Ezra Pound’s Theory of Language

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I, James Dowthwaite, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines Ezra Pound's linguistic theory in relation to literary, philosophical and academic treatments of language in the modernist period. Pound is a central figure in the history of twentieth century literature, and his poetic career marks a sustained engagement with questions of how language can register thought, how it can transmit and communicate images, and, ultimately, how language is able to mediate between artists (or, indeed, language speakers as a whole) and the world. I read Pound's statements on language against the disciplinary history of linguistics, assessing the extent to which his positions are representative of his period, or, conversely, the ways in which they form part of an idiosyncratic worldview. My approach is broadly historical. I begin with Pound's educational background, and move chronologically through his career to the concluding passages of his *Cantos*. I investigate the extent to which Pound's critical writing engages with new departures taking place in linguistics in the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. The scope of my investigation ranges from the legacy of nineteenth century philology to the approaches taken by William Dwight Whitney, Michel Bréal, and Ferdinand de Saussure, to name but a few, in focusing linguistic scholarship on synchronic study of language as function in the early twentieth century, to Franz Boas's and Edward Sapir's studies in the relationship between language and culture between 1910 and 1939. In situating Pound in relation to the history of linguistics as a discipline, I argue that his work asks some of the period's most apposite questions about language and culture, even if his conclusions differ from the dominant academic positions of the time.

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Introduction

In 1934, Ezra Pound provided a retrospective account of the difficulties that he faced in establishing his poetic voice early in his career. For Pound, the relative problems that he faced in defining and creating a poetry fit for the modern age were not primarily problems of representation, content, or style, but specifically issues of language. As Pound makes clear the problems he faced revolved around the history of language as well as the relationship between language and thought:

> What obfuscated me was…the crust of dead English, the sediment present in my own vocabulary – which I, let us hope, got rid of a few years later. You can't go round this sort of thing. It takes six or eight years to get educated in one's art, and another ten to get rid of that education.
> Neither can anyone learn English, one can only learn a series of Englishes. Rossetti made his own language. I hadn't in 1910 made a language, I don't mean a language to use, but even a language to think in.[1]

This comment is well known and often cited in Poundian scholarship. It provides an insight not only into Pound's linguistic thought, but also his interest in aesthetics, translation, poetic form, philosophy and his relationship to his literary forebears. Mark Kyburz reads it as an example of Pound's attempt to resolve a 'linguistic crisis' which revolved around 'the problem of the exhaustion of linguistic resources'.[2] For Kybruz, Pound saw the prevailing literary issues of the period as centred around the need for a renewed sense of language as fit for the modern age. K. K. Ruthven sees the above statement as one of the defining principles of Pound's attempt to create his own, distinct poetics.[3] Solving this crisis in language, in other words, was central to the development of Pound's poetic vision: his career begins in earnest with the formation of 'a language to think in'.

Pound's phrasing here pulls together a number of different approaches to language, all of which form integral parts of my discussion in this thesis. First, it draws on Pound's simultaneous understanding of language as historically determined and organic, in that the English Pound found himself using was ‘dead’, a word that indicates a lack not only of serviceable use but points towards the possibility of language’s semi-autonomous vitality. While this may at first seem paradoxical, Pound’s understanding of language is rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth century debates around the nature and histories of language (and languages) often revolved around organicist metaphors and taxonomies derived from the physical sciences: any given language was both tied to a national genius but also had its own organic history, developing and changing over time. Second, it draws on a principle of linguistic precision which is, I believe, linked most of all to a kind of linguistic relativity whereby each language or dialect is inextricably bound to the wider cultural practices of its speech community. The differing ‘series of Englishes’ serve only to represent those versed in them, be that a group or even an individual. Pound’s English, therefore, is not the same as other writers’, let alone his readers’ and it will bear traces that mark it out as uniquely his own. This is not simply a poetic principle, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, but was part of Pound’s wider understanding of race and culture. Indeed, it is worth pointing out at this early stage that even Pound’s admiration of Chinese writing and culture is not without its ideological pitfalls. By the late nineteen twenties and early 1930s Pound conceived of Chinese poetry as the highest achievement of visualising, imagistic language (‘phanopoeia’ in Pound’s terminology). As Daniel Katz has pointed out, however, this is an affirmation based in ‘abstract ethnographic or racialist theorizing with which Pound was increasingly taken’.[4] Third, and perhaps most importantly, Pound’s attempt to develop a language to ‘think in’ points towards a desire to understand the complexities of the relationship between language and thought, as well as the representative capacity of language as a whole. All three of these aspects of Pound’s statement in 1934 also point towards three areas of research in modern linguistics: the historical study of language; the relationship between language and culture; the referential nature of language with regard to both thought and the world of referents.

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[1] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 193-194.
[2] Mark Kyburz, *"Voi Altre Pochi": Ezra Pound and his Audience 1908-1925* (Basel: Birkhauser, 1996), p. 52.
[3] K. K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's* Personae, *1926* (London: University of California Press, 1969), p. 18.

This thesis is not about Pound’s attempt to develop idiomatic and idiosyncratic ways of writing, however. Rather, it looks at Pound's relationship with language as a whole, from his years studying modern languages at university to the eventual collapse of the *Cantos* into silence. Pound's career is of extraordinary interest not only to the student of literature but also to the student of language, and it is a crucial illustration of modernist intersections between linguistics, the philosophy of language, and literature. Pound maintained a consistent focus on the role that language plays in both poetry and society throughout his career. Pound's career is fascinating in that it spans the early disciplinary history of Linguistics as an academic subject. His first collection of poetry was published only ten years after Michel Bréal's seminal *Semantics* (1897) was first published, and by the time Ferdinand de Saussure's notes had been collected as *A Course in General Linguistics* (1916), his oeuvre included ten books of poetry, criticism and translation. Pound's life spans a crucial period of linguistic history, with the central period of his career taking place during the advent of Edward Sapir's (1921), Otto Jespersen's (1922) and Leonard Bloomfield's (1933) seminal treatments of the relationship between language and culture, as well as Ludwig Wittgenstein's and Roman Jakobson's important contributions to the relationship between language, art and thought. Remarkably, the latter period of Pound's career also spans the rise of Noam Chomsky's focus on syntactic structures and Universal Grammar, although Chomsky had no known impact on Pound's linguistic thought. In fact, the length of Pound's career as measured against the disciplinary history of linguistics is even more striking when we consider that he was born during a period dominated by philology and he died only four years before Michael Silverstein first published his work on indexicality and indexical order, an approach to language which is gaining considerable interest in literary scholarship today.

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[4] Daniel Katz, *American Modernism’s Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 76.

As Feng Lan has written in his *Ezra Pound and Confucianism,* by 1930 'the problem of language had been Pound's major concern from the beginning of his poetic career', even if his discussions were largely embedded in broader aesthetic concerns.[5] Lan sees notions of 'linguistic precision' as the central drive of modernist poetics until the 1930s. This 'precision' refers to a clarity of terminology and poetic phrasing, as well as a conviction that poetic intention should revolve around the clear presentation of images. While there is much truth in Lan's assessment, Pound's understanding of language is not simply an issue of aesthetics, nor does it engage with wider modernist concerns with language as much as would be expected. The development of Pound's theory of language largely follows a unique path, neglecting dominant linguistic and philosophical figures such as Bréal, Sapir, or Wittgenstein, in favour of less established writers, including Allen Upward, Leo Frobenius, and C.K. Ogden. Furthermore, where much of Pound's thought on politics, philosophy, and even aesthetics was subject to much change over time, his linguistic theories remained largely steadfast even as he drew on different figures.

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[5] Feng Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: Remaking Humanism in the Face of Modernity* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 56.

My research demonstrates that early in his career Pound established a series of principles which form the texture of his thought on language. These principles are not always clearly stated, but they are those most often articulated throughout his career. While the examples that Pound uses to illustrate his linguistic principles change considerably over time the basis of his thought remains remarkably consistent. As is clear from his retrospective remarks in 1934, Pound's early years are characterised by an attempt to develop a kind of linguistic precision along the lines that Feng Lan argues form the basis for the 'revolution of the word'. This comprises a combination of the Flaubertian *mot juste*, a literary device which attempts to attain a kind of descriptive accuracy shorn of all superfluity, with an interest in etymology, a philological approach to language that Pound came to depend upon often, as much as he deplored it. This is, in effect, faith in language as a referential system. There is nothing to suggest that Pound did not accept that language was a conventional and arbitrary system, and in both the essay series 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1911) and the *ABC of Reading* (1934), Pound's discussion of the necessity of fixing and maintaining meaning within a language system depends precisely on its ultimately arbitrary nature.

Linguistic clarity and precision form the bases of Pound's well-known 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', which was first published on 1 March 1913 in *Poetry*:

> Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.
>
> Don't use such an expression as "dim lands *of peace.*" It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that

> the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol.
> Go in fear of abstractions. Don't retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose. Don't think any intelligent person is going to be deceived when you try to shirk all the difficulties of the unspeakably difficult art of good prose by chopping your composition into line lengths.[6]

The 'language' section of the essay lists further advice to young poets seeking influence from older traditions. While these statements have been repeated in discussions of modernist poetry to the point of cliché, they are the foundation of the way in which Pound conceives the relationship between poetry and language. The use of no superfluous adjectives, the importance of concrete objects as the basis of the poetic image, and the fear of abstractions over the course of Pound's career become combined with an interest in the precision of Confucian doctrine, an fascination with Chinese language and literature, a fascination with the linguistic and cultural traditions of different cultures (and how they relate to one another), and a consistently renewed faith in the natural processes that poetry registers at its most successful. Pound remains committed to these principles, I argue, no matter how changed he or his work become over time.

Language in the Ezra Pound Critical Heritage

It is important, of course, that scholars are aware of the interrelatedness of all of Pound's ideological positions. Some of Pound's most remarkable statements on language are not only to be found in those texts outlining his literary or linguistic theories, as one would expect, but also in articles discussing economics, history, politics, philosophy, science and the visual arts. It is essential that we bear Peter Nicholls's warning in mind:

> This sense of underlying relations and homologies can be a source of both pleasure and irritation for the reader. No sooner have we isolated one strand of Pound's thought than we find that all along it was enmeshed with many others. Most previous criticism of his work has, from a variety of motives, sought to keep these different strands separate, tending in particular to drive a wedge between the 'literary' and political dimensions of his writing. Convenient though such an approach may seem, it

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[6] Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, 1:1 (1 March 1913), 200-206, 201-202.

> can never yield more than a partial view of Pound's work (at worst it issues a defensive formalism).[7]

The focus of my research has fortunately prevented such a 'wedge' being driven between the facets of Pound's work, not least because discussing his understanding of the role that language plays in all communication, from lyric poetry to political discourse, necessitates a thematic breadth. It is difficult to establish where Pound's linguistic theory ends and his philosophy and politics begin.

However, I believe that the investigation of Pound's linguistic theory demands a greater degree of relative isolation, or perhaps extraction, from the grand narratives of Pound's thought than many of the other topics raised in Nicholls's seminal study. For a poet so often associated with the intersection of literary and linguistic theory, critical studies focussing on Pound's relationship with language have been surprisingly rare. That is not to say that scholars have neglected the subject. On the contrary, there have been many engaging and enlightening discussions of Pound's use of language but for the most part these studies consider language in relation to other topics. Nicholls's injunction that we do not drive 'wedges' between the various strands of Pound's thought is a good justification for this, particularly when Pound himself often considered language from a functional point of view. Yet, one result of this is that it has been difficult for critics to establish boundaries between Pound's relationships with those contemporary linguists and philosophers of language whom he had read, and those modernist luminaries and commentators whom he may not have encountered but whose work bears fascinating correlations with (or, indeed, differences from) his own. In effect this establishes a broad view of Pound's work as a whole, but it delineates a far narrower vision of Pound's linguistic theory. In treating Pound's theory of language as a topic of research in and of itself, I have attempted in all places to establish distinctions between linguistic theories which Pound explicitly discussed or of which he was at least aware, those of which he was unaware but do bear a relation to his work, and those which bear little or no relation to his work. As a result, while this is indeed a 'partial view' of Pound's work as a whole, I have tried to establish a more comprehensive view of his understanding of language.

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[7] Peter Nicholls, *Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writing* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 1.

The earliest scholars of Pound's work produced studies that explored the breadth of Pound's poetic vision, combining formal analyses with exegesis and narrative. While the role that language in the development of Pound's poetic craft was often discussed, it was subsumed within wider concerns, namely the establishment, maintenance and investigation of Pound's literary and political reputation. Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era* (1971) is a good example of the combination of critical, biographical and scholarly details that so concerned the first generation of Pound scholars. Pound's association with far-right politics and his work's reputation for intense difficulty brought about a period of critical consolidation, where defining Pound's own outlook and his enduring legacy necessarily took precedence over specialised studies within his oeuvre. Nevertheless, in two central chapters, 'The Invention of Language' and 'Words Set Free', Kenner situates Pound in relation to a wider literary project which sought to revolutionise the relationship between art, language, and the world of 'things'.

Kenner treats this revolution historically, arguing that modernist linguistic revolutions were a direct outgrowth of nineteenth-century philological practices, without which he believes both the form and content of modernist texts such as *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* and *The Cantos* would not have been possible. Kenner writes that 'the province of these works, as never before in history, is the entire human race speaking, and in time as well as in space', by which he means that Eliot, Pound, and Joyce, are able to bring together fragments of speech and writing from across human history, facilitating conversations across time. Language is not simply treated as a product of its time, but as a series of products produced across time. In order for these poets to fully investigate the poetic treatment of language, and all of its attendant mysteries, they cannot be satisfied by one language alone or one time period. According to Kenner, such an approach was possible only because of historical moment in which these writers found themselves: 'this aplomb amid the multitudinous tongues of the world, moreover amid testimony to their constant change, has been possible for only a few decades, and is still not accessible to all readers'. This is coupled, however, with an increased awareness that the *raison d'etre* of language is a product not of natural links between words and their referents or essences, but of the conventional nature of speech, with histories established and maintained by etymological practice. ‘The linguistic contracts, being arbitrary, are fragile’, Kenner writes, ‘and only the code book, Webster’s or Larousse’s, wards off unspeakable disorder’.[8] Pound’s poetry is conceived, then, as responding to a period of linguistic history (and linguistic historiography) in which language is established and defined first by the collective practices of speech communities. After this it is then checked and ordered by philological and etymological research.

Kenner’s summary of the general linguistic outlook of the period leads him to a unified vision of language as a model built up of various intertwining matrices, themselves built up incrementally by fragments of words and practices. He sees Eliot, Joyce, and Pound (as well as others such as Gertrude Stein and William Carlos Williams) as finding themselves in a period of linguistic enlightenment, a process which they themselves took an active role in defining:

> Words characterise languages; languages are discriminated phases of Language; Language is the total apprehension, in time and space of the human mind, that labyrinthine marvel. Philology, in sorting out such matters – not always knowing what subtleties it sorted – permitted Pound’s generation the vision of languages as intertextured, cognate systems of apprehension, to each its special *virtu*.[9]

The process whereby language as an abstract entity is connected to concrete, individual languages is indeed a central concern of Pound’s poetry. Equally, Kenner’s connection between philological detail and remnants of a kind of mystical sublimity in individual phrases captures much of the modernist fascination with language, from Eliot’s use of Sanskrit at the end of the *The Waste Land* to Joyce’s appropriation of Old Norse in *Finnegans Wake*’s linguistic dexterity. Kenner’s project attempted to reconcile a period of scientific linguistic scrutiny with the mysteries invoked and indexed by the more lyrical aspects of modernist writing.

However, for all of Kenner’s attempts to outline Pound’s (and modernism’s) relationship to the linguistic inquiries of the period, *The Pound Era* contains very little scrutiny of Pound’s own statements about language. Furthermore, although linguists such as Michel Bréal and Otto Jespersen are mentioned, their ideas are not compared to Pound's in any detail. Kenner's main concern is outlining Pound's situation in a generalised account of the place of language in the modernist annals. The intense conflicts and contradictions inherent in the period's discussions surrounding the nature of language (let alone the study of language) are largely absent from his discussion. While *The Pound Era* nicely captures the ethos and ideology of modernist concerns with language, it does not outline the relationship between literary and linguistic figures, nor the issues that were at the centre of linguistic discussion. Furthermore, Pound's own voice is strangely absent, and while the influence of Pound's philological background is gestured towards, his own intense interest in a number of linguistic and non-linguistic figures' writing on language is not articulated. Kenner's account is an excellent introduction to the nature of Pound's thought on language, but its unity is misleading in terms of Pound's actual sources and his discussion of the period's dominant issues.

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[8] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 95.

[9] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 120.

Where Kenner attempted to assess Pound's understanding of language on Pound's own terms, more recent scholars have read Pound against the structuralist and post-structuralist models of language that have come to be widely used in literary studies. The most sustained account of Pound's linguistic theory is Victor Li's essay 'Philology and Power: Ezra Pound and the Regulation of Language' (1987), a more thorough treatment of both Pound's own statements and a number of his sources. Li assesses the extent of Pound's 'linguistic idealism', or a three-fold notion that language is secondary to a pre-existing reality, that the primary role language is to represent reality, and that language should represent reality in the most unmediated way possible. The latter point, Li contends, is one of the main reasons for Pound's fascination with Chinese characters which, following Fenollosa, he believed to be stylised pictographic representations of natural processes. Li traces an argument through Pound's work that language has a 'ground in an intelligent Nature' followed by an 'account of its decline into rhetorical din and mendacities of discourse'.[10] Where Kenner portrays the revolutionary aspects of Pound's (and others') approach to language, Li articulates the reactionary side of his linguistic theory, and attempts to account for the contradictions that result. For Li, when taken in its entirety, Pound's writing on language 'evince[s] an anxiety about the arbitrariness, instability, and susceptibility to change manifested in phonetic writing', by which Li means those languages which make use of alphabetic scripts. In turning to Chinese characters as an alternative, then, Pound reveals his 'desire for direct access to a permanent reality unburdened by the conventions, conflicts and changes of social discourse'. The Chinese character, according to Li, represents for Pound a kind of linguistic stability, and comes to function as indicative of an ideal linguistic state alien to 'phonetic' languages such as Greek, French, or English. Pound's linguistic project, then, is one of rectitude.

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[10] Victor P. H. Li, 'Philology and Power: Ezra Pound and the Regulation of Language', *boundary 2,* 15:1 (1986-1987), 187-210 (p. 189).

Li traces this throughout Pound's early and middle career, beginning with the influence of Allen Upward's *The New Word* in Pound's early essays during his London years and ending with a brief discussion of his review of C.K. Ogden's *Debabelization* in 1935. His study draws on the totalitarian nature of Pound's faith in Mussolini, arguing that Pound's belief in linguistic rectitude comes to rest upon an alliance to certain sites of linguistic authority: namely, Confucian philosophy, etymological histories, and poetry. Central to Li's contention is the idea that 'by purging words of their 'undependable' and 'loose' cultural and historical uses, and returning them to their original truth, Pound is really operating the regulative procedures of exclusion and rarefaction', by means of a rejection of abstractions in favour of a faith in original meanings.[11] This attitude is evident in Pound's work with increased regularity following the initial publication of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* in 1918, which Pound edited and for which he agitated in print for the rest of his career. Li's article is crucial in establishing a thread of linguistic thought that runs throughout Pound's career, namely faith in poetry's power to restore words and phrases to their original vitality.

While Li's article is to be commended for tracing this thread throughout Pound's work, Pound's linguistic idealism is complicated when submitted to inquiry within the wider history of linguistic thought during the modernist period. While it is true that Pound directly opposes Chinese characters to the practices of alphabetic writing, he is far more ambiguous when it comes to discussing the relative characteristics of the languages. In other words, Pound's statements regarding 'ideograms' revolve around conventions of writing and not necessarily language as a whole, although the two are, of course, deeply linked. As I demonstrate in Chapter One, Pound's attitude towards 'ideogrammic' writing is remarkably similar to those of professional linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics* and Otto Jesperson in *Language*. Of course, Li's account is limited by the amount of space available in a journal article, and as a result his scope is naturally narrower than a longer study would allow. Nevertheless, his linkage between Pound's tendency towards totalitarianism and a preponderance for linguistic rectitude is an invaluable contribution to the study of Pound's linguistic thought.

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[11] Li, 'Philology and Power', 206.

Philip Kuberski's *A Calculus of Ezra Pound* (1992) takes a post-structuralist approach to Pound's corpus. Kuberski begins by considering a curious remark of Jacques Derrida's in *Of Grammatology*. Derrida argued that Pound's and Fenollosa's writing represents a rejection of logocentrism. He contends that Pound and Fenollosa belong to a tradition of 'decentered' writing which destabilises the supposedly fixed categories of being and language upon which the western philosophical tradition has depended for centuries:

> The necessary decentering cannot be a philosophical or scientific act as such, since it is a question of dislocating, through access to another system linking speech and writing, the founding categories of language and the grammar of the *episteme*. The natural tendency of *theory* – of what unites philosophy and science in the *episteme* – will push rather toward filling in the breach than toward forcing the closure. It was normal that the breakthrough was more secure and penetrating on the side of literature and poetic writing: normal also that it, like Nietzsche, at first destroyed and caused to vacillate the transcendental authority and dominant category of the *episteme*: being. This is the meaning of Fenollosa whose influence upon Ezra Pound and his poetics is well-known: this irreducibly graphic poetics was, with that Mallarmé, the first break in the most entrenched Western tradition. The fascination that the Chinese ideogram exercised on Pound's writing may thus be given all its historical significance.[12]

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[12] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 92.

Derrida's notion of 'historical significance' is meant in the sense that we should be aware of the gravity of Fenollosa's and Pound's achievements and that their work should be considered as an embodiment of a Heideggerian reconsideration of the relationship between speech and being. By putting Pound in the same category of epistemological thought as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and, in fact, himself, Derrida is reinterpreting the role of poetry. Although Pound's own philosophical outlook was far from this tradition, Derrida is in fact assigning poetry the same cultural and historical significance that Pound did, if in a radically different way.

Derrida does not continue to explain how his terms relate to Pound's, nor how Pound fits into the tradition he assigns him, but Kuberski takes up this challenge. *A Calculus of Ezra Pound* is an engaging and deeply valuable assessment of the various ways in which Pound's work, and the work of many of his sources, may fit into differing post-structuralist analyses. While Pound's work has long interested post-structuralist critics, *The Cantos*, for all of their political intrigue and philosophical statements, tend to resist deconstructive analysis. One reason for this may be that Pound often names his sources and authorities in the text, giving the impression that binary oppositions that make up the poem are already laid bare. Another reason may be that Pound's sources are often outside of the dominant western political and philosophical traditions upon which desconstructive analysis often focuses as a point of opposition. As a result Kuberski's achievement is considerable, situating Pound's work in relation to a vast array of thinkers, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Jean Baudrillard.

Kuberski does not deconstruct the *Cantos* as such, but rather provides an exploration of the ways in which Pound's writing may or may not represent the 'break' that Derrida gestures towards in *Of Grammatology*. Kuberski argues that Pound's work can be characterised by tensions between a commitment to modernist poetics and a faith in anti-modern ideology and aesthetics (such as his belief in Mussolini, his treatment of Sigismundo Malatesta, or his use of Aristotelian notions of *techne*). Seen this way Pound's is a project which works against the 'relativizing tendencies of Freud, Saussure, and Einstein' by attempting to 'put the word, self, and atom back together again'.[13] In this sense, Kuberski's analysis shares much with Victor Li's, with both focusing on the apparent discrepancy between Pound's innovative poetic practice and his linguistic rectitude. Compared to *Finnegans Wake*, the *Cantos* are presented as a work which is ill-at-ease with the modern world and its developing tendencies, and it is this as much as modernist form which marks its engagement with Pound's contemporary era.

