6\) Cargill, p. 187. \(^7\) Ibid., p. 188. 
\(^8\) Friederick, p. 416. \(^9\) Ibid. 
\(^10\) Vide, letter to a friend, cited in Wilson, pp. 270-271.
If one chooses the . . . way of Axel, one shuts oneself up in one's own private world, cultivating one's private fantasies, encouraging one's private manias, ultimately preferring one's absurdest chimeras to the most astonishing contemporary realities, ultimately mistaking one's chimeras for realities. If one chooses the . . . way of Rimbaud, one tries to leave the twentieth century behind—to find the good life in some country where modern manufacturing methods and modern democratic institutions do not present any problems to the artist because they haven't yet arrived. 154

Such a choice appealed to those poets who were in a quandary about their position in society, and frequently the choosing of Axel's way led to an existence in an ivory tower completely withdrawn from all outside communication.

Huysmans, in A Rebours, creates the perfect Decadent in Des Esseintes, a maniacal hyper-aesthete with diseased tastes. 155 He too found much to be admired in the Latin Decadents who, according to Baudelaire, wrote in a language which was quite fit for the expressions of the French Decadents. Lucan is tolerated, whereas Horace and Virgil are viewed with contempt; Petronius and Apuleius are very admirable. 156 Although Des Esseintes is the perfect Aesthete, Huysmans is suspected of presenting a satire instead of a sympathetic reproduction of the French Decadent.

Of the other Symbolists, Remy de Gourmont, admired by Pound, who translated some of his works, also believed that

154 Ibid., p. 287.  
155 Cargill, pp. 196-197.  
156 Ibid., p. 197.
the best creative activity was the subconscious. Tristan Corbière influenced many Anglo-American Symbolists and contributed to the development of English symbolist idiom. Jules Laforgue came close to being the true example of the Decadent in his original and daring imagery, his fantastic usage and striking neologisms, and his use of irony; his style influenced Wallace Stevens, Archibald MacLeish, and Ezra Pound. He concentrated not on the ideal but on the everyday life, the "quotidien," thereby accepting Symbolist ideals but adjusting them to his own use; Laforgue, like other Symbolists, was interested in music, not symphonic music but the common music similar to jazz.

The French Classical Revival was encouraged by Jean Moréas and the École Romane, which included Ernest Raynaud, Maurice du Plessys, Raymond de la Tailhède, and Charles Maurras. Moréas, whose real name was Papadiamantopoulos, reverted to a classicism which had been modified by Byronic Romanticism; his interest in Renaissance literature and his revival of archaism caused his poetry to be somewhat obscure in spite of the freedom of expression which he achieved.

The poets who attempted reviving the classics in France

\[157\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 224.\]
\[158\text{Friederick}, \ p. \ 415.\]
\[159\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 417.\]
\[160\text{Starkie}, \ p. \ 146.\]
\[161\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 144.\]
\[162\text{Cargill}, \ p. \ 211.\]
thought that France as a nation could only fulfill her destiny by acknowledging her Graeco-Roman heritage. In literature, Moreas and others looked to the Renaissance of the sixteenth century and to the "abortive Renaissance" of twelfth-century Provence for inspiration, but their poetry reflected a classicism which was artificial, "watered-down" and out of touch with their age.163

As Decadence declined in England immediately before the First World War, so did the French Decadents and Symbolists decline in importance because they failed to relate to everyday life and concentrated on unattainable idealism and artifice.164 Some poets turned to Celtic and Teutonic myth, whereas others like Moreas turned to the classics. Paul Valéry emerged as an important poet of the early twentieth century, and his theory of poetry, unlike that of the Symbolists, consisted of an interest in poetic creation as intellectual exercise; he particularly wished to use an art form like music devoid of all emotion.165 Valéry is frequently compared to Mallarmé but is more intellectual and imaginative than is Mallarmé. The difference between the two poets may be compared to that between a watercolorist and a sculptor since Mallarmé's poetry seems delicate in comparison to the marmoreal quality of Valéry's poetry.166 To Valéry the poet

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163 Starkie, pp. 144-145.  
164 Ibid., p. 144.  
165 Ibid., p. 168.  
166 Wilson, pp. 71-72.
is an intellectual juggler who distinguishes thought from the creation of art although "the latter is seen as a formal quirk of the thinker's mind, indulged in rather as a mathematician might amuse himself with chess problems."\textsuperscript{167} \textit{La Jeune Parque}, according to Wilson, represents a new genre in literature; the story concerns a young Fate, just bitten by a snake, who sinks into a reverie which explores the human consciousness.\textsuperscript{168} Wilson also states that

the things that happen in \textit{"La Jeune Parque"} and in Paul Valéry's other mythological monologues--the Narcissus, the Pythoness and the Serpent of the rich period of poetic activity which followed immediately upon \textit{"La Jeune Parque"}--are never, on the one hand, quite imaginable as incidents which are actually taking place and never, on the other hand, quite reducible merely to thoughts in the poet's mind. The picture never quite emerges; the idea is never formulated quite. And for all the magnificences of sound, color, and suggestion which we find in these poems stanza by stanza, it seems to me that they are unsatisfactory because they are somehow not assimilable as wholes.\textsuperscript{169}

Valéry's poetry constantly shifts from the visible world to an intellectual, abstract realm, and the contrast and conflict resulting from the antagonism between the freedom of the mind and the limits imposed by life led Valéry to create some of the most original poetry in modern literature.\textsuperscript{170}

Valéry, like the Symbolist poets, escaped into a private world which caused his work to be obscure and difficult.

\textsuperscript{168}Wilson, pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{169}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{170}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 75.
The French poets, like their English counterparts, abhorred the world created by a utilitarian society and the Industrial Revolution, a world dominated by the middle class, with whom they had little sympathy. Eventually the Decadents and Symbolists gave up hope of ever regaining or of creating a niche for themselves in the modern materialistic society which cared little for poetry.\textsuperscript{171}

The importance of the French Decadents and Symbolists in relation to English poetry was one not only of influence on English Decadents, but also one on English Symbolists and Imagists of the twentieth century. The English, like the French, sought to expurgate the narrative and reflective from poetry in an attempt to create pure poetry. The difference between the French Symbolists and the English Imagists, however, is that the French looked to music for models, whereas the English turned to painting.\textsuperscript{172} Without admitting the influence of the French Symbolists on the English poets of the latter nineteenth century and the early twentieth century and without a knowledge of what the French Symbolists accomplished in their poetry, one may well consider modern English poetry obscure, unreadable, or incomprehensible since, as Friederick states,

\begin{quote}
when the Anglo-American poetic revolution against Romanticism finally occurred around 1912, the imagists,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{171}Ibid., p. 268. \textsuperscript{172}Grierson, p. 553.
influenced considerably by the parnassians, especially Gautier, formulated a new poetics which is essentially the same as the parnassian poetics: poetry should be clear, cool, chiselled, objective and should use as its principal device sharp and evocative images.\footnote{Friederick, p. 406.}
CHAPTER II

THE IMAGISTS

The English classical revival began in 1908 with the establishment of the Poets Club by T. E. Hulme; in the same year, a pamphlet entitled Pour Noël was published. The Club lasted until 1912, with Hulme as its leader. The poets who comprised the group constantly changed; all, however, were interested in bringing innovations into English poetry.¹ The poets became interested in form, craftsmanship, and technique, all typical concerns of classicists.²

The precursors of the group had been Dorothy Wordsworth, Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane, and Ford Madox Ford,³ and the creed of the new group of poets was based through the French Symbolists on the theories of Edgar Allan Poe. Ezra Pound, himself a member, eventually named the group the Imagists.⁴ Besides being influenced by Poe and by the French Symbolists whom they strongly resemble, the Imagists were descendants of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who also believed that the

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¹Starkie, p. 156. ²Bayley, p. 49.
⁴Grierson, p. 546.
visual image contributed much to poetry. Although there were also connections with the Decadents, both English and French, the Imagists, instead of concentrating on individual withdrawals into ivory towers, attempted creating precise and economic expressions "of a new sort of consciousness for which the traditional techniques were inadequate."

The connection between the English Imagists of the first two decades of the twentieth century and the French Symbolists is the strongest connection the Imagists have with another literary movement. Gilbert Highet classifies two Imagists, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, as Symbolists with Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, and James Joyce. Pound and Eliot eventually disassociated themselves from the Imagist movement when it began to decline in importance, but the influences on their poetic theory and practice when they were Imagists colored their later poetry greatly. Indeed, many Imagists who are less well known than Pound and Eliot verged on Symbolism themselves.

The Symbolists and the Imagists both used the Greek world as a decorative background of metaphor and allusion from which they drew images. The material which they used was, however, disguised until it became merely "a hint, a nuance, a grotesque, a parodic reminiscence, a phrase repeated in a

5Pinto, p. 152.

6Highet, p. 516.
dream, a poignant echo." To these poets, Greek and Latin literature is a storehouse of wisdom which stimulates imagination and consoles wounds incurred in the confrontation with the modern world. The return to myth and legend is comforting, but it is also to be expected since in becoming interested in man's deeper mind, one looks to primitive tales and discovers profound significance illuminating the unknown portions of the soul.

Besides being entranced by the classical world and classical literature, the Symbolists and the Imagists sought to use classical patterns as guides, but the results frequently are distorted and fragmentary replicas of the original model. The discipline of the classical forms sometimes appears to be too much for the modern poets, but their admiration and use of classical myth never loses its important place in their symbolism and imagery. Greek mythical gods and heroes symbolize spiritual attitudes, and the stories of the gods and heroes interpret spiritual experiences, beliefs, and aspirations. The difference between the classical writers and the Symbolist poets (including Pound and Eliot) lies in the fact that the modern poets

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7 Ibid., p. 517.  
8 Ibid., p. 518.  
9 Ibid., p. 546.  
10 Ibid., p. 504.  
11 Ibid., p. 507.  
12 Ibid., p. 510.
leave much to the imagination. But do the Greek poets also not leave much to the imagination? Yes, but the Greeks state the essentials, and allow the hearer to supply the details. The symbolist poets do not state the essentials. Instead, they describe the details, which, although not central, are so vivid as to haunt the mind.

The influence of the classical writers and of the classical world of the Imagists and the later English Symbolists cannot be overlooked. In order to see the influence clearly, the distinctive characteristics of the movement should be known.

Many of the Imagists were Americans who had exiled themselves to Europe. The reason these expatriates escaped America can be traced, in Fairchild's opinion, to the fact that of all the Western nations, the United States had become the "land of machine civilization par excellence," thereby causing the artist to feel an even vaster alienation than did artists in other countries. America cultivated Philistinism and materialism; there was an antipathy toward intellectuals and artists, and more pressure was exerted on citizens to conform to the national spirit of team co-operation through the facilities of mass education which led to a "larger, stupider, and more aggressively anti-aesthetic reading public than anywhere else in the world." In retaliation, the expatriate tended to exaggerate the evils of the American democratic society and to forget a more congenial historical American civilization.  

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13 Ibid., p. 502.  
14 Fairchild, p. 538.  
15 Ibid.
The American expatriate ironically felt a greater attachment to America while living in a foreign country than he did at home, and the American materialistic skills which he abjured—competitive drive and professional expertise—were put to excellent use in his own craft.\textsuperscript{16} The Imagists were iconoclasts who refused to imitate fuzzy-headed Romantics and soft Georgians, and who turned instead to the more rigorous ancient Greeks and Chinese for models. They tried to achieve the hard, clear and brilliant instead of the soft, indefinite, and vague which had appealed to the nineteenth-century poets. The Americans clearly saw that the twentieth century could not compare with the civilizations of the past, which was more alive than contemporary life could ever hope to be.\textsuperscript{17}

The Imagists, interested in painting and sculpture, tried to incorporate the qualities of visual art in their poetry. They attempted releasing poetry from conventions and traditions by concentrating on the fresh image which they perceived in their confrontation with modern life, but, because words are old and their meanings largely fixed, their attempts were limited.\textsuperscript{18} The Imagists began to realize that their expressions could not communicate to the general public; therefore, they

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Stephen Spender, \textit{The Struggle of the Modern} (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), pp. 216-217.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 190.
formed a coterie of the self-chosen elite who were concerned with preserving art from the barbaric, vulgar, commercialized middle classes.\(^\text{19}\)

As the new coterie began practicing their art, they formulated a doctrine enumerating their standards. To them the image was the most important part of the theory and the practice; Spender defines "image" as being

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\ldots \text{the immediate visual reaction of the sensibility of the poet to an event which strikes him with felt force.} \ldots \text{The liberating impulse of the imagist was the idea that any image was authentic to the extent that it realized itself in the mind of the attentive and aware reader. Here there was the example which gave authority not only to the outrageous imagery of Joyce and of the early Eliot} \ldots \text{but also to a new idea of what was meant by "work" in poetry. Work was not hunting around for rhymes and filling up metrical lines, but the kind of concentration in performance which remains faithful to the moment in which an idea, visualized, first purely occurs and asserts its claim that it is capable of further definition.}^{20}
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Further, Imagism emphasized the writers' perceptions of experiences which appeared as images, and the forms used were judged on whether they realized and liberated or subdued and inhibited the image.\(^\text{21}\) In order to perceive the true image, the poet must suffer both isolation and rejection.\(^\text{22}\) The idea that the artist must be estranged from society was not new to the English and, especially, the American poets since the themes of Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" and of

\(^{19}\) Pinto, pp. 151-152.  \(^{20}\) Spender, p. 111.

\(^{21}\) ibid., p. 131.

Henry James' "The Lesson of the Master" concern the same concept of the artist's alienation from a practical and unaesthetic society. The image to James Joyce was the "epiphany," and his term perhaps conveys the element of mysticism and incomprehensible wonder which accompanied the reception of the true image; for some Imagists such as Pound, Hulme, and others, this unexplainable phenomenon conflicted with their emphasis of hard, dry, accurate depiction of the subject of their poems, but for a few of the lesser poets, the "epiphany" ideally suited their natures. 

For the Imagists, as for Rimbaud, the "I" is transformed by the elimination of the subjective self-consciousness which inhibits the reception of the image. As Spender states,

the modern imagist attempts to operate upon the "I" by transforming the action of art into acting experience directly upon the sensibility, thus short-circuiting it. This is, I have suggested, what survives from the imagist method, which is more important than its programme of having poetry consist of nothing but images. . . . The justification of the systematic disordering of all the senses in order to attain the unknown, is that it cuts out that which is consciously the poet or man of letters who writes "I". Instead, the nerves and brain become mere instruments on which experiences write.

For the Imagists the "I" could, with the proper manipulation of material, treat any object, even machines, in a poetic manner, but the Imagists failed to tell how to treat such an object or how the process would relate to the traditional

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24Spender, p. 140.
presentation of poetic material. The Imagists' "Manifesto" otherwise was sound within its limitations, but neither the Imagists themselves nor the poets whom they contradicted believed that the Imagists were anything other than destroyers of the old tradition who were preparing for the establishment of new forms and methods of poetry. The result was, to some, an unintelligible stream-of-consciousness technique which did not incorporate classical simplicity and clarity, but the Imagists themselves insisted that they were essentially classicists opposed to Romantic poetry.

Among the Imagists, mainly dominated by the American expatriates, who attempted as had the French to correlate music, painting, and sculpture with poetry, and who were to the general public esoteric, were F. S. Flint, James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence. The real revolutionaries attacking the "hopeless ineptitude of current English taste," however, were Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Herbert Read, and Richard Aldington. Since the classical influence on Pound's literary theory and poetry is the subject of later chapters, it is not necessary to go into great detail tracing the general outline of his work in this chapter, but his position in the Imagist group and his relationship to other Imagists must be stressed.

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Pound was closely associated with T. S. Eliot during the more productive years of the Imagist movement. They were, in Spender's terminology, "revolutionary traditionalists" who saw in *Ulysses* the true tradition for modern poetry, and they studied past masterpieces in search of this true tradition which had been submerged under sentimental, ineffectual Romanticism.\(^{27}\) In the search for images, the two poets allowed the image to determine the form which was suitable; their poems, especially Pound's, reveal an astounding knowledge of past forms; some were extremely obscure forms which had not been used for centuries. The purpose of the study was to develop an individual style and form. Too, Pound and Eliot never were as prone to isolation as other Imagists; although they hated the vulgar, commercialized society they lived in, they really were more interested in reconciling society and bringing about a reunion of society and art than were H. D. Aldington and Hulme.\(^{28}\) In their attempt, however, they lost readers by presenting too vast a range of allusions to past civilizations which the readers had never heard of, and they used idiomatic diction which did not sound "poetic" to readers accustomed to reading Edwardian, Georgian and Romantic poetry. The idiomatic diction, of course, allowed Pound and Eliot to write about the commonplace in contemporary life, but again

\(^{27}\)Spender, p. 222.

\(^{28}\)Fraser, *The Modern Writer*, p. 42.
readers generally felt that such subject matter was not "poetic." Perhaps the most incomprehensible quality about Pound's and Eliot's poetry was the ironic nostalgia which they expressed; a society just emerging from Victorian ideas of progress could not understand a discontent with present life nor the desire to escape into the past.\(^29\) The readers needed time to catch up with Pound and Eliot; some never made it. During their Imagist period, the greatest contribution of Pound and Eliot was their expressions in idiomatic diction of the lack of current ideas available to poets and the condition of society which created an aesthetic desert.\(^30\)

Pound's influence in Imagism was his untiring search for new forms and new techniques.\(^31\) He also led the attack on the Georgians, whom he felt received undue attention for their innocuous poetry. He developed the static image into a dynamic image which he called an "idea in action." However, in spite of the invigorating leadership which he offered, one Imagist upstart, Amy Lowell, began taking the position of leadership away from Pound. Amy Lowell had learned to discard the Keats-Tennyson style from her poetry and had published in Pound's Imagist anthology, but the second anthology, Some Imagist Poets, was published in Boston by Amy Lowell. The second

\(^{29}\)Spender, p. 213. \(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 251. \(^{31}\)Friederick, p. 419.
anthology did not include poems by Pound, who in retaliation
began calling Imagism "Amygism." Pound completely dis-
associated himself from Imagism and proceeded to develop
along more individual lines.

The Sitwells—Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell—had begun
to experiment on the same lines as the Imagists. They too
used _vers libre_, although not exclusively, and they believed
that poets should write in the idiom of their own time, not
the idiom of the last century. Form and idiom, then, were to
be suited to and be the expression of the twentieth century.
Edith Sitwell's early poems contain hard, bright images which
objectify her subject; she did not care for abstractions.
She concentrated on conveying her sensation of the objects'
appearance, however. As Ward explains,

objects and scenes are often robbed of their visual
quality, in order that they may be given a _sensation_
quality. The reader is expected to receive an impression
of things—not through descriptions that enable him to
recognize them as things known by sight, but by an
application of epithets designed to revive the sensations
previously experienced in contact with similar objects,
or in similar circumstances . . . ^3^3^n

The value of Imagism was that it opened the common world
to the poet; it, in essence, released poetry, allowing poets
to discuss what they had never discussed before. ^3^4 The
Imagists were primarily housecleaners preparing for a new type

^3^2 Arthur Hobson Guinn, _The Literature of the American


^3^4 Spender, p. 113.
of poetry, but except for Pound and Eliot, who later developed their own individual techniques, the Imagists were not great poets. The Imagists also reunited prose and poetry in their insistence that form, rhythm, and rhyme are secondary to image. The movement also stimulated others to similar or related experiments. The Surrealists extended the technique of de-inhibition beyond the Imagists' mere creation of the image through the use of word and form. According to MacNeice, the Surrealists, by not controlling their media and thereby becoming "a modest registering machine," put into practice the theory which Plato states in Ion. The Surrealists attempted recording the various states of the mind, such as reverie, dream, trance, delirium, and even insanity. The first English Surrealist was James Joyce, whose Ulysses had inspired Pound and Eliot in their Imagist period.