Kuberski concludes that with regard to language and writing, *The Cantos* are distinctly anti-modern, writing that 'Pound may, far from being an advocate of modernism, be seen as its first critic, and his poetry may be seen as an attempt to employ innovation to motivate the sign – not finally to sever it from ideological anchoring points'.[14] By 'motivate', Kuberski is referring to a project providing supposedly arbitrary and conventional linguistic signs with fixed, stable referents; a process which, according to Saussurian Structuralism, is based upon a series of logical fallacies. This is an important part of Pound's linguistic theory and might point towards a kind of linguistic conservativism. However, it would be too simplistic to portray Pound as a reactionary with regard to language, as his background in modern languages, his poetic innovations, and his lifelong curiosity with linguistic debates clearly demonstrates that he sought a programme of reform which has much in common with other modernist tendencies. However, in order to understand Pound's relation to modernist thought on language as a whole, it is important to measure his beliefs against his contemporaries.

My thesis serves to build on the work of the aforementioned scholars, synthesising their critical and theoretical considerations of Pound's work with a sustained study of how Pound engaged with his linguistic contemporaries. My research explores the ways in which Pound saw his theory of language (and how this was brought to bear on his literary output) and the extent to which his ideas resonated with the prevalent theories and practices of his era. One area that my thesis does not explore in and of itself is translation. There has been a great deal of critical attention paid to Pound's work in relation to translation, from Ming Xie's 'Pound as Translator' to the broader studies of Laurence Venuti and Daniel Katz. These studies have served to build a clear picture of the ways in which translation infuses not simply Pound's understanding of the way languages and cultures interact, but also his entire poetic practice: as Daniel Katz has written, 'for Pound, poetry *is* translation'.[15] Understanding the importance translation held in Pound's conception of his work is essential for understanding the cultural negotiations of the *Cantos*. Katz terms the language of the *Cantos* as 'post-English', as the text cannot be said to rely simply on the structures and vocabulary of any one linguistic code. As Katz explains this is 'not only because [the *Cantos*] feature many foreign languages, but because no particular English remains against which the foreign tongues can be measured, it too having become an untethered "series of Englishes"'.[16] Translation is essential, therefore, in understanding three key aspects of Pound's poetics: the relationship between languages, language as cultural negotiation, the language of the *Cantos*.

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[13] Philip Kuberski, *A Calculus of Ezra Pound: Vocations of the American Sign* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1992), p. 4.

[14] Kuberski, *A Calculus of Ezra Pound*, p. 60.

Although my thesis does not engage with translation directly, the relationship between translation and poetic creativity is an important part of modernist concepts of language. In his *Language*, Edward Sapir conceived of poetry as two acts of translation. An author or poet, he argues, negotiates between two spheres of creative activity. The first is what he terms the 'linguistic matrix' which is in essence the language or dialect in which a text is written. The poetic flair that results from artistic creation, such as individual rhythms, intonations or idioms, are untranslatable. The second sphere (which operates above the former) is artistic vision, which he believes is non-verbal, and in so far as an image is presented this is translatable into any linguistic medium.[17] In effect, all poetry is translation as poets and authors already translate the non-verbal into verbal mechanisms. Which this does suggest that poetry and translation are inseparable, this thesis explores the largely abstract notion of language (*le langue* in Saussurian terms), understood as the initial act of translation between non-verbal images or thoughts and verbal machinery. Although we have made great critical strides in understanding translation and its centrality to Pound's poetic project, this thesis explores how Pound conceives of language prior to the act of translation. While this only tells part of Pound's poetic story, it provides a firm basis for future linguistic discussion.

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[15] Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, p. 75.

[16] Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, p. 87.

[17] Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp. 237-238.

This thesis outlines Pound's approach to Language as an abstract concept; the set of principles, in other words, that Pound applies in his treatment of the areas listed above. This is not simply a structuralist distinction between *langue* and *langage* (not least because such a model of language was unknown to Pound), but one in which Pound's general approach to language is built up incrementally from his instances of contact with linguistic thought. What emerges is a series of accounts of Pound's pragmatism. While he could be dogmatic in applying Confucius, or in his defences of Mussolini, his approach to language is idiosyncratic at certain points, informed by linguistic studies and research at others. While he may appear contradictory, it must be remembered that Pound did not claim adherence to any theoretical models of language. He treated the subject in largely practical terms throughout his career. For this reason, while I do bring in linguistic theory, such as Saussure's or Peirce's models of semiotics or the erroneously-named Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, I do so as an intended contrast and not as an appropriation of Pound's work. Pound's theory of language, I argue, is internally consistent even if it is not fully consistent with any of the twentieth century's most famous theories.

Defining Modernist Language

It is difficult to speak of a modernist approach to language. Authors and poets as distinct as D. H. Lawrence and Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens and Louis Zukofsky are collected under the term 'modernism' but the language of their texts differs greatly. Indeed, Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, all three of whom are held to be writers in the 'High modernist' tradition, have so many formal differences that it is difficult to extract a list of shared principles. One need only consider the differences between the writing in Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914) and an extract from Pound's *Cantos* to see that the term 'modernism' brings together a variety of approaches to language:

> Colored hats are necessary to show that curls are worn by an addition of blank spaces, this makes the difference between single lines and broad stomachs, the least thing is lightening, the least thing means a little flower and a big delay a big delay that makes more nurses than little women really little women. So clean is a light that nearly all of it shows pearls and little ways. A large hat is tall and me and all custard whole.[18]

While Stein's work is undoubtedly an extraordinary literary performance, combining relatively commonplace syntactic structures with new and creative combinations of words and phrases, its meaning, even in the smallest units, is difficult to penetrate. Indeed, Michel Delville argues that the relative simplicity of the syntax is an illusion which is 'irremediably shattered by the apparent nonsense of the description itself, which draws our attention to the artificiality of analytical and utilitarian prose'.[19] Compare this with a lyrical passage from Pound's 'Canto II', completed only a few years after Stein's *Tender Buttons*:

> Olive grey in the near,
>   far, smoke grey of the rock-slide,
> Salmon-pink wings of the fish-hawk
>   cast grey shadows in water,
> The tower like a one-eyed great goose
>   cranes up out of the olive-grove,
>
> And 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.
>   (II.10).

Although the text presents the reader with numerous difficulties, not least with identifying all of the references and establishing who the speaker is, the individual lines are intelligible at very worst with an exegetic guide. The language of the text is, as Pound's and Flint's dictums implore, shorn of superfluity, presenting a succession of clear images. Part of the problem in reading Pound's *Cantos* is in accounting for the way in which images hang together, but from a linguistic point of view Pound has not created any illusions of syntax or language.

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[18] Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (New York: Clair Marie, 1914), p. 26.

[19] Michel Delville, *The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), p. 195.

Sara J. Ford writes of the difficulty that scholars have faced in attempting to outline Gertrude Stein's exact theory of language and its influence on her work, suggesting that 'aiming to pin down Stein's language to a single referential interpretation will necessarily neglect the polymorphous nature of Stein's language and, therefore, miss the larger issues at stake in the text'.[20] It is not a question, therefore, of using research into Stein's (or other writers') theory of language in order to decode a supposedly 'difficult' text, but rather one of using that research in order to understand the way in which Stein's language differs from conventional usage. Ford suggests that Stein's use of language in *Tender Buttons* exceeds the author's immediate intention for the text, leading to a conception of language itself as a medium that expands beyond its communicative or referential functions. According to Ford, Stein's unconventional use of language 'creates so many associative possibilities that it becomes impossible, ultimately, to distinguish between the associations intended by Stein and those which naturally arise noticed by the artist or not by the new context itself'.[21] This approach could not be further from Pound's intention for linguistic precision even if the formal approach to the creative possibilities of the recontextualisation of words and phrases share many similarities with his own work. Where Pound wants to develop a poetics that draws on the communicative and referential functions of language, Ford suggests that Stein implicitly draws attention to language's more Protean aspects:

> Language, while referring all the time to its referents, must be reckoned with in its own right. By making art from the parts of language rather than using language to make art from the world of reality, Stein draws our attention to the way language functions as a system of signs. By placing otherwise dissimilar words together in new contexts, she also suggests radically new layers of potential linguistic association.[22]

One notable difference between Pound's approach to language and Stein's linguistic play, as it is described by Ford, is that Pound's focus is primarily on the relationship between language and referents. His treatment revolves around language as medium and not language as such. Pound's linguistic theory is often embedded in his discussion of other interests, such as anthropology, philosophy or economics, and as a result it is often focused on the way that language interacts with thought or the natural world. However, Pound does draw attention to the way that language functions as a system even if he is always keen to move beyond a discussion of its structures. Similarly, like Stein his work often revolves around creating new layers of 'potential linguistic association' as a result of placing 'dissimilar words together' – this forms an important part of what Pound argued was his 'ideogrammic method'. Where Pound's and Stein's approach differs, however, is in the purpose of this method. For Pound, his intention is always to draw on previously unseen (or obfuscated) relations between referents or particulars, whereas Stein, according to Ford, points towards new creative possibilities provided by the flexibility of language as a system of signs. In Pound's case, his work is never focused on language alone, but rather language as a means of service.

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[20] Sara J. Ford, *Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens: The Performance of Modern Consciousness* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 47.

[21] Ford, *Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens*, p. 51.

[22] Ford, *Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens*, pp. 51-52.

Pound's faith in language as a referential system sets him apart from James Joyce, whose *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is another key text in modernist linguistic discussions. Like *Tender Buttons*, *Finnegans Wake* is written in an idiosyncratic style, reworking language for the requirements of the work. Joyce himself describes the language of the text (or more specifically, a text within the text) as 'told in sounds in utter that, in signs so adds to, in universal, in polyguttural, in each auxiliary neutral idiom, sordomutics, florilingua, sheltafocal, flayflutter, a con's cubane, a pro's tutute, strassarab, ereperse and anythongue at all'.[23] In terms of the form of the language the differences with Pound's work are considerable and Pound famously dismissed Joyce's final work as 'circumambient peripherisation'. Where Pound's understanding of language is built around notions of clarity of image and accuracy, Joyce's work dramatises a post-Babelian cacophony of noise and unintelligibility. However, there are important similarities in that the sources for the linguistic play in the text are as varied as those for Pound's *Cantos*. Joyce's text also crosses over historical periods and cultures, attempting to formulate a universal vision composed of the interplay of disparate particulars. Although their work tends in opposite directions, both Joyce and Pound have a concern with pulling together a variety of discordant linguistic traditions into a harmony of modernist poetics.

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[23] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 117.

Joyce's work has produced a considerable amount of critical material looking at the text's relationship with the philosophy of language and linguistics. Equally, the language of the text has attracted a great deal of critical attention, due in large part to the wealth of material created by the linguistic issues raised by *Finnegans Wake*. The 2003 collection *James Joyce and the Difference of Language* brought together a number of approaches to studying Joyce's treatment of language throughout his oeuvre. Patrick McGee argues that the *Finnegans Wake* 'is a tissue of errors, of signifiers made up of letters that have wandered far away from their proper locations in the body of language as a symbolic system', and this may explain why it has become one of the quintessential texts in the study of the intersections between language and literature.[24] Joyce's work is in many ways a product of a period of history in which advancement in the study of the nature of language as an unstable system based on arbitrariness and conventionality was accompanied by a period of political and cultural instability. A text which is inherently unstable, unable to rest upon one pre-existing linguistic system, and which resists attempts to fix the relationship between signifiers and referents seems to capture the modernist period perfectly. The instabilities and tensions within the text are, according to Thomas Docherty, not only a fundamental part of the text, but are the text's ultimate achievement:

> the tension between the mediate and the immediate, the plastic and temporal, is more fully the very condition and point of the text itself. The language of the *Wake* is a language which tries not to be language, but to be plastic, sculptural, gestural even: presence in the very midst of absence.[25]

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[24] Patrick McGee, 'Errors and Expectation: the Ethics of Desire in *Finnegans Wake*' in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language,* ed. Laurent Milesi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003),), pp. 161-179 (pp. 161-162).

[25] Thomas Docherty, ''sound sense'; or 'tralala'/ 'moocow': Joyce and the Anathema of Writing' in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*, ed. Laurent Milesi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 112-127 (p. 121).

This is the fundamental difference between scholarship surrounding Joyce's work and Pound's. While Joyce's text responds to a post-Saussurian focus on language as a structure and system separable from the world of referents, but also, simultaneously, language as a material to be deformed, Pound's work resists this attempt. While Pound's poetry has a certain material quality, often drawing attention to itself as an object, in its linguistic principles it remains committed to ideals of precision, clarity and rectitude. In effect, it is a language which tries to be language even as it is being 'plastic, sculptural, gestural'.

In this sense Pound has much in common with his friend and compatriot William Carlos Williams, whose *Paterson* bears certain stylistic similarities to Pound's *Cantos*, with its loose typography, lack of a fixed metrical contract, its mixture of documentary prose with lyrical poetry, and, most significantly for my thesis, its explicit discussion of the role that language plays in shaping the poem. Formally, *Paterson* revolves around attempts to resolve stylistic tensions between the density of Williams's prose and the delicacy of his poetic language. In one of the most beautiful passages in the *Paterson I*, Williams decries

> Pithy philosophies of
> daily exits and entrances, with books
> propping up one end of the shaky table –
> The vague accuracies of events dancing two
> and two with language which they
> forever surpass – and dawns
> tangled in darkness –[26]

This can be contrasted with the poem's many instances of historical material, drawn from textbooks, testimonies or newspaper accounts. The dryness of the prose and the intense beauty of lines such as 'dawns/tangled in darkness' meet in Williams's grand poetic and historical visions. Language is conceived as an inadequate medium for the representation of events which 'forever surpass' the capacity of linguistic systems which attempt to represent them.

> The language, the language
> fails them

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[26] Williams, *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 23.

They do not know the words
            or have not
the courage to use them
            - girls from
families that have decayed and
taken to the hills: no words.
They may look at the torrent in
            their minds
and it is foreign to them.

For the people of the poem (and the people of the actual city of Paterson; the people of modernity) the problem is that ‘language/ is divorced from their minds’ and it is for this reason that it ‘fails them’.[27] In many ways, Williams attempts to compensate for language’s failure to register events with more than a ‘vague accuracy’ by making this difficulty explicit. For Brian A. Bremen this represents what he sees as Williams’s attempt to negotiate his poem through the ‘failure of language’ as ‘the frozen language of the prose history that the beauty of “things” will “forever surpass,” the divorce of feeling from fact, and the silence caused by the failure of language, all combine here to thwart the attempt at communion or cathexis’.[28] Williams’s response is to formulate a language of violent breakage, associated most often with the power of the Paterson river which is always ‘rolling in, top up/ under, thrust and recoil, [with] a great clatter’.[29] As Bremen explains, the explosive and destructive potential of the river – and by extension the natural world as a whole – is a necessary response to linguistic failure, as ‘freeing the language, freeing the beauty – the poetry that lies hidden in the prose – always takes place through violence in Williams’.[30] In *Paterson*, the poet’s struggle against language takes place within language itself: and it is this intractable situation that lies at the heart of all modernist treatments of language.

The similarity to Pound’s own struggle with language as a mimetic medium throughout the *Cantos* are striking: if language is inadequate as a means of representing events and ‘things’ accurately, then poetry has to compensate for the inadequacy. Williams’s response to this problem is to articulate the linguistic crisis itself; Pound's, by contrast, is a concerted effort to apply a programme of linguistic rectitude, attempting to fix the system as much as possible. Both Pound's and Williams's efforts end in incompleteness and silence.

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[27] Williams, *Paterson*, pp. 12-13.
[28] Brian A. Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 34.
[29] Williams, *Paterson*, p. 5.
[30] Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture*, p. 36.

One particular distinguishing feature of modernist poetry is its propensity towards citation. Although citation of various kinds has existed throughout poetic history, from Homer to Milton to Browning, it is the self-conscious and discursive approach evident in *The Cantos* or *The Waste Land*, to give two such examples, that sets modernist writing apart. *The Cantos* in particular collapse the boundaries between academic discourse, historical text, and poetry and in doing so the role of citation is more pronounced. With his academic background in philology, one might expect Pound's approach to citation and quotation to be both consistent and formulaic. This is not borne out in his poetic practice, however, as Pound is curiously inconsistent with regard to both the system of reference he employs and the extent to which he employs it. This may be for the reason that Pound's loyalty was to poetry and the art of language, rather than the precise scientific or historical study of it, despite his critical claims to the contrary. As Michael Harper has argued 'far from assimilating "history" to "poetry" Pound did the exact opposite: insisting on language as a means of knowing, he assimilated "poetry" to "history." For him the power of poetry lay in the precision of the reference it could achieve'.[31] Not only does the style of citation, or the extent to which it is even employed as a technique, depend on the material and form of Pound's individual poems, but its very discursive force, in Pound's view, receives its power from its use in poetry alone.

Pound's famous dictum that poets and artists should always strive to 'make it new' applies as much to his acts of citation as it does to his overall poetic theory. In his discussion of citationality, Constantine Nakassis explores the creative potential of citation, drawing on a wide semiotic canon including Charles Sanders Pierce, J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Michael Silverstein. First Nakassis explains citationality as an 'act [which] suspends or brackets something of what it cites, even as it carries something over from it. The citation focuses our attention on something that is immanent in, but perhaps not otherwise manifest to, our experience of that which is cited'.[32] Citational acts are both indexical and performative in the sense that they do not simply refer to a source, but in doing so carry the sense of authority over the cited material, or perform a kind of knowing by relying on an external authority. From a creative perspective, Nakassis argues, 'citational acts re-present and bracket that which they cite and, in doing so, open up new social horizons of possibility, signification, and, in some cases, performative power'.[33] As a result, 'make it new' is a process that takes place in any citational act.

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[31] Michael F. Harper, 'Truth and Calliope: Ezra Pound's Malatesta', *PMLA*, 96:1 (1981), 86-103, 87.

In many ways, Pound's acts of citation, quotation or appropriation are analogous to his approach to translation: by transplanting textual material from one place to another his poetry engages in multiple acts of recontextualisation at any one moment, whether from one textual site to another or from one language to another. Michael Alexander traces Pound's mistranslations to his approach to language (which he conceives as a direct result of his training in philology), claiming that 'he has the philologist's devotion to the individual word, rather than a linguistician's interest in structure'.[34] Where Pound does not translate, he brings in individual words or even whole phrases and passages in original languages. According to Alexander this insertion is 'sometimes to summon up a cultural tradition in a single word', thus suggesting that where Pound does not translate, he uses original languages to index cultural references, norms, or values. For Alexander this accounts for a 'philological lust', and formal 'palimpsestuousness', both of which result from 'an explosion of philology'.[35]

Structure of the Thesis

In my first chapter, I consider Pound's early writing on language in relation to the conflict between what Gerald Graff sees as a university-based institutional conflict in the modern language department between philological scholarship and a 'generalist' desire for literary study to be based on critical value judgements. While recent scholarship, particularly works such as Haruko Momma's *From Philology to English Studies* (2013) and James Turner's *Philology* (2014), has demonstrated that this dichotomy between philology and 'generalism' has been oversimplified, it is useful as a spectrum to gauge contemporaneous thought. Pound was studying Romance languages at a crucial time during this conflict, and this chapter looks at the influence that both philology and criticism had on the development of his linguistic thought. Pound, for all of his rejection of philology, comes to rely on many of its practices and assumptions when writing about language in both his critical writing and poetry, from his discussion of textual and linguistic particularities in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) to his account of his visit to the eminent Provençal scholar Emil Lévy in 'Canto XX' (1930).

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[32] Constantine Nakassis, 'Citation and Citationality', *Signs and Society*, 1:1 (2013), 51-77 (57).
[33] Nakassis, 'Citation and Citationality', 75.
[34] Michael Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', *Translation and Literature*, 6:1 (1997), 23-30 (27).
[35] Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', 29.

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first accounts for the influence that philological approaches to language had on the earliest development of Pound's linguistic theories. In particular, I look at the way that Pound's earliest treatments of language reflect the basic principles evinced by many of the dominant philologists of the late nineteenth century, with my particular examples being William Dwight Whitney (whom Pound read as part of his university syllabus) and Michel Bréal, whose ideas were contemporaneous with Pound's work. The second part of the chapter looks at Pound's turn away from philology and academia in general. Pound sought to develop a non-academic, literary approach to language which led him to consider language as part of wider artistic discussions, establishing a pattern he would follow for the rest of his career. Pound's interest in the work of Ernest Fenollosa can thus be considered within the broader context of the development of his linguistic thought in the period. Although Fenollosa is an important figure, I argue that Pound does not necessarily draw his linguistic principles from Fenollosa's work, but that he approaches *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* with a pre-defined set of assumptions. Fenollosa's impact on Pound's views on writing, the differences between East Asian and Western culture and language, and the relationship between poetry and the natural world is of course substantial. I conclude the chapter by demonstrating that Pound's abandonment of philology as an approach to literature is not necessarily followed by an abandonment of its fundamental linguistic tenets: Pound's *Cantos* develop out of his knowledge of the historiography of language and textual history, and they retain an intense focus on individual words and phrases in a way that reflects their author's linguistic background.

In my second chapter, I explore the way in which Pound believes language interacts with culture, drawing on the disciplinary history of linguistic anthropology, from E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer to Franz Boas and Edward Sapir. In terms of Pound's career, I cover a period from 1928 to the publication of *Guide to Kulchur* in 1938; by contrast, I draw on anthropological and linguistic research dating from roughly 1850 to 1940. I focus on the idea of linguistic relativity, which in the case of Pound's work relates to the way in which individual languages represent unique cultural characteristics. Linguistic relativity also explores the way that certain languages or dialects can create shades of meaning unavailable in others and the ways in which culture and language impact on one another. Linguistic relativity must be considered in relation to the wider anthropological framework out of which it developed, cultural relativism. This approach was outlined by Franz Boas, and it rejected the heirarchical evolutionism of nineteenth century anthropology which held certain groups to be more or less cultured (or 'civilised') than others. Boas proposed that what constitutes culture differs depending on the group, and that all groups are equally, and uniquely, 'cultured'. The debate around the extent to which culture and language are related, and particularly the extent that one's worldview is influenced by the language(s) one speaks, was at the centre of anthropological thought during the 1930s.

Pound's interest in anthropology can be traced to his discovery of the work of Leo Frobenius in the late nineteen twenties. Frobenius studied so-called 'primitive' cultures, and his work straddles the boundary between nineteenth century evolutionism and racialism, and twentieth century interest in cultural difference. Pound also draws on the ideas of the French philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, whose axiological relativism proposed that humanity is divided into 'logical' or 'modern' (western) and 'pre-logical' or 'primitive' (non-western) mentalities and that the relative differences are manifested in language, culture and behaviour. I situate Pound's interest in Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Leo Frobenius in relation to the period's wider discussions of the intersections between language, culture, and race. Pound shares Lévy-Bruhl's and Frobenius's axiological relativism in believing that the world is divided into 'primitive' and 'modern' societies, and as Pound's concerns are primarily literary, it is the linguistic manifestation of relative differences that becomes his primary concern. Pound's linguistic relativity is a fundamental part of his linguistic theory, and I explore the ways in which he links language to culture and race in the 1930s. In particular, I argue that Frobenius's and Lévy-Bruhl's understanding of the relationship between language, race and culture becomes a fundamental part of Pound's vision for the way in which the various cultures and languages of the *Cantos* form its textual fabric.

Chapter Three explores Pound's correspondence with the English philosopher, C.K. Ogden between the years 1935 and 1938. Ogden had developed an international auxiliary language, Basic English, for the purpose of international communication. Ogden and his colleague I.A. Richards had published a survey of linguistic thought in 1923 entitled *The Meaning of Meaning*. Within it, they concluded that language had been allowed to drift too far from the stability provided by fixed meanings. They believed that the lack of surety in meaning brought about by the modern state of language was the primary reason behind what they sure as a contemporary confusion of thought. For Ogden and Richards, a lack of linguistic rectitude and rigidity had brought about a confused state in humanity and was responsible for philosophical and psychological crises in the aftermath of World War One. Ogden's response was to develop a minimalist version of English, called Basic English, which had a basic vocabulary of eight hundred and fifty words (excluding variations) and a more rigid grammatical structure based around nouns rather than verbs. Although it was primarily advertised as an easy way for non-native speakers to learn English, Ogden predicted that it would one day become the basis for a renewed and purified version of the language as a whole.

Pound similarly saw Basic English as a means of reforming the English language, which he believed to have lost an original precision of meaning due to an over-reliance on abstraction. Pound and Ogden agreed that the English language (and language in general) needed an extensive effort of reform. I argue that Pound's interest in Ogden's work is a reflection of the linguistic values of *The Cantos* and Pound was impressed enough with Ogden's ideas to offer to write a canto in Basic English. I also explore the similarities and differences in their linguistic theories, and explain that while their fundamental principles of style are similar, Pound's inclinations towards polyphony and particularity cause their potential collaboration to collapse. While Pound agreed with Ogden's principles of reform, Basic English proved too rigid a system for him to be able to work in and Pound abandoned the idea of writing a Basic canto. For Pound the language relied on approximation of meaning, whereas his poetry revolved around an imagistic precision and linguistic variety for which a vocabulary of eight hundred and fifty words is ill-fitted. Furthermore, despite the similarities in their linguistic philosophies, Ogden and Pound disagreed on the practicalities of Basic English, with Pound criticising its grammatical structure in particular. Pound did, however, take much away from his engagement with Ogden's work, and the correspondence is a fascinating insight into the way in which Pound saw language as a material system.

The fourth chapter of the thesis focuses on the long, final period of Pound's career from around 1940 to the end of his life in 1972, although he had effectively stopped working on the *Cantos* by 1960. By the end of the 1930s, Pound had a well-established method of exploring the relationship between language and culture, a crystallised conception of the way in which language relates to both thought and the natural world, and a sound grasp of the historical processes behind individual languages. However, it is clear from his correspondence with the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana that he felt his poetic project depended too heavily on an intuitive link between particulars. What Pound sought to develop in the final stage of his career was a universalising philosophical outlook that could bring together the *Cantos*' disparate parts within a unified whole. Pound wrote to Santayana for advice in developing a philosophical canon, as well as seeking commentary on his own philosophical outlook, which was by his own admission lacked clarity. The outbreak of the Second World War, however, arrested Pound's philosophical ambitions as he became further involved in propagandising on behalf of Mussolini's regime.

This chapter looks at Pound's failure to develop an all-encompassing philosophy that would serve to 'make [the poem] cohere'. Specifically, I argue that Pound's theory of language, which he established as an ambitious programme of reform early in his career, collapses into a pessimistic silence, with many of the *Cantos*' final passages gesturing towards the non-linguistic world as a means of contemplation and unity: for a poem which revolves around a myriad of celebrated linguistic play, as well as explicit musings on the importance and value of language as a cultural, let alone communicative, touchstone of civilisation, this becomes a devastating and irreversible loss to its vitality.

I begin by exploring Pound's engagement with the aesthetic philosophy of George Santayana. During the Second World War, when Pound was not engaged in writing articles regarding the war, he maintained a period of consolidation, promoting his long-held views on language and literature within the Italian press. I argue that the process by which the *Cantos* move from a focus on language to a focus on gesturing towards the non-verbal, natural world begins with the intense introspection of the *Pisan Cantos*. Pound's time spent at the American Detention Training Centre and his subsequent trial for treason and incarceration significantly altered the focus of the poem, forcing him to reassess its main values and the possibility of unity in what was an increasingly unstable situation. I do not believe that Pound was able to recover the same steadfast vitality and confidence which drove the linguistic experimentation and thought of his early and middle periods, thus leading the poem to collapse into silence. While Pound may not have engaged with what we understand today to be the major linguistic figures of the period, for example Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, or Roman Jakobson, he did strive to relate his own theories to other thinkers, no matter how obscure they may appear to us now. It is notable, therefore, that during the long period during and after his ordeal in Pisa, Pound stopped relating his work to new figures and authorities, and as a result this chapter is less closely related to contemporaneous linguists than the preceding three chapters.

My approach in this thesis is broadly historicist and chronological in that it looks at Pound's linguistic thought in relation to two particular histories. First, I consider Pound's theory of language as a development over time: an expansion of basic principles throughout his career. Second, I measure the developmental stages of Pound's linguistic thought in relation to the disciplinary history of linguistics itself. In taking this dual historical approach, I was able to divide my project into four discrete chapters that follow distinct periods in linguistic history as well as separate stages of Pound's life and work.

I have chosen to focus my study on linguistics as an academic discipline rather than on the philosophy of language as a whole for three interrelated reasons: one, the distinction between the two is, particularly during this period, often more apparent than actual; two, Pound's own academic background was heavily rooted in the approach taken by disciplines which relied on approaches that are now part of linguistic disciplinary history, rather than philosophy; three, as a point of contrast, linguistics is a science of language, and in tracing its relation to the art of language we can more easily assess where the two disciplines diverge and where they come together. The philosophy of language, in other words, straddles both disciplines and is thus not easily separable from either.

Chapter 1: 'End Fact. Try Fiction': Philology, Historical Linguistics and Pound's Early Poetry, 1907-1925.

Ezra Pound's first publication was an article entitled 'Raphaelite Latin' which defended aspects of Renaissance Latin poetry against a charge of 'literary barrenness'. This article was published in *Book News Monthly* in September 1906, when he had recently taken up doctoral study in Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania. The article outlines Pound's ideological differences with academia in general and the discipline of philology in particular. Decrying the 'neglect' of Renaissance Latin poetry, and giving a number of reasons for this, Pound criticises the dominant academic model which results in the division of literature into set periods:

> There are causes for this neglect. The scholars of classic Latin, bound to the Germanic ideal of scholarship, are no longer able to as of old fill themselves with the beauty of the classics, and by the very force of that beauty inspire their students to read Latin widely and for pleasure; nor are they able to make students see clearly whereof classic beauty consists. The scholar is compelled to spend most of his time learning what his author wore and ate, and in endless pondering over some utterly unanswerable question of textual criticism, such as: "In a certain epigram," not worth reading, and which could not get into print to-day, "is a certain word *seca* or *secat?* The meaning will be the same, but the syntax is different."[36]

Pound's characterisation of scholarship implies a dedicated and limited focus on particulars and curiosities, without full attention to literature (or language) as a whole. Pound's most extensive experience of academia was in philology, a broad term used to stand for the academic study of language and literature, and the precursor to modern literary and linguistic study. As David Moody has written, ''philology' would become the catchword for all that Pound thought wrong with the university teaching of literature as he experienced it', although, as I shall explore below, Pound's own account may obscure as much as it reveals.[37] Nevertheless, philology is a discipline, Pound argues in 'Raphaelite Latin', that takes too narrow a focus as the basis of study, basing its methodology on the ‘scientific’ approach developed in Germany in the early nineteenth century. He continues by describing the effect the perceived narrowness of philological study on the scholar:

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[36] Ezra Pound, 'Raphaelite Latin', *Book News Monthly*, 25.1 (1906). 31-34 (p. 31).

[37] David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 16.

> The scholar is bowed down to this Germanic ideal of scholarship, the life work of whose servants consists in gathering blocks to build a pyramid that will be of no especial use except as a monument, and whose greatest reward is the possibility that the servant may have his name on the under side of some half-prominent stone, where by chance – a slender one – some future stone-gatherer will find it. This system has three results; it makes the servant piously thank his gods that his period ends in A.D. 400, and that there are some stones he need not carry, some things written thereafter that he need not read. It also prevents his building a comfortable house for his brain to live in, and makes him revile anyone who tries so to do with the abject and utterly scornful “dilettante”. No one knows the contempt and hatred that can be gathered into these few syllables until they have been hissed at him by one fully Germanized.[38]

Pound’s vitriol and hyperbole is symptomatic of much of his criticism, and is particularly indicative of his attitude towards philology as a critical practice throughout his career. Pound’s own version of scholarship, as he sees it, prefers to focus instead on impressions, senses, moods and tones, finely-wrought phrases, and comparisons to literatures of other periods or places. However, in order to appreciate Pound’s grievances with philology fully, as well as the wider impact that the discipline had on his understanding of language and literature (and the relationship between the two), we must first look at the history of philology itself.

Philology has been treated with renewed critical interest in the last fifteen years, and Pound’s place in relation to the discipline is particularly relevant to critical discussions for a number of reasons. First, Pound is one of the central figures in twentieth century literature, and his formative years and postgraduate study at university were spent in modern language departments: both his critical writing and his poetry bear witness to the history of philology at a crucial time. Second, Pound is at the centre of modernist discussions of language, with the function, history, and use of language fundamental aspects of his poetics. Third, Pound’s critical writing often focuses on the same questions of language, literary value and history that occupy philological discussion. I argue that Pound’s positions, from his early treatment of scholarly method to his interest in Ernest

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[38] Pound, ‘Raphaelite Latin’, 31.

Fenollosa, are a sustained engagement with philology and philological assumptions. Furthermore, the breadth of the linguistic and literary detail of Pound's poetry throughout his career reflect the time that he spent engaged in philological concerns, despite his general antipathy towards the American university system.

One problem with outlining the place of philology in modernist discussions of language, and in Pound's work in particular, is the notorious difficulty of defining the term in the first place. Its definition has changed considerably over time and place, and understanding the history of philology as a discipline is perhaps the best way to understand the term itself. In 2002, during his presidential address to the Modern Language Association of America, Michael Holquist called for a return to philology in a paper entitled 'Why We Should Remember Philology'. This echoed an earlier paper of Holquist's, 'Forgetting our Name, Remembering our Mother' (2000), in which he articulated the narrative of philology's decline and eventual disappearance by the time of the twentieth century. Holquist traces the origin of philology to the Prussian university of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries. The foundation of philology lies, he argues, in Friedrich August Wolf's and Wilhelm von Humboldt's preferences for studying language as language, separate from the dominant philosophical and theological ideas of the period.[39] According to Holquist, Philology is defined broadly as the study of language and literature for their own sakes. He then argues that in the development of the nineteenth century German university, philology becomes a specialised, narrower form of study, which comprises the dedicated linguistic and textual scholarship with which the term is most often associated today. At the heart of the word 'philology', then, is a separation between an original term encompassing the whole of the study of language and literature, and a narrower definition that developed out of the academy referring to practicalities of scholarship: a focus on details and variations; and a situating of study in relation to wider linguistic histories and developments. It was also focused on textual scholarship, as opposed to critical or aesthetic evaluations.

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[39] See Michael Holquist, 'Why We Should Remember Philology', *Profession* (2002), 72-79.

More recently, Sheldon Pollock (2009) and Haruko Momma (2012) have similarly called for a return to philology, lamenting the decline of the centrality of the discipline not only to the study of language and literature, but to the university as a whole. Momma, in one of the more balanced discussions of the subject, narrates the rise of philology to its predominance in the modern language department at the turn of the twentieth century to its eventual marginalisation by the 1930s:

> In the twentieth century, the study of language and literature blossomed in the fields of linguistics and literary analysis. These two may be seen as sibling disciplines in that they were born of the same parent, philology, and that they took after different features of their matrix. Their paths parted almost immediately after birth: literary analysis found its home in the emergent field of modern languages and especially of English, whereas linguistics often claimed its own territory in university programmes bearing its name…This meant, however, that the study of language and literature was split into two separate subjects, thus dissolving a good portion of the space occupied by philology for more than a century.[40]

By the nineteen eighties, Momma continues, the term philology had become 'exceedingly narrow' as 'most of its semantic field had been taken over by *linguistics*'.[41] The term itself gained a pejorative meaning, with the phrase '*mere* philology' referring to a kind of dead historicism which focused on (allegedly) superfluous biographical details and linguistic peculiarities, adding little to the advancement of the study of language or literature as a whole. For Sheldon Pollock this is strictly not the case, and he argues for a revivified definition of philology:

> philology is, or should be, the discipline of making sense of texts. It is not the theory of language – that's linguistics – or the theory of meaning or truth – that's philosophy – but the theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning…both in theory and in practice across time and space, philology merits the same centrality among the disciplines as philosophy and mathematics.[42]

In Pollock's terms, philology becomes a unification of language and literature, and the lamentation of philology's decline is perhaps more a call for greater correspondence between linguistic and literary research. Philology, as conceived by Pollock, was a meeting point for all discussions of language, and it is idealised as a balance between disparate tendencies. In reality, philology was itself both a methodology, a historical-comparative method of studying both languages and texts, and a broad term for the study of language and literature. While Pollock is correct in assuming a textual basis, his definition is, on the one hand too narrow (philologists such as Karl Brugmann or William Dwight Whitney often expanded their work beyond textual studies into more generalised accounts), and on the other too broad as language was very much the focus of the discipline.

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[40] Haruko Momma, *From Philology to English Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 185.

[41] Momma, *From Philology to English Studies*, p. 185.

[42] Sheldon Pollock, 'Future Philology: The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009), 931-961 (p. 934).

Holquist, Momma, and Pollock all attempt to reclaim lost ground for philology, arguing that its renewed centrality would be a response to what they perceive as the dominance of theoretical approaches in modern language and literature faculties. They also all share a narrative of decline and fall. Against this, I wish to posit one of assimilation and change, whereby the advent of linguistics and literary studies did not usurp philology as a discipline but were a natural outgrowth from it. This argument has been most fully articulated in James Turner's *Philology* (2014), which traces a longer narrative arch, rooting the origins of philology in ancient Greece, and explaining which traces of the discipline remain in the histories of the modern humanities. For Turner, 'philology's legacy survives in ways we build knowledge today', not simply in the study of language and literature, but as both a paradigm for modern scholarship in the humanities as a whole and a shared historical point of contact between various newer disciplines.[43]

Turner's conclusion suggests that the development of linguistics at the turn of the twentieth century was indeed a radical change in philology, but was not necessarily a radical departure from its humanistic roots.

> Perhaps the most accurate assessment is that, when the discipline of linguistics took its modern form around 1900, it stood betwixt and between. Part of it identifiably linked to the humanistic philological tradition. Other parts left that tradition far behind.[44]

Linguistics, then, developed from philology by adopting and adapting aspects of the latter discipline; the same can be said of literature departments, combining philological professionalism and scholarly ethos with wider critical concerns. Indeed, Turner's assessment is apt for a discussion of philology's place in the development of Pound's linguistic theories. Pound himself stood 'betwixt and between' philological study in the early years of the twentieth century, negotiating between a sense of critical frustration and an inevitable scholarly learning. When he came to distance himself from philology, he still adopted and adapted much of what he had learned and put it to use in a linguistically-charged poetic career that ran parallel to many of the developments of twentieth century linguistics. As Turner concludes on the latter history of philology, in a phrase that applies equally well to the discipline's place in Pound's career, 'philology did not vanish. It went underground'.[45]

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[43] James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. xiii.

[44] Turner, *Philology*, p. 253.

There have been a number of accounts of Pound's relationship with philology and the study of language, both with regard to his poetry and his lifelong interest in education. Stuart McDougal's *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (1972) explains the vital link between Pound's education and the centrality of Provence in his literary project. McDougal argues that Pound's professors, as well as his wider reading material, would have impressed upon him the notion that 'Provence was the first culture in western Europe to produce a vernacular, and thus an examination of Provençal poetry was a return to origins', or at the very least a project of great historical significance.[46] Similarly, J. Mark Smith explores Pound's potential ideological similarities with aspects of philology as a way of thinking about language, arguing that what Pound took away from the discipline was 'an archive of historical usage charged with synchronic possibility'. For Smith, exploring potential theoretical links between Pound's understanding of language and philology as a concept is of central importance as 'surveying many of the modernist writings of the early twentieth century, one can very plausibly speak of an interleaving of poetic and philological tradition'.[47] This point is supported by Hugh Kenner, who writes in *The Pound Era* that 'philology…permitted Pound's generation the vision of language as intertextured, cognate systems of apprehension, to each its special *virtu*', and

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[45] Turner, *Philology*, p. 380.

[46] Stuart McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 4.

[47] J. Mark Smith, 'The Energy of Language(s): What Pound Made of Philology', *English Literary History*, 78 (2011), 769-800 (p. 770).

Laurence Rainey who sees an alleged philological tension between 'method and its object of attention, between melody and meaning' taking place in Pound's own work.[48] The influence that philology had on Pound, regardless of his animosity towards the discipline and his instruction in it, has been widely acknowledged. However, scholars have tended to focus on the theoretical aspects of the argument, seeing philology as an intellectual model for *The Cantos*' linguistic variety and interrelatedness. In this chapter, I explore the more practical ways in which Pound made use of his philological background, where it influenced his early understand of language (and individual languages), and where he departed from it.

Philology and the American Modern Language Department

Pound's remark at the end of 'Raphaelite Latin' neatly characterises what was a contemporary debate about the nature of philology and the future direction of modern language study. In his seminal study of the debates surrounding the development of modern language and literature departments, Gerald Graff outlines two rival tendencies: philologists, who were dedicated to the 'scientific' study of language, textual history, and comparative grammar, and 'generalists', who saw literature as an embodiment of a wider humanitarian spirit, and whose criticism focused on questions of literary value. Graff characterises the pejorative extremity of the 'generalist' and philological positions, respectively, as 'dilettantes versus investigators: the one all interesting but untrue generalizations, the other all true but sterile particularities, and evidently nothing in between'.[49] Pound's writing during and after his university years can be characterised as attempting to occupy a position between philological rigour and generalist aestheticism.

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[48] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 120; Laurence Rainey, 'Introduction' in *A Poem Containing History: Textual Studies in* The Cantos, ed. Laurence Rainey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 1-20 (p. 10).

[49] Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 95.

Graff’s distinction, however, relies heavily on the assumption of a clear binary opposition between the ‘generalist’ (or ‘dilettante’, in Pound’s terms) camp and philologists. Irving Babbitt, whom Graff names as one of the ‘arch-generalists’, himself recognised that the rival tendencies could indeed be situated within a single scholar, let alone within a single discipline. For Babbitt, part of the problem lies in the fact that philology is difficult to define, and that discussions need to recognise that originally broad aim of the discipline itself:

> In coming at our definition we need to return for a moment to Emerson’s distinction between the two laws “not reconciled.” So far as language falls under the “law for things,” it is philology; so far as it expresses the “law for man,” it is literature. In following out the phenomenal relationships of language and literature, philology has a vast and important field. It becomes an abuse and usurpation only when it would set up these phenomenal relationships as a substitute for the still more important relationships of language and literature to the human spirit. Again, the appeal of literature to the individual intellect and sensibility has a large and legitimate place. Impressionism and dilettantism arise only when the individual would emancipate himself entirely of the discipline of more general standards.[50]

Neither the study of literature nor the study of language were outgrowths of the other, but they were both instead differing ways to study the ‘human spirit’, with different foci. As a result, individual scholars could take one approach or the other without compromising what might otherwise appear as a totalising dogma. As Babbitt himself remarks, in terms notable for both their sexism and their crassness, ‘philology and dilettantism are in reality only the analytical and the aesthetic, or, as one would be tempted to say, the masculine and feminine aspects of the same naturalistic movement’. This he calls the ‘curious interplay of philology and impressionism’ which as ‘sometimes united in the same person’, even if they generally exist separately within the same departments.[51] Babitt uses ‘impressionist’ and ‘dilettante’ interchangeably, indicating that opposition to philology, though widely apparent, is not necessarily consistent. For this reason, Graff’s term ‘generalist’ is a useful catchword for a variety of labels used at the time, although it is to be remembered that it cannot be considered in absolute terms.

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[50] Irving Babbit, *Literature and the American College: Essays in the Defense of the Humanities* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1908), p. 121.

[51] Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, p. 128.

Philology, then, is a broader discipline than Pound presents in ‘Raphaelite Latin’. The final aspect of Pound’s remark, that scholars become ‘Germanized’, points to another ideological aspect of the modern language department at the turn of the twentieth century. Philological scholarship, as Michael Holquist alludes, had its origin in the Prussian, and then German, university. Many of the most prominent achievements in nineteenth century linguistics occurred in Germany and German universities such as Gottingen, Bonn, and Berlin had developed departments and methodologies for instruction as a framework for the training of future scholars. American universities gradually adopted their methodologies for both research and teaching, in many cases employing either German-born or German-trained academics. Perhaps the most enduring illustration of the German model’s success was the ‘Neogrammarian hypothesis’. The term ‘Neogrammarians’ (*Junggrammatiker)* referred to a school of scholars, who featured Karl Bruggmann (1849-1919), Hermann Paul (1846-1921) and Karl Verner (1846-1896), amongst others, who instigated detailed research into sound laws. The so-called ‘Neogrammarian hypothesis’, which proposed the regularity of sound change, and Verner’s Law, which dealt with historic sound change in the fricatives of Proto-Germanic, are good examples of this. Their theories and methodologies became widely accepted, but perhaps even more pertinently, their work testified to the supposed ‘scientific’ respectability, with notions of hypotheses and proof, that philology supposedly brought.

In 1874, James Morgan Hart, an American student who studied the Germanic method of instruction first hand, published his account of his experiences at various German universities. He explained the importance that the study of language held: ‘language is a mode of expression for the widest range of ideas and feelings; unless we essay it in all its lispings and stammerings to its most exalted utterances we shall never fully enter into its character’.[52] Hart’s account makes clear the endurance of philology’s original broad definition as an all-encompassing study of culture and civilisation through a focus on language and literature. His was an impassioned call for the American university to adopt a structure based on the German model. He outlines the actual methodology of instruction that he observed during his time in Germany, an outline that fits the profile of the kind of philologist against whom Pound protests:

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[52] James Morgan Hart, *German Universities: A Narrative of Personal Experience* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1874), p. 85.