Another movement which evolved from Imagism was Vorticism, led by Pound and Wyndham Lewis, who put into practice the artistic theory of Gaudier-Brzeska. The Vorticists substituted the word "vortex" for "image," but essentially the two groups were quite similar. The Vorticists, taking the aesthetics of T. E. Hulme seriously, attempted to impose order on the chaos

37 Ibid., p. 113. 38 MacNeice, p. 152.
39 Grierson, p. 566.
which the destructive tendencies of Imagism had provoked, but in general they failed since those involved in the movement still felt the urge to destroy the influence of the nineteenth century.\footnote{40} The term "vortex," according to Kermode, reveals the influence of Yeats; as he says,

\emph{I imagine the origins of Vorticism will not be fully understood until the Pound-Yeats relationship is better known, but it is not unreasonable to guess that the term derived in the first place from the Empedoclean vortex which attracted Yeats because it provided a magical symbol of the resolution between antinomies like concord-discord, life-death, stillness-movement. The Vortex is the Image in movement, though paradoxically still... This appealed to Yeats because of his fascination with oscillation between opposites, to Pound because he had abandoned simple Imagism (which gave concreteness but not vitality and action) and to Wyndham Lewis...\footnote{41}}

The Vorticists concentrated on establishing a creative rather than a destructive force in modern art, but again the Vorticists created a coterie of the elite and did not attempt to reach the public.\footnote{42}

In spite of the fact that Pound was recognized as the leader of the Imagists, others insisted that T. E. Hulme was the leader and that Pound had stolen Hulme's ideas. Hulme, in his Poets Club which met in a Soho restaurant, worked out the theory which evolved into Imagism; he detested smoothness in poetry but admired compact, functional writing.\footnote{43} He also attacked Humanism and contended that philosophy should revert

\footnote{40 Fairchild, p. 484.} \footnote{41 Kermode, p. 133.} \footnote{42 Fairchild, p. 484.} \footnote{43 A. H. Quinn, pp. 861-862.}
to Scholasticism and art to Egyptian and Byzantine hieratic
and geometrical art; he rejected the Romantic idea that man
is basically good and getting better, and he saw man as
imperfect and the world as an ash-pit relieved only by
occasional oases. 44

Hulme believed that man was a highly organized chaos on
the verge of reverting to primitivism at any moment; the world
and society had been made from ennui and disgust. 45 In his
statements he rejected as naive the philosophy of the
Romantics, and he cleared the way for a new poetry which
would take over in England after Romanticism had been blasted. 46

The philosophers who had influenced Hulme were Cusanus,
Bergson, and Husserl, as is revealed in Hulme's "sociopolitics." 47

The change which he looked for in politics, religion, and
philosophy was evident to a lesser extent in the changes which
he demanded in poetry. 48 Although Hulme looked at poetry as
a philosopher and theorist and not as a critic, he wrote
poetry himself and greatly influenced those poets who met
with him in the Soho restaurants or in his apartment. He

44 Pinto, pp. 152-153.
48 Ibid., p. 71.
in finding an image and then expressing it without making ugly noises than in using words as "counters." Feeling that poetry in the nineteenth century was ineffectual, Hulme stated that the good poem, the strong poem, should contain a new analogy and should startle, or shock, the reader, the desire to shock being a carry-over from the Decadents. He suggested that poets look at the world, not as they had been taught, but as they themselves could see, and then the poet should persevere until he could express what he had actually seen.

To Hulme, subject was irrelevant, but accuracy and detachment were extremely important; words had been made meaningless by overuse and the precise new word should express the emotions, if there were any, accurately. Hulme looked to a new "classical" poetry, meaning a poetry which would express "a belief in objective ethical values." Man's art should express his sense of limitation and imperfection by hard, geometrical surfaces; poetry was not excluded from this dictum. Hulme himself acknowledged the fact that to believe that either Romanticism or Classicism was the ultimate theory

49 Ibid., p. 223. 50 Ibid., p. 207.
51 Ibid., p. 209.
53 Roberts, p. 58.
by which to pattern art was a fallacy since both interrelate
and both are inseparable.\footnote{Hulme, \textit{Speculations}, p. 236.} As Hulme explains it,
\begin{quote}
... there are the two views, then. One, that man is
intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the
other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined
by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To
the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other
like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a
reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the
one which regards him as a very finite and fixed
creature, I call the classical.\footnote{Ibid., p. 117.}
\end{quote}

To Hulme, Romanticism was the deification of man, and man was
not worth it.\footnote{Ibid., p. 118.} Hulme believed, too, that he was witnessing
the decline and decay of Romanticism and that soon classicism
would become predominant.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 121-122.}

The classical art which would supplant the Romantic and
Humanist art would be not an imitation of the past but an
expression of the religious view of the world.\footnote{Roberts, p. 58.} Although
poetry will express the religious attitude, it will not be
a religion in itself, unlike the art of the past. and, as he
observes,

the effect of rhythm, like that of music, is to produce
a kind of hypnotic state, during which suggestions of
grief or ecstasy are easily and powerfully effective.
... This is for the art of chanting, but the procedure
of the new visual art is just the contrary. It depends
for its effect not on a kind of half sleep produced, but
on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of visual images should exhaust one.\(^{59}\)

Hulme does not feel that the exact description of finite objects could be adequately expressed in prose since poetry is a sensuous, concrete language which, unlike prose, forces the reader to feel the object described as if he were actually seeing it.\(^{60}\)

Hulme did not fully explain the nature of the coming classical revival since he did not know whether it would be a vital or a formal movement; he was not even certain that the movement would be recognized as being classical since in all likelihood it would be much different from past classical periods because Romanticism had made such an impact on literature.\(^{61}\) Hulme was more concerned, as he put it, with "the maximum of individual and personal expression" of the poet than with "the attainment of any absolute beauty."\(^{62}\) The classical poet, always mindful of his limitations,

\[\ldots\] must be free from the prosaic vision that we use for ordinary purposes. The merit of his work depends partly on the technical skill with which he communicates what he has seen, partly on the accuracy of his intuition, and partly on the proportion that he establishes between it and other intuitions.\(^{63}\)

\(^{59}\) T. E. Hulme, *Further Speculations*, edited by Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955), p. 73.

\(^{60}\) Roberts, pp. 65-66.

\(^{61}\) Hulme, *Speculations*, p. 125.

\(^{62}\) Hulme, *Further Speculations*, pp. 71-72.

\(^{63}\) Roberts, p. 212.
The classical subject matter which Hulme approved was that which was ordinary, perfectly human, and never exaggerated; the hero of necessity should be a man, not a god.64 Metaphors and images should be fresh, not for novelty, but to keep readers from passing over words which they had become accustomed to reading as "counters." In order to be vivid and exact the metaphor and the image should be new and unexpected, and the images, essential in intuitive language, should startle the reader by drawing attention to similarities and differences in an unusual manner.65

Since the world in Hulme's opinion is "an ash-pit of cinders," whatever unity exists is similar to "a kind of manufactured chess-board laid on a cinder-heap."66 One comprehends the world through the processes of the "imagination" and expresses what the imagination comprehends through the processes of "fancy."67 The classical poetry which Hulme advocates would be an expression through fancy, since emphasis upon mere imagination is the Romantic method which generally discounts fancy.68 As Roberts explains "fancy," it is "not only a grasping of sensuous similarities . . . it is also a grasping of obscure relationships and associations."69

64 Hulme, Speculations, p. 127. 65 Roberts, p. 67.
66 Hulme, Speculations, p. 219. 67 Roberts, p. 68.
68 Ibid., p. 70. 69 Ibid., p. 221.
The new metaphors which startle the reader into perceiving the same truth about the world are metaphors made from fancy.\textsuperscript{70}

Although Hulme disapproved of Romanticism, he did not entirely discount the methods of the Romantics. As Fairchild observes, "... the basic motive of his 'classicism' was desire to preserve romantic power-experience by purging it of enfeebled romance and enthroning it within an art-world of contrahuman disengagement and abstraction."\textsuperscript{71} The execution of such a task is, perhaps, impossible, but the theory did have historical importance. In looking to other artists, Hulme commended Rossetti's fusion of the physical and the spiritual, Whitman's theory that all things are poetic, and the French \textit{vrai librista} techniques of expressing the ordinary.\textsuperscript{72}

He looked to what he called the new "mechanical art" which was not merely a reflection of a mechanized society but "a result of a change of sensibility which is ... the result of a change of attitude which will become increasingly obvious."\textsuperscript{73} The new mechanical art will make it impossible to portray the heroic and noble in epic-form; instead what will be important will be the poet's impression, since it has become "definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{70}Hulme, \textit{Speculations}, p. 137.
\item \textsuperscript{71}Fairchild, p. 484.
\item \textsuperscript{72}Hulme, \textit{Further Speculations}, pp. 91, 97, 68.
\item \textsuperscript{73}Hulme, \textit{Speculations}, p. 109.
\end{itemize}
communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind . . . ."[74]

Of necessity the new expression of the poet will not rely on meter since meter inhibits the perception of the image which is the most important element of the new classical poetry, and this new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes. This material . . . is image and not sound. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic effect of rhythm.[75]

Each word should be an image which is hard, definite, and personal.[76]

Hulme's own poetry was not imagistic; he wrote poems simply to illustrate, not always successfully, his theories. His own diction and syntax had not been freed from the influence of the Victorian Romantics. The forms which he chose were the Japanese tanka and haiku and the French vers libre.[77]

His own poetry points out the limitations of his theory, since, as he had chosen to be a painter in words, he limited his poetry to literal descriptions of tangible objects, but there are a few striking metaphors such as his describing the moon as a child's balloon caught in the sails of a ship. The restriction of poetry to the superficial and logical eliminates the necessary abstract and perceptive quality which

74 Hulme, Further Speculations, p. 72.
75 Ibid., p. 75. 76 Ibid., p. 79.
77 Jones, Hulme, p. 53.
most poets enjoy. Perhaps had Hulme not been killed in Flanders in 1917, he might have refined his theory. As it was, he influenced those young poets who listened to him, and they in turn determined the development of twentieth-century poetry. The primary achievement of Hulme and those who practiced his poetic theory was that of ridding poetry of the stifling influence of decadent Romanticism. However, in spite of zealous opposition to such an idea, Imagism might have developed without Hulme.

Ezra Pound took over the task which Hulme had set for himself, but Pound disliked Hulme's insistence on the necessity of metaphysics in poetry. Regardless of the charges against him, Pound insists that he would have developed a similar theory without the help of Hulme, and, therefore, Pound looks to Ford Madox Ford as the "Father of Imagism." The accusation of some critics that Pound stole his Imagist theory from Hulme is inaccurate since Hulme after entering the war lost interest in his poetic theory; Pound, therefore, should not be falsely accused of stealing ideas which had been left abandoned and which he felt were significant in the development of his own and other Imagists' poetry. It is true, however, that neither Pound nor Hulme had much use for each other personally, even though Pound proved useful to

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78 Ibid., pp. 52-53.  
79 Roberts, p. 208.  
80 Kermode, p. 121.
Hulme as an excellent "public relations man." Hulme, himself, was rather irritated by Pound, thinking him a comedian, but Hulme indulged and patronized Pound because, in his opinion, the young American poet had not fully accepted the theories which he was advocating. The influence of Hulme on Pound was significant in that Pound quieted down his poetry a great deal after he met Hulme and began to experiment with different forms and different tones of voice. There were, however, other influences on Pound which were not at all related to Hulme, influences such as Fenollosa, the medieval Italians, and the Provençal poets.

Among the Imagists was "H. D." (Hilda Doolittle), whose poems are frequently considered the most nearly perfect Imagist poetry. The Greek influence on H. D. is considerable; she has written a drama, Hippolitus Temporizes, published in 1927, the form of which is classical. Also, H. D. translated Euripides' Ion. Her translations are important in determining the methods by which she re-creates the Greek world in her poetry. H. D.'s use of Greek literature is more than mere theme and form; it is instead "something suggestive of a mystical affinity, or, to the fanciful mind, a reincarnation." The Greek provides a mask for H. D., but the Greek which she

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81 Jones, Hulme, p. 33.  
82 Ibid.  
83 A. H. Quinn, p. 364.  
84 Bush, Mythology, p. 497.  
85 Glenn Hughes, Imagism and the Imagists (New York, 1931), p. 112.
turns to is colored by her own thought, making it not the true Greek spirit of the past but one which she makes her model of the Greek spirit. The result is a romantic attachment to Greece but also a new kind of sophisticated primitivism. Her favorite model is Sappho, but "the Greece she dwells in has no real connection with the Greece of historic actuality." Through her poetry, H. D. expresses the oppression which a sensitive mind feels when confronted with the ugliness and barbarism of the modern world which has no use for beauty.

Many of H. D.'s themes concern love, which leads to her use of the figures of Eros and Aphrodite. Because of her emphasis on love, she is not concerned with representing mythical characters and situations with fidelity. Even her translation of Ion forces the Greek play to become an Imagist play full of vague cries and bright images. Her poem At Eleusis compares a twentieth-century psychoanalyst to the goddess of Eleusis, both performing the ritual of the Mysteries. The Look-Out presents the poet, called Lynceus,

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86 Fairchild, pp. 463-464.
87 Bush, Mythology, p. 505. 88 Ibid. 89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., p. 502.
92 Fairchild, p. 463.
as being the look-out on a Greek galley rowed by members of
the "Philistine public"; Lynceus sees and feels everything
with excruciating pain while the rowers envy him his "easy
job."93

H. D.'s Greece is one which she finds after following
the work of Moreas, the Latin Decadents, and Ovid, resulting
in a definite "Decadent" tone in her poetry.94 Greece to her
is a dream world containing ideal beauty, but her method of
seeking and expressing beauty is definitely "un-Greek." She
also resembles the Victorian Hellenists in her search for
the "ivory tower" which they eventually gave up. As Bush
states, "her Greece, the paradise of beauty and beautiful
loves, is essentially the Greece of Pater and Wilde."95

Richard Aldington, H. D.'s husband, in his early works
reflects the same intention and technique which his wife
revealed in her poetry, but his poetry was softer and
contained more Victorian weariness and nostalgia than did
H.D.'s. Greece to Aldington was a "symbol of the beauty of
nature and art, of freedom and amorous nymphs."96 One of his
poems, Choricos, reveals the influence of Swinburne in the
melancholy regret, satiety, death, and eternal sleep which
is similar to the themes in Swinburne's The Garden of
Proserpine.97 Aldington's Images, however, shows that all his

93 Ibid., pp. 465-466. 94 Cargill, pp. 246-247.
95 Bush, Mythology, pp. 505-506. 96 Ibid., p. 468.
97 Ibid.
poetry is not entirely Greek; the poetry presents an ugly London, a picture of filthy peace, to which was added

... a greater ugliness, and, as the poet had contrasted the statue of Eros and Psyche with the grime of Camden Town, so his images of war were mingled with visions of "beauty and the women of Hellas," the sea and olive gardens, fauns and "naked wanton hamadryads." 98

In *A Fool In the Forest*, published in 1925, Aldington presents one character split into three; the narrator is a modern artist who struggles to relate himself to the world, but the other two characters comprising the total being—the Conjurer and Mezzetin—are monsters representing the intellectual and imaginative sides of the one person. The three visit Athens, and while they are there, they discuss Greek culture. The Greeks possessed the perfect harmony of mind and senses which led them to accepting life by enjoying it but with disciplined senses of beauty. In contrast the twentieth century is depicted in the conclusion of the story as unbalanced and diseased. Mezzetin, through the Conjurer's blundering, is killed in the war; the Conjurer is then thrown into the Thames by the artist who, now that both his intellect and imagination are destroyed, becomes one of the middle class comfortably living in suburbia. 99

Greece is the image which Aldington uses to present his love of beauty and desire for pagan freedom, although

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saturated with melancholy. His conception of Greece is generally emotional and sentimental. As Bush states,

altogether, Mr. Aldington is a sensitive romantic rebel who has found in Greek poetry, as any selective reader can find, support for his own temperament. He is superior to many such rebels in being aware of disharmony and confusion in himself.

T. S. Eliot, although not generally recognized as an Imagist, did have, nevertheless, an "Imagist period." During that time he was greatly influenced by Ezra Pound, who edited The Waste Land which Eliot published in 1922. The close relationship between the two poets who began their careers as Imagists is reflected in their poetry of the time of their friendship; Pound and Eliot both wrote a poem entitled "Portrait of a Lady," Pound's characteristically being entitled "Portrait d'une Femme." There are some similarities in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, published by Pound in 1920, and The Waste Land by Eliot. The techniques of The Waste Land—the evolution of free association, the studied banality of phrase, and the deliberately pedestrian rhythms—had been foreshadowed in Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, published in 1917. Eliot brought together two disparate traditions, that of the French Symbolists and that of the seventeenth-century English Metaphysicals. Eliot, like Pound, uses scraps of passages

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100 Fairchild, p. 468.  
101 Bush, Mythology, p. 470.  
102 Grierson, p. 547.  
103 Wilson, p. 93.
in his poetry from those poets whom he has studied. He also has used prose works, as is seen in his finding in Jessica Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and Frazer's *The Golden Bough* subject material for *The Waste Land*.  

One of the chief subjects of *The Waste Land* is that the classics may be a consolation for those who hate the twentieth century. In order to make twentieth-century brutality and cruelty endurable one must turn not to philosophy or politics but to legends and myths, to mystical, haunting words, to beautiful poetic phrases, to graceful, musical sounds, and to pictures beyond intellectual comprehension. Eliot chooses as the archetype for the artist Philomela, the ravaged, mutilated woman who was transformed into a nightingale, her cry of pain becoming music. Hightet states that "the transformation was the work of the Greek spirit, which has provided for . . . both comfort in facing the vileness of life, and stimulus to soar, although wounded, above it." The *Waste Land* is an expression of the emotional starvation of the artist in a world become desolate, sterile, and puritanical. The poem becomes a literary medley, again reflecting the influence of Pound. The medley is one of

\[\ldots\ldots\text{cross-currents, switch-overs, throw-backs, and quasi-automatic tags of \ldots a serious and horrified} \]

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104 Evans, p. 200.  
105 Pinto, p. 170.  
106 Hightet, p. 519.  
107 Wilson, pp. 104-105.  
108 Ibid., p. 110.
attempt to represent (without satire and without sentimentality) the gloomy cross-currents, the half-exposed strata, the ruins and dying roots of that civilization which the Freudians spend their time dissecting and which the Marxists hope to alter.109

Besides the figure of Philomela, the Tiresias figure also represents the plight of the poet who in gaining wisdom and understanding becomes blind and helpless in daily life.110

Eliot's plays reveal the influence of the classics. The Family Reunion is an interpretation of Aeschylus' The Eumenides in which the Furies avenge themselves on an English family because the father and the son both want to get rid of their wives.111 The Elder Statesman also reflects the influence of Greek tragedy, being patterned after Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus.112

After their Imagist periods, Pound and Eliot developed along individual lines, but both continued to dominate contemporary poetry, which may be traced back through the Georgians and the Decadents to the Pre-Raphaelites with a considerable influence of French Decadent and Symbolist poetry. The classical influence is apparent, though the emphasis may be only secondary. Modern poetry, including that of Pound and Eliot, eventually shifts attention from the external to the internal, from criticism of the twentieth century to the exploration of ideas or of levels of consciousness.

109 MacNeice, p. 148.  
110 Highet, p. 515.  
111 Cargill, p. 271.  
112 Spender, p. 252.
forcing the world to become "a menacing evil on the fringe of a universal dream, a transforming ecstasy of love, or a compelling and timeless orthodoxy."  

The revolt against Romanticism initiated a new theory based on the idea that poetry-writing was a deliberate, conscious process, not the result of self-intoxication.  

For this reason, modern poetry takes on the attitude of the classical poets who also recognized that technique, form, and intellectual consciousness was a part of writing poetry. The intellectual process, however, is used to make the past contemporary with the present because the modern poets, such as Pound and Eliot, feel more comfortable in the past than in the present world which they hate. The anxiety about the state is a common anxiety, and much of the poetry which the modern poets turn to is poetry which expresses this anxiety. However, an equal amount of their poetry reveals an attempt to escape; this poetry produces nostalgia for the "classical styles in settled communities with fixed institutions."  

Stephen Spender explores the idea of the modern poets' nostalgia for the past. He believes that the driving force behind the nostalgia is a self-correcting force which demands

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113 Ibid., p. 224.  
114 Ibid., p. 48.  
115 Ibid., p. 46.  
116 Ibid., p. 146.
that the poet constantly seek the truth, which results in a
demonic intensity in the poetry. Nostalgia, too, was also
prevalent in the nineteenth century, especially in the poetry
of the Aesthetes of the 1890's. The nostalgia for the
past, most generally the past of classical Greece or of
Renaissance Italy, plus the hatred of the twentieth century
have provided modern poets with a tradition which counter-
acts the miserable spiritual conditions resulting from the
Industrial Revolution. Whereas the Victorians who felt
the nostalgia for the past attempted to reform the present
to match their vision of Utopia, the twentieth-century
idealists became tired and only asked for escape into the
idyllic classical past because they realized that Utopia could
not be attained in a spiritual desert. Spender explains the
escape into the past as being a unique development:

the Renaissance used to be regarded as a rebirth of the
classical European spirit as the result of the then
recent discovery of masterpieces of classical antiquity.
The modern nostalgia is not so much a rebirth as a burial
of the contemporary world under the heaped-up memories
of the past. The modern nostalgic feels that an
irreparable break has taken place between the past and
the present, in society and in man's soul. The dubious
material gains of progress have been made at the price
of stupendous spiritual loss.