> To make the method of instruction more evident, we have only to picture ourselves a man like George Curtius, of Leipsic, “reading” on the Odyssey. He begins probably with a general introduction to the Homeric question, spending perhaps a fortnight setting forth his views and refuting the views of others. He then gives a detailed description of all the manuscripts of the poem, their comparative merits and deficiencies, and also the best modern critical editions. Then, following some generally received text, he translates, either carefully, line by line, or else rapidly, according as the passage may be difficult or easy. As he goes he makes historical, aesthetical, linguistic excursions. By the end of the semester he has probably finished only a few books. But his hearers, who have listened attentively and with minds prepared by their gymnasial training, have caught the essence of the poem and its relations, can henceforth study it for themselves.[53]

Hart is clearly convinced of the value of the German method, and *German Universities* is partially a plea for the adoption in American universities of numerous methods outlined in the book. However, it is worth remembering that his account largely consists as much of generalised summaries as it does of detailed experiences. In the case above, while Hart names the philologist George Curtius (1820-1885), the outline is largely speculative and based on a composite of lectures that he attended, as well as idealised depictions of a philological scholar.

The Germanic model was, however, largely adapted for the study of modern languages in the United States, and had been well established by the time Pound entered university. In the year before Pound’s birth, 1884, H.C.G. Brandt, professor of German at Hamilton College, published his address to the Modern Language Association. In his address he defended the ‘scientific basis’ of the modern language department against what he believed to be three opposing trends: ‘utilitarians’ (another manifestation of the ‘dilettante’ or ‘generalist’ creed), classical philologists suspicious of new methods, and complacency within modern language teachers themselves. He argued passionately for the continuation of the scientific, rather than humanistic, model, writing that ‘a scientific basis dignifies our profession’ by demanding professionalism, precision, and proof. In his account, he cites the example of the Neogrammarians in particular, suggesting that their achievements are an indication of the exciting possibilities that Germanic philology offers the scientists of language:

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[53] Hart, *German Universities*, pp. 268-269

> We recognise these men as the foremost among those who have developed within the last fifteen years the old humdrum, the empirical treatment of living languages into the scientific study of them today. They have done even more than that. Investigating the phenomena of *living* languages they have reached results which are a valuable contribution to the science of language and comparative philology. They have started a new branch of philology, viz. Phonetics, invented new methods of investigation, and gained deep insight into the nature of language.[54]

According to Brandt, Philology as a practice and as an ideology of study provides the student not only with a sound scientific basis, with the nobility of proof and clear methodology, but also with access to current and lively scholarship. There is, of course, an implication in Brandt's address that to base the study of language (and literature) on a non-scientific foundation would be undignified, and in that sense the prejudices on either side of the debate are manifested in this defence.

However, Brandt was by no means a practitioner of 'mere philology'. He continues to argue that philology's greatest value is in teaching students the way to read the 'best' literature, and 'to speak the language, to think in it, live in it, dream in it'. As such, questions of literary value as well as the human spirit, are combined with philological research, at least in philology's conceptual plane. Brandt was still Professor of German when Pound attended Hamilton College between 1903 and 1905, and Pound remembered his former professor very fondly in a letter to John Quinn on 16 August 1915 as part of a list of admirable figures in the United States. Pound also included his former professors Felix Schelling, Clarence Child, Hugo Rennert (all of the University of Pennsylvania), as well as William Pierce Shepard, also of Hamilton College.[55] This suggests that 'generalism' and philology could be combined within a single department, even, perhaps, a single study, and that Pound himself drew on this collaboration at times.

Pound's first engagement with Romance philology as a discipline came between 1903 and

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[54] H.C.G. Brandt, 'How Far Should Our Teaching and Text-books have a Scientific Basis', *Transactions of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1 (1884), 57-63 (pp. 58-59).

[55] Ezra Pound, Letter to John Quinn, 26 August 1915, in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and John Quinn, 1915-1924*, ed. Timothy Materer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 41.

1905, where he studied Provençal as an extra-curricular activity under William Pierce Shepard at Hamilton College. Scholars interested in the early part of Pound's career have focussed most heavily on Provençal, a fact which reflects his own interests at the time. Alongside Italian, French, and (later) Chinese, the Langue d'Oc provided Pound with a strong grounding for his interest in history (both political and literary), linguistic nuance, aesthetics and poetic practice; a combination particularly apparent in the figures of the troubadours. Stuart McDougal alludes to the fact that Shepard, a well-travelled and renowned scholar of Provençal, would have exposed Pound to a number of philological trends.[56] Shepard had graduated from Hamilton College in 1891, before pursuing his studies in Provençal first at the University of Grenoble, then at the Sorbonne, and finally at the University of Heidelberg, where he studied for his PhD. In Europe, he was exposed to both the rapid development of Provençal as a language for study, as well as to the German model of philological study.

At Hamilton College, Pound had access to an extensive Romance collection at the library. In 1971, Rouben C. Cholakian, a professor at Hamilton who had inherited Shepard's personal library, published a critical bibliography outlining its contents, providing commentaries on the most notable items. Cholakian explains Shepard's importance:

> It is due almost entirely to the efforts of William P. Shepard, Professor of Romance Languages at Hamilton College from 1896-1940, that this small school can boast today of its unusually extensive collection of Provençalia. During his long association with Hamilton, Professor Shepard guided the library in its purchase of works in Romance Philology and upon his death in 1948 bequeathed to it the major part of his own private collection.[57]

Naturally, a large number of the books in the bibliography were published long after Pound left Hamilton, but in searching through the items, we can establish a probable view of what would have been available to Pound as he began his studies in Romance languages. As would be expected, we find the spiritual father of the study of Provençal, Francois Raynouard, alongside the disciplinary founder, Friedrich Christian Diez, as well as a number of leading Provençal and Romance scholars. Assuming that Shepard (or Hamilton itself) had ownership of them at the time of Pound's studies, the following books would all have been available either in the library or in Shepard's private collection: G.J. Adler's translation of Claude Charles Fauriel's *History of Provençal Poetry* (1860); Harriet Preston's *Troubadours and trouveres: New and Old* (1876); Antonio Restori's *Letteratura Provenzale* (1891); Albert Stimming's *Provenzalische Literatur* (1893), which was also available as part of Gustav Gröber's *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie* (1888), itself in the collection, and to which Pound refers favourably in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910). These texts would have provided Pound with enough evidence of the critical modes employed by 'Germanized' philology. In addition to well-known studies such as the Harvard Chair of Romance Department (1899-1911) Charles H. Grandgent's *An Outline of the Phonology and Morphology of Old Provençal* (1905), there is a large collection of philological texts, largely in German, called *Pamphlets on the Provençal Language*.

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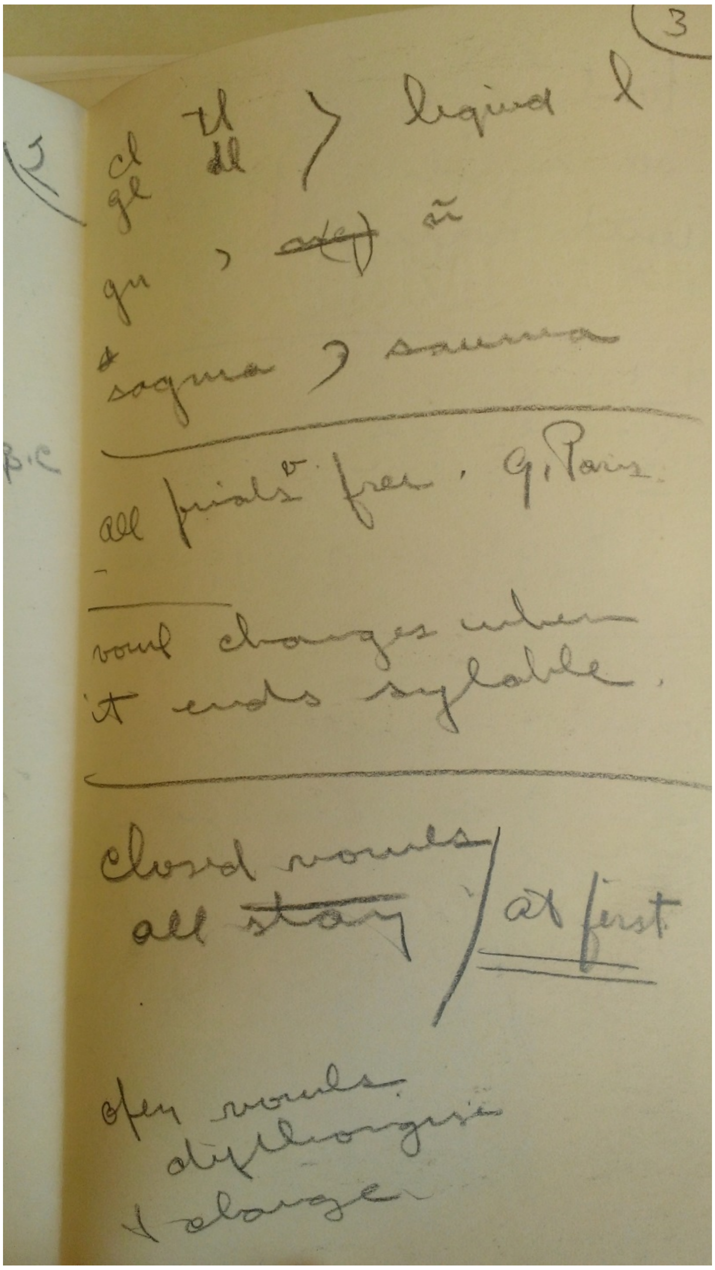
[56] Stuart Y. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 3-4.

[57] Rouben C. Cholakian, *The William P. Shepard Collection of* Provençal*ia: A Critical Bibliography* (Hamilton: Clinton, NY, 1971), p. i.

By the time Pound came to study for an M.A. in Romance languages at the University of Pennsylvania in 1905, then, a wide collection of philological research had already been available to him. Pound's college notes, taken down during lectures or in preparation for them, reveal a great deal about the philological vein of instruction at the University of Pennsylvania. They reveal that Pound had either read or was acutely aware of many of the major linguists and philologists of the time. Furthermore, they also indicate that the study of literature was very much treated as a subsection of linguistic scholarship, and Pound's frustration with a lack of aesthetic criticism comes out in the notes on occasion.

Pound's notes are particularly valuable in establishing the practical and theoretical ethos of the university. Pound's notes reveal a density of both scholarship and practice, and show him engaging with many of the key figures in his discipline. As Pound specialised in Romance languages, instances of general accounts of language and linguistics are rarer than specific studies in Italian, French, Spanish or Provençal. The notes demonstrate that the lectures that Pound attended varied between outlining the key philologists in each branch of Romance languages and their findings, and giving examples of the practical aspects of philological research. Pound’s notes on individual instances of sound change or explanations of etymological processes are far more detailed than his notes on individual philologists, suggesting that, as with the study of literature, he was more interested in practice than scholarly traditions. Pound took detailed notes on sound change in the development of Vulgar Latin, indicating that when he came to write *The Spirit of Romance* five years later, his general comments were supported by a background of detailed study. The following example from Pound’s philology course demonstrates that the instruction he received made him aware of both the historical and physiological changes that take place in language:



3

cl tl > liquid l
gl dll

gn > ~~[illegible]~~ ñ

*sagma > sauma

B.C

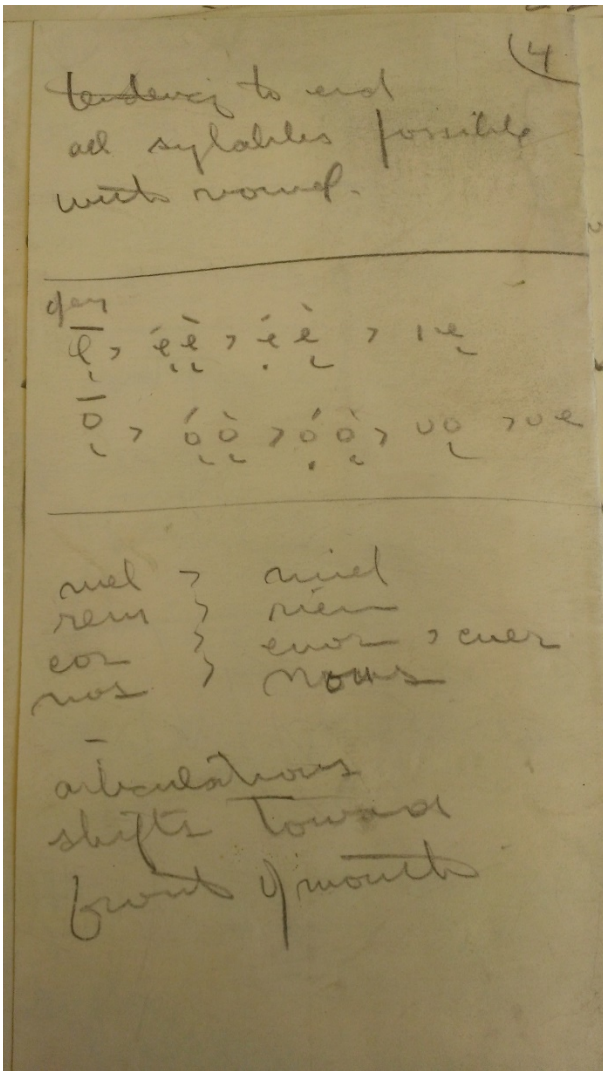
all finals free, G. Paris.

vowel changes when
it ends syllable.

closed vowels
all ~~stay~~ / at first

open vowels
diphthongize
& change

Fig 1.[58]



(4

tendency to end all syllables possible with vowel.

open ē > éè > éè > ie

ō > óò > óò > uo > ue

mel > miel

rem > rien

cor > cuor > cuer

nos > nous

articulations shifts toward front of mouth

Fig 2.[59]

These notes exemplify the kind of linguistic instruction that he was receiving. Furthermore, they show that Pound's lifelong interest in language was founded upon sound linguistic practice and theory. The establishment and classification of sound laws was one of nineteenth century philology's most enduring achievements, and a particular hallmark of Neogrammarian scholarship, and Pound's awareness of the regularity of sound change, as the notes 'closed vowels all stay' and 'open vowels diphthongize and change' indicate, would suggest that the foundation of his linguistic knowledge was on solid philological ground. That language was a system of articulated sounds used to symbolise various meanings, and that those sounds and meanings are the product of long, complex histories of change, was undeniably clear to Pound.

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[58] Ezra Pound, 'Philology' [2 of 2], 21 February 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3734, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[59] Ezra Pound, 'Philology', 21 February 1906.

The notes are interspersed with references to various associations (in the case of this lecture, the Modern Language Association) texts, and authors. The most often cited is Gaston Paris (see Fig 1 for an example), a philologist and scholar who would retain Pound's respect even when he was disparaging of the discipline in particular and scholarship in general (Pound dedicated *A.B.C. of Reading* to Paris and the French philologist-archaeologist, Salomon Reinach, 1858-1932). Paris balanced his dense philological scholarship – as seen in his *Les Plus anciens monuments de la langue française* (1875), his translation of *Grammaire des langues romanes* (1874-1878) by Friedrich Diez, or his *Manuel d'ancien français* (1888) – with a dispensation towards expanding his research into more general aesthetic commentary, such as his *Penseurs et poetes* (1897) and *Légendes du Moyen Age* (1903). In 1872 Paris and fellow Romance scholar Paul Meyer founded the journal *Romania*. This was dedicated to the dissemination of contemporaneous research and thought relating to romance languages. Pound cites the journal a number of times in his lecture notes.

Although Paris is by far the best represented, the majority of references are to dense bibliographical resources, such as Eduard von Wolfflin's *Archiv fur lateinische Lexikographie und Grammatik* (1872), and large grammatical texts such as Gustav Gröber's *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie* (1888).[60] Literature was used as illustrative of linguistic research, and was not treated in aesthetics terms, an ethos which Pound protested against by writing that the 'character of work must be looked to' in the middle of his notes during a lecture in Philology on 24 January 1906.[61] Pound was also aware of Walter Skeat's *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (1888) and James Murray's *The Evolution of English Lexicography* (1900), both of which would have given Pound an indication of contemporary developments in the study of language. Although Skeat's work comes to rest upon the existence of a Proto-Aryan language that is widely considered erroneous today, his focus on the interrelatedness of the world's languages is a useful indication of the breadth of philological approaches. 'I endeavour, in every case', Skeat writes in the preface to the first edition, 'to exhibit [English's] relation to cognate tongues; and as, by this process, considerable light is thrown upon English by Latin and Greek, so also, at the same time, considerable light is thrown upon Latin and Greek by Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic'.[62] Pound's lifelong refusal to express the world in one tongue may have had its root in such philological enterprises. The vast majority of Skeat's work, however, is dedicated to dense etymological detail and analysis, and little is given to wider theoretical considerations. As much as the inclusiveness of philological study is evident from Skeat's work, Pound may also have borne witness to the narrowness of most scholarly purviews.

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[60] Ezra Pound, 'Phonetics', 1 November 1905, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3735, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[61] Ezra Pound, 'Philology' [2 of 2], 24 January 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3734, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

That is not to say that Pound was unaware of a scholarly third way, and his notes on his course in literary criticism, taken between 1905 and 1906, indicate that he had in fact been given more generalised instruction than his own account would imply. In the notes for a lecture on literary criticism dated 10 October (1905), for example, Pound lists a number of critical texts all of which testify to both the interrelatedness of language and literary criticism in the late nineteenth century. Pound's issue may be with the lack of a specific focus on literary principles alone, but many of these texts do represent attempts to broaden philological study.

Fittingly, the first text that Pound mentions is Friedrich von Schlegel's *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (1842), a seminal text in the history of philology, and one which is indicative of the early period of the discipline's history. Friedrich von Schlegel was in many ways the archetypal philologist; he was an expert in the history of literature and a prominent proponent of the study of Sanskrit and Persian, as well as more general phonetic laws. For von Schlegel, poets have a preeminent role in the development of language, as guardians of both innovation and speech, an argument that he couches in terms not dissimilar to Pound's. In fact, von Schlegel treats literature as the highest form of language, as if scholarship must treat it as the point at which all the facets of language are brought to focus:

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[62] Walter Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1900), p. vi.

> But in order to discover with perfect clearness and precision the importance of literature, both in its original destination, and in the power which it certainly exerts on the world and welfare of nations, let us for a moment consider it under both of these aspects. And, in the first place, let us regard the true nature and object, the wide extent, and original dignity of literature. Under this name, then, I comprehend all those arts and sciences, and all those mental exertions which have human life, and man himself, for their object; but which, manifesting themselves in no external object, energize only in thought and speech, and without requiring any corporeal matter on which to operate, displays intellect as embodied in written language. Under this are included, - first, the art of poetry, and the kindred art of narration, or history; next, all those higher exertions of pure reason and intellect which have human life, and man himself, for their object, and which have influence upon both; and, last of all, eloquence and wit, whenever these do not escape in the fleeting vehicle of oral communication, but remain displayed in the more substantial and lasting form of written production.[63]

The unity of von Schlegel's interests is apparent in this quotation, but they are unified in hierarchical terms. The study of literature, and of poetry in particular, is privileged above any other because literature, according to von Schlegel, codifies what is best in language, as opposed to the 'fleeting vehicle of oral communication'. Linda Dowling summarises von Schlegel's worldview as one in which 'literature was…simultaneously an effect of civilization and a partial cause', and thus studying it was fundamental in exploring the essence of human culture.[64] As he was writing at a time when written texts and inscriptions were essential in developing histories of world languages (a process in which he was intimately involved), as well as establishing connections between them, it is perhaps only to be expected that literature holds a sacred place in von Schlegel's hierarchy of values. The significance of von Schlegel's name appearing in Pound's notes lies less in the particulars of his arguments or his prominent role in the history of philology, but more in the fact that he represents a reversal of what Pound saw as the philological 'dogma': in effect, that the study of the development of language should be based on the study of literary history.

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[63] Friedrich von Schlegel, *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Langley and Chatham, 1841), p. 7.

[64] Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siecle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 36.

Similarly, Joel Elias Spingarn's *A History of the Literary Criticism of the Renaissance* (1899) and Charles Mills Gayley's and Fred Newton Scott's *An Introduction to the Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism* (1899), both of which appear in Pound's notes, are detailed accounts of the development of literary criticism with a particular focus on Italian, French, and English literature of the late Middle Ages to the end of the Renaissance. Spingarn draws on a myriad of different writers, and although his account is lucid and general, he is the antithesis of Pound's later call for a scholarship of 'luminous detail'. Nevertheless, his account certainly relates individual writers to wider histories, and his use of Aristotle's *Poetics* throughout the book demonstrates his intent to comment on an even wider literary history than his account allows.

Gayley's and Scott's text is rather different, and is both a compendium and summary of the history of literary criticism itself, outlining many of the practical and theoretical standpoints that have come to dominate literary studies. Aesthetics and poetic craft are in fact the primary focus of the text. The book was intended as a means of instruction for students and teachers. As a historical document, it is remarkable for breadth of its authors' insights into the conversations taking place in literary and linguistic study at the time. They raise questions of the 'fundamental principle' of literary art (as, indeed, the question as to whether literature can be considered an art), while detailed bibliographies and summaries are given for various positions in debates as to the nature of literary study. Given that Pound mistakenly notes their text down as 'Bibliography of Lit Crit' and misspells Gayley as 'Gailey', it may be assumed that he did not read the text, or at least had not read it by the time of the lecture. Pound's failure to engage with these texts fully suggests that his characterisation of his philological instruction as a failure of generality is based as much on his own assumptions and hostility as it is on fact.

Nevertheless, Gayley and Scott tell us more than Pound would imply. The section dealing with the relation between literature and language is the most interesting from a philological point of view, as, though brief, outlines which figures were considered to have the widest impact. Max Müller (1823-1900), George Santayana (1863-1952), William James (1842-1910), and George Henry

Lewes (1817-1878) are all cited as discussing the nature of language, but William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894) is named as the most influential philological figure.[65] Whitney's importance is evident from the widespread dissemination of his work in American universities at the time, and his work was used as one of the key touchstones for the study of language at the University of Pennsylvania, a fact supported by the appearance of his *Essentials of English Grammar* (1886) in Pound's notes. Having established himself as a leading figure in Indology at Yale, Whitney gave a series of public lectures on language in general in 1867, demonstrating that philological scholarship was capable of being expanded beyond linguistic particulars. Whitney's general account of language retains the empirical focus of his philological research. Whitney argued that language was a purely conventionalised system of arbitrary signs, and Pound's later statements on the fundamental arbitrariness of the linguistic sign in his essay series, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (see below), may owe their origin to the availability of Whitney's theories. As James Turner suggests, this was not an original point, and Whitney merely expanded upon an approach to language developed by the Scottish Common Sense philosophers a century earlier.[66] Where Whitney goes further, however, is in the way in which convention creates relatively stabilised meanings out of an arbitrary system. He argues that the meaning of words is historically determined, and that diachronic philological study is required in order to explore the way in which meaning develops. In *Language and the Study of Language* (1884), Whitney defines 'the character of the study of language as a historical or moral science'. It is, furthermore, 'a branch of the history of the human race and of human institutions'.[67] It is easy to see the origins of modern linguistics' breadth of study (from psychological processes to sociolinguistics) in Whitney's broad approach. Pound's concern with the 'development of language as a means of registration', as he puts it in *A.B.C. of Reading* (1934), in fact reflects more of his former departmental ethos than he makes clear.[68] Further evidence of the influence of Whitney's ideas at the University of Pennsylvania is reflected in his *Language and the Study of Language* being used as the primary text book in Morton Easton's course in Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1905.[69]

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[65] Charles Mills Gayley, and Fred Newton Scott, *An Introduction to the Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism* (pp. 233-237).

[66] Turner, *Philology*, p. 248.

[67] William Dwight Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language: Twelve Lectures on the Principles of Linguistic Science* (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1884), p. 48.

Whitney is a particularly important figure, as his work is essential in bridging philological scholarship and linguistic theory. He demonstrates that general linguistic accounts, as well as more theoretical considerations, had their origin in philology, and in many cases combined with it. Otto Jespersen (1860-1943) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), two of the most influential linguists in the early twentieth century, both published detailed philological works prior to their more theoretical works, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) and *Language* (1922), respectively, and held university chairs in philology as well as general linguistics. Graff's account of a polarisation between philology on the one hand, and generalised accounts of language and literature on the other, is a useful spectrum against which to measure Pound's earliest positions, but Pound's own experiences reflect a closer correspondence between the two positions than the account implies.

Pound's career, as both a poet and a writer of prose, would continue to bring him into contact with philology, and despite his attempts to distance himself from academia, many of his beliefs about language and literature were formed in response to philological practices. In her discussion of the role of philology in developing Pound's views on education, Anne Birien summarises Pound's position as one that argues 'philology had become corrupt enough to be reformed, but its teachings remained too essential to be dismissed or destroyed altogether'. Birien continues, suggesting that Pound's place in the American university system in the early part of the twentieth century provided a fruitful ground for his reformative zeal, in that 'individuals in and outside the academe vindicated both the need for and feasibility of the reform Pound envisioned'.[70] As a result, fully understanding Pound's attitude towards philology is essential for an exploration of his theory of language.

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[68] Ezra Pound, *A.B.C. of Reading* (London: Routledge, 1934), p. 56.

[69] *Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1905), p. 138.

[70] Anne Birien, 'Pound and the Reform of Philology' in *Ezra Pound and Education*, ed. Steven G. Yao, and Michael Coyle (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 2012), pp. 23-46 (pp. 36-37).

In reading Pound's critical work against the background of the history of philology as Turner outlines it in *Philology*, and as Birien does with regard to the role of education in Pound's critical development, we are able to see the true complexity of his relationship with the discipline. We are also able to see philology's true complexity: far from being a form of narrow textual reconstruction or grammatical exercises, it was a rich and varied approach to language and literature, with the scope of its purview dependent on individual institutions and scholars. Although it is true that Pound used 'philology' as a 'catchword for all Pound thought wrong with university teaching', as Moody has written, he also reaped substantial rewards from his instruction and training, whether he acknowledged this or not. In fact, we must be careful not to read philology through Pound's characterisations of it, but instead read Pound's characterisations against the history of the term and discipline. Accepting Pound's vision of philology narrows our account of its effect on him and obscures aspects of the accurate history of the discipline.

Between 'Generalism' and 'Philology': Pound's negotiations

Pound's drafts of his college essays demonstrate that Pound was practicing more 'generalist' critical techniques and standpoints, but his arguments tend to centre around the wider artistic world, rather than literature in particular. In 'Black Mirror', Pound argues that criticism should have a creative vision, for the purpose of improving technique: an insight that is best represented by artists themselves. 'It is our aim to make our future criticism more constructive than destructive', he writes in a line that chimes with Graff's characterisation of philological dismissals of critics.[71] He continues, writing that 'we are in perfect sympathy with those who want to see more criticism from the standpoint of the artist and less from that of the uncultivated public'. Critical writing, Pound argues, is a matter that should be left to those who practice art. It is not immediately clear who 'we' might represent, but as Pound was already writing poetry at this time, it may mean artists generally, positioning himself within a more aestheticist collective.

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[71] Ezra Pound, 'Black Mirror', 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 86, Folder 3710, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

What is most interesting about the college essays from a philological point of view is in fact a remarkable lack of philology. For a poet so entrenched in modernist discussions of language, and whose early poetic reputation was established by drawing inspiration and subject matter from poetry in the languages that he studied philologically at university, it is strange that language is not discussed in what remains of his college essays (assuming, of course, that the remaining extracts of the essays are representative). One explanation may be seen in the nature of Pound's subsequent criticism of philology as a discipline. Pound's arguments tend to revolve around the place of literature in philological scholarship, and the way that 'significant' poets are neglected at the expense of broader studies of the period; while he implicitly laments the dominance of the study of linguistic particulars, Pound does not take issue with the actual linguistic training he received, nor scholarly techniques that he gained, all of which would serve him well in the early part of his career. In many ways, while Pound's 'College Notes' are evidence of his training in philology, his 'College Essays' demonstrate his training in 'generalist' criticism – in his poetry and his prose, he uses both to indicate a negotiation between the two.

Pound's scholarship is one that calls for 'generalities', although we must be careful not to draw too fixed a binary opposition between philology and 'generalism'. Pound's arguments revolve around a failure to relate the particular to the general, and do not necessarily fall in favour of one nor the other. Rather, he argues that scholarship should focus on significant works, and take care to relate the part to the whole, whether that particular generality be a text, a literary movement, or a style. What is clear from Pound's early writing is that his criticism of philology as a discipline revolves around its scholarly methodologies and its application to literature. His criticism does not tend to focus on philology as a method of linguistic research, and this requires far more elucidation in order to make full sense of Pound's remarks about the discipline and its influence on him.

For all the linguistic instruction that Pound received, it may simply be the case that language was not the primary motivation for his studies. By the late nineteenth century, according to Graff's depiction, philology used literature as a means of instruction, or as an extension of linguistic scholarship, whereby texts were used to illustrate principles and laws discerned in the study of language rather than literature. While this is, of course, reductive, it certainly captures an anti-philological mood that Pound himself adopts at various points in his career. In a draft of a poem entitled 'Goal' (although Pound probably intended 'Gaol'), he portrayed philology as a prison cell in which scholars are bound to study literature as a narrow science:

> Yea I will enter your prison
> Cramped mid the bands of your philology
> Ye that hold (holding) flowers naught but names and
> chemicals
> Yea will I stay behind the bars
> that hold poesy and ald men's loved writings
> To be science and no art.[72]

Later in his career, particularly in 'How to Read' (1928) and the *A.B.C. of Reading*, Pound explicitly attempts to align the study of literature with the natural sciences, but in this case the distinction between the two disciplines is useful from an aesthetic point of view. It is difficult to date this poem, as although Dorothy Pound's note on a covering sheet of paper suggests it was written around 1910 in preparation for *Canzone* (1911), it reflects interests incumbent upon Pound during his time at university, and may well have been written earlier. Indeed, the tone and voice of the poem suggest a speaker who is currently involved in philological scholarship, rather than one who has already abandoned it. Entering into the 'prison' of philology is a metaphor that may reflect what were Pound's very real anxieties about an academic career; anxieties that led him to his eventual departure from the United States in 1908.

Nevertheless, Pound spent six years of his life studying literature through the prism of linguistic scholarship, and the centrality of the analysis of language to understanding culture and civilization remained throughout his career. Although the discipline, and academic life, may not have suited him, the theoretical and practical aspects of philology as an approach to language left an indelible mark. Whether they were conscious or unconscious, whether he accepted or rejected them, the early part of Pound's career marks a sustained engagement with dominant philological approaches to language and literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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[72] Ezra Pound, 'Goal', YCAL MSS 43, Box 88, Folder 3791, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Although Pound would continue his postgraduate study for a further eighteen months in pursuit of a PhD on the plays of Lope de Vega, he eventually abandoned academia in 1907 and finally embarked on his poetic career. This marks neither an abandonment of his interest in literary history, nor, more significantly, his interest in theories of language nor scholarship. In the immediate aftermath of his leaving the University of Pennsylvania, Pound took a position teaching Romance languages at Crawfordsville, Indiana. Upon leaving his teaching post, Pound went to Europe in 1908 to begin his poetic career, eventually settling in London. Although poetry was Pound's primary concern, he continued his engagement with philology and its literary and linguistic implications in a series of prose works, most importantly *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) and the essay series 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1911-1912). Both works mark Pound's attempt to wrestle literary scholarship free from what he saw as philological oppression.

Pound distances himself from his former discipline by asserting that 'this is not a philological work' at the opening of *The Spirit of Romance*. In this book, which he points out is designed chiefly for the interested layman rather than the specialist, Pound provides a brief chronicle of the development of the various Romance languages, from their origins in Vulgar Latin to their fullest literary expressions. He is most concerned with tracing certain literary qualities he finds in some of the most renowned poets of pre-Renaissance Europe, and he dedicates large sections of the book to discussions of Arnaut Daniel, Dante Alighieri, and Lope de Vega. While the linguistic aspects of his approach are undoubtedly important, Pound is keen to stress that his focus is primarily on the literary. His rationale for this is given in his introduction:

> I have floundered somewhat ineffectually through the slough of philology, but I look forward to the time when it will be possible for the lover of poetry to study poetry – even the poetry of recondite times and places – without burdening himself with the

> rags of morphology, epigraphy, *privatleben* and the kindred delights of the archaeological or “scholarly” mind. I make no plea for superficiality. But I consider it quite as justifiable that a man should wish to study the poetry and nothing but the poetry of a certain period, as that he should study its antiquities, phonetics or palaeography and be, at the end of his labours, incapable of discerning a refinement of style or a banality of diction.[73]

Despite Pound’s aversion to ‘the slough of philology’, he provides biographical and historical details for each of the authors he discusses in *The Spirit of Romance*. There is, however, an undoubted focus on poetic craft throughout the book. His intention is precisely to define those ‘refinement[s] of style’ and to expose the ‘banalit[ies] of diction’. In *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound often exercises overt value judgements in a way that philological scholarship, according to the strictures of objective study, cannot.

There are two main criticisms that Pound directs at philology through this text. The first is that more general, aesthetic literary values are lost in what Pound sees as generally fruitless discussions about grammatical forms. According to this view, philology either encourages students to read literature as a mere example of certain linguistic forms and categories for exploration, or it imposes a method of linguistic inquiry ill-suited for an approach to art. Specifically on this latter point, philology encourages the reader to focus on biographical or historical detail at the expense of general value judgements. The second criticism that Pound levies against philology is its scholarly rigidity. Pound’s response to this is his famous declaration that ‘what we need is a literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats with one balance…and will, with equity, give praise to beauty before referring to an almanack’ (*SR*, p. vi). Philology is presented as a stifling influence on the study of aesthetic values, which Pound believes to be the proper object of ‘literary scholarship’.

In another attempt to move beyond philological scholarship, Pound defines his own critical apparatus, particularly in the discussion of Arnaut Daniel’s and Dante Alighieri’s work. In this we see the origin of the literary programme outlined over two decades later in *ABC of Reading*, as well as some of the tenets so often associated with Imagism. Pound's comment on the second stanza of Arnaut Daniel's 'Sols sui qui sai lo sobrafan quem sortz' provides a good example of Pound's tendency towards idiosyncratic interpretation:

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[73] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1910), p. v. Subsequent textual references are to this edition unless indicated otherwise.

> Three times in this stanza the Provençal makes his picture, neither by simile nor by metaphor, but in the language beyond metaphor; by the use of the picturesque verb with an exact meaning. Firstly, "pools himself" – the natural picture. Secondly, after the comparison of gold and lead, the metal worker's shop gives tribute, and is present to the vision in the technical word "refine." Thirdly, the feudal ceremony and the suggestion of its pageantry are in the verb "invest" (*SR*, p. 26).

The 'language beyond metaphor' is not fully explained at this point, and it is included simply to introduce the reader to the kind of poetry that Pound will explain later in the book. Why 'pools himself' should be part of a language beyond metaphor, when it reads as a standard use of figurative writing, is never made clear. The use of 'refine' and 'invest' are sensible choices, but he does not explain why they would also be distinct cases of a 'language beyond metaphor'. Pound is, of course, providing commentary on his translation as much as he is on the original poem. One may argue, in fact, that he is justifying his own craft as much as Daniel's.

Pound's preference for a 'language beyond metaphor' is defined more explicitly in his discussion of Dante. Taking his cue from Dante's discussion of the value of aspects of the Provençal, French and Italian languages, Pound outlines the value of certain shades and gradations of adjectives.

> I use the term "comparison" to include metaphor, simile (which is a more leisurely expression of a kindred variety of thought) and the "language beyond metaphor," that is, the more compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception, such as antithesis suggested or implied in verbs and adjectives; for we find adjectives of two sorts, thus, adjectives of pure quality, as: white, cold, ancient; and adjectives which are comparative, as: lordly. Epithets may also be distinguished as epithets of primary and secondary apparition. By epithets of primary apparition I mean those which describe what is actually presented to the sense or vision. Thus in *selva oscura*, "shadowy wood"; epithets of secondary apparition or after-thought are such as in "*sage* Hippotades" or "*forbidden* tree." Epithets of primary apparition give vividness to description and stimulate conviction in the actual vision of the poet. There are likewise clauses and phrases of "primary apparition" (*SR*, pp. 166-167).

While Pound’s explanation here is articulate and far more lucid than his previous discussion of the ‘language beyond metaphor’, it is still heavily flawed. The distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘comparative’ adjectives is more apparent than actual. Despite this, Pound’s discussion of ‘primary apparition’ can be read as an interesting precursor to the imagist ‘direct treatment of the thing’.[74]

The reference to Dante’s *selva oscura* actually takes us beyond the *Commedia*. In his discussion of the different qualities of words, Pound is attempting to write a kind of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante’s text of linguistic and poetic inquiry, and the source of the phrases ‘Langue d’Oc’ and ‘Langue d’Oil’. Dante measures the relative values of French, Provençal, and the various Italian dialects according the aesthetic merit of individual types of words. He divides words according to whether they are ‘smooth’ or ‘hairy’, just as Pound categorises adjectives according to their aesthetic purity, or the vividness with which they are able to register experiences.

In her discussion of Dante’s influence on Pound, Eliot and Joyce, Lucia Boldrini reads *The Spirit of Romance* as a rejection of philology, and sees Pound’s interest in mediaeval languages and literatures as partly the result of an affinity between the development of national languages out of Latin in the Middle Ages and Pound’s desire for literary innovation at the start of the twentieth century. Boldrini writes that ‘thanks to the historical fluidity of languages in the making, the Middle Ages offer an attractive parallel, sloughing off the weight of Latin as they acquire cultural autonomy’ in much the same way that Pound ‘sloughs’ off the weight of his immediate forebears in developing his own literary language.[75]

When discussing language itself, however, Pound does indeed rely upon his experiences in Romance linguistics, and it would be misleading to describe Pound as opposed to philology as a whole at this point. It is perhaps fairer to suggest that Pound’s view respects philology as a domain of scholarship dealing with language, but that literature itself requires a different treatment. As

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[74] Ezra Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, *Literary Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 3-14 (p. 3).
[75] Lucia Boldrini, ‘Translating the Middle Ages: Modernism and the Ideal of the Common Language’, *Translation and Literature*, 12 (2003), 41-68 (p. 55).

Boldrini herself suggests, he uses his philological experiences to contextualise his discussion within frameworks of both linguistic and literary histories.

Pound expanded upon his developing critical stances in a series of essays entitled ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ in the *New Age* between 1911 and 1912. Here, Pound outlined a new scholarly method, one that focused explicitly on that which was artistically valuable. This Pound called the method of ‘luminous detail’ and he opposed it to the method of ‘multitudinous detail’ prevalent in philology as well as to ‘generalism’ and sentiment. The method of luminous detail proposes that certain facts, artworks, or writings are predominant, and that their mere presentation can evoke entire epochs or cultural geniuses. According to Pound, this is opposed to a philological method whereby all known facts are presented; his own method presents only what he believes to be the most important or most evocative.

One notable difference between Pound’s approach and that of philology is historical process. Pound’s ‘College Notes’ have numerous accounts of the historical and comparative studies of various languages, tracing sound change laws or individual etymological changes. Pound explains that he is ‘more interested in the Arts than in the histories of developments of this and that’; instead his method of ‘luminous detail’ discerns that which ‘remains the permanent basis of psychology and metaphysics’. Philology traces the modulation of languages, ideas, and historical processes; Pound’s method of ‘luminous detail’ is more concerned with the steadfast and the unalterable. This method can ‘weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats’ by focusing on those permanent or recurrent values that their work exudes.

Another major difference between Pound’s method of scholarship and that of the specifically German-influenced philology of his university education is his approach to linguistic discussion. In *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound’s discussion of linguistic issues tended to follow historical processes, etymologies or prior research. There is in actual fact very little outline of Pound’s understanding of how language works in *The Spirit of Romance*, but in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ he becomes more explicit. Pound demonstrates one way in which he believes language works in the example of poetic technique, which, Pound explains, is reliant upon both mystery and convention:

> [Poetry's] media are on one hand the simplest, the least interesting, and on the other the most arcane, most fascinating. It is an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols. In so far as it is an art of pure sound, it is allied with music, painting, sculpture; in so far as it is an art of arbitrary symbols, it is allied to prose. A word exists when two or more people agree to mean the same thing by it.[76]

Pound's practical explanation of how words gain meaning, namely, by convention, is significant as a departure from historical and comparative treatments of language, as well as from specific accounts of individual languages, that he largely engages with in *The Spirit of Romance*. Pound has moved from commentaries on individual languages to discussions of language as a concept, a movement that parallels the general accounts of language being produced in the new discipline of linguistics.

Pound's assertion of the arbitrariness of linguistic signs requires slightly more contextualisation. By referring to notions of an arbitrary linguistic sign, Pound was affirming a widely-held way of thinking about language. Ferdinand de Saussure, in his lectures and in his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), credited Whitney with establishing this belief in his lecture series of 1867 and subsequent publications.[77] Pound had encountered Whitney's work at university, and although he does not cite him in 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', their arguments do correspond. In fact it is more likely that Pound was merely articulating a linguistic position that had been current since the time of von Schlegel and von Humboldt. Stephen G. Alter suggests that the notion of an 'arbitrary sign' was in fact taught in most rhetoric classes in American schools and colleges by the time of the late nineteenth century.[78] The simplicity of Pound's statement is less a radical departure from his background in philology, but rather a common sense expression of the way in which the majority of philologists and linguists thought about language.

Similarly, it would be misleading to imply that Pound's depiction of philology as a discipline of scholarly minutiae was accurate. In 1900, ten years before Pound published *The Spirit of Romance*, Emmeline Mary Elizabeth Welby-Gregory, otherwise known as 'Nina' Cust, published a translation of Michel Bréal's *Essai de Semantique* (or, *Semantics*). Bréal's *Semantics* (originally published in 1896) repositioned linguistic discussion around an extensive study of how words produce, maintain, and lose their meanings. Bréal trained as a comparative philologist under Franz Bopp at Berlin, and translated Bopp's *Comparative Grammar* into French between 1866 and 1874. Bréal's work combines classical philological insights with the practical aim of defining what language's main functions are.

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[76] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – IX', *The New Age*, 10:13 (1912), 297-299, (p. 298).

[77] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally, and Albert Sechehaye (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 76.

[78] Stephen G. Alter, *William Dwight Whitney and the Science of Language* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 72-73.

The importance of Bréal's work to the history of linguistics is manifest in his focus on the practical aims of language: specifically, that the aspect of language that should be of most interest to the linguist is its role as a means of communication. To this end, Bréal defined language as 'a product, begun and continued with a practical goal in view, from which, in consequence, the conception of utility cannot be absent for a moment'. Language acquires, or changes, meaning depending on three laws that Bréal identifies. First, there is the law of specialisation, by which Bréal identifies a tendency towards greater clarity and simplicity. Second, and most significantly, there is the law of Differentiation. This Bréal defines in terms akin to Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of *difference*, arguing that 'the history of language is a series of differentiations. That, and that alone, took place at the birth of languages'. The law of differentiations includes the separation of words into distinct meanings, the tendency to distinguish between synonyms to the point that a synonymy no longer exists, as well as the means by which the people differentiate grammatical and syntactic functions. Differentiation is, in fact, the main governing principle of language, according to Bréal, who argued that preoccupation with the origin of language, such as concerned Max Müller or, to an extent, Otto Jespersen and Fritz Mauthner, was a misdirected inquiry. 'We know but little about the *creation* of Language', Bréal argues, 'but Differentiation is the true demiurge thereof'; in other words, all we may know about the origin of language is still present in the processes by which we still discern and discriminate our speech today. In this sense, Bréal anticipated much of the structuralist focus on synchrony. The final governing principle of language is what Bréal refers to as irradiation; this is the process or the application and extension of grammatical principles to languages as a whole.[79]

'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' is more critical of philological practice than any of its basic linguistic tenets. However, Bréal is a rather different case from many of the other philologists of the period, and his focus on the meaning-making practices within language, rather than simply language alone, marked one of the key directions in early twentieth century descriptive linguistics. Like Bréal, and unlike Saussure later, Pound did not offer a strict formula for linguistic processes. For example, his attempt to explain the different ways in which people think reveals that Pound would have rejected any uniform explanation of speech processes:

> We may as well agree, at this point, that we do not all of us think in at all the same sort of way or by the same sort of implements. Making a rough or incomplete category from personal experience I can say that certain people think with words, certain with, or in, objects; others realise nothing until they have pictured it; others progress by diagrams like those of the geometricians; some think, or construct, in rhythm, or by rhythms and sound; others, the unfortunate, move by words disconnected from the objects to which they might correspond, or more unfortunate still in blocks and *clichés* of words; some, favoured of Apollo, in words that hover above and cling close to the things they mean. And all these different sorts of people have most appalling difficulty in understanding each other.[80]

Language, then, becomes an approximated means of communicating different mentalities. The establishment and development of linguistic conventions were, as Bréal would assert in 1896, and as Pound would in the *A.B.C. of Reading* in 1934, for means of communication. While Bréal's and Whitney's discussions about language in general may seem to be a complete contrast to the dense specificity of philological tracts, it is not to be forgotten that the majority of their publications were philological works. Equally, Ferdinand de Saussure was widely regarded as a Sanskrit scholar in his own lifetime, and the more theoretical semiology for which he became famous after the Second World War was in the most part rooted in his discoveries in historical linguistics. In this sense, while

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[79] Michel Breal, *Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning*, trans. J.P. Postgate (London: William Heinemann, 1900), p. 36.

[80] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – VI', *The New Age*, 10:10 (1912), 224-225 (p. 224).

Graff's, and to an equal extent Pound's, polarisation between philology and generalism in the English and Modern Language departments of American universities does indeed express counter-tendencies, the relationship between the two positions could also be intensely positive.

Philology and *Kultur* in the First World War

Although the First World War has long been an important fixture in literary history (and modernist literary history in particular), Pound's war is curiously academic. As a foreigner, he was spared conscription, and was thus dependent on correspondence and newspaper reports for his understanding of the battles that took place. That is not to say, however, that he did not feel the pains of war intensely, losing friends and colleagues such as T.E. Hulme and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska during the conflict. Pound's responses to the war, both during and after the conflict, reflect the same sense of cultural malaise and personal devastation that scholars of modernist literature recognise as widespread during the period. As a poet so concerned with language, however, Pound may have been expected to have commented on the disjuncture that war brings to poetic process. As Kate McLoughlin concludes in her 'Words and War', '*not* finding words for war – or at least claiming not to find them may…be the most potent technique for conveying its magnitude'; that language, in other words, is best placed to simply point towards its own failings in the face of indescribable horror.[81] Yet, exploring the links that Pound draws between the war and language reveals a continuation of his practical concerns with linguistic issues, and his continued opposition to philology as a discipline, where one might instead expect grander statements on the relationship between language, poetry and life or death.