The homesickness for the past led modern poets to attempt a
transformation of techniques, ideas, appearances, and material

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117 Ibid., pp. 212-213. 118 Ibid., p. 209. 119 Ibid.
in order that modern man through the medium of a rejuvenated modern art, resembling the hieratic art of the ancient past, might himself be transformed through the revolutionized appearance of the urban industrial civilization.\textsuperscript{120} The modern world would be made beautiful by technology under the direction of artists. Of course, the beautiful dream was never actualized, and some of the artists, the chief of whom was Pound, turned to totalitarian ideologies, such as Fascism, in hope of obtaining the dream. That, too, proved futile, and the artist was condemned to being a ghost haunting the past but living in an industrialized, fragmented present.\textsuperscript{121}

The nostalgia for past cultures felt by modern poets was directed toward classical Greece and Renaissance Italy. In feeling the kinship with two great artistic civilizations and in feeling the nostalgia of wanting to return to such a civilization in spite of knowing that such a return is impossible, modern poets may seem to lack self-criticism, a fact which Spender explains: "the projection of one's aesthetic self into a time not one's own leads to a dismissive attitude towards one's own time, and therefore to a total disregard of any current standards by which one's own work might be criticized."\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., pp. 206-207. \textsuperscript{121}Ibid., p. 212. \textsuperscript{122}Ibid., p. 221.
Some critics, in spite of the fact that modern poets are enamored of the classical past, insist that the twentieth century is not classical. Thomson states that the classics have rivals in the sciences and the modern languages. Twentieth-century literature, in Thomson's opinion, is definitely anti-classical.\footnote{Thomson, pp. 253-254.} Bush, however, recognizes the isolated artist's longing for Greece, but he also observes that the Greece of the twentieth-century Hellenistic revival is not "the Greece of Aeschylus or Socrates but a romantic mirage."\footnote{Bush, Mythology, p. 532.} In spite of the fact that Hulme, Pound, and Eliot violently opposed Romantic poetry, the "classical" poetry which they encouraged could not escape the influence of Romanticism. The modern Classicist, however, is aware of the long history of art because of a classical education which is not available to all readers or to all poets even, and in his self-appointed task of preserving the tradition he has exiled himself from society because the public generally cannot understand his interest in nor his allusions to the classical past.\footnote{Spender, p. 124.} The poet interested in the past, in the mythology of the various folk-cultures and especially the mythology of Greece, feels frustration when he realizes that the tradition may be lost because of indifference or destroyed because mythology is no longer important to the common man.
The frustration generally turns into bitterness, and the poet, because he felt the historic past, is criticized for being obscure and sometimes is persecuted for his attempts to revivify the ancient past. Among such poets, Ezra Pound is a leader; therefore, the remainder of this study will be an investigation of the classical influences in both Pound's literary theory as expressed in his individual criticism and in several of his major works, The Homage to Sextus Propertius, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, and The Cantos.
CHAPTER III

LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

Ezra Pound is a difficult and controversial writer. In order to understand him, one must first recognize and accept his eclectic nature and realize that he, more than any other poet of the twentieth century, is responsible for the literary movements and thought which have formed modern poetry. He has stated that at fifteen he knew "pretty much what I wanted to do." ¹ Being an adolescent, and apparently a perceptive adolescent, at the turn of the century, Pound was aware of the literary tradition. With the aid of such teachers as William Shepard at Hamilton College, Pound was quickly introduced to classical writers, Provençal troubadours, and French Symbolists. Upon his arrival in London in 1908, he was especially disappointed in the literature of the Georgians, the reason being that he was acutely aware of the great poetry of the past. Being the person that he was, Pound proceeded to "set the critics straight" and to evangelically promote a revolution against the Georgians. T. S. Eliot has said that "Mr. Pound is more responsible for the XXth century revolution in poetry than is any other individual." ²

But Pound did not revolt against poetry only; he found much in twentieth-century culture which needed reform. In an "Envoi" written in 1946, Pound has this to say:

Prince, in this circus of three rings,
Hell, heaven and earth wherein is nothing clear
Void, mix'd and loose up to the stratosphere,
Pity the young who have not known these things. 3

In this poem, as in others, Pound links the twentieth century to past ages. What Pound discovers in the twentieth century is a mechanically and technologically oriented culture which negates the world of the spirit. It is an age when "individuals" should not exist, and Pound, because he is an individual, is "the voice of 'private judgement', lost, and crying out in the twentieth century against a bewildering sea of matter and fact." 4

He saw something of Imperial Rome in the modern world, and several of his early poems, not the least of which are Homage to Sextus Propertius and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, reveal his view of London, the metropolis which was the Home of the early twentieth century. Even the art of poetry suffered from chaos which "will endure until the Art of poetry has been preached down the amateur gullet, until there is such a general understanding of the fact that poetry is an

3Ezra Pound, "Envoi to a ballade unwrit re a past age, i. e., Verlaine's," Quarterly Review of Literature, V (1949), 201.

4Stock, p. xi.
art and not a pastime . . . ."⁵ Pound's century relates
directly to the previous Victorian century and to Confucian
China in that both, too, are societies of prosperous commercial
classes

for whom dishonesty and cheating are almost the worst
possible offences a man may commit. For the Confucian,
as for the Victorian husband of comfortable means, the
sly thief is not a sinner whose act of perfect contrition
may place him among the blessed, but an unmentionable
cad who has polluted the social workings and is best put
out of mind just as soon as the administrative details
can be settled. The Confucian idea of society, like the
best secular ideas of our own time, is one in which a
certain type of social honesty and frankness rank far
above charity and chastity. Charity is tolerable, so
long as it doesn't hurt, and chastity is nobody's
business, so long as it doesn't get into the newspapers;
if it does it becomes an occasion for lust and polite
regret, and perhaps for a certain amount of social
manoeuvering.⁶

In light of these rather depressing facts about society's
materialism and false propriety, Pound developed the idea that
"civilization is individual."⁷ And since civilization is
individual, each individual becomes his own teacher in
discovering the historical scope of the society in which he
lives. Somewhat later in his life, after Pound left London
and was considering moving to Italy, he appeared to be driven
by a restlessness which approached being panic. Charles Norman

⁵Ezra Pound, The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (Norfolk,
⁶Stock, p. 259.
in his biography of Pound speculates on the meaning of the unrest:

Perhaps he was running from something—himself, most probably. There is a hint of frenzy in the Paris records and memoirs, and what does not appear in most of them, in addition to his London repertoire of assorted accents, exclamations in foreign languages, strange cries and catcalls of Anglo-Saxon words which Ford and Aldington almost alone have hinted at. And there were outbursts which literally terrified some of his friends. Perhaps he was running from the accelerating bustle and din of modern life.

In addition to the bustle and din of modern life in post-war London, Pound may have also been escaping from the tag of failure which had been attached to Imagism after Amy Lowell took over, thereby encouraging a type of mediocrity not much better than the Georgian mediocrity which Pound had been combatting; but mediocrity was necessary in Pound's opinion, because "only the mediocrity of a given time can drive the more intelligent men of that time to 'break with tradition'" resulting in a revolt in literature. The problem with the Georgian poets of the first decade of the twentieth century was that they lacked original observation and an honest vocabulary. Pound, seeing their overall failure, proceeded to promote the kind of writing that would supply this lack. In 1912, Pound, with Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington, outlined the three principles of the Imagist movement:

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1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.  

The movement was christened "Imagism," and the poets following the doctrines, whether closely or rather loosely, were called "imagists." Pound, their acknowledged leader, defined "image" for them:

An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term "complex" rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart, though we might not agree absolutely in our application.

It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the pressure of the greatest works of art.  

However, Pound as leader of the Imagists was indebted to T. E. Hulme, whose poetic theories, along with F. S. Flint's theories concerning French Symbolists, are almost indistinguishable from Pound's.  

Hulme thought that twentieth-century man was entering a new Classical age, that man was ceasing to think of himself and of his possibilities as being infinite, and that man was learning to understand his finiteness and limitation through art and philosophy, the art being clear.

10Pound, Make It New, p. 335.  
11Ibid., p. 336.  
12A. R. Jones, "Notes Toward a History of Imagism: An Examination of Literary Sources," South Atlantic Quarterly, LX (Summer, 1961), 282.
precise, and descriptive. Likewise, Pound related the modern skeptical age to that of Apuleius: "The sceptical age hungers after the definite, after something it can pretend to believe." Whereas Apuleius saw miracles and the humanization of the gods, Pound saw mechanical inventions and the decline of Christianity. Therefore, Pound thought that modern poets must find the precise object to point to in order to conjure up some universal meaning which had not been known before. The object considered, however, is not ugly since "there is no violence, sin, or crime in the world of the Imagists—just the sharp edge of loveliness, longing, and the gentle pain of breathing." When, in 1918, Pound became Ernest Fenollosa's literary executor at the request of Mrs. Fenollosa, Pound became aware of the importance of the image in Chinese poetry. The image functions as a metaphor. As Fenollosa says, "Metaphor, the revealer of nature, is the very substance of poetry. The known interprets the obscure, the universe is alive with myth," and the metaphors pile up in a language like geological strata.


is the chief device of poetry, poetry is more concrete than prose, "poetry only does consciously what primitive races did unconsciously." In the choice of metaphors and objects, the poet must be aware of the harmony produced in the juxtaposition of objects resulting in a delicately harmonic blending.

With the development of Imagism came an increased concern for technique, a discipline in an art form which opposed the chaos which had been the result of ineptitude and laziness in the Georgians. However, Pound was not content with technique alone. He knew that a change was necessary; yet what he offered, Imagism, was not the full answer, and when the movement was debased by poetasters such as Amy Lowell, Pound, realizing that a change in form and technique was not sufficient, denounced Imagism. What Pound had done was to break the hold of the Tennysonian-Georgian poets in order that a more substantial and definitely modern poetry might be written. The Imagists succeeded in reforming technique, but they failed in not discovering an important theme. In a comparison, Imagist poetry is not necessarily superior to Georgian poetry because of the lack of intellectual and philosophic themes; the Imagists present only what may be perceived through the senses, and certainly the senses do not

17 Ibid. 18 Pack, p. 254.
constitute all of the human experience. Regardless of the failure which the Imagists suffered, Pound had made it clear that poetry must change from the Georgian style. He thought, for a while, that the change would be to Imagism, but after even the leader became discontented with the movement, the Imagists disappeared.

The outgrowth of Imagism, for Pound, was Vorticism, a movement which he organized with the help of a French sculptor, Gaudier-Brzeska, and an English painter, Wyndham Lewis. The Vorticists sought to unite all arts under one aesthetic theory, but even this idealistic movement failed to establish the necessary theory for the arts. Out of the failures of Imagism and Vorticism, however, came influences which in themselves affected Pound—the influences of Chinese ideograms, sculpture, painting, and music. After his associations in artistic movements, Pound finally discovered what he meant when he declared that civilization was individual, for he was not ever again a member of a "chartered" group of artists. To be sure, he had many followers, but he never again set out to establish a movement for the salvation of the arts; instead, he proceeded as an individual seeking to influence individuals through his writings, conversations with other artists, and innumerable letters to his followers and friends. As a revolutionary, Pound attacked "the idolatry of a great artist by unintelligent critics, and his imitation by
uninspired practitioners." In the process, however, Pound himself was idolized and attacked.

In the role of individual artist and teacher communicating to other artists and those curious about art, Pound turned to criticism. He had already published *The Spirit of Romance*, a collection of original criticism on the Greek classicists, Provençal troubadours, Dante, Spanish dramatists, and French Symbolists. With *Make It New, Culture*, and those essays which T. S. Eliot collected in *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, Pound made clear his literary principles, and he sought zealously to convert others to his cause, just as he sought diligently to find publishers for those artists who, he thought, deserved recognition, artists such as T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and James Joyce. Eliot relates the fact that every change Pound promoted always struck him as being of instant urgency. This is not only the temperament of the teacher: it represents also, with Pound, a passionate desire, not merely to write well himself, but to live in a period in which he could be surrounded by equally intelligent and creative minds.20

Pound himself was aware of his role as teacher-critic. He never apologized for his skeptical view of the American educational system, and perhaps he was justified in light of his experiences at Wabash College. Speaking always as one...

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American discussing a common problem with other Americans, Pound complained, that what he found faulty in the system did not result from what the system had done to him, but that the system did not accept the responsibility of preparing the student for living in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{21} Pound's sympathy is with the student, and the blame for the miserable situation is pinpointed in the college president. Teachers, too, rarely accept the responsibility for making ideas live, and they also fail to help students understand the process now going on . . . enveloping . . . an individual in a social order, and quite unlikely to be very "new" in themselves however fresh or stale to the participant. . . . An education consists in "getting wise" in the rawest and hardest boiled sense of that bit of argot.\textsuperscript{22}

Colleges fail to educate the student, and, therefore, the colleges reject their responsibility to their nation, since "the function of the teaching profession is to maintain the HEALTH OF THE NATIONAL MIND."\textsuperscript{23} And teachers neglect their responsibility of first examining their own consciences in order to perceive truth, to reject laziness and prejudice, to demand the facts, to acquire and transmit knowledge which extend from a direct confrontation with the material, and to

\textsuperscript{21}Pound, \textit{Literary Essays}, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{22}Ezra Pound, \textit{Culture} (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1938), pp. 51-52.

\textsuperscript{23}Pound, \textit{Literary Essays}, p. 59.
combat the stultifying system; above all, the teacher should be curious and encourage curiosity in his students.  

In Pound's opinion, the critic is a teacher, a specialist in teaching literature, and, for critics, there are added requirements, namely that the critic must refine his sense of nature and artifice and develop a native passion for beauty. The critic may not arrest his own education nor the development of his mind; instead, he must assume his role as Odysseus journeying through the literary experience. In order to fulfill these requirements, the critic must never be content but continuously search for perfection, a perfection, according to Pound, which cannot be discovered in one language only. In spite of Pound's definite emphasis on the scholarship of the critic, he is willing to admit that the poet may not necessarily be aided by the scholarly pursuit:

of course, no amount of scholarship will help a man write poetry, it may even be regarded as a great burden and hindrance, but it does help him destroy a certain percentage of his failures. It keeps him discontented with mediocrity.

Pound, the poet, but especially the critic, sought to make his native language a polyglot of at least nine foreign languages, because he was not satisfied with the limitations of English.

As a critic, Pound is definitely an original scholar. He will have little to do with Aristotle, preferring instead that each critic approach each work in a new and personal encounter. Eliot has been quoted as saying that the twentieth century will be known as "The Age of Ezra Pound," and he also directs young poets to Pound's critical writings as being profitable study. In his introduction to Pound's *Literary Essays*, Eliot states that the collection will show (1) that Pound has said much about the art of writing poetry in particular, that is permanently valid and useful. Very few critics have done that. It will show (2) that he said much that was peculiarly pertinent to the needs of the time at which it was written; (3) that he forced upon our attention not only individual authors, but whole areas of poetry, which no future criticism can afford to ignore. And finally (what will matter less to him than any of the foregoing achievements) that he has shown a more immediate and generous appreciation of authors whose work one would not expect him to find sympathetic, than is generally known.  

Pound's criticism is forceful, as his personality is forceful in its witiveness, eclecticism, erudition, and self-confidence. He is, however, not the maverick he would lead people to believe he was, since Swinburne, Anatole France, and others also believed that criticism was not art nor science but the adventure of the soul among literary works.  

Even as a critic, Pound is playing his role as Ulysses.

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28 Feldman, p. 231.
Some critics have accused Pound of being interested only in the craft of writing and not in the philosophy of execution nor the theme embodied in the writing.\textsuperscript{29} However, Pound did prod English poetry out of the stagnation he found in London. Pound also accepted his role in "the correction of taste" in his evangelical promotion of Dante, Homer, Villon, and Propertius. Pound respected "the tradition," and it was not merely a good writing tradition; subject matter was involved, too. But, since Pound was rather bohemian, his objectionable personality blinded some critics who were apparently deafened too, thereby only hearing part of the message. Nevertheless, some critics who reacted adversely toward Pound were willing to accept his good suggestions. Pound opened up for those critics, as he revealed to other readers, areas which, though present before, had never been examined, areas such as French and American prose fiction and people such as Stendhal and James. He drew attention to the Symboliste poets of the late nineteenth century, and he broke down the time barriers so that the works of Homer, Catullus, Propertius, Ovid, Dante, Arnaut Daniel and other troubadours, along with Villon, could be examined as modern works were being examined. Pound, indeed, was the innovator of much of modern literary criticism. He sought to rejuvenate writing by examining the past masterpieces as new models and by ignoring conventional categories.

\textsuperscript{29} Pack, p. 263.
His view of history and traditional literature contrasted sharply with the critics of his age because he did examine the specific work in his criticism. For him, past literature was the literature of the present, not material for an exercise in philology.

Pound's critical theory, however, is not systematic, and one might easily become discouraged in trying to discover what Pound really did say. He frequently is abstruse, especially in his discussions of the relationship of poetry and music. He is generally dogmatic, and at times, when he discusses music and economics, his facts and information are wrong. Nevertheless, Pound did contribute greatly to modern criticism in his insistence on the "unsentimental" education of the critic. His most important contribution, perhaps, is his demanding that critics look at the specific works, an idea which has greatly influenced subsequent critics, especially the New Critics; the thought, in essence, is comparable to the insistence of modern science that scientists rely on observation through experimentation. The importance of Pound's criticism lies in its correcting the misinformed. As Eliot says in his "Introduction" to the Literary Essays:

30 Feldman, p. 234.

31 The correlation between poetry and science perhaps occurred to Pound as he worked with Fenollosa's notes; vide Fenollosa, p. 28, "Poetry agrees with science and not logic."
Much of the permanence of Mr. Pound's criticism is due simply to his having seen so clearly what needed to be said at a particular time; his occupation with his own moment and its needs has led him to say many things which are of permanent value, but the value of which may not be immediately appreciated by later readers who lack the sense of historical situation.

For Pound, the critic was an individual who must say what he thinks in order to focus the reader's gaze at a work of art. Never forgetting the fact that each reader is or should be a critic in his own right, Pound, in various places, delineates the role and function of the critic. The critic, in general, is boring, and he is many times a nuisance, as indeed, many considered Pound. However, Pound warns readers to "pay no attention to the criticism of men who have never themselves written a notable work." The critic must have a groundwork of moral training through studying both Oriental and Western writings, by which he will develop a moral passion for beauty and art. The critic's most important task is that of publicizing art and attracting an audience for good artists. Not only is the critic a publicity agent, but also a competent interpreter of literature. The critic's first duty is to classify a work in a historical perspective, determining if the work is that of a past age, that of the present, or a revolutionary work foreshadowing the future. The critic is enabled to make his decisions because of his

33 Pound, Make It New, p. 337.
intensive study of masterpieces of all ages, his tools for his examination being, of course, languages. In Pound's opinion, the greatest evil a critic may commit is the refusal to assert himself since the critic is not bound to being objective; indeed, criticism is a highly subjective procedure. Pound urges critics "to become showmen, advertisers, even at the risk of vulgarity," but the problem is that the critic is in danger of simply gurgling with glee over a work which he likes, by no means an example of valid criticism.  

Besides being a publicity agent, certainly not a very exalted function, the critic is a prophet predicting new modes of composition. The artist, of course, if he is a master artist, will be aware of the trends of art and will be, too, a prophet of sorts. The critic is not only prophet but also the guardian of literature insuring that good literature is encouraged. The critic understands other cultures, a function made easier by the critic's knowledge of foreign languages, the result being a unity with the rest of mankind.  

The conscientious critic punishes or publicly condemns the wicked artist, that is, the artist who lies; however, at times it is difficult to discover what Pound 

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34 Feldman, p. 232.

35 Pound's own unity was marred by his prejudices, especially those prejudices which were a result of his hatred of usury.
considers to be truth and what falsehood.\textsuperscript{36} The critic, however, should not necessarily be an armchair psychologist. Also, the critic should not be afraid of the ugliness which may appear in literature. Above all, the critic should maintain a sense of proportion and perspective.\textsuperscript{37} His belief that art does not exist in a vacuum led Pound to deviate from his role as textual critic and artist, stating that students of criticism should study economics and history, since in order to understand the arts, the critic must understand the culture producing them. Connected with the subject of economics is Pound's preaching for the relief of poverty-stricken artists through public means, i.e., the government. Regardless of the fact that Pound became enamored with economics in his criticism as he did in his poetry, he made significant contributions to criticism. He failed to win the literary world to his way of thinking in many instances, but in spite of his own abstruse and at times slovenly critical dicta, he did make an impact on twentieth-century criticism.

One of Pound's critical tenets was a militant aversion to rhetoric since he thought it to be "the substitution of sentiment for observation."\textsuperscript{38} If a critic, or for that matter

\textsuperscript{36}Feldman, p. 243.  \textsuperscript{37}Jones, "Notes," p. 274.  
\textsuperscript{38}Pack, p. 254.
a reader, could not observe and, therefore, could not understand fully, Pound suggested that he leave the work alone in order not to mislead someone else. Through his own unique observation, Pound suggests that criticism may be divided into five categories: discussion, translation, parody, music, or new composition.  

"The function of criticism is to efface itself when it has established its dissociations." Criticism should also serve as a gun-sight for artists and, through the process of what Pound labelled "excrernent," should order and weed out what artists have already produced so that repetitions might be eliminated in order that future generations might not waste time in performing obsolete tasks.  

Feldman finds in the principle of excernent a definite impressionistic dogma, and he also believes that "in the first analysis the canon of 'excrernent' reveals itself as a venture of individual caprice to become universal principle, the attempt of an anarch to impose order, order without law." Excrernent takes on the characteristics of the theory of evolution in that artistic selection, like natural selection, is advocated. However, Pound does not pursue the idea of excernent beyond his mentioning the word and defining it in Make It New.

Pound's own method of

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39 Pound, Make It New, p. 3.  
40 Ibid., p. 11.  
41 Ibid., p. 5.  
42 Feldman, pp. 231, 229.
critical analysis as revealed through his individual criticism perhaps embodies what he attempts to advise. First, he briefly reviews the principal characters and action; secondly, he quotes from the work, and, thirdly, he interprets, raises questions, and estimates the artist's method and the content of the work. The process quite obviously is closely connected with the work itself and is not reliant on outside sources. Pound's chief contribution to criticism may well be this act of liberating the work and forcing the critic to deal solely with the work of art itself.