Three months after the outbreak of the First World War, Pound sent Harriet Shaw Weaver a prospectus for a College of Arts. The proposed college would provide an education for two separate kinds of students: on the one hand, Pound was keen to advertise to ‘those who intend a career in some single art, who desire practical and technical instruction’; on the other hand, the college was also open to ‘those who believe that learning is an adornment, a gracious and useless pleasure’. The programme of study would be inspired by the structure of a graduate school, but the expertise on offer would be practicing artists rather than scholars and professors. The prospective college would be in support of, rather than supplant, traditional education establishments, and previous experience of scholarship does not seem to have been a requirement:

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[81] Kate McLoughlin, 'War and Words' in *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing*, ed. Kate McLoughlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 15-24 (p. 22).

> Our organization is not unlike that of a University graduate school, and is intended to supplement the graduate instruction in ‘arts’. This instruction is offered to anyone who wants it, not merely those holding philological degrees.
>
> A knowledge of morphology is not essential to the appreciation of literature, even the literature of a forgotten age or decade.[82]

Pound’s calling into question of philology’s essential role in the study of literature at a graduate level is in keeping with his arguments of the preceding decade. The College of Arts, which was to include instruction by Gaudier-Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis, and Pound himself, amongst others, never advanced beyond this prospective state, but it is still valuable in measuring Pound’s vision of scholarship and study.

It may not be obvious on first reading why Pound would choose to advertise the initiation of an educational institute in the midst of a war, and Pound himself admits that he may be ‘a bit late’ with his prospectus. However, one may see in Pound’s statement of prospective education the affirmation of peacetime values; the persistence of humanist and cultural practices even in the face of war. In fact, Pound’s challenge to the predominance of philology in particular is of central importance in his war time writing. Pound saw philology as an outgrowth of the alleged oppressive and suppressive nature of German state culture, or *Kultur*. As a result, Pound’s early career opposition to the privileged position of philology in academia intensified as part of his support of the allied war effort. As Vincent Sherry explains, anti-German war propaganda supplemented Pound's pre-existing prejudices against German philology:

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[82] Ezra Pound, Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 12 October 1914, in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1950), pp. 41-43.

> While Pound may well find philology to be the signature idiocy of German academic comprehensiveness (the opinion goes back to his experience of the system in his study, to the master's level, in romance language), this point of personal rebuke grows more virulent as a nationalist animus appropriates, animates, and expands it. The degree to which this propagandistic language takes over the passage may measure at once the dominant power of that political ideolect and the requisite strength of literary invention.[83]

Sherry is correct in saying that Pound's antipathy towards German philology was supplemented by the war rather than initiated by it, and it is true that Pound's rhetoric gains a propagandist dimension during the war years. Between 1914 and 1918, Pound would continually challenge the place of philology in both academia and culture, arguing that it is representative of what he saw as a Germanic attitude in which the critical faculty of the individual is reduced to merely contributing minutiae to the detail of scholarship.

For all of Pound's dismissals of philological methodology there are numerous examples when his training in the discipline becomes evident. The war itself was to emphasise the role that nationality, race, and culture played in philological study. In particular, the heightened sense of the link between nationality and culture in years in and around the Great War served to highlight to Pound the ways in which language can manifest these issues. In his review of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Pound emphasises the difference in civilisation between the prose of Joyce and Flaubert from the situation of Europe in the early twentieth century:

> It is very important that there should be clear, unexaggerated, realistic literature. It is very important that there should be good prose. The hell of contemporary Europe is caused by the lack of representative government in Germany, *and* by the non-existence of decent prose in the German language. Clear thought and sanity depend on clear prose. They cannot live apart. The former produces the latter. The latter conserves and transmits the former.

This statement reads as a justification for the centrality of language study in scholarship and criticism. Indeed, one may go so far as to link it to the original, broad definition of philology as an all-encompassing study of culture through language. Pound's insistence that German *Kultur* and Germanic philological study are intimately related is repeated here but with an added linguistic dimension. Pound argues that the oppressive, 'muddled', nature of a culture with philology at its centre has a direct effect on its language:

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[83] Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 111.

> The mush of the German sentence, the straddling of the verb out to the end, are just as much a part of the befoozlement of Kultur and the consequent hell, as was the rhetoric of later Rome the seed and symptom of the Roman Empire's decadence and extinction. A nation that cannot write clearly cannot be trusted to govern, nor yet to think.

It is possible to see here the seeds of Pound's later assertion that 'inflected' languages, such as Latin and German, do not lend themselves to clarity as well as more analytic or isolating languages, such as Provençal, English or Chinese. Equally, Pound's statement also implies the Social Darwinist model of language that Pound inherited from Maxim Hudson that saw literary language as a more 'advanced' form of language. German state *Kultur*, which Pound believed to have held philology and not literature as its bellwether of culture, is cast as a less 'advanced' and consequently more 'barbaric' state of civilisation. This, Pound argues, is the basis of the war between what he saw as a more 'civilised' allied force and a more 'barbaric' *Kultur* represented by Germany.[84]

Throughout the war, though increasingly after American entry in 1917, Pound used his *New Age* column to argue that Germany's so-called 'barbarism' was an outgrowth of a Prussian *Kultur* that places philology at the centre of its worldview or *Weltanschaung*. He believed that Germany emphasised the role of the state, and the subservience of each citizen to a national ideal, a model of culture which imposed itself on literary study, encouraging scholars to serve a narrowed form of scholarship, rather than literature as a whole. In Britain, France, and the United States, Pound felt that the general societal impetus was less on servitude of political or scholarly aims and more on the cultivation of the individual. This position fits in with Gerald Graff's description of 'humanist' opposition to German-style philology in American universities when the U.S. entered the war, as well as with allied propaganda targeted at the liberal intelligentsia more generally.[85] While this opposition often took the form of jingoistic courses and revisions of existing academic content (a notable example would be Columbia University's "War Issues" course), Pound's position is rather more subtle. Pound's academic target, as I have stated above, was not necessarily the existence of philology in the university as such but rather its predominance. Similarly, his position on the war was not one that held the values of Britain, France, and the United States to be immeasurably perfect, but rather one that saw them in broad opposition to what he saw as political and cultural suppression of the individual in German *Kultur.*

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[84] Ezra Pound, 'James Joyce: At Last the Novel Appears', *Egoist*, 4:2 (1917), 22 (p. 22).

In a four-part essay series for *The New Age* in July 1917, entitled 'Provincialism the Enemy', Pound attached his resentment of the philological bias in the academy to the anti-Germanic sentiment bred by the First World War, arguing that *Kultur* and philology were outgrowths of an institutionalised provincialism. His argument begins by explaining his rationale for opposing the German model of academic research and instruction:

> it is evil because it holds up an ideal of "scholarship" not an ideal of humanity. It says in effect: you are to acquire knowledge in order that knowledge may be acquired. Metaphorically, you are to build up a dam'd and useless pyramid which will be no use to you or to anyone else, but which will serve as a "monument." To this end you are to sacrifice your mind and vitality.[86]

Scholarship for the sake of scholarship is not justification enough for the philological method to be dominant. The notion of philology as 'evil', as if it corrupts the minds of its practitioners with an insidious intent, is a lot stronger than Pound's previous treatment of philology. The image of the pyramid recalls Pound's first published article, suggesting that the terminological and metaphoric framework with which he conceived philology remained unchanged for the best part of a decade.

Pound's position chimes with allied propaganda. Artistic, literary, philosophical, philological, and linguistic circles owed much to German scholars and thinkers, and as a result professionals in these areas required a different rationalisation for anti-German sentiment. By the outbreak of the war, however, allied intellectual circles attempted to distance themselves from German heritage. Ford Madox Ford, for example, condemned philology as part of the general 'barbarism' of German *kultur,* as opposed to idealised leisureliness of English 'civilization'.[87] As Peter Buitenhuis has remarked, 'it is a curious spectacle to see this writer, who had spent much of his time before the war advocating professionalism in literature, demanding amateurism in the arts as well as everything else', but such ideological inconsistencies appear in war.[88] Interestingly, Matthew Stibbe notes that the idea of a unified and strong *Kultur* as a bulwark against a liberal 'civilization' was equally prevalent in German propaganda.[89]

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[85] See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature*, pp. 128-132; Richard Utz, "*Englische Philologie* vs. English Studies: A Foundational Conflict", in *Das Potential europäischer Philologien: Geschichte, Leistung, Funktion*, ed. Christoph König (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), pp. 34–44.

[86] Ezra Pound, "Provincialism the Enemy: I," *The New Age*, 21:11 (1917), 244–45 (pp. 244-245).

In the first article in 'Provincialism the Enemy', Pound expands upon his anti-German and anti-philological positions and unifies the two more explicitly. 'Where the other phase of the idea, the slave of the state (i.e., of the emperor) idea has worked on the masses', Pound argues, 'the idea of the scholar as slave of learning has worked on the "intellectual"'.[90] It must be added that Pound's earliest essays are evidence enough that he was opposed to what he saw as a German intellectual system corrupting American education, but this feeling intensifies during a war that Pound typically discusses in intellectual terms. Nevertheless, he does grant certain concessions to the bureaucratic and methodological practices of philological scholarship, arguing that 'science has been advanced, greatly advanced, by a system which divides the labour of research, and gives each student a minute detail to investigate'. Indeed, Pound's own studies in the troubadours, Sigismundo Malatesta, and later Chinese, have recognisably philological characteristics, and he was certainly receptive to scholarly expertise when presented in a mode to which he was sympathetic. However, he believes that philology must be combined with a more general understanding of literature, as 'this division of the subject has not been the sole means of advance, and by itself would have been useless'. Pound's implied response is a combination of philological rigour and expertise with an application to a wider understanding of literature and aesthetics.

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[87] Ford Madox Ford, *When Blood is Their Argument*: *An Analysis of Prussian Culture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), p. 90.

[88] Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), p. 45.

[89] Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 74-75.

[90] Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy: I', 245.

Pound's discussion is at its most advanced in the third essay in the series, which was published on 26 July 1917. What seems at first glance an analogy, that German state oppression and control is like philological scholarship, Pound develops into a direct assertion: namely, that philology is itself an extension of state oppression.

> The "State" forgot the "use" of "man"; "scholarship," as a "function of the state," forgot the use of the individual, or, at least, mislaid it, secreted it for its own purpose. "Philology" laid hold of the arts, and did its best to make them knuckle under. Kunstwissenschaft was exalted. The arts also were to become a function of the State, duly ordered and controlled. It is all exceedingly plausible. Germany was so provincial that she supposed the rest of the world would swallow the bait and submit. America was so provincial that it took her several years to understand that militarism must be put down. Even now, she does not much understand; she is stampeded, thank God, in the right direction, toward the annihilation of Kaisers.[91]

By implication, Pound's argument is two-fold: first he argues that America should act politically to stop German militarism; second, the American university should reassess the place of philology in the outlook of the academy in order to better develop humanistic and artistic values. Pound portrays philology as a tool of suppression, acting to subject the arts to wider work on language and uniformity of culture. In this system, so Pound believes, individual expression is rejected in favour of uniform descriptions of isolated eras. Philology becomes for Pound the academic expression of the institution of provincialism.

In fact, Pound goes further and implies that philology works as an agent for militarism in the German university.

> the moment you teach a man to study literature not for his own delight, but for some exterior reason, a reason hidden in vague and cloudy words such as "monuments of scholarships," "exactness," "soundness," etc., "service to scholarship," you begin his destruction, you prepare his mind for all sorts of acts to be undertaken for exterior reasons "of State," etc., without regard to their merit.[92]

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[91] Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy: III', *The New Age*, 21:13 (26 July 1917), 288-289 (pp. 288-289).

[92] Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy – III', 289.

What is interesting from a political perspective is that Pound's anti-German sentiments are driven by cultural and academic concerns rather than imperial ones. Pound takes issue with German nationalism, *Kultur*, and militarism, but does not seem concerned by moral questions over the actual effects of imperialism and military expansion more generally. In this sense, Pound's war is an intellectual one; one of competing theories of education and scholarship, though this is not to imply that he was not sensitive to the death and suffering on the battlefields.

For Pound, it was, even more significantly, a battle between humanism and dehumanisation. Pound's interpretation of Philological scholarship reduces human beings to a part in a scholarly machine, with individual opinions, impressions and sensibilities subjugated to slaving after an ideal of scholarship without full justification. This, he believed, was best represented by German *Kultur*, a development Pound associated with Prussia, whereby the student was supposedly subservient to a methodology protected by a university itself subservient to the state. The counter position, best represented in Pound's view by British customs and French thought, argued for the place of the critical individual in discerning value judgements. Graff's polarisation of the university between philology on one side and 'generalism' on the other, however, is of course a description of convenience. Pound's position, though steadfast against the influence of Kultur and the Germanic method of scholarship, was not dismissive of philology on the whole. Rather, Pound believed that ideal scholarship should apply the advances and methodologies of philology to most 'generalist' aims: in other words, Pound wanted a unification of the two extremes.

Pound's tone did become rather more conciliatory and less aggressive than in the preceding articles, and he expanded upon his argument in favour of philology being subsumed into generalist critical practice. Pound still contended that philology alone is a practice which stands against humanism, but conceded that its uses are manifest in the study of literature.

> Such dehumanisation went on in the universities of Deutschland, subtly and with many exterior hues. There appeared to be no harm in it so long as it produced nothing more appalling than "grundrissen" and "Zeitschrifts fur blankische philologie": - parts of which might conceivably be of some use and facilitate the reading of lost literatures. I know at least one German professor who has produced a dictionary and remained

> delightfully human at the age of about sixty-five. His abridgment would have helped me to read troubadours if I had not learned to read them before I had found it.[93]

The professor to whom Pound refers at the end is Emil Levy, who advised Pound on the meaning of Arnaut Daniel’s mistranscribed word *noigandres* (or, as Levy suggested, *d’noi ganres*, ‘and wards off boredom’) from a manuscript Pound had consulted in the Ambrosiana library in Milan. Pound visited Levy in Freiburg in 1912 to consult him on the meaning of this word at the suggestion of his former professor William Shepard, as he had put together a large dictionary of Provençal. By alluding to Levy here, and mentioning him in the *Cantos*, Pound demonstrated his pre-war reliance on philology, as well as intimating its continued importance in providing a foundation for his understanding of literature. As Ann Birien argues, in terms that capture the reformative nuances of Pound’s arguments, he ‘chose to eradicate the evils of philology by sponsoring the kind of philology that legitimized his own position, and thus kept at bay the kind that could easily harm it’.[94] Philological details such as Levy’s intuition or Shepard’s seminars provided, backed up by sources such as the *grundrissen*, or works by Reinach and Paris, formed key parts of Pound’s literary and linguistic education, and served to colour his work with a reformed philological practice.

Philology and Pound’s Poetic Practice

During the war, Pound also published one of his most important poems on the troubadour theme as part of his collection, *Lustra* (1916). ‘Near Perigord’, like the Provençal-Latin ‘Alba’, was a repetition of a subject that Pound had worked on for many years. Pound was fascinated by the character of the warrior-troubadour Bertran de Born. At the centre of the poem is a lyric by de Born entitled ‘Dompna pois de me no’us cal’, wherein the poet, spurned by his lover, the Lady Maent of Montaignac, writes a poem describing a ‘composite lady’ out of all of the renowned women of Provence. Even this, de Born says, does not match Lady Maent. Pound summarises this canzone in the second stanza of ‘Near Perigord’:

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[93] Pound, ‘Provincialism the Enemy – III’, 289.

[94] Birien, ‘Pound and the Reform of Philology’, p. 36.

> Bertrans, En Bertrans, left a fine canzone:
> ‘Maent, I love you, you have turned me out.
> The voice at Montfort, Lady Agnes’ hair,
> Bel Miral’s stature, the viscountess’ throat,
> Set all together, are not worthy of you. . . .’
> And all the while you sing out that canzone,
> Think you that Maent lived at Montaignac,
> One at Chalais, another at Malemort
> Hard over Brive – for every lady a castle,
> Each place strong.[95]

Pound explores a hypothesis in ‘Near Perigord’ that Bertran’s love poem was in fact a calculated reflection of his military ambitions in the area. In impressing Lady Maent, Bertran increases his political influence in Provence, and establishes a greater power base in the region.

Pound ends part I of ‘Near Perigord’ with a series of questions that casts doubt on the sincerity of Bertran’s intentions towards Lady Maent. Pound’s list of questions read as if a series of lecture questions put forth by his proposed College of the Arts; an idealised depiction of the questions he believed should be asked by literary scholarship:

> Is it a love poem? Did he sing of war?
> Is it an intrigue to run subtly out,
> Born of a jongleur’s tongue, freely to pass
> Up and about and in and out the land,
> Mark him a craftsman and a strategist?
> (St. Leider had done as much as Polhonac,
> Singing a different stave, as closely hidden.)
> Oh, there is precedent, legal tradition,
> To sing one thing when your song means another,
> ‘*Et albirar ab lor bordon-‘*
> Foix’ count knew that. What is Sir Bertrans’ singing?
>
> Maent, Maent, and yet again Maent,
> Or war and broken heaumes and politics?[96]

These questions are left unanswered. Pound’s approach is certainly un-philological. He is working from speculation rather than from known facts, and he does not engage with finer linguistic points. Indeed, it is difficult to see how Pound is engaging with philology or linguistics at all in this poem, particularly as he focuses on unfounded biographical rumours.

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[95] Ezra Pound, ‘Near Perigord’ in *Lustra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1916), pp. 95-103 (p. 95).
[96] Pound, ‘Near Perigord’, pp. 98-99.

Pound's response, at the beginning of part II, is one of the most significant lines of his poetic career, as it marks a definitive departure from philological scholarship in his verse.

> End fact. Try fiction. Let us say we see
> En Bertrans, a tower-room at Hautefort,
> Sunset, the ribbon-like road lies, in red cross-light,
> Southward toward Montaignac, and he bends at a table
> Scribbling, swearing between his teeth; by his left hand
> Lie little strips of parchment covered over,
> Scratched and erased with *al* and *ochaisos*.
> Testing his list of rhymes, a lean man? Bilious?
> With a red straggling beard?
> And the green cat's-eye lifts towards Montaignac.[97]

The first half of the opening line, 'End fact. Try fiction', is a direct challenge to philological authority over literary figures and texts. Pound suggests, in other words, that biographical facts and philological details have not provided an adequate explanation of 'Dompna pois de me no'us cal', and a fictitious account of the events surrounding the poem's composition may give a more accurate portrayal of the meaning of the poem, as well as the 'spirit' in which it was written.

Stuart McDougal stresses the importance of Bertran de Born's poem in developing Pound's poetic technique. McDougal argues that it is not simply a philological, biographical, or scholarly point that attracts Pound to de Born's poem, and that leads him to speculate as to its true nature. Rather, he argues, Pound sources a poetic principle of assimilation:

> For Bertran's attempt to create a "borrowed lady" to replace the woman whose favour he has lost is a metaphor for the poetic activity of both Bertran and Pound: not only is the poet's goal the creation of an ideal beauty, but this beauty is composed of diverse elements taken from many sources. Bertran's method here is analogous to Pound's use of material in poems like "Na Audiart," "Near Perigord," and especially *The Cantos.*[98]

As Pound's hypothesis that de Born was attempting to cause political strife is not proven, McDougal's reading is an intelligent one. It may be that Pound was experimenting with the remnants of his training in Romance philology and in doing so expanded upon a method between the poetry of the *Cantos* and the method of 'luminous detail' defined three years earlier.

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[97] Pound, 'Near Perigord', p. 99.

[98] McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, p. 33.

In his introduction to the publication of *A Walking Tour of Southern France*, Pound's account of two journeys to Provence in 1911, Richard Sieburth explains the notebook from which he drew together the text was 'recalcitrant to philology' and demonstrates Pound's struggles with his own relationship with the discipline. Sieburth describes Pound's early poetic output as a 'series of experiments in transforming romance philology into contemporary poetry', and that he saw his walking tour in Provence as a geographical culmination of much of what he had learned about the troubadours up until that point.[99] Pound wished to verify his theories and readings of the troubadours via a kind of geographical philology. As Sieburth writes, 'Pound's account of his walking tour vacillates between a confidence that the mysteries of Provençal song might be philologically or imaginatively recovered and an elegaic awareness that the world he is seeking is irrevocably lost, accessible only as trace or ruin'.[100] In another of the poems to come out of that walking tour, 'Provincia Deserta', Pound lists his experiences and the things he has seen in Provence:

> I have looked south from Hautefort,
>   thinking of Montaignac, southward.
> I have lain in Rocafixada,
>   level with sunset,
> Have seen the copper come down
>   tinging the mountains.[101]

These beautiful descriptions of Provence eventually yield to a resignation that admits the failure of Pound's attempt to recreate the vitality and beauty of Provence in his own language:

> That age is gone;
> Pieire de Maensac is gone.
> I have walked over these roads;
> I have thought of them living.[102]

This passage marks the true abandonment of Pound's philological method. In 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', even in delineating a new method of scholarship, Pound failed to fully distance himself from his academic background. His tone towards philology was one of reform, as if the discipline could have been reinvigorated by a focus on aesthetic values in combination with a background of scholarly rigour and research. In 'Provincia Deserta' and 'Near Perigord', as in the *Cantos*, philological methodology is all but abandoned and is replaced by a series of non-philological strands of thought. As will be shown below, however, Pound's rejection of philology as a mode of discussing literature did not necessarily result in a rejection of all that he had learned about language.

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[99] Richard Sieburth, Introduction to Ezra Pound, *A Walking Tour of Southern France* (New York: New Directions, 1992), pp.vii-xxii (p. ix).
[100] Sieburth, *A Walking Tour of Southern France*, p. xv.
[101] Ezra Pound, 'Provincia Deserta' in *Lustra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1916), pp. 61-66 (p. 63).
[102] Pound, 'Provincia Deserta', p. 64.

Hudson Maxim, Ernest Fenollosa and the non-Philological Tradition

While Bréal, Jespersen, and Sapir, all developed within the philological tradition, a separate, evolutionist strand of thought in the philosophy of language developed out of philology. Charles Darwin himself does not dedicate much discussion to language in *The Origin of the Species* (1859), and when he does approach the topic it is largely used analogously to illustrate a biological or historical point. However, Stephen G. Alter explores the significance of this analogy, and explains Darwin's debt to philology in particular as both a methodological and theoretical framework. According to Alter, Darwin's interest focused on theories of the origin of language, and prior to writing *The Origin of the Species*, he had read Gardiner's *Music of Nature* (1832), James Burnett's theory of grunts and interjections, Horne Tooke on abbreviations, William Jones on Sanksrit, as well as Herbert Spencer's 'Progress: Its Law and Cause' (1857). Darwin himself believed that although language undergoes numerous transformations, it retains traces of its original state. Alter argues that this helped crystallise his thoughts on the transmutation of species, with developments in philology providing a method of categorisation and analysis:

> The linguistic analogy of evolutionary change was the fact that languages undergo steady transformation over the course of time; gradualism suggested that this process took place incrementally. These two findings of contemporary philology were useful to Darwin, for even if the amount of time required for noticeable linguistic change was really minuscule compared with that required for biological transmutation, it still demanded of its students a similar effort of the imagination. Moreover, this gradual kind of change was characterised by an "organic" unfolding, one that always

> maintained a degree of continuity with the past and preserved, as Darwin put it, “traces of anterior states”’.[103]

As a result, evolutionist approaches to language, particularly in philology, in many cases pre-date Darwin’s work. Rather than relying on the natural sciences for organic metaphors; the natural sciences had recourse to a powerful philological analogy in order to illustrate their points and give their arguments intellectual validity. In many ways, Alter argues, ‘philology actually stood closer to the idea of descent-with-modification than did pre-Darwinian natural history, even including the work of the reputed scientific forerunners of Darwin’. That is not to say that philology offered proof of natural selection (an argument later implied by Max Müller), but rather that it was useful in establishing a method of analysis. Furthermore, by linking biological evolution to philology, Darwin gave his new theory academic credibility.