Pound's critical ability enabled him to construct unity, order, and beauty from the chaos which existed in his life. This ability, however, helped him in his discussions of art also, and although Pound stated that he did not think criticism to be his chief function, the greater amount of his prose is concerned with aesthetic theory. In Pound's theory of art, one art form interprets another, and the origin of all the great arts is in the ancients.\(^4\) Again, in the field of artistic theory, Pound's eclecticism is revealed. Art for Pound is an extremely individualistic process, and is, therefore, a type of anarchy.\(^5\) Art also "never asks anybody to do anything, or to think anything, or to be anything. It exists as the trees exist, you can admire, you can sit in the shade,

\(^{5}\) Feldman, p. 229.
you can pick bananas, you can cut firewood, you can do as you
jolly well please."\(^{45}\) Art is beyond the reach of both science
and history in the expression either of vital ecstasy or
tedious obsolescence.\(^{46}\) Art traditionally deals with beauty,
and beauty, for Pound, is that which "reminds one what is
worth while. . . . You don't argue about an April morning,
you feel bucked up when you meet it. You feel bucked up when
you come on a swift moving thought in Plato or on a fine line
in a statue."\(^{47}\) For Pound, however, ugliness does have its
place in art. Ugliness is referred to as the diagnosis in
art, whereas beauty is the hygienic cure. Satire, in his
scheme, may be compared to surgery.\(^{48}\) In Pound's opinion art
is suspended between chaos and what he calls mechanics, both
of which are wrong since one disrupts all order and the other
restricts the progress of order.\(^{49}\) "The spirit of the arts
is dynamic. The arts are not passive, nor static, nor, in a
sense, are they reflective, though reflection may assist at
their birth."\(^{50}\) Art is necessary for those whose lives have
no design and no articulation; in such a situation, only art
can pinpoint the relationship of the irrational elements


\(^{47}\) Pound, *Literary Essays*, p. 45.  \(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) There may be a contradiction here, since Pound does not
reconcile his hatred of mechanics and his demand for technique.

\(^{50}\) Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 222.
of life.\textsuperscript{51} And good art can never be immoral if it is truthful and precise, whereas bad art, that which lies, can never be anything but immoral.\textsuperscript{52} Art's function is that of relating the truth about life and man to man.

The great artist in Pound's opinion is not made, but is. However, the potentially great artist may choose to develop himself into a good artist, or a flawless artist. As Pound has said, "Artists are the antena of the race, . . . it is the business of the artist to make humanity aware of itself . . . ."\textsuperscript{53} The artist, therefore, need not necessarily teach or delight, only move his audience to greater understanding. The bad artist, Pound believes, should be condemned as negligent physicians or inaccurate scientists are condemned. Because Pound himself was a poet, his comments concerning the artist generally refer to the poet. In light of the fact that the artist should move man to understanding himself, the poet should accept the responsibility of being the interpreter of the times summarizing that part of the historical tradition, no matter how obscure, which enlightens the contemporary situation. The poet is a discoverer "either of life itself or of the means of expression."\textsuperscript{54} Through the function of the discoverer, a more general role of interpreting the meaning

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 218. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{52}Pound, \textit{Literary Essays}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{53}Pound, \textit{Make It New}, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{54}Pound, \textit{Literary Essays}, p. 56.
of life or a more specialized role of experimenting with means of communication may be taken on by the poet. Whether the poet chooses to be an interpreter or an experimenter (and Pound himself was both), the poet "should master all known forms and systems of metric."\(^5\) Pound's demands that the poet be quite familiar with metrics pose a stringent standard for determining which poets are great poets. The process requires discipline, labor, and adjustment, especially as the poet matures. As Pound remarks,

> It is true that most people poetize more or less, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. The emotions are new, and to their possessor, interesting, and there is not much mind or personality to be moved. As the man, as his mind, becomes a heavier and heavier machine, a constantly more complicated structure, it requires a constantly greater voltage of emotional energy to set it in harmonious motion. It is certain that the emotions increase in vigour as a vigorous man matures. In the case of Guido Cavalcanti we have his strongest work at fifty. Most important poetry has been written by men over thirty.\(^56\)

In the long run, the continuation of the emotional nature typical of late adolescence and early adulthood is what "makes the poet," but discipline, or control, must also be part of that emotional nature.\(^57\) Poetic geniuses also discover and express what they emotionally experience. Pound classifies poets as inventors, masters, diluters, good poets of a good style, belles-lettistes, and starters of crazes.\(^58\) The quality

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\(^5\)Ibid., p. 9.  
\(^56\)Ibid., p. 52.  
\(^57\)Ibid.  
\(^58\)Ibid., pp. 23-24.
of the artist's work is of less value as the artist is classed lower on the classification scale. The real art of writing poetry, not the popularized process, is a task for masters and inventors. Great poets are either masters or inventors depending on their particular ability. Master poets, however, are those great poets who "seldom make bricks without straw; they pile up all the excellences they can beg, borrow, or steal from their predecessors and contemporaries, and then set their own inimitable light atop of the mountain." The reward for the true poet is that, as the true record, he is enabled to "heave him out of himself, out of his personal limitations, out of the tangles of heredity and environment, out of the bias of early training, of early predilections."

Because of inept poets, Pound believed that the twentieth-century poetry which he found in London was chaotic and that the problem could only be solved by a knowledge of technique both, as he says, on the surface and in content. Paradoxically, it is only through the strict adherence to technique that the freedom, the ecstasy of the poetic expression is achieved. The poetic expression is the record of life as it is. Pound declares that "poetry is about as much a 'criticism of life' as a red-hot iron is a criticism

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60 Pound, Make It New, p. 257.
61 Pound, Literary Essays, p. 10.
of fire.\textsuperscript{62} Since poetry in essence is truth, it answers that undefinable desire which all people experience just as the Eleusinians' needs were answered by the mysteries. Poetry, like the mysteries, should not be spoken of except among the initiated. Poetry is like the mysteries which \textit{can} not be revealed. Fools can only profane them. The dull can neither penetrate the secretum nor divulge it to others.\textsuperscript{63} The greatest poetry besides being unfathomable to outsiders also cannot be classified as "Classic" or "Romantic" or "Elizabethan." Instead, the greatest poetry has in common certain qualities which transcend the restricting classification.\textsuperscript{64} Since the function of art is to create ecstasy, "the finer the quality of this ecstasy, the finer the art; only secondary art relies on its pleasantness."\textsuperscript{65} The greatest art is the result of exceptional talent which also is fortunate, the result being, in actuality, a miracle.\textsuperscript{66} Great poetry is the best of good poetry, and one of the requirements for good poetry is originality in expression. Generally, the originality of expression is more likely after a great age of translation since there are wider ranges of experience for the poet to draw from. A poet may benefit from this extension of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{62} Pound, \textit{The Spirit of Romance}, p. 222.
\bibitem{63} Pound, \textit{Culture}, pp. 144-145.
\bibitem{64} Pound, \textit{The Spirit of Romance}, p. 13.
\bibitem{65} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 82.
\bibitem{66} Pound, \textit{Literary Essays}, p. 56.
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his poetic experience, but the mastery of art will demand a lifetime of work. Because of the short cuts afforded succeeding poets, the experimenters, like experimenters in science, should record their findings.

It is tremendously important that great poetry be written, it makes no jot of difference who writes it. The experimental demonstrations of one man may save the time of many—hence my furore over Arnaut Daniel— if a man's experiments try out one new rime, or dispense conclusively with one iota of currently accepted nonsense, he is merely playing fair with his colleagues when he chalks up his result.  

In an article entitled "Credo" written in 1918, Pound states that he believes that rhythm must be employed in order to enhance or make clearer the emotion which the poet wishes to achieve. The rhythm should be interpretative and original, so original in fact, that the rhythm may not be copied by another artist. In Pound's opinion, the Fioretti of St. Francis of Assisi fulfills the requirements excellently. Pound believes that the best symbol a poet may use is the natural object and that technique is "the test of a man's sincerity." He also believes that form may be solid like a tree or fluid like water depending upon the purpose of the poet. Technique, the execution of what one proposes to do in the most efficient manner, and style, the subjugation of details to the artist's will, are also important to the poet's purpose. Poetry at a height of rhythmic and metrical

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Ibid., p. 10. 
Ibid., p. 9. 
Ibid.
brilliance is closely related to music. In fact, poetry is a composition of words set to music, and poetry dies out when the music to which it is set is eliminated. The music, however, should enhance or make plainer the meaning of the words, not distort them. Poetry, likewise, may be likened to inspired mathematics which gives the equation for human emotion. For a less scientific mind, poetry is like a magic spell. Poetry may also be a centaur since "the thinking word-arranging clarifying faculty must move and leap with the energizing, sentient, musical faculties." Nevertheless, Pound always returns to the fact that the musical phrase is the key to poetry since music develops the ear and a sense of timing. The influence of the musical phrase rids poetry of terms such as "trochaic" and "iambic" (although Pound could use them well) since the terms are inadequate "when applied to syllabic metres set to a particular melody." For Pound, prosody may be defined as "the articulation of the total sound of the poem." What Pound is combatting in his redefinitions of traditional literary terms and by his emphasis on the musical phrase is the heavy swat on alternate syllables. The length of silence between the "swats" is

70 Ibid., p. 437.  
71 Ibid., p. 52.  
72 Pound, Make It New, p. 56.  
73 Pound, Literary Essays, footnote #1, p. 421.  
74 Ibid., p. 72.
as important as is the "swat." In spite of his rather liberal attitude toward meter, Pound, in essays written before his greatest encounters with music, is definitely opposed to vers libre.

I think one should write vers libre only when one "must," that is to say, only when the "thing" builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the "thing," more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents one with iambic or set anapaestic.75

However, he is more lenient in a subsequent essay written after his encounter with George Antheil and the music of Stravinsky and Schönberg.

No one is so foolish as to suppose that a musician using "four-four" time is compelled to use always four quarter notes in each bar, or in "seven-eights" time to use seven eighth notes uniformly in each bar. He may use one 1/2, one 1/4 and one 1/8 rest, or any such combination as he may happen to choose or find fitting. To apply this musical truism to verse is to employ vers libre.76

In classifying poetry, Pound first was influenced by Richard of St. Victor, who delineated three modes of thought: cogitatio, meditatio, and contemplatio. Cogitatio, cogitation, is the aimless flitting of the mind around the idea; meditatio, meditation, is the circling about the idea methodically; and contemplatio, contemplation, is the unification with the idea.77

From this scheme Pound evolved the three kinds of poetry:

75Ibid., p. 12.  
76Ibid., p. 93.  
77Pound, Culture, p. 77.
Melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia. Melopoeia deals with the musical sound of poetry, whereas phanopoeia is the casting of a visual image on the imagination. Logopoeia, however, is not directly related to the senses since it is "the dance of the intellect among words," essentially the Odysseus-like adventures of the intellect among thoughts. Melopoeia does not necessarily rely on the transmission of meaning for its effect; for instance, a person with a sensitive ear might well appreciate the sound or music of the language which is being sung, chanted, or spoken and not be able to understand the meaning at all; because melopoeia deals with sound patterns, it is almost impossible to translate. Phanopoeia, on the other hand, is easily translated since it deals mainly with concrete objects; however, great care must be exercised in order to achieve the precise effect by using the exact word. Logopoeia, like melopoeia, does not translate, although paraphrasing may be possible. Any attempt to translate logopoeia usually requires that the translator discover derivative or equivalent expressions of the original. Pound, of course, relies on logopoeia in such poems as Homage to Sextus Propertius.

Pound never ceases demanding economy in literary expression. Although he does not give definite rules or

Pound, Literary Essays, p. 25.
examples for detecting words which are not relevant to the work, he urges writers to study the classics in order to develop the instinct for literary parsimony. Nevertheless, Pound suggests that man desires to communicate to his fellow men in increasingly complicated means. Gesture, symbols, and speech all serve as progressively abstract means of communication. "Gradually you wish to communicate something less bare and ambiguous than ideas. You wish to communicate an idea and its modifications, an idea and a crowd of its effects, atmospheres, contradictions." Combining the two concepts of parsimony and maximum communication, Pound evolves, influenced by Fenollosa, the ideogrammic method by which the accumulated meanings, effects, atmospheres, and contradictions are inherent in the symbol. Fenollosa comments about the Chinese ideogram.

> Chinese etymology is constantly visible. It retains the creative impulse and process, visible and at work. After thousands of years the lines of metaphoric advance are still shown, and in many cases actually retained in the meaning. . . . Metaphor was piled upon metaphor in quasi-geological strata.

Gradually Pound learned more of the ideogrammic method, and by the time he wrote Canto LX and those cantos following, he was incorporating the method in his own poetry. In the delineation

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79 Feldman, p. 236.

80 Pound, Literary Essays, p. 51.

81 Fenollosa, pp. 25, 23.
of the three kinds of poetry and in the recognition of the ideogrammic method lie Pound's greatest contributions to aesthetic theory.

Pound relates in *A B C of Reading* an anecdote concerning one of his friends, Basil Bunting, who, when looking through a German-Italian dictionary, discovered that the German verb "dichten" is equal to the Italian verb "condensare." The idea that poetry is concentration apparently is as old as the German language since the verb "dichten" corresponds to the noun "Dichtung," poetry. The Italian verb, of course, means "to condense." From this experience, Pound evolves the idea that "poetry . . . is the most concentrated form of verbal expression."82 Of course, the idea is not new, as Pound proceeds to inform the reader. He cites the fact that Pisistratus found the Homeric texts in disorder and had them arranged in order, that the Bible is a compendium made solid by being trimmed down, that a Japanese emperor found that there were too many Nō plays which he limited to 450 through careful choice, that both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are compendiums also. Besides being compact, poetry, like all great literature, is "language charged with meaning" to the greatest possible extent.83 Good writers are

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obligated to keep the language efficient, accurate and clear
in the process of charging language with meaning. One may
charge the language in three ways: by using the meaning of
the language as it has developed in history, by making use of
**phanopoeia**, **melopoeia**, and **lozopoeia**, and by using the word
in a special relation to usage.\(^{34}\)

The student of literature, Pound advises, should always
read the oldest poem of a specific kind. Generally, for
western literature, the oldest poem may be found, as are the
prototypes of all arts, in the ancients. This return to
origins is invigorating

because it is a return to nature and reason, The man
who returns to origins does so because he wishes to
behave in the eternally sensible manner. That is to
say, naturally, reasonably, intuitively. He does not
wish to do the right thing in the wrong place . . . .\(^{85}\)
He wishes not pedagogy but harmony, the fitting thing.

Modern man, however, is hampered in his return to origins
because the classics, especially Greek, are not taught well.
As Pound said in 1918, "the classics have more and more
become a baton exclusively for the cudgelling of schoolboys,
and less and less a diversion of the mature."\(^{86}\) Pound, in a
characteristic gesture, sets out to correct the situation by
making a reading list of books which he re-reads. The entries

\(^{34}\)Ibid., pp. 36-37.


are frequently obscure, but always interesting and good. Also one need not be stopped from reading the selections because of a language barrier, since Pound recommends that translations are better than not reading the material at all; he even suggests the translations of the classics which he has found to be particularly good. Notable omissions are Shakespeare, to whom Pound is apathetic, and Milton, for whom Pound has an intense hatred. Pound gives credit to those who were what he calls the "conservators" of the classics, namely, Cassiodorus, Benedict, St. Columba, and Alcuin, and the early printers who "fought the long fight in the dark," Aldus, Estienne, Froben of Basel, Plantin, Elzevir of Leyden, the Kobergers, and Caxton.87 The reading list includes Homer, Sappho, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, the Provençal troubadours, the German Minnesingers, Bion (whom he classifies with the medieval poets), Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Villon, Voltaire, Stendhal, Flaubert, the Goncourts, Gautier, Corbière, and Rimbaud, and, of course, Confucius.88 In perusing these authors Pound began to recognize the veiled splendor which had been hidden for centuries in some cases or never recognized in others. Within the time span of the list are two great lyric traditions: the Melic and the Provençal. "From the first arose practically

88 Pound, Literary Essays, p. 38.
all the poetry of the 'ancient world,' from the second practically all of the modern."\(^{89}\)

A classic is a classic because of a "certain eternal and irrepressible freshness" and because it concerns normal things and normal people.\(^{90}\) The first of the great classics was written by Homer, and, as Pound says, the news in the *Odyssey* is still news. Pound says further,

*Odyssey* is still "very human," by no means a stuffed shirt, or a pretty figure taken down from a tapestry. It is very hard to describe some of the homeric conversation, the irony, etc., without neologisms. ... You can't tuck Odysseus away with Virgil's Aeneas. Odysseus is emphatically "the wise guy," the downy, the hard-boiled Odysseus. His companions have most of them something that must be the Greek equivalent of shell-shock. And the language of the conversations is just as alive as when one of Edgar Wallace's characters says, "We have lost a client."\(^{91}\)

Indeed, Pound believes that the authentic cadence of the speech is untranslatable.\(^{92}\) Of the Greeks, Homer and Sappho are inventors. Even the dramatists of the Golden Age rely heavily on their audiences' knowledge of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Although Pound believes that there are defects in Greek drama,\(^{93}\) he also believes that "the triumph of total meaning over detail is nowhere so demonstrable as in the common phrases 'greek /sic/ tragedy' or 'greek /sic/ drama.'

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\(^{91}\) *Ibid.*, p. 44.  
\(^{93}\) Pound, *A B C of Reading*, p. 46.
Those phrases carry a definite and freighted meaning to every literate auditor."

Because much of the meaning of drama depends on the movement of the actor, to consider only the words of, for instance, the Agamemnon of Aeschylus is unfair. In spite of what Pound calls rhetoric in Aeschylus, there is magnificence in the incomparable "beacon telegraph stuff."

Like other arts, Greek poetry decayed. Also, Pound is critical of the Greek philosophers.

You may with almost complete justice assert that greek thought is utterly irresponsible. It is at no point impregnated with a feeling for the whole people. It was mainly highbrow discussion of ideas among small groups of consciously superior persons, Curzons, etc. who felt themselves above the rest of society.  

Pound accuses Aristotle of being a dilettante, but he commends Plato for his ability to stir men to "a sort of enthusiasm productive of action."

In a comparison of Roman and Greek poets, the Romans and the Greeks are equal with the exception of Homer, whom Pound believes to be the greatest poet of the ancients, and, therefore, a figure to contend with in any literary age. Catullus, however, is not inferior to Sappho, nor is Propertius inferior to any of the Greeks. Ovid gave the world a vast amount of information which cannot be found in the Greeks. Pound apparently is impressed with Ovid, for he comments on

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94 Pound, Culture, p. 92.
95 Ibid., pp. 29-30.
96 Ibid., p. 347.
him frequently. He considers Ovid's poetry to be "as lucid as prose," although uneven at times. In metrics, he cannot equal Catullus or Propertius. In comparing Homer and Ovid, Pound states that

Homer is a little rustic, a little, perhaps a good deal, medieval, he has not the dovetailing of Ovid. He has onomatopoeia, as of poetry sung out; he has authenticity of conversation as would be demanded by an intelligent audience not yet laminated with aesthetics, capable of recognizing reality. He has the repetitions of the chanson de geste.

Ovid, though, is described as being "one of the most interesting of all enigmas. Indeed, he added and invented much that is not in Greek. The Roman inventors added sophistication to literature, and Catullus, Ovid, and Propertius are the ones Pound looks to in order to study the growth of sophistication. Horace is "the perfect example of a man who acquired all that is acquirable, without having the root." Pound does not discuss Pindar or Virgil as inventors. He does not propose that the student of literature interested in the charging of words read all the poetry of any one inventor; instead, he asks that the student read in order to discover the personal methods each inventor uses to charge the language.

97 Pound, A B C of Reading, p. 48.
98 Pound, Make It New, p. 132.
99 Pound, Culture, p. 272.
100 Pound, Literary Essays, p. 28.
From his study of Greek and Roman literature, Pound came to believe that the two great cultures were civilized by language. The greatness of a civilization is reflected in the writing. As Pound declares, "Rome rose with the idiom of Caesar, Ovid, and Tacitus, she declined in a welter of rhetoric, the diplomat's 'language to conceal thought,' and so forth." Repeatedly, Pound states that literature, the charged language, does not exist in a vacuum. Writers, especially great writers, must fulfill their social as well as their artistic functions, their social function being to keep the language efficient, accurate, and clear. If, however, the artist rejects his social obligation and if the literature and the use of language decline, the nation atrophies and decays. As the nation becomes accustomed to inaccurate, obscure, inefficient writing, the people lose grip of themselves and their empire. In essence, the people including the writers lose the ability to judge accurately because their senses are dulled.

The Roman empire fell, but the Latin language continued in medieval literature. The medieval inventors, in Pound's opinion, are the authors of the Anglo-Saxon Seafarer and Beowulf, the Spanish Poema del Cid, the sagas of Grettir and Burnt Njal, the songs of the troubadours and minnesingers.

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101 Pound, A R G of Reading, p. 33.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 32.
104 Ibid., p. 34.
(especially those of Von Morungen, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Walther von der Vogelweide), and Bion's *Death of Adonis*, which Pound insists is medieval.\(^{105}\) Of the medieval inventors, Pound is greatly interested in the troubadours because of their combination of literature and music in their songs; he is particularly fascinated by the restraints placed on the poetry as a result of the tune, the rhyme-scheme, and the use of nature as a background for action.\(^{106}\) The Italian inventors are Guido Cavalcanti and, of course, Dante. As Pound believes, "in Italy, around the year of 1300, there were new values established, things said that had not been said in Greece, or in Rome or elsewhere."\(^{107}\) Although both the troubadours and the Italians were concerned with combining poetry and music, the methods and the results are different. Behind the troubadour songs is a rather simple romanticism; however, behind the Italian canzoni is the rather intricate love code. The songs of the troubadours are popular lyric poetry in a simple, rustic state; they reveal the prevailing opinion of their age that a song should be not only intelligible but singable. Eventually songs like those of the troubadours fade into an indistinguishable similarity. Dante's canzoni are rituals, similar to the high mass, and one must approach

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\(^{105}\) Pound, *Literary Essays*, p. 28.


them as ritual in their purpose and effect. In comparison to
the simpler songs, the canzoni are subtler and contain layers
of meaning revealed only as one becomes expert in approaching
them. 108

Villon is another of the great inventors; he lived in
fifteenth-century Paris, and his poems were written in a
rather troubadour-like style; however, the sordid squalor of
the subject-matter distinguishes his poetry from that which
preceded him. For several centuries after Villon poetry
degenerated into efflorescence or floritura without new
innovation. If any innovation took place, it took place in
Italy since

beginning with the Italians after Dante, coming through
the Latin writers of the Renaissance, French, Spanish,
English, Tasso, Ariosto, etc., the Italians always a
little in the lead, the whole is elaboration, medieval
basis, and wash after wash of Roman or Hellenic
influence. I mean one need not read any particular part
of it for purpose of learning one's comparative values. 109

The classical movement began in Renaissance Italy and spread
throughout Europe, reaching England after Marlowe and Shake-
speare had written. The movement was a restraining movement,
not an inventing one. England's reaction to the new movement
was characteristic in Pound's eyes: "anything that happens to
mind in England has usually happened somewhere else first." 110

The Elizabethans were not inventors, instead they were embroiderers of the language. The result is graceful, rich, abundant, but not unique. The ballads of the English, Scotch, and Spanish are invention, to be sure, but they are not significant developments.

The significant writing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is satire, in which is a "very limited sort of logopoeia."

After 1750, poetry degenerated rapidly, and prose succeeded as the more effective means of literary expression. The most significant advancement was made by Stendhal, who believed that prose was superior to poetry for expressing "a clear idea of the diverse state of our consciousness."

Modern, twentieth-century verse must be understood in light of this development. Both Stendhal and Flaubert sought to write as they saw by using the precise word in order to portray, not to make a comment.

In order to survive, poetry had to make a similar discovery. The French poets, observing the innovations of Stendhal and Flaubert, proceeded to experiment on their own. Jammes, Rimbaud, de Gourmont, and the symbolistes found that the best effects are obtained through the presentation of objects, not through didacticism.

That the classics influenced English literature is obvious. Wordsworth and Shelley used Italian canzoni forms,
and Swinburne used Greek "injection." The influence of Latin meter is evident in the English iambic pentameter, "the metre of moral reproof." Browning's *Sordello* and Kipling's tales are part of nineteenth-century England's contribution to the classic idea of literary invention.

For most English poets, especially for Pound, translation is artistic expression and also an introduction to literature for the neophyte. Since there are few inventions in each literary age, many of the poets are copiers and diluters. Pound, however, will not abide the diluters. "If a certain thing was said once for all in Atlantis or Arcadia, in 450 before Christ or in 1920 after, it is not for us moderns to go saying it over, or to go obscuring the memory of the dead by saying the same thing with less skill and less conviction." Pound's salvation lies in his emphasis on translation.

Realizing early the fact that the inventors are few and the diluters numerous, he proceeded to laboriously scrutinize the greatest of poets by translating their own works. If Pound is an inventor, he is one because of his perusal of the inventors of the past. Pound seeks to correct the taste of the translators because he will not accept the unproved and highly

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illogical fact that all the classics are excellent simply because they are ancient. In his own translations Pound seeks the excellent in Propertius and Catullus, plus the best of those writers of the classical tradition. He also translates the classics of the Orient, the Confucian Odes. Indeed, the Chinese offers him the symbol in the Ching Ming ideogram of what he seeks in all poetry. The first figure, in actuality a hitching-post or king-pin uniting various levels of existence, the ground and the sky, means "Governor." The second ideogram, the waning moon suspended over the sign for the mouth, indicates terminology drifting through successive phases requiring re-alignment with fact. Even the Greek and Roman classics, according to Pound, contain the elements of the Chinese "Ching Ming."

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CHAPTER IV

THE CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN POUND'S POETRY

Pound has said in his book *Culture*, "When you don't understand it, let it alone."¹ And, frequently, Pound's readers wish that they could do just that. By far, the most popular comment about Pound's poetry is that it is obscure, not only in subject matter, which few people are familiar with, but also in style:

... he is very elliptical, he jumps from one thing to another, leaving the reader to fill in connexions or see relations for himself. And he always refers to any person, place, or episode he is talking about as if the reader were already familiar with it.²

In attempting to comprehend order in the seemingly hopeless chaos of Pound's poetry, one must remember that his view of poetry is inextricably bound to his view of history. Pound's mission is to be a poet witnessing the activation of ideas. He conserves the best of the past and seeks to renew the principles of order in a chaotic world.³ In being concerned with the moral, political, and social status of society.

¹Pound, *Culture*, p. 127.
²George Fraser, *Ezra Pound* (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 75-76.
Pound follows a tradition established by Homer. He does not believe that a civilization can exist separate from a "vital faith in the divine." But Pound's divine is not the Hebraic and in his opinion anti-art spirit, but the Hellenistic, pro-art spirit; Pound's view of the divine is influenced not only by Greek and Roman mythology but also by neo-Platonism and Confucianism, and, to a certain extent, Roman Catholicism. Neo-Platonism is evident in the fact that Pound accepts Plotinus' basic theory that the image of light is the origin of good, beauty, and creativity. Confucianism is reflected in Pound's pointing to Kung-fu-tse as the perfect philosopher-ruler who establishes order from chaos. The mythological element in Pound's poetry frequently consists of the journey in the forms of the periplus of wandering around the earth literally or figuratively and of the nekula, the descending into the underworld, both journeys being a means of education, the gaining of wisdom; after this journey, and sometimes during the journey, a metamorphosis generally takes place. The two sources for Pound's mythological influences are Homer's Odyssey and Ovid's Metamorphoses. At times Pound's poetry seems to be merely close-ups of details on a Greek

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6 Ibid., p. 10.
architectural frieze, with its reliefs of mythological heroes, gods, and goddesses. The deities and the classical writers alike are presented with a "concentrated mingling of idealism with disillusioned irony and even wit." In general, Pound's poetry may be classified as either translation or original work; but, characteristically, the poems frequently are hybrids containing original translations which, though based on the work of another author, are essentially new poems which Pound has created.

Pound's "translations" appear to be exercises preparing him for the outburst of original creativity in the Cantos. Of the translations, Papyrus is one of the more unique and interesting. The poem consists of

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Spring
Too long
Gongula
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which is a translation of three of sixteen extant lines of a seventh-century fragment of one of Sappho's poems (Berliner Klassikertexte F9722.4). The poem was anthologized by Ernst Diehl as fragment 97 in the Anthologica Lyrica Graeca, I; the four pertinent lines are

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7Kenner, p. 124.
8Bush, Mythology, p. 535.
The word in the second line resembles the Greek word for "spring." The third line is a word similar to "too long," and the fourth is Gongula's name. As Murray interprets the poem, the fourth line is extremely important:

... Gongula (or Gongyla) of Colophon was reputed to have been one of the pupils of Sappho; more important, two badly mutilated poems by Sappho evidently refer to the same young woman. Apparently Pound became familiar with at least one of the fragments... His imagination was doubtless stimulated by its suggestive incompleteness. ... Pound's modern "papyrus" thus stands as evidence of the manner in which the almost legendary poetess entered again into literary consciousness, as a result of the fascinating (and tantalizing) papyrus finds of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His borrowing here, while quantitatively small affords additional insight into the associative processes of the poet conscious of a literary heritage.

Pound has also translated another entirely different work from the Greek, the Trachiniae (Women of Trachis) of Sophocles, which was published during his confinement in St. Elizabeth's Hospital. When Pound discussed the translation with Donald Hall in an interview for the Paris Review in Rome, he said that

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11N. E. Collenge, "Gongyla and Mr. Pound," Notes and Queries, V (June, 1958), 265-266.


one sees a job to be done and goes at it. The Trachiniae came from reading the Fenollosa Noh plays for the new edition, and from wanting to see what would happen to a Greek play, given that same medium and the hope of its being performed by the Minorou company. The sight of Cathay in Greek, looking like poetry, stimulated cross currents.  

Women of Trachis is an unusual translation in that the diction which Pound chooses is colloquial. In the opening scene Daysair (Herakles' wife, Dalaneira) on hearing a slave suggest that Hyllos, Daysair's and Herakles' son, search for the long absent Herakles, replies

See here, son, this slave talks sense, more than some free folks.

to which Hyllos responds

What's she say? Lemme hear.

Of course, critics were dubious, but Pound's entire work is in the same vein. The poetry for the Khoros is somewhat more formal:

TORN between griefs, which grief shall I lament, which first? Which last, in heavy argument? One wretchedness to me in double load.

DEATH'S in the house, and death comes by the road.

THAT WIND might bear away my grief and me, Sprung from the hearth-stone, let it bear me away. God's Son is dead, that was so brave and strong.


And I am craven to behold such death
   Swift on the eye,
Pain hard to uproot,
   and this so vast
A splendour of ruin.

THAT NOW is here.
As Progne shrill upon the weeping air,
'tis no great sound.
   These strangers lift him home,
with shuffling feet, and love that keeps them still.
The great weight silent
   for no man can say
If sleep but feign
   or Death reign instantly. 16

Herakles Zeuson, the Solar Vitality, has put on the jacket
which Daysair had prepared for him to wear while he sacrifices
the hecatomb. Unfortunately, she has also dabbed the jacket
with the blood of a Centaur, Herakles' enemy, which had been
contaminated with Hydra's blood, and when Herakles puts on
the jacket, the poison begins melting his flesh. As Herakles
is carried to his home he speaks, saying

Holy Kanea, where they build holy altars,
done yourself proud, you have,
nice return for a sacrifice:
messing me up.
I could have done without these advantages
And the spectacle of madness in flower,
   incurable, oh yes.
Get someone to make a song for it,
Or some chiropractor to cure it.
A dirty pest,
take God a'mighty to cure it and
I'd be surprised to see Him
   coming this far . . . . 17

Daysair, seeing what she has done, commits suicide, but

Herakles thinks that she intended to kill him. Hyllos attempts

telling Herakles,

It's about mother's mistake.
What's happened. She didn't mean it.18

Herakles replies,

Well of all the dirtiest . . .
Your bloody murdering mother
and you dare to mention her
in my earshot!19

Eventually, Herakles is convinced that Daysair did not wish
to murder him, but that his old enemy, after many years, had
tricked Daysair into avenging him. Herakles shouts, "IT ALL
COHERES," which Pound believes to be the key phrase of the
entire play.20 Turning to Hyllos, Herakles makes him promise
to cremate him so that his agony may end; Hyllos, of course,
is reluctant, but finally obeys his father, saying

Hoist him up, fellows.
And for me a great tolerance,
matching the gods' great unreason.
They see the things being done,
calamities looked at,
sons to honour their fathers,
and of what is to come, nothing is seen. Gods!
Our present miseries, their shame. And of all men
none has so borne, nor ever shall again.

And now ladies, let you go home.
Today we have seen strange deaths,
wrecks many, such as have not been suffered before.
And all of this is from Zeus.21

Sutherland states that "this particular classic can
fairly enough be said to be negligible or Pound's use of it

18 Ibid., p. 47.
20 Ibid., p. 50.
19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 54.
vicious, and the culture to which it contributes neither ours nor living."22 That *Women of Trachis* is an inferior translation or inferior to Pound's other work may be a valid criticism, but to call the translation negligible or vicious may indicate a prejudiced viewpoint towards Pound typical of the time during which the play was released. Sutherland seems to ignore Pound's very obvious attempt to re-state the classics in order to make them meaningful for modern man. However, Bernard Dick also denounces *Women of Trachis* as being "a burlesque of Greek tragedy—caustic, pedestrian, and often in dubious taste."23 Dick also criticizes Pound's substituting "subway-circuit" diction for the diction of Sophocles, thereby ruining the play. The tendency to substitute colloquialisms for the original in order to make the classics speak to modern readers is also characteristic of the early *Cantos*, and especially of *The Homage to Sextus Propertius*; therefore, Dick overlooks Pound's long-established theory of translation plainly evident in nearly all his work.

In *Sextus Propertius*, Pound discovered a kindred personality. Propertius was, as Pound is, enigmatic, gloomy, difficult, contradictory and moody; he, also like Pound, was a pessimist, thinking civilization's collapse imminent.


Propertius saw the Roman society of the first century B.C. as being hostile to arts and especially poetry, and, in alternating moods of absolute despair and extravagant, though unfounded, hope, he condemns Rome for sacrificing art to the affairs of Caesar.\textsuperscript{24} Pound sees in Propertius' civilization a foreshadowing of the British Empire, and especially of London in 1917, and he applies many of the ideas in Propertius' poetry to twentieth-century problems.\textsuperscript{25} As Pound states in a letter to the editor of the \textit{English Journal} in January 1931, the \textit{Homage to Sextus Propertius}

\begin{quote}
presents certain emotions as vital to me in 1917, faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the British Empire, as they were to Propertius some centuries earlier, when faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the Roman Empire. These emotions are defined largely, but not entirely, in Propertius's own terms.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Pound found other similarities in Sextus Propertius, whose work is, like Pound's own, characterized by erudition and respect for the past combined with an eclectic style.\textsuperscript{27}

Pound's \textit{Homage} is not a translation but an adaptation of Propertius' elegies, which he rearranges freely in order to play with sound and association. Identifying himself with

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\item[\textsuperscript{24}]Harvey Seymour Gross, \textit{Sound and Form in Modern Poetry} (Ann Arbor, 1964), p. 152.
\item[\textsuperscript{25}]Stock, p. 96.
\item[\textsuperscript{27}]Norman, p. 205.
\end{itemize}
Propertius, Pound aims at making "an original modern poem out of the light that Propertius' sensibility and his own seemed to cast on one another."\(^{28}\) Using Propertius' elegies to denounce rhetorical sham and to restate artistic principles, Pound also uses Propertius' work to attack political and academic "jargon and deception."\(^{29}\) Although using Propertius as a mask, a persona, through whom he attacks British society, Pound uses the love poetry not as the passionate and subjective poetry which Propertius wrote, but as an expression of Propertius' poetic credo. In opening the *Homage* with

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Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas,
It is in your grove I would walk, . . .
Out-weariers of Apollo will, as we know, continue
their Martian generalities,
We have kept our erasers in order.\(^{30}\)
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and in closing the *Homage* with

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Varro sang Jason's expedition,
Varro, of his great passion Leucadia,
There is song in the parchment; Catullus the highly indecorous,
Of Lesbia, known above Helen;
And in the dyed pages of Calvus,
Calvus mourning Quintilia,
And but now Gallus had sung of Lycoris.
Fair, fairest Lycoris--
The waters of Styx poured over the wound:
And now Propertius of Cynthia, taking his stand among these.\(^{31}\)
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\(^{30}\) Pound, *Personae*, p. 207.  
Pound makes it clear that in choosing Propertius' love poetry he emphasizes Propertius' concern with the verbal expression of his love.\(^{32}\) Pound, like Propertius, "believes fate has destined him to purify the Muse."\(^{33}\) In changing the elegies, Pound obviously adds anachronisms such as

My cellar does not date from Numa Pompilius,
Nor bristle with wine jars,
Nor is it equipped with a frigidaire patent . . \(^{34}\)

and

Go on, to Ascræus' prescription, the ancient,
 respected, Wordsworthian:
'A flat field for rushes, grapes grow on the slope.'\(^{35}\)

But Pound also deletes material from Propertius' work which would recall the Romantics' translation of the Roman elegist.

As Sullivan observes,

in this sense at least Pound's boast that the *Homage* has "scholastic value" is quite true: we are a step nearer the real qualities of Propertius because we have taken away from him some fictitious qualities Victorian classical translation had imposed. As it happens, he has achieved this not by any deep insight into Latin poetry or by any great knowledge of the Latin language but by a feeling for poetry itself and the poetic language of his own tradition.\(^{36}\)

In cutting out material, Pound exercises his critic's prerogative by eliminating or compressing the obscure mythological allusions, thereby avoiding unnecessary parallels and creating


\(^{33}\)Gross, p. 52. \(^{34}\)Pound, *Personae*, p. 209.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., p. 229. \(^{36}\)Sullivan, p. 78.
an impression of the original rather than a literal rendition.\textsuperscript{37}\ In essence, Pound captures Propertius' mood without being forced to use his mode of expression.\textsuperscript{38}\ The result is that Pound chooses incomplete and non-consecutive passages, some as short as three lines, some as long as a hundred, from Books II and III in order to present, through rigorous critical creativity, a homage or a treatment of Propertius.\textsuperscript{39}

When the Homage appeared, classicists and Latin scholars were appalled. One scholar, William Gardner Hale, presents a typical scholarly viewpoint: "Mr. Pound is incredibly ignorant of Latin. He has of course a perfect right to be, but not if he translates from it. The result of his ignorance is that much of what he makes his author say is unintelligible."\textsuperscript{40}\ Hale continues his deprecation of the Homage by saying

if Mr. Pound were a professor of Latin, there would be nothing left for him but suicide. I do not counsel this. But I beg him to lay aside the mask of erudition. And, if he must deal with Latin, I suggest that he paraphrase some accurate translation, and then employ some respectable student of language to save him from blunders which might still be possible. If he does not owe this to himself, he owes it to his author . . . .\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 45.


\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 130.

\textsuperscript{40}William Gardner Hale, "Pegasus Impounded," \textit{Poetry}, XIV (1919), 52.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 55.
In viewing the *Homage*, however, it is important to remember that Pound did not intend his poem to be a "crib" translation of the Elegies, but an attempt to make Propertius a vital poet to readers in the twentieth century. In reality, Pound is translating the impossible, the *logopoeia*, which cannot be translated literally but only transferred from one cultural expression to the similar, but not exact, expression of another civilization. Pound, in writing to Orage, explains his attempt: "... there was never any question of translation, let alone literal translation. My job was to bring a dead man to life, to present a living figure."\(^4\) In following the ideal of Ching Ming, Pound seeks to accurately and adequately transpose Propertius' thinking, emotions, and expression into English. Even in technique, Pound "freely renders Propertius' meter and catches the abrupt syntactical patterning, the quick turns of speech, and the overall descending movement."\(^3\)

Pound substitutes *vers libre* "sense units" for Propertius' elegiac couplets, a measure which, in Pound's opinion, only leads to pleonasm and padding. In general, Pound substitutes for the couplet a long line followed by one, and sometimes two, short lines according to the sense pattern of the original.\(^4\) The "sense units" also make use of associations of ideas, the emotional correlations sometimes producing

\(^3\)Gross, p. 154.  \(^4\)Sullivan, p. 84.
abrupt juxtapositions. These juxtapositions affect the themes both before and after the apparently sporadic shift. The resulting effect is one of a *collage*, a layering of sense, which is an extension of Pound's ideogrammic style.

By opening the *Homage* as he does with "Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas," Pound indicates that he too is intrigued by the poets who portray the innovator and the master of the Alexandrine tradition. Both poets felt a rather Flaubertian devotion to literature and art. The elegies of Propertius reflect the influence of Callimachus' *Aetia* and of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. But added to Propertius' Elegies is an irony which is entirely Propertius' own and which Pound can fully appreciate. In attempting to extol great Augustan themes of the destiny of Rome and the achievements of Augustus, Propertius, with touches of irony, makes it very clear that he is rejecting "the whole Augustan literary ethos." Pound recreates the irony in Section I:

Annalists will continue to record Roman reputations,
Celebrities from the Trans-Caucasus will belaud Roman celebrities
And expound the distentions of Empire,
But for something to read in normal circumstances?
For a few pages brought down from the forked hill unsullied?
I ask a wreath which will not crush my head.
And there is no hurry about it;
I shall have, doubtless, a boom after my funeral,
 Seeing that long standing increases all things regardless of quality.

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The theme continues throughout the *Homage* as shown in Section II:

I had rehearsed the Curian brothers, and made remarks on the Horatian javelin (Near Q. H. Flaccus' book-stall).
'Of' royal Asmilia, drawn on the memorial raft, 'Of' the victorious delay of Fabius, and the left-handed battle at Cannae,
Of lares fleeing the 'Roman seat' . . .
I had sung of all these
And of Hannibal,
and of Jove protected by geese.
And Phoebus looking upon me from the Castalian tree,
Said then 'You idiot!' . . .''