There were other affinities between Darwin’s descent of man and philological scholarship beyond a formal similarity in their methods of inquiry. Ideologically, Darwin had attempted to analyse the biological history of man with the same objectivity with which philologists approached linguistic questions. Alter sees philology as the expression of a shared spirit in both the humanities and sciences of the nineteenth century:

> Comparative philology also had the inherent benefit of combining a scientific method and a romanticist, antiquarian spirit, an association that could have emerged so prominently perhaps only in the nineteenth century. The antiquarian ethos, a vast topic in itself, united much of that era’s scholarship, transcending boundaries between the sciences and the humanities. It showed itself in a varied array of concrete pursuits: in collecting and arranging, in the classifying of things in ordered *taxa*, in fossil hunting and in stocking geological cabinets; in the interest in old manuscripts and etymologies, in numismatics and inscriptions, in origin myths and buried cities; in the periodization of style in architecture, sculpture, and painting; in recovering lost civilizations and deciphering forgotten writing systems ; in metaphors of treelike growth, in tracing one’s own family lineage. From the enthusiasm for natural history to the rage for discovering (and often inventing) national origins, in the irresistible analogy between archaeology and paleontology [*sic*], in all of these fields, a historical consciousness pervaded. From this unifying aesthetic perspective, science and history – the reconstruction of the past – were not at antipodes but at one.[104]

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[103] Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 17-18.

[104] Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image*, p. 148.

This ‘historical consciousness’ led to the prevalence of etymology, where philological methodology became focused on individual examples, and the historical tendencies of the period found condensed expression in the tracing of meanings and origins in single words. Yet historical consciousness does not characterise philology alone. In both his poetry and his prose, for example, Pound reveals his knowledge of different historical epochs, even when he distances himself from philology. Rather, it is a method of descent, meticulously tracing each successive stage of a historical process in order to establish chronologies and correlations that characterises the affinity between Darwinist evolution and philology.

Pound read unorthodox philosophical texts such as Allen Upward’s *The New Word* (1907) and Hudson Maxim’s *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language* (1910) in the years following *The Spirit of Romance*. Upward’s work is particularly disparaging of philology, dismisses Max Müller’s notion of Aryan roots, and expresses indifference to the work of Michel Bréal. Combined with Hudson Maxim’s *The Science of Poetry*, Pound had access to at least two books that proposed a ‘scientific’, but particularly non-philological, approach to language and art.

Maxim’s work, according to Ian Bell and Rebecca Beasley, had a profound effect on Pound’s understanding of language. To this end, Maxim’s evolutionary, Social Darwinist approach ‘prepared the ground in particular for his later encounter with Fenollosa’s essay ‘The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry’’.[105] As for the nature of language itself, Maxim’s initial statements emphasise the role played by a symbolism that is for the most part arbitrary:

> All thought-expressing properties of oral language depend upon symbolism, the directly metaphorical, the analogical, or the arbitrary. No thought whatever beyond simple ideas of emotional states in the speaker can be conveyed by oral sounds merely as sounds, for the reason that the four properties of sound have only sensuous and emotive significance. Even sounds used in imitation of other sounds, although but indirectly imitative (onomatopy), come under the general head of symbolism. Conversely, metaphor comes indirectly under the general head of imitation.[106]

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[105] Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*, p. 53.

[106] Hudson Maxim, *The Science of Poetry* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910), p. 25.

Like Whitney, Bréal, and Saussure, Maxim demonstrates that supposedly imitative, onomatopoeic words are in fact assimilated into a system of conventional signs. However, his placement of metaphor under the head of imitation is at odds with his linguistic contemporaries, particularly as the role of conventional in passing down metaphors through language is marked quite strongly by etymology.

Rather than relying on contemporary linguists, Maxim draws predominantly on the theories of Herbert Spencer, who applied a strict Social Darwinist creed to his discussion of language in the mid to late nineteenth century. According to Spencer, language is subject to the same natural laws as biology; it is affected by natural selection, and all languages can be ranked and categorised according to their place on an evolutionary scale. English was put at the top as one of highly 'civilised' languages, whilst others were graded down to the level of 'savage' or 'primitive' languages. Although language of this kind is by and large absent from Fenollosa's theories, the principle that languages tend to evolve and belong on an evolutionary scale is one that he embraces. Spencer uses grammatical categories to support his Social Darwinist model, and relies upon a narrative borrowed from the natural sciences and imposed upon linguistics from without:

> The lowest form of language is the exclamation, by which an entire idea is vaguely conveyed through a single sound; as among the lower animals. That human language ever consisted solely of exclamations, and so was strictly homogeneous in respect of its parts of speech, we have no evidence. But that language can be traced down to a form in which nouns and verbs are its only elements, is an established fact. In the gradual multiplication of parts of speech out of these primary ones in the differentiation of verbs into active and passive, of nouns into abstract and concrete in the rise of distinctions of mood, tense, person, or number and case in the formation of auxiliary verbs, of adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, articles in the divergence of those orders, genera, species, and varieties of parts of speech by which civilized races express minute modifications of meaning; we see a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. And it may be remarked that it is more especially because it has carried this subdivision of functions further than any other language, that the English language is structurally superior.[107]

Spencer's view of language was widely influential, and contributed to both an erroneous way of seeing the relationship between synthetic and analytic languages, by which the latter was thought to evolve out of the former, but also a means of categorising languages according to their evolutionary value. Fenollosa was an enthusiastic member of the Herbert Spencer society during his time at Harvard, and the tendency to assimilate linguistic theories within a naturalistic worldview is evident in his work.

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[107] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1862), p. 162.

Fenollosa in fact distances his work from linguistics and philology from the beginning, writing that ‘it is not as a professional linguist or a sinologue that I humbly put forward what I have to say’. Rather Fenollosa sees himself as ‘an enthusiastic student of beauty in Oriental culture’, a definition that chimes with aestheticist trends in art, and generalist trends in academia. *The Chinese Written Character*, according to Pound in his preface, is certainly no work of philology, but rather offers ‘a study of the fundamentals of all aesthetics’.[108]

Fenollosa’s own educational background ties him to Graff’s description of the ‘generalist’ creed. He was taught by Charles Eliot Norton at Harvard, a ‘generalist’ who was an associate of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold, during his tenure as Professor of Fine Art.[109] Norton was a renowned teacher of Dante’s works, and imparted to Fenollosa a tendency towards seeing the visual arts and the poetic together. Norton, furthermore, arranged for Fenollosa to take a position in Tokyo after the completion of his studies.

In order to fully assess the importance of Fenollosa’s work to Pound’s linguistic theories, as well as the extent to which *Chinese Written Character* represents a radical break from his contemporaries, the more general statements in the book need to be contextualised and compared with contemporaneous work in linguistics. Fenollosa, of course, emphasised that his focus was on poetry rather than language as such, but his Spencerian tendencies mean that he makes a number of revealing statements about the study of language:

> My subject is poetry, not language, yet the roots of poetry are in language. In the study of a language so alien in form to ours as is Chinese in its written character, it is

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[108] Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: An Ars Poetica*, ed. Ezra Pound (London: Stanley Nott, 1936), p. 42.

[109] Graff, *Professing Literature*, p. 82.

> necessary to inquire how those universal elements of form which constitute poetics can derive appropriate nutriment.[110]

Fenollosa's statement demonstrates an intention beyond a mere discussion of Chinese poetry: namely, that his essay negotiates between a discussion about language in general and Chinese poetry in particular. On the other hand, it would be misleading to imply that Fenollosa made claims to be discussing the Chinese language as a whole. He quite clearly specifies that his theories are applicable to the language 'in its written character', and he does not refer to Chinese phonetic characteristics anywhere in the essay. His discussion of Chinese ranges from its syntax to its written form, yet he does not extend his points into a more general linguistic theory, except by implication.

The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry is somewhat ambiguous on the relationship between language and writing, but what is clear is that Fenollosa believed the Chinese written character to be stylised depiction of natural processes. This he contrasts with the nature of both alphabetic scripts and the spoken word:

> Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion.

The method to which Fenollosa refers is the medium of writing, rather than speech. He quite clearly states that the spoken word is a sound given meaning by convention alone, and as he does not distinguish Chinese on this point, we may assume that he is including it in this definition. As a result, the Chinese written character is by its supposed non-arbitrary nature distinguished not only from other written scripts, but also from Chinese speech. This is evidently Pound's reading as well, as he draws the same distinction in *A.B.C. of Reading*. Pound defined spoken language as 'noise divided up into a system of grunts, hisses, etc.' and only marks a distinction between two kinds of language when discussing writing.[111]

The failure to draw distinctions at the level of speech is due to two possible explanations:

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[110] Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*, p. 43.

[111] Pound, *A.B.C. of Reading*, p. 28.

the first possibility is that Pound and Fenollosa believed the Chinese language to be as arbitrary in speech as all other languages, and it is only in writing that an idealist ‘natural suggestion’ takes place; alternatively, it could be that as both lacked the necessary linguistic knowledge to analyse the Chinese language, they were forced to focus their discussion on the written character only. In reality, it was most likely a combination of both points, and as a result Fenollosa’s discussion focused primarily on the visual. Pound’s 1912 statement in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ on the fundamental arbitrariness of language is a general statement, and while his championing of Fenollosa does not contradict his point as such, neither Pound nor Fenollosa give any explicit reason to believe that they thought the phonetic system of Chinese to be less arbitrary or conventional than any other language.

Having argued that the Chinese character is a stylised depiction of natural processes, and that this is reflected in the tendency to emphasise verbs rather than ‘static’ nouns, Fenollosa extends his discussion into Chinese syntax. His treatment of syntax does, of course, lead him to making statements on the Chinese language as a whole, but he stops short of commenting on phonetic and semantic characteristics.

> Let us return to the form of the sentence and see what power it adds to the verbal units from which it builds. I wonder how many people have asked themselves why the sentence form exists at all, why it seems so universally necessary *in all languages*? Why *must* all possess it, and what is the normal type of it? If it be so universal it ought to correspond to some primary law of nature.
>
> I fancy the professional grammarians have given but a lame response to this inquiry. Their definitions fall into two types: one, that a sentence expresses a "complete thought"; the other, that in it we bring about a union of subject and predicate.[112]

Both answers, according to Fenollosa, are inadequate. The former falls down as an explanation as ‘in nature there is *no* completeness’ [emphasis in text] and as a result, no thought can be completed by a sentence. ‘All processes in nature are inter-related’, he argues, and as a direct result ‘there could be no complete sentence (according to this definition) save one which it would take all time to pronounce’. Similarly, the latter definition he sees as pure abstraction, reliant on the ‘pure subjectivity' of 'grammarians', and is therefore not an attribute of nature. Rather than the expression of a complete thought, or the union of abstract grammatical principles, the sentence becomes a linguistic expression of natural processes. Fenollosa believes that 'the sentence form was forced upon primitive men by nature itself', and that it is a direct 'reflection of the temporal order in causation'. For example, he claims that a flash of lightning passes from a cloud to the earth, just as an action moves from a subject to an object. This process alone is the sentence's claim to verity, as Fenollosa writes: 'all truth has to be expressed in sentences because all truth is the *transference of power*' [emphasis in text].[113]

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[112] Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*, p. 46.

Analytic languages with (mostly) subject-verb-object syntactic structures like English and Chinese retain primordial linguistic processes, according to Fenollosa's conception. Theories of this kind were dismissed by Otto Jespersen in his *Language* , who argued that the first humans to make use of language were unlikely to have formed such a 'logical' grammatical structure. Rather, Jespersen contends, it is far more likely that 'less logical and more material grammatical appliances' were abandoned gradually in order to form the current grammatical state of the language. As a result, Jespersen claims, the Chinese language cannot be used as an example of 'primitive' or 'primordial' linguistic structures.[114]

Fenollosa's point of view was also rejected by Edward Sapir in 1921. First Sapir demonstrates that the definition of 'word' is problematic as its meaning in fact ranges on a spectrum from the expression of a single concept (abstract, concrete, or purely relational) to the expression of complete thoughts (accepting, of course, that such a thing is possible). He then compares the definition of the word with the role of the sentence as a grammatical construct:

> The word is merely a form, a definitely moulded entity that takes in as much or as little of the conceptual material of the whole thought as the genius of the language cares to allow. Thus it is that while the single radical elements and grammatical elements, the carriers of isolated concepts, are comparable as we pass from language to language, the finished words are not. Radical (or grammatical) element and sentence--these are the primary "functional" units of speech, the former as an abstracted minimum, the

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[113] Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*, pp. 22, 47.

[114] Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Origin and Development* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), p. 372.

> latter as the esthetically satisfying embodiment of a unified thought. The actual "formal" units of speech, the words, may on occasion identify themselves with either of the two functional units; more often they mediate between the two extremes, embodying one or more radical notions and also one or more subsidiary ones. We may put the whole matter in a nutshell by saying that the radical and grammatical elements of language, abstracted as they are from the realities of speech, respond to the conceptual world of science, abstracted as it is from the realities of experience, and that the word, the existent unit of living speech, responds to the unit of actually apprehended experience, of history, of art. The sentence is the logical counterpart of the complete thought only if it be felt as made up of the radical and grammatical elements that lurk in the recesses of its words. It is the psychological counterpart of experience, of art, when it is felt, as indeed it normally is, as the finished play of word with word.[115]

Sapir's definition of the sentence is contrary to Fenollosa's definition of it as the expression of natural processes, is in fact a conventional form, primarily for aesthetic satisfaction. Indeed, the sentence is here figured as a logical device which may approximate natural processes in syntactic structures, but more often than not is a convenient, conventionally established means for communication. Sapir goes on to provide a more succinct definition, explaining that '[the sentence] is the linguistic expression of a proposition. It combines a subject of discourse with a statement in regard to this subject'. It is an outgrowth of logical discourse and abstraction, rather than a direct representation of actions in nature. With characteristic relativism, Sapir suggests that the sentence is a discursive device that, naturally, takes different forms in different languages.

In many ways, Fenollosa shared with linguists such as Bréal, Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield, a tendency to eschew the old grammatical 'parts of speech' in favour of new debates with a new terminology, and in his focus on the word as the primary meaning-making unit of language his work fits in with contemporaneous debates about semantics and semiotics. However, where linguistics began to look increasingly inwards towards cognitive and behavioural processes, Fenollosa looks towards external, natural transferences of power such as kinetic energy.

Furthermore, this syntactic registration of natural processes corresponds with a metaphoric tradition that he believes to be still evident in poetry. Speech, Fenollosa believes, is a layering of metaphors upon metaphors. Abstract terms, he contends, have their roots in verbs denoting direct action, and are themselves based upon concrete description. Etymology, seen this way, becomes a kind of archaeology, digging up original, vital meanings. The tendency in linguistics to use current speech as the primary evidence of linguistic function is rejected in *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*. Instead, what is vital and significant in a language is not current usage but rather the original meaning of a term. Poetic language is the most powerful expression of this original vitality, as 'poetry only does consciously what the primitive races did unconsciously'; due to poetry's closeness to the 'concreteness' of natural, direct action, 'poetry, language and the care of myth grew up together'.[116] This statement is significant for understanding the direction of Pound's poetry. The unification of poetry with myth, poetry with language, and language with myth brings together three interacting aspects of Pound's writing during the period, and is a fine example of why Pound was attracted to Fenollosa's drafts. Pound, like Fenollosa, rarely discusses language apart from art. Here there is a genuine alternative to his background in philology, where literature was taught as an extension of linguistic study. *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, however, suggests that linguistic study just as well can be an extension of literary principles, insofar as literary (or more broadly aesthetic) principles express the vital, primordial elements behind all linguistic function. In this sense, language and myth are mutually dependent, not least because language becomes the registration of a kind of natural theology, bearing traces of the original utterances by which humanity explained the world around them. Poetry best captures this original state because in its careful attention to the order, meaning and style of words it exhibits the same primordial intentions as the earliest human speakers. Fenollosa expressly links this process to etymology, which gives a kind of professional verification to the poetic focus on the original and vital. His theories allow Pound to circumvent philology and assert poetic practice as performing a more successful analysis of language than historical linguistics.

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[115] Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp. 33-34.

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[116] Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*, p. 55.

The Philological Method in *A Draft of XXX Cantos*

By the time Pound came to work on the *Cantos* from 1915 onwards, his opposition to philology as a mode of literary study was well established. His interest in non-philological figures such as Fenollosa, Maxim, and Upward, combined with his disparaging remarks about the discipline in relation to German *Kultur* would appear to have marked a complete departure from his educational background. On the contrary, Pound’s engagement with philology continues throughout the *Cantos*, with his treatment of it ranging from vitriolic criticism to recourse to elements of its methodology, evidence of philological research, and a continued interest in Romance linguistics.

One need only read through the first five *Cantos* to find evidence of Provençal subject matter and poetry. ‘Canto IV’ compares the Provençal story of Guillem da Cabestan to the Graeco-Roman myths of Procne and Philomena, and Actaeon. Furthermore, Canto VI has lines of Provençal scattered throughout, from the coarse and vulgar ‘tant las fotei com auzirets’ to the beautiful ‘que la lauzeta mover’. However, it is the opening of Canto VII that reveals the enduring influence of Pound’s philological background:

Eleanor (she spoiled in a British climate)
        ‘’Ελανδρος and ‘’Ελέπτολις, and
        poor old Homer blind,
        blind as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea-surge;
        rattle of old men’s voices.
And then the phantom Rome,
        marble narrow for seats
“Si pulvis nullus” said Ovid,
“Erit, nullum tamen excute.”
Then file and candles, e li mestiers ecoutes;
Scene for the battle only, but still scene,
Pennons and standards y cavals armatz
Not mere succession of strokes, sightless narration,
And Dante’s “ciocco,” brand struck in the game.

(VII.24)

Excluding the English that begins and frames this passage, the languages run in order: Greek, Latin, Old French, Provençal and, briefly, Italian. As a student of Romance philology, Pound will have been conscious of the fact that this follows exactly the descent from Greek to Latin to the Romance languages. Richard Sieburth's remark that Pound was 'transforming romance philology into contemporary poetry' is apt for this canto.

The next major reference to philology occurs in 'Canto XIV', one of the 'Hell Cantos', and it is part of a litany of what Pound sees as the great corruptors of the modern world.

> The slough of unamiable liars,
>   bog of stupidities,
> malevolent stupidities, and stupidities,
> the soil living pus, full of vermin,
> dead maggots begetting live maggots,
>   slum owners,
> usurers squeezing crab-lice, pandars to authority,
> pets-de-loup, sitting on piles of stone books,
> obscuring the texts with philology,
>   hiding them under their persons,
>
> (XIV.63).

Pound's placement of philology in his revolting depiction of post-war London captures his personal feelings towards the state of the discipline, and it is one of his strongest condemnations of it. It should be pointed out that Pound portrays philology as a tool used by corrupt elements within British letters in the immediate post-war years, rather than a part of a corrupt establishment itself. Nevertheless, Pound's description here would seem to make his engagement with philology come to an abrupt end.

On the contrary, Pound's most sympathetic portrayal of philological scholarship occurs only six cantos later. In Canto XX, Pound recounts his visit to Emil Lévy in 1912 in order consult the renowned philologist on an Arnaut Daniel manuscript. For J. Mark Smith, Canto XX is both the 'high point' and 'limit case' of the 'interleaving of poetic and philological tradition' that he sees in modernist writing.[117] Pound was perplexed by the word *noigandres* which had appeared in Daniel's 'Er vei Vermeills vertz, blaus, blancs, gruocs'; it seemed to have no known meaning, and was not recognisable as a Provençal word. What is ostensibly an anecdote of Pound's study of Daniel, however, soon becomes a celebration of the capacity of the Provençal language to create a union of semantic and aural beauty. The passage opens with a combination of Romance languages, emphasising that language, and Pound's former discipline of Romance languages in particular, is at the heart of this canto:

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[117] J. Mark Smith, 'What Pound Made of Philology', p. 700.

> Sound slender, quasi tinnula,
> Ligur' aiode: Si no'us vei, Domna don plus mi cal,
> Negus vezer mon bel pensar no val."
> Between the two almond trees flowering,
> The viel held close to his side;
> And another: s'adora ".
> "Possum ego naturae
> non meminisse tuae!" Qui son Properzio ed Ovidio.
>
> (XX.89)

Pound moves from one Romance language to another. 'Quasi tinnula' ('as if ringing') is from the Latin of Catullus, while 'Ligur' aoide' is from *The Odyssey* and refers to the sharp song of the sirens. Pound then moves to the Provençal of another troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn, whose phrase here he would translate in Canto XCII as 'And if I see her not,/ no sight is worth the beauty of my thought' (XCII.639). 'S'adora', 'they worship her' is from Guido Cavalcanti's Tuscan, and from a style of poetry that drew heavily on the influence of the troubadours. In moving from Latin and Greek to Provençal and Italian, Pound's poem, which blends languages in an almost seamless transition, is once again performing the history of romance languages. The final two lines are a Latin quotation from Propertius, and then a Dantescan reference to Ovid and Propertius in Italian. The way in which Pound blends the cadences of different languages demonstrates not only his linguistic and poetic competence, but is also a testament to the philological training he received during his youth.

Pound then recounts his visit to Freiburg. His portrayal of Lévy is sympathetic, and Pound comes across as remarkably deferential. His opposition to philology is not evident in this passage, which may suggest that he sees philological scholarship performing its natural role:

> And I went to old Lévy, and it was by then 6.30
> in the evening, and he trailed half way across Freiburg
> before dinner, to see the two strips of copy,

Arnaut's, settant'uno R. superior (Ambrosiana)
Not that I could sing him the music.
And he said: Now is there anything I can tell you? "
And I said: I dunno, sir, or
"Yes, Doctor, what do they mean by *noigandres?"*
And he said: Noigandres! NOIgandres!
" You know for seex mon's of my life
" Effery night when I go to bett, I say to myself:
" Noigandres, eh, *noi*gandres,
" Now what the DEFFIL can that mean! "

(XX.89-90)

Given Pound's general opposition to philology by this point, his portrayal of the only philologist to appear in the *Cantos* in any detail is surprisingly warm. One reason for this might be that Pound skilfully suggests that philology's proper place is as a supplement to the enjoyment and study of literature, not a scholarly end in itself. Pound travels to consult Lévy only after he has failed to work out to the word himself.

The passage then changes into a lyrical mode. The poem moves to landscape of Provence itself, leaving Lévy's suggested translation of the word unsaid. Lévy's philological advice is relegated by the meaning of the word itself.