Propertius, the persona for Pound, realizes that his insincere attempts to conform to society's demands were only destroying what potential he did have; but, Propertius is "saved" from himself as Apollo speaks to him from the "Castalian tree" named after Castalia, a nymph who, when chased by Apollo, was transformed into a spring which was made sacred to Apollo and the Muses and which Roman poets believed conferred poetic inspiration. Calliope also urged Propertius to be

'Content ever to move with white swans!
'Nor will the noise of high horses lead you ever to battle;
'Nor will the public oriers ever have your name in their classic horns,
'Nor Mars shout you in the wood at Aeonium,
Nor where Rome ruins German riches,
'Nor where the Rhine flows with barbarous blood, and flood carries wounded Suevi.
'Obviously crowned lovers at unknown doors,
'Night dogs, the marks of a drunken scurry,
'These are your images, and from you the sorcer-

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'The wounding of austere men by chicane.'

Thus Mistress Calliope,
Dabbling her hands in the fount, thus she
Stiffened our face with the backwash of Philetas the
Coan.50

After his encounter with the deities, Propertius continues to
make jabs at the Augustan hierarchy. Pound presents his
version in Section V:

Oh august Pierides! Now for a large-mouthed
product.
Thus:
'The Euphrates denies its protection to the Par-
thian and apologizes for Crassus,'
And 'It is, I think, India which now gives necks to
your triumph,'
And so forth, Augustus. 'Virgin Arabia shakes in
her inmost dwelling.'
If any land shrinks into a distant seacoast,

it is a mere postponement of your domination.
And I shall follow the camp, I shall be duly cele-
brated for singing the affairs of your cavalry.
May the fates watch over my day.51

Propertius-Pound continues his adamant stand:

Thus much the fates have allotted me, and if,
Maecenas,
I were able to lead heroes into armour, I would not . . . .52

Combining his overly-morbid fear of death with his disgust at
militant Rome, Propertius sings

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

one tangle of shadows.

50 Ibid., p. 211. 51 Ibid., p. 216.
52 Ibid., p. 217.
Caesar plots against India,
Tigris and Euphrates shall, from now on, flow at
his bidding,
Tibet shall be full of Roman policemen,
The Parthians shall get used to our statuary
and acquire a Roman religion;
One raft on the veiled flood of Acheron,
Marius and Jugurtha together.\(^{53}\)

Pound chooses to present Propertius' coupling of Jugurtha,
the ruler of western Numidia who provoked the Jugurthine War,
and Gaius Marius, who led the Roman forces against Jugurtha.
The latter, after completely destroying his uncle Adherbal
and the Roman forces at Cirta, resorted to guerilla tactics
in order to harass Marius. Eventually, in 105 B.C.,
Jugurtha was taken captive, ending the war.\(^{54}\)
Propertius,
in condemning Marius and Jugurtha to harassing each other in
the afterlife, reveals his disdain for all Roman military
leaders and governmental officials. For the typical interest
in the military, Propertius substitutes his interest in women:

> And I also will sing war when this matter of a girl is
  exhausted.\(^{55}\)

The matter of the girl is never exhausted, and Propertius ends
his diatribe by flaunting this interest in the face of the
other, more militant men; Pound expresses Propertius' feelings
in this manner:

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\(^{53}\text{Ibid., pp. 218-219.}\)

\(^{54}\text{Arthur E. R. Boak, A History of Rome to 565 A.D.,)

\(^{55}\text{Pound, Personae, p. 216.}\)
And behold me, small fortune left in my house.
Me, who had no general for a grandfather!
I shall triumph among young ladies of indeterminable character,
My talent acclaimed in their banquets,
I shall be honoured with yesterday's wreaths.
And the god strikes to the marrow.  

Pound believed that Propertius' ironic attitude toward the Augustan Roman Empire was most evident in his *logopoeia*, which cannot be literally translated; therefore, the attitude in the *Homage* at times takes on Pound's attitude toward the British Empire, which is much stronger and more definitely condemning than Propertius dared to be. Pound appreciates Propertius' tendency to parody his society when he is forced to eulogize this society in order to remain in it.  

Besides Propertius' mockery, Pound has also masterfully translated Propertius' use of colloquialism, but, as in Propertius, there are in the *Homage* many passages which are sonorous and impassioned. Pound, likewise, although he does not feel the panic which Propertius felt, keeps the death imagery in the *Homage*. The horror of personal death as in

*For long night comes upon you*

and a day when no day returns.  

and in

*You may find interment pleasing...*  

is turned, by Pound, into an expression of artistic death.

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56 Ibid., p. 229.  
57 Sullivan, p. 75.  
59 Ibid., p. 222.
The fear which Propertius experiences for Cynthia (in actuality, Hostia), is also used by Pound as the expression of the death of art:

Persephone and Dis, Dis, have mercy upon her,
There are enough women in hell,
quite enough beautiful women,
Iops, and Tyro, and Pasiphae, and the formal girls of Achaia,
And out of Troad, and from the Campania,
Death has his tooth in the lot,
Avernus lusts for the lot of them,
Beauty is not eternal, no man has perennial fortune,
Slow foot, or swift foot, death delays but for a season.⁶⁰

In comparison to Propertius' original work, Pound's, besides simplifying the mythological allusions and maintaining Propertian themes, has altered Propertius' diction. One of the better examples is Section XI. Pound begins with

The harsh acts of your levity!
Many and many,
I am hung here, a scare-crow for lovers.⁶¹

The passage in the Homage is Pound's rendering of Propertius' 

I have often feared many things hard to bear from your fickleness (levitas), Cynthia, but never yet this perfidy. It is by those eyes I am perishing, a warning to lovers like me that safety lies, alas, in believing no blandishments.⁶²

Likewise,

Escape! There is, O Idiot, no escape,
Flee if you like into Danaus,
desire will follow you thither,
Though you heave into the air upon the gilded Pegasean back.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 223. ⁶¹Ibid., p. 226. ⁶²Translated by Sullivan, p. 90.
Though you had the feathery sandals of Perseus
To lift you up through split air,
The high tracks of Hermes would not afford you
shelter.

Amor stands upon you, Love drives upon lovers,
a heavy mass on free necks.

is Pound's translation of

Where are you flying to, in your madness? Flight is
impossible: you may fly to Tanais, yet Love will ever
follow you. Riding in air on the back of Pegasus will
not avail; not though your feet be furnished with wings
like Perseus, not though the breezes, cleft by your
winged heels, waft you with a lofty flight like Mercury's,
will it be of use. Love is always hovering over your
head: he hovers over a lover, and alights with all his
weight on free necks.

For Propertius' "It is not from the city you are so madly
eager to escape, but from my sight. Your efforts are useless;
the snares you are laying for me are in vain: you are idly
spreading nets for me that I am well aware of--I am
experienced," Pound offers,

 It is our eyes you flee, not the city,
You do nothing, you plot inane schemes against me,
Languidly you stretch out the snare
with which I am already familiar . . . .

As Propertius warns Cynthia that all Rome is gossiping about
her, Cynthia excuses herself, saying that hers is the fate of
all beautiful women. Propertius urges Cynthia to reconsider
and to begin living a life that would not be as likely to

63 Pound, Personae, p. 226.
64 Translated by Sullivan, pp. 90-91.
65 Ibid., p. 91.
66 Pound, Personae, p. 226.
encourage gossip. In the original elegy, Propertius states, with a wealth of mythological examples,

the daughter of Tyndarus left her home for a foreign lover, yet she was brought back alive and uncondemned, Venus herself is said to have been seduced by Mars' lust, yet she remained an honest woman in heaven as before . . . . Ah, Cynthia, if only you would choose to dwell with me in dewy caverns on a mossy hill: there you shall see the tuneful sisters cling to the rocks and sing of the sweet clandestine loves of another Jove: of how he was consumed with love for Semele, how madly fond of Io and how, in the form of a bird, he flew to the halls of Troy . . . .

For this passage, Pound offers a condensed and simplified version of the mythological allusions:

A foreign lover brought down Helen's kingdom and she was led back, living, home; The Cytharean brought low by Mars' lechery reigns in respectable heavens, . . .

Oh, oh, and enough of this, by dew-spread caverns, The Muses clinging to the mossy ridges; to the ledge of the rocks; Zeus' clever rapes, in the old days, combusted Semele's, of Io strayed, Oh how the bird flew from Trojan rafters, . . .

Pound invariably substitutes the suggestive impression for the pleonastic in his translation of Propertius. Frequently he also puns on the Latin language, puns which can only be understood by a reader knowing both Latin and English and who, therefore, can see the association; one example is Pound's translation of

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67 Translated by Sullivan, pp. 92, 93.
68 Pound, Personae, p. 227.
69 Sullivan, p. 97.
Actia Vergilio custodis litora Phoebi
Caesaris et fortis dicere posse rates

("Be it for Vergil to sing the shores of Actium o'er which Phoebus watches, and Caesar's gallant ships of war").

In the Homage the passage becomes

Upon the Actian marshes Virgil is Phoebus' chief of police,
He can tabulate Caesar's great ships. 

Some puns, dubbed "the howlers" by Pound's critics, show that Pound has a sense of humor; two examples are the translating of stant litore puppes as "there stands a litter of puppies" and of contiguere omnes as "they were all County Kerry men." 

The haiku technique which Pound used in Lustra is evident in his translation of Propertius, but the themes in the Homage are also those of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. The devices and the irony utilized in the Homage are apparent in the Cantos which also juxtaposes latinisms and colloquialisms, the passive and the active voices, distance and involvement, dignity and vulgarity. The scope of the Cantos widens to include all history, and again the anachronisms are evident as a more developed major principle of composition. The use of myth, personal history, gossip, chronicle, fact, and prejudice likewise are a part of the Cantos as they were a part of the Homage. Even though the Homage appears to be a

70 Kenner, p. 149. 71 Pound, Personae, p. 228.
72 Kenner, p. 150. 73 Ibid., pp. 162-163.
74 Gross, p. 156.
prolegomena to the Cantos, the themes and personae of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley are important developments in the maturing of Pound's poetry which culminates in the Cantos.

In Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Pound presents the same themes, with variations, as those presented in Homage to Sextus Propertius. Mauberley is a lyrist who opposes the sham of twentieth-century London as Propertius shunned first-century B.C. Rome, and Mauberley is also an ironist and a follower of Aphrodite, although a meek and ineffectual disciple. The Homage may be the stronger of the two poems, because, as a rule, Pound's "translations" are his most effective poetry.

Mauberley is the dandified aesthete who is "out of key with his time" in his attempts to "resuscitate the dead art" of the Aesthetic poetry of the nineties.75 Two views of Mauberley are offered by Pound; Mauberley is first seen in 1919 as the aspiring though struggling and lonely aesthete, and again in 1920 when he has been defeated and, therefore, gives up his attempts at writing poetry. The extent to which Mauberley is speaking for Pound himself is questionable and has been the source of much critical discussion. Perhaps Wright's opinions concerning the problem are more illuminating than any of the other opinions offered by the critics:

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley represents Pound's most eccentric use of masks. To determine exactly who speaks the various parts of this enigmatic poem is a puzzle that has

75Pound, Personae, p. 187.
long occupied the lucubrations of Pound critics. It
now appears that Pound himself considers the first poem,
"E. P. Ode pour l'Election de Son Sepulchre," to be
spoken by Mauberley himself: "... Mauberley buried
E. P. in the first poem, gets rid of all his troublesome
energies." So he writes to Thomas E. Connolly, who
therefore suggests that Mauberley speaks the first twelve
poems and the "Envoi," whereas the last five poems form
an account of Mauberley's career and a final judgment
thereon, rendered by the hostile or indifferent world of
letters. Thus, while Mauberley disdainfully damns the
literary world, the literary world damns him with equal
disdain. ... the aim is to present in all their
inadequacy certain wrongheaded views of art as they
connect with certain wrongheaded views of life.76

The Mauberley-persona is described by Pound as being his inter-
pretation of a Henry James character, and the poem itself is
Pound's condensation of a James novel.77

The figure of Mauberley incorporates another persona,
that of Capaneus, who defied Zeus and was destroyed for his
hubris.78 Another hero, Odysseus, is presented in the first
poem of the sequence, "E. P. Ode pour l'Election de Son
Sepulchre." Pound begins stanza three with a quotation from
the Odyssey, XII, 189, translated as "For we know all the
things that are in Troy."79 The quotation is from the Sirens'
song; Pound continues with

76 George T. Wright, The Poet in the Poem: The Personae
of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960),
pp. 146-147.

77 Ezra Pound, letter to Felix Schelling, July 9, 1922,

78 Rosenthal, Primer, p. 34.

79 William V. Spanos, "Modulating Voice of Hugh Selwyn
Mauberley," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, VI
(Winter, 1965), 79.
Caught in the unstopped ear;
Giving the rocks small lee-way
The chopped seas held him therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Fascinated by Circe and the Sirens of his culture, Mauberley, who reflects Pound in being born "in a half savage country," also reflects Pound's interest in Flaubert, Circe, to a less wily and clever man, could be mistaken for Penelope, the symbol of the end of the disciplined pursuit of pure art, and Mauberley's problem is determining which character he is, that of Odysseus or that of Elpenor. The search for the answer is carried on through irony, satire, and self-mockery, and always in the subconscious is the nagging suspicion that Mauberley, like Capaneus, might be destroyed by his arrogant pride.

The stanzaic form (borrowed from Gautier) and the diction and rhyme make it apparent that Mauberley is "out of key with his time" stylistically. In Poem II, the alienation which Mauberley feels is even more evident:

The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

80Pound, Personae, p. 187.  81Spanos, p. 81.
82Blackmur, p. 128.
Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze;
Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,
Made with no loss of time,
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.83

Mauberley, like Propertius, is being pressured to conform to
the aesthetics popular in London after the First World War;
but Mauberley, a misplaced aesthete, cannot conform, his
situation being again similar to Propertius' in that he
retaliates by condemning and satirizing his society.

In Poem III, Mauberley compares modern culture to the
classical past and finds the present lacking. Women's dress
is not the mousseline worn by the women of Cos, but a "tea-
rose tea gown"; the pianola is substituted for Sappho's
"barbitos." Even in religion, the present is inferior to the
past:

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations;
Caliban casts out Ariel.

Even the Christian beauty
Defects--after Samothrace;
We see θαλάξια δέ λευκά
Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,
Nor the saint's vision.
We have the press for wafer;
Franchise for circumcision.84

83 Found, Personae, p. 188.  
84 Ibid., p. 189.
In supplanting Dionysian revels with the sobriety of Christianity, religion has lost much of the excitement which the ancients felt, and modern man is forced into an unnatural religious philosophy, becoming a warped, twisted monster (Caliban) instead of a free spirit (Ariel). Even beauty (TO KALON) is "cast before the swine" in the market place, the temple of Usura who, like Circe, turns men into pigs. Not even the saint's mystical vision is available to modern man whose Eucharistic wafer is the daily newspaper, and whose religious ritual is not the ancient tribal rite of initiation into adulthood (circumcision), but the political procedure of voting for politicians who more often than not are greedy, exploitative men; instead of a wise ruler, even though he may be a tyrant like Pisistratus, modern man chooses, in order to remain "free" in his democracy an ineffectual sycophant:

All men, in law, are equals.
Free of Pisistratus,
We choose a knave or an eunuch
To rule over us.

Mauberley searches for a man on whom to bestow a tin wreath, but even with the aid of Apollo, there is not one man in the twentieth century to be found worthy of that fourth-rate honor:

0 bright Apollo,
Τι'ν' αυδρα, τι'ν' ήρωα, τι'να θεόν
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon?\textsuperscript{85}

The pun on "tin" (tin andra, tin heroa, tina theon) is lost if

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid.
one does not recognize the Greek which is translated in the following line; the Greek is a slightly altered quotation from Pindar's Second Olympian Ode which in the original is "what man, what warrior, what god!" The figure of Pisistratus in Poem II is one which should not be merely glanced at.

Pisistratus, the Athenian tyrant of the sixth century, though little is known about him personally, was a ruler who encouraged art and letters, who established dramatic contests and who sponsored the redaction of the Homeric poems, and to Pound he perhaps represents the prototype of the wise philosopher-ruler whose counterpart in the Orient is Kung-fu-tse. Connolly is not entirely correct in maintaining that the Pisistratus-figure shows that even in a democracy modern man may as well live in an oligarchy under a tyrant for all the wisdom he shows in electing his rulers. Modern man, especially the artist, would be much better off if he did live under a well-educated, sensitive ruler who encouraged the arts.

Poem IV presents the sad picture of the soldier's plight in World War I; many men did not want to fight, but being

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88 Connolly, p. 61.
residents in a country which had declared war, they had to
fight regardless of their own desires. Pound juxtaposes two
Latin poets in his interpretation of the attitude toward the
war. The poem begins with

These fought in any case,
and some believing,

pro domo, in any case . . . . 89

The "pro domo" refers to Cicero's Pro domo sua.90 Those
lines are followed by an adaptation of Bion's technique in
his Lament for Adonis:91

Some quick to arm,
Some for adventure,
some from fear of weakness,
some from fear of censure,
some for love of slaughter, in imagination
learning later . . . 
some in fear, learning love of slaughter.92

Men fought either for personal reasons or because their
society demanded that they fight regardless of whether they
wanted to or not, and, therefore, there were many examples of
how and why men became soldiers. Some readily fought out of
patriotism, or because they desired adventure. Some, however,
fought from fear: fear that they were weak and could prove
their prowess by joining the army, fear of ridicule or gossip,
fear of bloodshed that had to be transformed into a love of

89 Pound, Personae, p. 190.
90 Spanos, p. 84.
91 John J. Espey, Ezra Pound's "Mauberley": A Study in
Composition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), p. 44.
92 Pound, Personae, p. 190.
slaughtering their German brothers. Then there were some who thought they loved to kill, but who found out in battle that their love of blood-letting was only in their twisted imaginations. The following lines

Died some, pro patria, non "dulce" non "et decor"... 93

are a re-interpretation of Horace's Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori (Carmina, III, ii, 13). 94 Those who went to the European battle fronts discovered that dying for one's country was not sweet nor was it fitting, and the lesson was learned well by those who

walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy;
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places. 95

The war brought out the best of some of the men, "daring as never before," both personally and by comparison with all the soldiers of past wars, but there was also "wastage as never before" in the history of mankind. 96 The degrading, useless slaughter, repulsive in itself, was a disruption of cultural life, but the eruption of the war only made quite clear what should have been evident—that the rottenness of the Victorian age was the cause for the degraded state into which

93 Ibid.  
94 Spanos, p. 84.  
95 Pound, Personae, p. 190.  
96 Ibid.
man had sunk. The reason for the Great War is ironically stated in Poem V:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

The poem entitled "Yeux Glauques" is a reminiscence of the artistic rebellion of the Pre-Raphaelites in the mid-nineteenth century. An acquaintance with the men mentioned is important in understanding the situation. Gladstone, alternately prime minister (changing positions with Disraeli several times) and leader of the Loyal Opposition, was a man who, though busy with government affairs, still respected the arts. In relation to the previous two poems, his being disliked by Victoria, the symbol of the Victorian age, only adds to his stature. Nevertheless, he should not be overly eulogized, in Pound's thinking, because he was still a Victorian. John Ruskin and Swinburne are readily recognized as being prominent Victorian writers, whereas Rossetti is remembered as the rebel who fought the Victorians by urging an artistic return to the Medieval Age. Rossetti's muse was his wife, whom he painted and about whom he wrote

his poetry. Buchanan, repulsed by the erotic sensuality of the Pre-Raphaelite school, wrote a critique of the medievalists, *The Fleshly School of Poetry*. In all the controversy, although admirable work was being done by the Pre-Raphaelites, "the English Rubaiyat was still-born/In those days." Fitzgerald, the greatest English poet and translator of the Victorian period, was ignored.

The next four poems--"'Siena Mi Pe'; Disfecemi Marenna," "Brennbaum," "Mr. Nixon," and Poem X--present the "contacts" which Mauberley encounters. In "'Siena Mi Pe' . . ." Mauberley meets Monsieur Verog, himself "out of step with the decade," who talks for two hours with Mauberley about Gallifet, Dowson, the Rhymers' Club, and how Lionel Johnson died by falling off a bar stool; Verog, in actuality Victor Gustave Plarr, the author of "The Dorian Mood," is lonely, detached from and neglected by society as a result of his memories of poet-friends who either committed suicide or died naturally in their youth. Pound has changed the particulars of Johnson's death, who really died after falling downstairs, in order to re-inforce the connection of the Decadent poet (shown both in Johnson, as foreshadowing, and in Mauberley himself) with the Elpenor of the *Odyssey*, who, enchanted by Circe, slips into a stupor during which he falls off the roof.

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and dies. In "Brennbaum" Mauberley encounters a Jewish
Decadent, perhaps a parody of Max Beerbohm. Mr. Nixon is the
popular, successful Georgian poet who advises Mauberley to

"Consider
"Carefully the reviewer.

"I was as poor as you are;
"When I began I got, of course,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
"Follow me, and take a column,
"Even if you have to work free.

"Butter reviewers.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

"And no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece.
"And give up verse, my boy,
"There's nothing in it." 102

The Georgian poet, like Browning's "Bloughram" advising a
young priest, warns Mauberley-Pound that "The 'Nineties'
tried your game/And died, there's nothing in it." 103 In
Poem III, "the stylist" is shown living in wretched conditions--
the roof sags and leaks through the thatch, he is unpaid and
unknown, and his mistress is "placid and uneducated." Still
the stylist

. . . exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress. 104

In order to be a true artist, not a sycophant or a poetaster,
the twentieth-century artist is not necessarily forced to
pledge chastity, but poverty is a pledge which society makes

101 Ibid., p. 93. 102 Pound, Personae, p. 194.
103 Ibid. 104 Ibid., p. 195.
certain he takes if he insists on his role as poet and if he tries to fulfill the role of *vates*.

Poems XI and XII portray Mauberley's encounter with women. The "Conservatrix of Milésien" is a pathetic model for Mauberley to use as Rossetti used Miss Siddal:

No instinct has survived in her
Older than those her grandmother
Told her would fit her station.  

The young woman cannot possibly overcome her upper-middle class Victorian background. Even Lady Valentine has been infected by the "merchant philosophy" of her nation; she is like Daphne, who instead of succumbing to Apollo was changed into a bay tree. Mauberley visits the Lady Valentine even though he knows that she does not like his appearance and that she is not appreciative of poetry:

I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion;

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata
Where the lower and the higher have ending;

A hook to catch the Lady Jane's attention,
A modulation toward the theatre,
Also, in the case of revolution,
A possible friend and comforter.  

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With the introduction of these two women, a second theme, that of Mauberley's incapability of choosing between women or poetry, is introduced in the sequence of poems. Poem XII ends with the following quatrains:

Beside this thoroughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses. 107

Espey states in his study of the poem that

"Pierian roses" in the sense of "poetry" derives ultimately from one of Sappho's fragments, and is here a muted echo of "Sappho's barbitos" in the third poem. Sappho's lines are addressed to a woman of no culture who will "have no share in the roses from Pieria." Sappho's flower in the Anthology is the rose, and Pieria is traditionally associated with worship of the Muses. 108

Lady Valentine, in Mauberley's (and in Pound's) opinion is a highly developed cultural ignoramus. The ultimate artistic expression which Mauberley achieves is in the "Envoi (1919)," in which is introduced the color amber (or topaz) which becomes important in Part II of the sequence and in which are juxtaposed the themes of present day degeneration and of the attraction of women:

Go, dumb-born book,
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:
Hadst thou but song
As thou hast subjects known,
Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,
And build her glories their longevity.

107 Ibid. 108 Espey, p. 98.
Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Beaking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

Tell her that goes
With song upon her lips
But sings not out the song, nor knows
The maker of it, some other mouth,
May be as fair as hers,
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.

The undauntable aesthete, finding fault in one of the most beautiful women of his age, never despair of seeking Beauty.

"Mauberley 1920" begins with a reference in Poem I to Messalina, the wife of Emperor Claudius, who was notorious for her immorality; she is to Penelope what Circe was in the "Ode" in Part I. Poem II presents Mauberley's state after his further degeneration:

For three years, diabolus in the scale,
He drank ambrosia,
All passes, ANANGKE prevails,
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

He had moved amid her phantasmagoria,
Amid her galaxies,
NUKTIS 'AGALMA.

Anangke is the Fate to whom Mauberley's relationship to the Lady Valentine yields. Besides having overtones of Odysseus'
stay with Calypso, the passage refers to the quatrain in Poem III of Part I in which Mauberley states that

\[
\text{All things are a flowing,} \\
\text{Sage Heracleitus says;} \\
\text{But a tawdry cheapness} \\
\text{Shall outlast our days,}
\]

suggesting not the beauty of Calypso but the sordidness of Messalina. The reference to Anangke echoes the poem The Wings of one of the Bucolico poets, in which Eros tells that his birth was one "under the reign of Necessity." The reference to NUKTIS 'AGALMA is a misquote of a fragment given by Legrand. "Beautiful statue" is one reading; but more accurate, especially with the fragment's mentioning Hesperus, the evening star, relating to Mauberley's "galaxies," is the reading of the phrase as "night's ornament," a reference to Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. Stanza three of Poem II introduces the theme of Mauberley's drifting on his indecision:

Drifted . . . drifted precipitate,  
Asking time to be rid of . . .  
Of his bewilderment; to designate  
His new found orchid . . . .

Mauberley's bewilderment is his sexual desire, suggested in the word "orchid" derived from orchis. By the time Mauberley decides that his sexual desire is not a threat to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111}Espey, p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{113}Connolly, p. 64.
\end{itemize}
his pursuit of Beauty and Art, the opportunity has passed. The concentration on Truth as opposed to Untruth and on his inability to make up his mind is presented in stanza v:

Unable in the supervening blankness
To sift TO AGATHON from the chaff
Until he found his sieve . . .
Ultimately, his seismograph

The truth or the good (TO AGATHON) is not discovered until too late, and the standard by which Mauberley finally makes his decision (the sieve) does not allow him to come to a conclusion until it is too late. He realizes his situation and experiences an emotional earthquake on realizing that Lady Valentine, not art, is the most important thing in his life. The poem ends with

Mouths biting empty air,
The still stone dogs,
Caught in metamorphosis, were
Left him as epilogues.

The quatrain refers to Cephalus, who was given a hound by his wife who, in turn, had gotten it from Artemis. The hound was sent against the great boar of Thebes, and both animals, being equal in strength, were turned to stone. Cephalus killed his wife accidentally with the spear which she had given him. Mauberley, in taking too long, kills his love (Lady Valentine's) too, but more than that he kills his

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previous mistress (Art) who could not survive his allegiance to a mortal woman. The stanza also refers to the epigraph at the beginning of Part II: "Vacuos exerceat aera morsus." The misquote is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VII, 786, which is the image of unrelieved frustration.  

"The Age Demanded" is a recapitulation of Poem II in Part I. The color of coral, topaz, or amber, the color of sensuality, is referred to again and again as Mauberley's insensibility is made evident in

And his desire for survival,
Faint in the most strenuous moods,
Became an Olympian *apathen*
In the presence of selected perceptions.  

The scene shifts to a South Sea Isle on which Mauberley becomes as one of the *lotophagoi* (lotus-eaters) of the *Odyssey*. He realizes that he is not the hero who can encounter Circe with the moly-plant and survive, but one of those who is enchanted by a lesser substitute for the experiences of Odysseus. In fact, Mauberley is really Elpenor, who died under Circe's spell and went to Hades; Odysseus, in searching for Tiresias, comes across Elpenor who asks that he be given funeral rites and that his oar be placed on his grave. In this instance Mauberley-Elpenor is the owner of an oar which states:

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"I was
And I no more exist;
Here drifted
An hedonist."

In light of Mauberley's complete emasculation, the epigraph from Nemesianus which introduces the entire sequence—"Vocat Aestus in Umbra" Ec. IV--makes its ironic point in "the heat calls us into the shade." The heat of desire which destroys Mauberley causes him to become, like Elpenor, a shade in Hades, the Hades of this life.

The "Medallion" closing the Mauberley sequence portrays a woman singing,

The grand piano
Utters a profane
Protest with her clear soprano.

The woman is compared to Reinach's Venus:

The sleek head emerges
From the gold-yellow frock
As Anadyomene in the opening
Pages of Reinach.

Honey-rad, closing the face-oval,
A basket-work of braids which seem as if they were
Spun in King Minos' hall
From metal, or intractable amber;

The face-oval beneath the glaze,
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as
Beneath half-watt rays,
The eyes turn topaz.

Aphrodite is triumphant; Pound, using the same elements of

119 Norman, p. 215.
120 Pound, Personae, p. 204. 121 Ibid.
music and topaz, the Hymeneal color, as in Canto V, suggests the full implication of "active passion." 122

Themes in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley recur in the Cantos—those of the periplus, the female chaos, and the poet's Odyssean mission. The periplus of the discovery of Penelope and Aphrodite occupy Pound throughout Mauberley and the Cantos. The "female chaos" awaiting the order which only a man can create is left frustrated in Mauberley because of the weakness of the character. The sexual frustration suggests, also, the artistic frustration of the ineffectual Mauberley. The poet in order to fulfill his task as poetas-vates cannot be an aesthete who withdraws from the life of society, but an Odysseus who willingly enters into the life around him, becoming a fusion of both Homer and Odysseus, the poet and the hero. The poem is a warning to Pound himself—the picture of what he feared he might become if he stayed in London, the counterpart of Circe's pigsty. Mauberley is a catharsis for Pound, who is freed to begin the Odyssean journey of the Cantos. 123

The Cantos is perhaps the most obscure of Pound's poetry, and he admits it; in a letter to his father on April 11, 1927, Pound states:

Afraid the whole damn poem is rather obscure, especially in fragments. Have I ever given you an outline of main

122 Espey, p. 78. 123 Spanos, p. 96.
scheme: \( \text{sic} \) or whatever it is?

1. Rather like, or unlike subject and response and counter subject in fugue.

A. A. Live man goes down into world of Dead

C. B. The "repeat in history"

B. C. The "magic moment" or moment of metamorphosis, bust thru /sic/ from quotidiem /sic/ into "divine or permanent world." Gods, etc.

Various things keep cropping in the poem. The original world of gods, the Trojan War, Helen on the wall of Troy with the old men fed up with the whole show and suggesting she be sent back to Greece, Rome founded by survivors of Troy.\(^{124}\)

Even the explanations are obscure, as W. B. Yeats testifies:

He has scribbled on the back of an envelope certain sets of letters that represent emotions or archetypal events—
I cannot find any adequate definition—ABCD and then JKLM, and then each set of letters repeated, and then ABCD inverted and this repeated, and then a new element XYZ, then certain letters that never recur, and then all sorts of combinations of XYZ and JKLM and ABCD and DCBA, and all set whirling together. He has shown me upon the wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Chastity, in the middle Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura's day. The Descent and the Metamorphosis—ABCD and JKLM—his fixed elements, took the place of the Zodiac, the archetypal persons—XYZ—that of the Triumphs, and certain modern events—his letters that do not recur—that of those events in Cosimo Tura's day.\(^{125}\)

In spite of the confusing quality of the explanations, the Cantos may be understood with effort; the poem is not, however, one which the reader can comprehend without help. Before beginning the Cantos, one should be familiar with Homer's Odyssey, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Brooks Adams' The Law of


Civilization and Decay, and Pound's other writings. The Cantos was also influenced by Andreas Divus' translation of the Odyssey, the Adams-Jefferson correspondence, and Lincoln Steffens' Autobiography.

As Yeats noted, Pound insisted that the poem has the structure of a Bach fugue:

Now at last he explains that it will, when the hundredth canto is finished, display a structure like that of a Bach Fugue. There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, mediaeval or modern historical characters. The structure, of course, is not usually one understood by critics, who generally have not studied a fugue and who, therefore, are baffled by the method which Pound uses—that of introducing a subject or theme which is built upon by the use of historical persons and historical events. The first theme is generally set in ancient Greece, especially during mythic times, and the characters are consistently taken from Greek mythology; on the Greek basis are piled examples from ancient Rome, Provence, Renaissance Italy, eighteenth-century America, ancient China, and modern Europe. Pound's somewhat elliptical style does not help matters much; he concentrates on the appearance of the page and incorporates the calligraphic

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127 Yeats, Vision, p. 4.
Chinese ideogram frequently. Pound's style, in fact, appears to be ideogrammic in the piling up of images without connecting explanation. The use of the ideogrammic style leads to an "ideogrammic unity" in the juxtaposition of strong, independent ideas and images with a minimum of syntax.\footnote{Gross, p. 161.} The resulting poetry is similar to that of a detailed frieze arresting an "epic of timelessness."\footnote{Frank Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (London, 1950), p. 9.} Unity is also made possible in the \textit{Cantos} by the tension resulting from the bringing together of the creativity of Eleusis with the Confucian "concept of human ordering."\footnote{Emery, p. 5.} Pound attempts to fuse the cultures of ancient Greece and ancient China, finding in them the most admirable achievements of man; he hopes to see Utopia built on the principles of Greek religion and Confucianism. In order to present his vision, Pound has used the entire history of the world, and, of course, not everyone can keep up with his peripatetic poem.

The \textit{Cantos} is an epic, as Pound explains in an interview for the \textit{Paris Review}:

There are epic subjects. The struggle for individual rights is an epic subject, consecutive from jury trial in Athens to Anselm versus William Rufus, to the murder of Beckett and to Coke and through John Adams. Then the struggle appears to come up against a block. The nature of sovereignty is epic matter, though it may be a bit obscured by circumstance. Some of this can be traced, pointed; obviously it has to be condensed...
to get into the form. The nature of the individual, the heteroclite contents of contemporary consciousness. It's the fight for light versus sub-consciousness; it demands obscurities and penumbras. A lot of contemporary writing avoids inconvenient areas of the subject. 131

In his epic, Pound has used many languages, also helping to obscure matters somewhat; the languages are used as verbal music, as the "special tonalities of national sensibility," as "irreducible formulation," as "rendering not the uniqueness of certain modes of perception but their ubiquity," and as "evidence of the relative antiquity of various conceptions." 132

Of course such languages as Greek and Chinese cause problems for the average reader, but Pound insists that one need not understand the exact message of the languages in order to understand how he uses the languages. He writes in a letter to Sarah Perkins Cope, on January 15, 1934, telling her to skip anything you don't understand and go on till you pick it up again. All tosh about foreign languages making it difficult. The quotes are all either explained at once by repeat or they are definitely of the things indicated. If reader don't know what an elephant /sic/ is, then the word is obscure.

I admit there are a couple of Greek quotes, on along in 39 that can't be understood without Greek, but if I can drive the reader to learning at least that much Greek, she or he will indubitably be filled with a durable gratitude. And if not, what harm? I can't conceal the fact that the Greek language existed. 133

The sources of the thematic motifs of the Cantos are classical: the nekula, or journey into Hades, of Homer (Odyssey, XI), the

Metamorphoses of Ovid, and the archetype-variant pattern of classical personalities with correspondences in subsequent history. The three motifs are fused into one single theme: "the degeneration throughout history of the ethical values represented in what Pound calls 'the factive personality' and the possible regeneration of the values through revitalization of fragments from the usable past."¹³⁴ The format of the poem is taken from Thales' idea that water is the source of all being, a great flux representing ubiquitous material realization.¹³⁵ Connected with the flux of water, the source of existence, is the idea that love is also a flowing, or a flux.¹³⁶ Another idea is that love must be free, again a representation of the love as flux theme.¹³⁷ Opposing the natural flux of love is usura, or usury, which Pound repeatedly describes as being contra naturam. In the search for truth, knowledge, and beauty, Pound uses sexual symbolism to stand for the theme of self-realization and self-renewal, which is opposed by the attempt to stifle the procreative cycle; the

¹³⁴James C. Cowan, "The Classical Figure as Archetype in Pound's Cantos, I-XXX," Twentieth-Century Literature, VI (April, 1960), 25.

¹³⁵Kenner, p. 209.


enemy, usura, suggests moral depravity in its stopping of life's ceremonies, joys, and values, thereby squelching the human spirit. The perfect example of the man completely destroyed by his love of usura is the medieval alchemist who searched for the magic elixir by which he could turn base metal into gold. In Pound's opinion, usury is as bad as otherworldliness in its capacity to ruin man. One other theme is important—that of beauty's being difficult to possess—since man at times does not realize that he has beauty within his grasp or does not know how to capture beauty; if man does capture beauty, he frequently cannot maintain possession of it.

In his search for wisdom and beauty, Pound utilizes the device of what he calls the periplum, the voyage of discovery, the word suggested by the Phoenician periplo and by Hanno's periplug. The image carries with it the suggestion that the voyage is one of successive flashes of perception, and it is used throughout all the cantos as the admirable method by which heroes search for their goal. The suggestion comes of course in the voyage which Odysseus set out on after he left Ilium, and essentially the Cantos is a logbook for the voyager-poet, an odyssey presenting Pound's voyage through history.

139 Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 34.
The "periplum" is presented in a series of metaphors representing the themes of the "nekula", the metamorphosis, and the meditation on the miracle of transformation.\textsuperscript{140}

The metamorphoses serve as summary of man's desire to transcend the sordidness of his society.\textsuperscript{141} They fit in ideally with the concept of flux as it lends to the cyclical character of the universe in its transformation of the abstract into the concrete, a personification of the universal truth of man's emotions.\textsuperscript{142} The metamorphosis is presented in the ideogrammic juxtaposition of cultural revelations which resemble Joyce's epiphanies.\textsuperscript{143} The metamorphosis is also the means of turning history into myth.

The mythic themes which Pound chooses to present in the Cantos include the need to consult the dead in order to conserve tradition (the "nekula" of Canto I), the need to escape provincialism in the form of the odyssey or periplum (Canto XL), the need for rebirth in a new form (the metamorphosis of Canto II), the need for maintaining decorum in dealing with the mysteries (the myth of Actaeon in Canto IV), the need to recognize the varied recurrent (the juxtaposition of Actaeon and Vidal in Canto IV), the need for accord with the natural process (Cantos XLVII and LII), the need of sacrifice for

\textsuperscript{140}Guy Davenport, "Ezra Pound's Radiant Gists: A Reading of Cantos II and IV," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, II (1962), 50.

\textsuperscript{141}Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{143}Kenner, p. 186.
fertility (the Adonis and Proserpine myths in Canto XLVII),
the need to bring energy and discipline to equipoise (Canto XIII),
the need of the forming of matter (Canto 90), the need of the
creative power of emanating light (Cantos XXXVI and 91), the
need to ascend to higher levels of understanding (Cantos 94
and XX), and the need to build the perfect city (Canto LXXIV). Pound turns American and Chinese histories into myths in order
to fit them into his schemata, and Adams and Kung-fu-tse
become the mythic noble leaders of the stable communities.
The stable community and the perfect and noble ruler are
symbolized, as are creative energy and the urge to establish
order in chaos, in the imagery of the light (similar however
to the destructive light of the flames which levelled Troy).
The light of sensual passion suggested by the Eleusinian
Mysteries is metamorphosed into creative energy through
devotion, and the light draws man, living in gloom, to it,
leaving him even more in darkness when it departs. Man, in
essence, becomes Danaë waiting in a dark hole for the divine
shower of gold.

One of the basic principles of the Cantos is that all
related characters may merge or melt into one another.

144 Emery, p. 113.
145 G. S. Fraser, "Pound: Mask, Myth, Man," An Examination
of Ezra Pound, edited by Peter Russell (Norfolk, Connecticut,
1950), p. 177.
146 D. S. Carne-Ross, "The Cantos as Epic," An Examination
of Ezra Pound, edited by Peter Russell (Norfolk, Connecticut,
1950), p. 139.
In using archetypal *personae*, Pound relates each mythic character to a corresponding historical character. Among the archetypes of the heroes are Odysseus, Kung-fu-tse, Hanno, Roland, the Cid, Vidal, Sordello, William of Poitiers, Pierre de Maensac, Savairic Mauleon, Arnaut Daniel, Guido Cavalcanti, Sigismundo Malatesta, Borso D'Este, Pisanello, Titian, Carpathio, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Van Buren, Pietro Leopoldo, Henry James, Benito Mussolini, and Francis Drake. Even though these men are heroes, they are not entirely good men; neither are they exempt from suffering. Frequently the hero does not speak himself but is seen through the eyes of one of his followers or is revealed through his letters. In essence, all the heroes contain the same basic characteristics in their attempts to establish order in chaotic societies and in their strong and wise philosophic convictions. Of the heroes, Odysseus is the prototype establishing the characteristics by which the other heroes are portrayed; he represents the poet as adventurer, as ritual prophet, and as untiring quester after chthonic wisdom.\(^\text{147}\) The hero must journey through Hell in order to become wise so that he may know the secret of perpetual renewal. Odysseus' role as the just ruler is re-inforced by the mythic parallels of Cadmus and Theseus in Cantos II, IV, and XXVII.

\(^{147}\) Kenner, p. 299.
Among the archetypes of the heroines are Helen of Troy, Penelope, Eleanore of Aquitaine, Ignez de Castro, Lady Soresmunda, Isotta degli Atti, the Marchesa Parlsina d'Este, and Cunizza—"all of these women whose flesh enshrined a gleam of the eternal beauty."148 Woman, in the Cantos, is an ocean, a flux; she has a mind which like the woman in "Portrait d'une Femme" is a Sargasso Sea. She may be a disruptive person, as Helen was in causing the Trojan War; nevertheless, she may inspire in man the creative energy which is highly prized.

The archetypes of the villains are Chi Hoang Ti, Ou-heou, Franz Joseph, Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, Churchill, Krupp, Metevsky, and others who are commanded by Usura. Midas is the mythic character used as the prototype of the greedy man and as a personified criticism of usury.149 These men, along with tax-collectors, money-lenders, bankers, and "other-worlders" like the Taoists are the enemies of the establishment of creative stability. The female villain is the femme fatale or the "merciles beauté." Beauty may be cruel, as Diana of Ephesus was cruel, forcing man to sacrifice himself in order to gain her favor; she is always identifiable by her eyes which reflect her nature. She becomes Usura, a grotesque modern goddess, whose prototype is Circe, a lovely wizard. Usura, like Circe, plays on man's lust for material

148 Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 24. 149 Ibid., p. 33.
goods and turns him into a pig. As Tate says, everywhere Pound lands "is the shore of Circe."  

The gods of the Cantos are also archetypes, blending into one another as a result of their portrayals in different cultures. Dionysus blends into Adonis, Tammuz, and Manes with the female counterparts in Kore and Demeter as agents of fructification. Apollo and Helios become symbols of the precision of definition. Aphrodite stands for the imposition of material form on concept. Diana, in her two roles of being cruel and kind, suggests the dual nature of change, whereas Kuanon, a Chinese deity, is the merciful, the contemplation of whom induces the "peace that passeth understanding." Ra-Set represents a fruitful god-man relationship, and Hermes, eminently helpful, is the emissary between the gods and men. Athena is the symbol of Justice, and Isis is the symbol of the life cycle (resembling Artemis). In her dual nature, Diana is the feminine opposite of the masculine principle symbolized in the sun. Aphrodite becomes the archetype of what comes out of the flux, in essence the incarnation of flux itself. All these personages appear, suggest other personages, melt into these other persons, and


\[151\] Emery, p. 112.
disappear only to return again throughout the flux of the 
Cantos.

Pound begins Canto I with Odysseus' preparing to descend 
into Hades. Odysseus' legend is symbolic of man's endless 
wafering search for a spiritually meaningful home, and, 
according to Friederick, the Cantos is the most significant 
treatment of the Odysseus legend by which Odysseus becomes 
the "nebulous principle of organization in the poem." 152 
Canto I is Pound's re-interpretation of the eleventh book of 
the Odyssey of Homer, in which Odysseus seeks out Tiresias in 
order to find a way home to Ithaca. Odysseus speaks:

And then went down to the ship, 
Set keel to breaker, forth on the godly sea, and 
We set up mast and sail on that swart ship, 
Bore sheep aboard her, and out bodies also 
Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward 
Bore us out onward with bellying canvas, 
Circe's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Here did they rites, Perimedes and Eurylochus, 
And drawing sword from my hip 
I dug the ell-square pitkin; 
Poured we libations unto each the dead, 
First mead and then sweet wine, water mixed with white flour. 
Then prayed I many a prayer to the sickly death's-heads; 
As set in Ithaca, sterile bulls of the best 
For sacrifice, heaping the pyre with goods, 
A sheep to Tiresias only, black and a bell-sheep. 
Dark blood flowed in the fosse, 
Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides 
Of youths and of the old who had borne much; 
Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender, 
Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads, 
Battle spoil, bearing yet dreary arms, 
These many crowded about me; with shouting,

152 Friederick, p. 343.
Pallor upon me, cried to my men for more beasts;  
Slughtered the herds, sheep slain of bronze;  
Poured ointment, cried to the gods,  
To Pluto the strong, and praised Proserpine;  
Unsheathed the narrow sword,  
I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead,  
Till I should hear Tiresias.153

Pound, using a hieratic style more similar to the Anglo-Saxon  
than to the Greek, describes through the mask of Odysseus the  
preparations for the journey to Hades. The preparations are  
the blood rite which will appear in the fertility rites in  
subsequent Cantos. The first shade which Odysseus meets is  
"our friend Elpenor," who pitifully begs to be remembered in  
funeral games and proper burial. Odysseus continues his  
description of his encounters with the shades of Hades and  
of Tiresias' prophecy:

And Anticlea came, whom I beat off, and then Tiresias Theban,  
Holding his golden wand, knew me, and spoke first:  
"A second time? why? man of ill star,  
"Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region?  
"Stand from the fosse, leave me my bloody bever  
"For soothsay."  
And I stepped back,  
And he strong with the blood, said then: "Odysseus  
"Shalt return through spiteful Neptune, over dark seas,  
"Lose all companions." And then Anticlea came.154

Anticlea is Odysseus' mother. After the passage containing  
the prophecy of Tiresias, Pound breaks into the narrative:

Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,  
In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.

pp. 3-4.  
154 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away
And unto Circe.\textsuperscript{155}

Urging the writer, whose sixteenth-century translation he used,
to lie quiet in Hades, Pound pictures Odysseus' journey back
to Circe. But before the end of the Canto, Aphrodite, the
symbol of change, appears, suggesting Cybele and the golden
bough of Aeneas. Odysseus', and Pound's, journey will be a
dangerous one over an ocean ruled by the angry god Poseidon,
but in order to attain Ithaca Odysseus must finish the
journey he courageously begins. In Canto I, Pound quotes
from the Second Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, which tells of
Aphrodite's courtship with Anchises and the subsequent birth
of Aeneas.\textsuperscript{156}

Canto II begins with a reference to "Eleanor" (taken
from the \textit{Agamemnon}), in actuality Helen the destroyer of ships
and of cities who merges into Eleanor of Aquitaine. The
Canto continues with

\begin{quote}
And poor old Homer blind, blind, as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea-surge, murmur of old men's voices:
"Let her go back to the ships,
Back among Grecian faces lest evil come on our own,
Evil and further evil, and a curse cursed on our children,
Moves, yes she moves like a goddess
And has the face of a god
and the voice of Schoeney's daughters,
And doom goes with her in walking,
Let her go back to the ships
back among Grecian voices."\textsuperscript{157}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., p. 5. \textsuperscript{156}Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{157}Pound, \textit{Canto II}, p. 6.
The old men of Troy, tired of the war, begin to clamor for sending Helen back to the Greeks. The reference to "Schoeney" is taken from Golding's translation of the eighth book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, in which he mentions "Atlant, a goodly Ladie one/of Schoneys daughters," meaning Schoenus, Atalanta's father. 

The scene shifts to Tyro's being attacked by the sea-god. The sea remaining the central setting becomes that surrounding Scios, and the character shifts to that of the young Dionysus, continuing the theme of form out of flux. The story of the young god of wine is taken from Golding's translation of Book III of Ovid's Metamorphoses. The patron-god of the theatre is taken advantage of by the crew which is to take him to Naxos:

And an ex-convict out of Italy
  knocked me into the fore-stays,
  (He was wanted for manslaughter in Tuscany)
  And the whole twenty against me,
  Mad for a little slave money.
  And they took her out of Scios
  And off her course . . .

The narrator instantaneously becomes Acoetes telling the story to Pentheus. Acoetes, the pilot of the ship, took Dionysus' }

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159 Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 27.
part and was not transformed into a dolphin like the rest of the crew with Dionysus' "god-sleight." The myth is of course a variation on the theme of usury's enslaving the arts. Accompanying Dionysus are his lynxes, which are brought back into the picture in the Pisan Cantos. After the Dionysus story, the scene shifts to Ileuthyeria:

And of a later year,
   pale in the wine-red algae,
If you will lean over the rock
   the coral face under wave-tinge,
Rose-paleness under water-shift,
Ileuthyeria, fair Dafne of sea-bords,
The swimmer's arms turned to branches,
Who will say in what year,
   fleeing what band of tritons,
The smooth brows, seen, and half seen,
now ivory stillness.161

Ileuthyeria, the personification of freedom, is given sanctuary by Proteus, the ever-changing; he, in turn is chided by the fauns who are the symbols of masculine fertility, and the frogs, symbols of metamorphosis, sing against the fauns:162

And we have heard the fauns chiding Proteus
   in the smell of hay under the olive-trees,
And the frogs singing against the fauns
   in the half-light.163

Canto IV begins with the vision of Troy in smoldering ashes, followed by a victory shout--"ANAXIFORMINGES!" meaning "Lords of the Lyre," taken from Pindar's Second

161 Ibid., p. 9.
162 Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, p. 37.
163 Pound, Canto II, p. 10.
Olympian Ode. The following word—"Aurunculeia"—is the name of the bride for whom Catullus wrote a poem and for whom Hymen is invoked later on in the Canto. The story of Actaeon, who saw Diana bathing, was changed into a stag, and was killed by his own hounds, finds its historical repeat in Peire Vidal, whose love for the Lady Loba led him to become a wild animal, a wolf, who was almost killed by the Lady Loba's dogs. Vidal knows that his situation is the same as Actaeon's, as he stumbles "along in the wood, muttering, muttering Ovid." In Canto IV the myth of Itys and Tereus, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VI, 620 ff.), is combined with the story of Cabestan, a Provencal troubadour, whose love for the Lady Soremonda was discovered by her husband, Sir Raymond, who had Cabestan murdered. Sir Raymond then served Cabestan's heart to Lady Soremonda, who, when told that it was the heart of her lover, committed suicide by jumping from her balcony. The story of Itys, the son of Procne and Tereus, is equally gruesome. Tereus, after ravishing Philomela, Procne's sister, had Philomela's tongue cut out so that she could not tell her sister what had happened to her, but Philomela wove the story into a tapestry which she sent her sister. Procne, on


165 Davenport, p. 61.

166 Pound, *Canto IV*, p. 15.
discovering the truth, murdered her son and served him to Tereus. All three were transformed into birds—Philomela, a swallow, Procne, a nightingale, and Tereus, a hawk. Pound's juxtaposition of the story occurs at the beginning of Canto IV:

And by the curved, carved foot of the couch,
claw-foot and lion head, an old man seated
Speaking in the low drone . . . :

Ityn!

Et ter flebiliter, Ityn, Ityn!
And she went toward the window and cast her down,
"All the while, the while, swallows crying:

Ityn!
"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish."
"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish?
"No other taste shall change this."

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

'Tis. 'Tis. Ytis. 167

Cantos XIV-XVI are Pound's presentation of hell, the intervening Cantos describing the career of Sigismundo Malatesta. Included in the hellish scene are all those whom Pound hates—politicians, profiteers, financiers, newspapermen, liars, pedants, preachers, Fabians, imperialists, conservatives, and all who have allowed their lust for money to overpower them—in short, the dominant character types in London of 1919 and 1920. 168 Throughout the next Cantos, the

167 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
168 Pound, letter to John Drummond, Letters, p. 239.
American personae, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Martin Van Buren, are praised and are treated as variants of the hero.

Canto XXXIX, a renewal of the Odysseus theme, opens with Elpenor talking. Not knowing his situation, Elpenor is witnessing a ritual which is essentially the same as the Eleusinian Mysteries. Elpenor is not the only witness of the rites, as Eurilochus, another shipmate, is there at Circe's dwelling also. The two men represent the alternatives which Odysseus may choose. Elpenor, man-destroying passion, is opposed by Eurilochus, the aggressive man-destroying intellect.169 Odysseus chooses neither role, instead succumbing to Circe, but shielded from harm by the moly-plant. Without the preparation which Circe gave him, Odysseus could not have descended into Hades, nor could he have resumed his journey to Ithaca. Odysseus is able to overcome the spell of Circe whose menu includes

First honey and cheese
honey at first and then acorns
Honey at the start and then acorns
honey and wine and then acorns170

revealing the men's metamorphoses into swine. Elpenor, the fool-hardy, and Eurilochus, the overly-cautious, will not end


170 Pound, Canto XXXIX, p. 44.
their journey in Ithaca; only Odysseus, the wily, the cunning, the clever, will end his wandering at his home, but only after he has learned humility. Odysseus is capable of assimilating the metamorphosis whereas Elpenor succumbs to it and Eurilochus denies it.\textsuperscript{171} The latter part of Canto XXXIX shifts to the sexual symbolism of the union of man and woman, indicating that part of Odysseus' "education" must be learned in Circe's bed.

Dark shoulder have stirred the lightning
A girl's arms have nestled the fire,
Not I but the handmaid kindled
Cantat sic nupta
I have eaten the flame.\textsuperscript{172}

Again the reference to Eleusis comes to the forefront, but also there is the hint that the persona is Penelope, faithfully waiting for Odysseus.

The Mysteries are again referred to in Cantos XLVII and LXXIX in which Dionysus is accompanied by his lynxes. In Canto XLVII, Tiresias gives Odysseus advice:

To the cave art thou called, Odysseus,
By Molū hast thou respite for a little,
By Molū art thou freed from the one bed
that thou may'st return to another
The stars are not in her counting,
To her they are but wandering holes.
Begin thy plowing
When the Pleiades go down to their rest,
Begin thy plowing
40 days are they under seaborb.

\textsuperscript{171}Read in Leary, p. 106.

\textsuperscript{172}Pound, Canto XXXIX, p. 46.
Thus do in fields by seabord
And in valleys winding down toward the sea.
When the cranes fly high
think of plowing.\textsuperscript{173}

In order to return to Penelope, Odysseus must learn patience; part of Tiresias' advice concerns the ritual passage from Hesiod's \textit{Works and Days} which is returned to in the "plowing" passages in the Pisan Cantos. Odysseus has not yet suffered; he understands Tiresias, but he is not yet ready to act on his advice, knowing that it will lead only to pain.\textsuperscript{174}

The Cantos following XLI\textsc{VII} develop the themes of American and Chinese history, and, as they do not reveal classical passages except in passing, the Pisan Cantos are the next in importance. In the Pisan Cantos, Pound is really Odysseus in Polyphemus' cave, only this time he is alone.\textsuperscript{175} Pound, after World War II, willingly surrendered himself to the Allied Armies in northern Italy. At that time he was taken to a Detention Training Center near Pisa and put into one of the steel "death cages" because the Army feared the Fascists might try to set him loose. Pound had been arrested for making treasonous shortwave broadcasts from Rome directed at North America and Britain. In the broadcasts he denounced both countries for prolonging the war, and, at times, he discussed his Social Credit economics. The broadcasts are interesting

\textsuperscript{173}Pound, \textit{Canto XLI\textsc{VII}}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{174}Read in Leary, pp. 115-116.
\textsuperscript{175}Fraser, p. 70.
for the light which they throw on the Cantos, as Pound repeatedly refers to his poems as being the expression of his economics. Pound says in his first broadcast on December 7, 1941, that "what I had to say about the state of mind in England in 1919, I said in my canto (?) àsic?, cantos 14 and 15. Some of your philosophers and fancy thinkers would have called it the spiritual (?) àsic? side of England. I undertake to say state of mind."176 This quote is the first of the many in which he connects his poetry with his economics and political philosophy.

Pound wrote about his imprisonment in the Pisan Cantos (Cantos LXXIV-LXXXIV), which are among the most effective of his poems. Pisa is Pound's own personal hell in which he learns, through personal suffering, the lessons which Odysseus learned in his journey to Ithaca. He takes on Odysseus' name—"Noman"—which Odysseus gave to Polyphemus:

...O ϖ Τ ΩΣ Ω Ωδυσσευς
the name of my family.177

Pound also draws an analogy of himself with Tithonus, the man loved by Eos, the Dawn, who had him granted immortality but forgot to ask for immortal youth; Tithonus shrivelled up, an

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177 Pound, Pisan Cantos, p. 3.
old man forever. In his imprisonment, similar to Odysseus' and Tithonus', Pound is subjected to the wind and the rain:

The wind is part of the process
The rain is part of the process.

The eyes of the femme fatale Usura, "the suave eyes, quiet, not scornful," haunt Pound as being a part of the process. Pound seeks his peace with "the process" as did Odysseus on his raft tossed about by the angry sea-god.

More importantly, Pound becomes one of Odysseus' men, the victim of Circe (or Usura):

so ego in harum
so lay men in Circe's swine-sty.

Aphrodite even becomes all powerful and frightening as "Cythera potens," the eternal Cytherean. She forsakes him as he is subjected to "the process." But, there is hope, the hope that what happened to Odysseus will happen to him, that he too will meet Nausikaä on the last stop before his final arrival at Ithaca:

so Nausikaä
took down the washing or at least went to see that the maids didn't slack.

As Aphrodite has forsaken him, he turns to Dionysus, whose presence is suggested by the lynx:

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178 Ibid., p. 13.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid., p. 3.
182 Ibid., p. 34.
183 Ibid., p. 60.
O Lynx, my love, my lovely lynx,  
Keep watch over my wine pot,  
Guard close my mountain still  
Till the god come into this whiskey.  

In praying that his sensitivity to love and beauty not be put out by Usura, hope is again apparent, for existence is bound up in

*Amo ergo sum.*

"I love, therefore, I am."  

Realizing that he too, like escapees from the camp, may be shot, Pound suggests his fear of the boastful guard in the form of Clytemnestra's speech in *Agamemnon*:

... a good job  
dead by this hand.  

Usura is presented in human form— that of Clytemnestra, a powerful, arrogant, destructive woman who was not a conserver of tradition, the most important function of the woman.

Still hoping, Pound pleads with the Great Mother,

...  

O GEA TERRA,  
what draws as thou drawest  
till one sink into thee by an arm's width  
embracing thee. Drawest,  
truly thou drawest.  

Still the fear of destruction at the hand of Usura returns:

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185 Ibid., p. 71.  
186 Ibid., p. 101.  
187 Ibid., p. 104.
the loneliness of death came upon me
( at 3 P. M., for an instant),
buts at least this time it is only for an instant.

Canto LXXXIII begins with the theme of "HVDOR at Pox"—water (or flux) and peace. The deities begin to make their appearances to Pound in the tent first in the form of a Dryad:

Dryad, thy peace is like water.

Then, Artemis appears, though misshapen:

A fat moon rises lop-sided over the mountain
The eyes, this time my world,
But pass and look from mine
between my lids
sea, sky, and pool
alternate
pool, sky, sea...

The eyes announce the presence of the "good" deities, just as the eyes had announced the entrance of the femme fatale.

He learns patience by enduring his fear, which finally reaches its culmination, leaving only with the desire to "let an old man rest." Circe becomes a peasant girl, a "swine-herdess" (pastorella del suini), and finally "rosy-fingered dawn" breaks in, a burst of light in the immense darkness—Pound is grateful:

If the hoar frost grip thy tent
Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent.
In the latest Cantos—Rock-Drill (Cantos 85-95) and Thrones (Cantos 96-109)—Pound continues the themes of establishing order and accepting responsibility. He discusses the two sections in his interview with Donald Hall:

Rock-Drill was intended to imply the necessary resistance in getting a certain main thesis across—hammering. I was not following the three divisions of the Divine Comedy exactly. One can't follow the Dantesquan cosmos in an age of experiment. But I have made the division between people dominated by emotion, people struggling upwards, and those who have some part of the divine vision. The thrones in the Cantos are an attempt to move out from egoism and to establish some definition of an order possible or at any rate conceivable on earth. One is held up by the low percentage of reason which seems to operate in human affairs. Thrones concerns the states of mind of people responsible for something more than their personal conduct.194

The hammering of the Rock-Drill may be the creative building of the temple, or then, again, it may be the useless hammering of the prisoners in the rock-pile. Thrones gives credit to those throughout history who have accepted the responsibility of being responsible leaders in their society, thereby establishing and encouraging the "timeless principles upon which civilizations are built."195

In Canto 90, Paradise is regained:

Grove hath its altar
under elms, in that temple, in silence
a lone nymph by the pool.196

Other miracles take place, proving the re-establishment of the

194 Hall, pp. 48-49.
195 Dekker, p. 198.
196 Pound, Rock-Drill Cantos, p. 67.
mythic Arcadia. New characters are introduced in the figures of Apollonius, Princess Ra-Set, Francis Drake, and "Miss Tudor" (Elizabeth I). The gods and goddesses again are the symbols of the guiding principles; Drake is a new variation of the hero, and Elizabeth Tudor incorporates the feminine and masculine qualities in being a wise ruler, her position strengthened by the fact that Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a poem comparing her to Diana. Canto 95 ends with Odysseus' being rescued by Leucothoe; the section ends on a note of hope that the journey is reaching its end.

Thrones, according to some critics, indicates the disintegration of the Cantos and the collapse of Pound's poetic method. His style becomes increasingly more prosaic, but there is one interesting development. The temple, the building housing the altar which has returned to the grove, is shown in repeated instances in Canto 97. Using his own hieratic ideogram to accompany the description of the temple, Pound says:

The temple is not for sale . . .

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

The temple is holy because it is not for sale. 198

But the temple is also uncompleted because he has "got no stone." 199

197 Dekker, p. 198.


199 Ibid., p. 33.
The *Cantos*, according to Pound, is his chief work. In it, he has used every device, every image, every character which is important in understanding his original work. But the *Cantos* indicates more than merely the culmination of Pound's work, albeit unfinished and perhaps, in the opinion of some, a failure. The *Cantos* reveals the way in which modern poets use the classics as subjects for re-interpretation, as symbols to recall an ancient archetype, as materials for original creation. Twentieth-century poets, however, may not be called classicists because of the attitudes which they have developed toward the world and because they have been influenced, however negatively, by Romanticism, Aestheticism, and French Symbolism. Pound and his fellow-poets have found their world a miserable place to live in, and they have sometimes thought that the ancient past would be a better world. Many modern poets withdrew into their ivory towers as did Pre-Raphaelite, Aesthetic, and French Symbolist poets. Pound, however, attempted venturing out into his world for the purpose of establishing Arcadia on earth, or at least a decent facsimile of the ancient earthly Paradise. He failed, caught in a political cross-current which he could not foresee in the early 1940's. He attempted to put his ideas into action, these ideas being the result of intense study in much of the world's literature, but especially in the classics. He failed, however, to communicate to his readers because of
his assuming they knew what he knew—which, in a majority of cases, they could not know.

Pound's readers must be broadminded enough to see, without being blinded by political ideas, the vision which he saw and which he tried to communicate in his poetry. In spite of all the controversy centering on Pound's political ideas, he is still one of the greatest stylists and one of the most creative innovators in modern poetry. Perhaps one of Pound's major contributions is his making classical characters live in their historical counterparts. Without his poetry, then, many modern readers would not be as aware of the classics as they are now.
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