Wind over the olive trees, ranunculae ordered,
By the clear edge of the rocks
The water runs, and the wind scented with pine
And with hay-fields under sun-swath.
Agostino, Jacopo and Boccata.
You would be happy for the smell of that place
And never tired of being there, either alone
Or accompanied.
Sound: as of the nightingale too far off to be heard.
Sandro, and Boccata, and Jacopo Sellaio;
The ranunculae, and almond,
Boughs set in espalier,
Duccio, Agostino; *e l'olors* –
The smell of that place – *d'enoi ganres*.
Air moving under the boughs,
The cedars there in the sun,
Hay new cut on hill slope,
And the water there in the cut
Between the two lower meadows; sound,
The sound, as I have said, a nightingale
Too far off to be heard.

> And the light falls, *remir*,
> from her breast to thighs.
>
> (XX.90).

Lévy's suggested translation of 'noigandres' is the result of brilliant scholarship. The word itself troubled Lévy as it did Pound. It comes from a line in Daniel's 'Er vei Vermeills vertz, blaus, blancs, gruocs', 'e jois lo grans, e l'olors de noigandres'. Lévy, perplexed by this word for six months, formulated a hypothesis that it may have been mis-transcribed from the original. *Gandres*, he guessed, must come from the verb *gandir* ('to ward off'), whilst he also suggested that *de noi* should be *d'enoi*, which is related to the modern French *ennui*. Thus transcribed, the line 'e jois lo grans, e l'olors d'enoi gandres', becomes, as Hugh Kenner translates it, 'and joy is [love's] seed, and its smell wards off sadness'. It is a celebration of the Provençal landscape and the power of love, both of which Pound idealises in the passage. But it is not immediately clear why Pound does not give Lévy's translation.

The answer may lie in the relative value he accords the Provençal language. On Daniel himself, Pound wrote one year before his visit to Lévy that 'he is never content with a conventional phrase, or with a word which does not convey his exact meaning; for which reason his words are so often hard to translate, more especially as there is no complete or satisfactory Provençal-English, or Provençal-anything, lexicon yet printed'. As a result, a translation of 'd'enoi ganres' would not capture the poetic sensibility to which Pound attached so much value. It would also invalidate the non-philological presentation of Levy's philological research, whereby artistic sensibility is presented rather than explained. This passage represents the dominance of the literary over the philological modes of poetic exploration. Rather than giving an etymological explanation of the meaning of the word, Pound applies his philological discovery to a direct presentation of natural processes, following Fenollosa. Nevertheless, it is evident not only from this canto, but in Pound's poetry as a whole that the linguistic virtuosity that would become one of his foremost literary signatures was founded upon a philological approach to language developed during his time at university. In this sense, Philology gave Pound a linguistic platform from which to depart, and to which to return, throughout his career.

Despite his considerable engagement with philological methodologies, as well as with many of the discipline's prominent figures and ideas, Pound's treatment of literature revolved around value judgements, aesthetic concerns, and social utility. Pound undoubtedly approached literature from the point of view of an artistic practitioner and not that of a scholar by the time he had abandoned his studies. Nevertheless, the influence of his philological can be seen throughout his work. First, it is the basis for his knowledge of language, and his linguistic concerns – from the variety of languages in the *Cantos* to the more societally-driven treatment of language in his critical prose – are vital to his poetics. Second, the *Cantos* display an abundance of research techniques and assimilative and comparative practices. The archival nature of the composition of the 'Malatesta Cantos', for example, owe much to the research techniques demanded of trainee philologists. Pound's Sigismundo Malatesta is a remarkably historical and academic construction, his vitality drawn from documents, himself a composite of tangible evidence. Finally, as Pound's continued interest in both the history of language and the relationship between different languages and cultures show, Fenollosa's privileging of the Chinese written character did not supplant Pound's philological foundations as such. Rather, it supplemented and embellished his pre-existing interests. While Pound may have abandoned philology as a mode of literary analysis, its practices and approaches remained embedded in his treatment of language.

Chapter 2: 'Words So Full of Detail': Anthropology and Linguistic Relavity in Pound's Middle Career, 1928-1939

Ezra Pound’s critical writing has a tendency towards eclectic conclusions being drawn around a central focus. Pound’s conclusions, particularly with regard to language, often transcend his shifting focal points. In the nineteen twenties, as Michael Ingham and David Moody have both shown, Pound dedicated a considerable amount of time to the study of music, taking it as the centre point of his discussions of a wider variety of topics. For example, Pound outlined a number of his linguistic tenets in a 1924 article on the music of George Antheil in *The Criterion*, whilst also expressing an interest in anthropology. Pound’s study in music led him to reflect on the elements of his own art, writing that ‘the medium of poetry is words, i.e. human symbols, conventions; they are capable of including things in nature, that is, sound quality, timbre, up to a point’. Poetry’s affinity with music, according to Pound, relies upon the cadences of words, a similarity due to the fact that ‘they have interior rhythm, there can be rhythm in their arrangement, even tone leadings, and these with increasing precision’. However, as words are dependent upon linguistic structures that are founded upon convention and arbitrary meaning, ‘[one] can not get a word back into the non-human’.[118] As a poet so invested in natural process, and human interaction with the natural and divine, Pound’s attempt to create a poetics best able to represent that investment comes to rely upon a medium (language) that is ultimately ‘superfluous’ or ‘wholly inadequate’. What the ‘good’ artist searches for, Pound argues, is an ‘ideograph of admirable compound-of-qualities that make any work of art permanent’, but such an ‘ideograph’ is, in his view, accessible only in turning away from the contemporary culture of the west, as his use of Fenollosa’s erroneous understanding of the

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[118] Ezra Pound, ‘George Antheil’, *The Criterion*, 2:7 (1924), 321-331 (p. 325).

Chinese written character demonstrates.[119] Pound's argument led him to suggest that such 'permanence' draws inspiration from other cultures.

> The difference between this utterance and similar statements by lunatics is that the artist does attain precise utterance in his own medium. And from that precise utterance the interested reader may interpret, more or less, the artist's ambiguous, or more than ambiguous, verbal statements about life, cosmos, being, non-being, time, eternity, etc. (These are, often, no worse or no more ambiguous than the general and considered statements of professed philosophers.)
>
> I mean that from such fragmentary and confused writing the intelligent observer will induce the fact that the artist is very gravely concerned with the bases of his art, and with the relations of that art to *everything else*. This is very different from preciosity; emollients; trimmings; connoisseurship; traditions regarding superfices, or the customs or fashions of the moment.
>
> Hence the permanent resemblances of masterwork, the "revolutionary" nature of genius, the returns to the primitives, and so forth.[120]

Pound's notion of a return to 'the primitives' is most likely a reference to the primitivist aesthetic developed in the visual arts by Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, as well as Pound's acquaintances Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, to name but a few. The notion of a 'primitive' state is, however, fraught with assumption and prejudice, and draws on underlying racial, linguistic and cultural notions of western supremacy, even if Pound is partially attempting to undermine them. Gill Perry has noted in her discussion of modernist notions of the 'primitive' that the term 'primitivism' itself 'is generally used to refer to the discourses on the "primitive"', and not on any essential aspects of individual people or cultures.[121] It is, in other words, an imposed western ideal, and not a manifestation of otherness. Pound uses 'primitivism' as a basis for his discussion of what is permanent in art and, increasingly over the following decade, in language and culture.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Nancy Cunard's Black Hours press published the first complete section of Pound's long poem, *A Draft of XXX Cantos* (1930). The title itself makes it clear that Pound's project was a work in progress, but it nevertheless marks an important moment in

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[119] Ezra Pound, 'George Antheil', 326-327.

[120] Ezra Pound, 'George Antheil', 327.

[121] Gill Perry, 'Primitivism and "The Modern"', in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Francis Frascina, Charles Harrison, and Gill Perry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 3-85 (p. 5).

Pound's middle period as it is the first division of *The Cantos*. The next eleven cantos, *Eleven New Cantos* (1934), would be devoted increasingly to contemporary economics and the history of the early American republic and considerably less to myth and Renaissance European history. 1930 is thus a year of departure, with Pound having published his 'preparation of the pallete', and dedicated himself to the poem's new direction. It is also in this year that Pound met the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius, following an excursion to Frankfurt from Vienna, an event recounted in Canto XXXVIII. Frobenius's work, which Pound read between 1929 and 1930, explores the particularities of African culture, describing the habits, languages and myths of various tribes and relating them to a general theory of *kulturmophologie*. Pound's interest in Frobenius's research can be read alongside his interest in the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, the French philosopher who proposed that there are two kinds of mentality: a 'logical mentality' which is found in the 'civilized' west, and a 'prelogical mentality' found amongst groups described as 'primitive'. These differences, Lévy-Bruhl argues, are manifest in language. It is on this very point that Pound brings his interest in Frobenius and Lévy-Bruhl together in Canto XXXVIII.

> The ragged arab spoke with Frobenius and told him
> The names of 3000 plants.
> Bruhl found some languages full of detail
> Words that half mimic action; but
> generalization is beyond them, a white dog is
> not, let us say, a dog like a black dog.
> (XXXVIII.189).

I shall explore this canto in greater detail below, but Pound's premise is that the language of so-called 'primitive' peoples is better able to register details, and is closer to a primordial vitality than western, Indo-European languages. While this is, of course, a deeply problematic and entirely erroneous position, it does require further explanation in the context of 1920s and 1930s linguistic anthropology.

Lévy-Bruhl was not strictly speaking an anthropologist, but he has nonetheless been described as such in modernist studies, not least because his work is both influenced by, and impacts on the professionalisation of anthropology as a discipline in the early twentieth century. Leon Surette and, more recently, Susanna Pavloska , both describe Lévy-Bruhl as an anthropologist in their discussions of the idea of 'the primitive' in the modernist period, but he was in fact a professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1899 to 1927, and he did not undertake any fieldwork during his career.[122] According to Surette, Lévy-Bruhl 'relativized the "past" through an ahistorical perception characteristic of modernism'. While this 'ahistorical perception' may be true of modernist works such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or, indeed, Pound's *Cantos*, Lévy-Bruhl's work is not necessarily characteristic of anthropological research in the modernist period.

Early twentieth century anthropology can be characterised by two opposing positions: evolutionism and cultural relativism. Evolutionism depends upon a universalist understanding of human mental functions, which holds that the physiological, mental and social aspects of all human cultures are fundamentally similar and similarly capable, and differ only in detail and gradation. Combining this with evolutionism, or the belief that humanity constitutes a progression from less civilized cultures to more civilized ones, advocates of this view held that the indigenous people of Africa, Australasia and North America (the three most common areas of study) existed in a 'primitive' state of mankind. Thus, all cultures were seen on an evolutionary scale, with the western countries from which such theories were expounded at the top and the studied subjects at the bottom. Proponents of this universalist-evolutionist position included James Gordon Frazer, whose *The Golden Bough* (1890) was widely influential in cultural and artistic circles, and was read by Pound and Eliot.

The universalist and evolutionist standpoints were articulated most fully by Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917). In his most famous works, *Primitive Culture* (1871) and *Anthropology* (1881), Tylor laid the foundations for the discipline by establishing a relatively objective and scientific methodology. His evolutionism eschews the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer, arguing that 'it appears both possible and desirable to eliminate considerations of hereditary varieties or races of man, and to treat mankind as homogenous in nature, though placed at different grades of civilization'.[123] By considering different groups according to cultural and historical factors rather than racial distinctions, Tylor was able to provide a focus for the new discipline of anthropology.

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[122] Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 59; Susanna Pavlovska, *Modern Primitives: Race and Language in Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Zora Neale Hurston* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 63.

According to the evolutionist stance, language is also seen on a scale of values, with Indo-European languages seen as inherently 'civilised' and the languages of the indigenous people of North America and Australasia placed as naturally 'primitive'. Tylor compared the linguistic and psychological operations of his subjects with those of children in western society, sharing in the popular belief that the languages of these peoples are far simpler and less advanced than Indo-European languages such as English or Latin.

> The theory that the original forms of language are to be referred to a low or savage condition of culture among the remotely ancient human race, stands in general consistency with the known facts of philology. The causes which have produced language, so far as they are understood, are notable for that childlike simplicity of operation which befits the infancy of human civilization. The ways in which sounds are in the first instance chosen and arranged to express ideas, are practical expedients at the level of nursery philosophy. A child of five years old could catch the meaning of imitative sounds, interjectional words, symbolism of sex or distance by contrast of vowels. Just as no one is likely to enter into the real nature of mythology who has not the keenest appreciation of nursery tales, so the spirit in which we guess riddles and play at children's games is needed to appreciate the lower phases of language. Such a state of things agrees with the opinion that such rudimentary speech had its origin among men while in a childlike intellectual condition, and thus the self-expressive branch of savage language affords valuable materials for the problem of primitive speech.[124]

This is a fascinating and unsettling insight into a number of the discussions taking place in linguistic anthropology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tylor applies etymological techniques in speculating on the origin of language, an approach that draws on the legacy of nineteenth century historical linguistics. Furthermore, he uses a kind of etymological teleology to suggest that the languages of certain tribes whose speech is of non-Indo-European origin, and who make extensive use of non-verbal systems such as gesture, are less-developed. Their languages, therefore, are seen as living and 'organic' evidence of mankind's ancient past. Fifty years later, the notion of gesture would come to interest Lévy-Bruhl, Frobenius and Marcel Jousse, amongst others, and I shall return to the linguistic implications of Tylor's arguments later in the chapter.

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[123] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 7.
[124] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, pp. 236-237.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the cultural relativist school of anthropological thought grew out of, and significantly departed from, Tylor's approach under the guidance of the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942). Rather than seeing cultures as more or less civilized according to an ethnocentric scale of values, Boas argued that all cultures are of equal and unique value, and must be studied on their own terms. Like Tylor, he believed that racial distinction was both irrelevant and spurious, relying on historical factors as the main determinant of cultural differences. It was these differences, however, that Boas took to be of fundamental interest in disparate cultures, and not any underlying similarities with western culture. Explicitly rejecting the idea of evolution within culture, particularly according to the standards of western society, Boas reformulated the remit of anthropological and ethnographic research, insisting that only objective study of the uniqueness of cultures, to which no value or judgement should be attached, was the true scientific approach. Boas exerted great influence in the development of the field over the next four decades from his position as head of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, as well as in his guiding role in the American Anthropological Association. Many of Boas's students became eminent anthropologists and linguists, and those working under his direct influence included Ruth Benedict, Alfred L. Kroeber, Robert H. Lowie, and Edward Sapir.

In contradistinction to Tylor, Boas explicitly argued that language cannot be taken as an example of cultural value. Rejecting the idea that so-called 'primitive' languages are more simplistic than Indo-European ones, Boas used evidence from his fieldwork to demonstrate that they are merely different in construction:

> Many primitive languages are complex. Minute differences in point of view are given expression by means of grammatical forms; and the grammatical categories of Latin,

> and still more so those of modern English, seem crude when compared with the complexity of psychological or logical forms which primitive languages recognize, but which in our speech are disregarded. On the whole, the development of languages seems to be such, that the nicer distinctions are eliminated, and that it begins with complex and ends with simpler forms, although it must be acknowledged that opposite tendencies are not by any means absent.[125]

This position was to become extremely influential. Susan Hegeman warns against seeing Boas as the originator of an American 'culture concept', as he wrote little on the topic itself until 1930, but the influence of Boas's cultural and linguistic anthropology which emphasised civilisation as a relative, not absolute, concept was felt extensively in anthropological circles during the modernist period.[126] The legacy of Boas's outline of linguistic research can be seen particularly in the work of Edward Sapir, who produced a number of influential studies on Athabascan languages, English, German, Hebrew, and numerous others, by adopting and adapting Boas's principles.

An outstanding linguist, Sapir applied Boas's methods to his study of language, with a particular focus on the indigenous languages of North America. As Marc Manganaro has demonstrated, Sapir's interest was not limited to anthropological linguistics alone, and he wrote with great authority on the relationship between language and culture. Sapir published poetry and literary reviews in addition to his extensive work on North American languages, with his work appearing in *The Nation*, *The Dial* and *Poetry*, journals ingrained in modernist culture. As a result, he is an important figure in measuring the relationship between language as a science and language as an art form. Sapir, in fact, defined language as 'a symbolic guide to culture' in a significant essay of 1929, entitled 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science'.[127] In this essay, Sapir has been seen to outline the position of linguistic relativity, a standpoint which argues that each language expresses a different mode of thought, and that perfect translation between languages is virtually impossible, as certain ideas, shades of knowledge and ways of interpreting reality are unique to certain languages.

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[125] Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 172.

[126] Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 39.

[127] Edward Sapir, 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science', *Language*, 5:4 (1929), 207-214 (p. 210).

> No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.[128]

Seen this way, the language spoken by a particular group reflects a worldview particular to that group. Language is a means by which the unique interpretation of the world by a culture is registered, and is thus bound up with a unique way of expressing thought. Sapir did not develop such a theory to the extent that he has perhaps been understood to have, but, as Regna Darnell and Richard Handler have demonstrated, the way in which language evoked and represented differences in social reality remained an important component of Sapir's general theory throughout his career.

The evolutionism of Tylor and Frazer on the one hand, and the relativism of Boas, Lowie and Sapir on the other dominate the history of anthropology in this period. It is strange, then, that when Pound came to consider the questions of how culture, language and history interact at the end of the nineteen twenties, he did not seem to have read the work of the major figures in anthropology. Instead, Pound focused his interest on the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, a professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne who had written on the fundamental psychological differences between 'civilized' and 'primitive' cultures, and Leo Frobenius, a German ethnologist whose particular influence on Pound was the (somewhat adapted) notion of *paideuma*, which Pound came to define as the 'inrooted ideas of any period', or the manifestation of certain cultural habits, beliefs and mentalities that Frobenius believed to belong to certain ethnic groups.[129]

The two positions of universalism or evolutionism and cultural relativism are of course not dogmatic and absolute, and many of the key figures on either side of the debate adapted elements of both into their research. Nonetheless, the two positions provide a spectrum against which to measure Pound's views, as well as those of the figures that influenced him. Pound was extremely interested in both Frobenius's and Lévy-Bruhl's treatment of language, and refers to their work in the *Cantos*, the *ABC of Reading* (1934), and *Guide to Kulchur*.

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[128] Sapir, 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science', p. 209.

[129] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938), p. 57.

In this chapter I shall explore Pound's appropriation of their work, its impact on his understanding of language as a concept, as well as situating both their positions and Pound's in relation to debates in anthropological linguistics in the early twentieth century. In this approach I am indebted to the work of Marc Manganaro and Susan Hegeman, both of whom have produced detailed studies of the way that the 'culture' concept engaged with modernist literature. Pound, however, is difficult to place, even against the backdrop of modernist interest in culture and language as detailed by Manganaro and Hegeman. In his eventual sole reliance on Frobenius, Pound can perhaps be seen to occupy an increasingly isolated position, despite the correspondences between his work and the work of anthropological figures in the same period.

Axiological Relativism in the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl

Lévy-Bruhl's position with regard to linguistics is outlined in a chapter entitled 'The Mentality of Primitives in Relation to the Languages They Speak' in his 1911 book *How Natives Think*. This chapter is significant for a two primary reasons. First, it is Lévy-Bruhl's most sustained engagement with his anthropological contemporaries. Second, all of Pound's published references to Lévy-Bruhl's work are from this chapter.

The linguistic theory explored in the chapter is rather simple: Lévy-Bruhl surmises that due to alleged differences in mental habit and construction, the languages spoken by different peoples must register that difference.

> If the need for concrete expression and the accumulation of forms capable of expressing any peculiarities of action, or subject and object, are indeed features common to very many of the languages spoken by primitive peoples; if these features tend to grow weaker or to disappear as communities advance in development, it is permissible to inquire what it is with which they correspond in that which we have called the mentality peculiar to these peoples. It is a mentality which makes little use of abstraction, and even that in a different method from a mind under the sway of logical thought; it has not the same concepts at command. Will it be possible to go yet

> a little further and find, in examining the matter at its disposal – that is, the vocabulary of its languages – any positive indications of the manner of its functioning?[130]

This is then formulated into a more coherent hypothesis:

> In the long run the mental habits of the group cannot fail to leave some trace upon their modes of expression since these are also social phenomena, upon which the individual has little, if any, influence. With differing types of mentality, therefore, there should be languages which differ in their construction.

It must be stressed that Lévy-Bruhl does not advocate a position similar to what has come to be known (largely erroneously) as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or the theory that language is capable of determining thought. Indeed, Lévy-Bruhl states that due to a relative lack of knowledge of the linguistic material (as of 1911) and the difficulty in attaching a particular language to a particular ethnic group due to migratory, historical, and political reasons, 'we can therefore safely establish nothing more than a very general correspondence between the characteristics of a language and those of the mentality of the social group' (*HNT,* p. 139). As a result, this is not a position of linguistic determinism, and Lévy-Bruhl, like Pound and even Sapir himself, operates on the principle that language is primarily influenced by thought, rather than the other way around.

Pound seems to have accepted the hypothesis that different languages reflect different mentalities, and this is a position that he adopts in the *ABC of Reading* and *Guide to Kulchur*. Lévy-Bruhl supports his argument by exploring the wealth of detail expressed in languages across the world, with the native North American language families his primary example. He writes that the descriptive qualities of the Klamath language (from Southern Oregon and Northern California), for example, demonstrate an entirely different mental capacity, and a linguistic function that 'express[es] concrete details which our languages leave understood or unexpressed' (*HNT,* p. 140). The reason for Lévy-Bruhl's choice of North American languages is as much practical as it is ideological, and it is not least due to the fact that American anthropology was producing more detailed accounts of those languages than any others. Other examples, mainly from Australasia and

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[130] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think (Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*), trans. by Lilian A. Clare (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926), p. 147. Subsequent textual references are to this edition.

Africa, are also cited as evidence.

The primary source for Lévy-Bruhl's discussion is A.S. Gatschet's *The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon* (1890), an extensive account of the Klamath people and their language. Using Gatschet as evidence, Lévy-Bruhl focuses his inquiry through two main aspects of thought: generalisation and pluralisation. 'The primitive's mentality needs to differentiate between two, three, a few, or many subjects or objects, to indicate whether they are together or separate', Lévy-Bruhl claims, and as a result '[the mentality] has no general terms for "tree" or "fish" but special terms for every variety of tree or of fish' (p. 142). Pound clearly bore this argument in mind and would later draw on it in Canto XXXVIII, and he accepted the claim that other people do not make use of the concepts of plurality and generalisation as speakers of Indo-European languages in America and Europe understand them. That is not to say that Lévy-Bruhl argues that people of non-Indo-European languages cannot pluralise, but merely that they do it in a radically different way. Taking Klamath as his example, and quoting Gatschet, he suggests that the 'distributive reduplication' employed in the Klamath performs a function analogous to western concepts of pluralisation. Distributive reduplication indicates plurality by duplicating a word or part of a word (the base). To give an example of partial reduplication, Gatschet argues that the word *Pádshai* refers to the state of being blind in one eye, whereas total blindness is given by *papádsha i*, or blindness in two eyes. The phoneme *pa* is the reduplicant. According to Lévy-Bruhl's interpretation, this does not represent the plural as the student of an Indo-European language would understand it, but instead represents the kind of plurality necessitated by a different mentality.

While focusing on Klamath, Lévy-Bruhl characterises the wealth of detail available to the languages he refers to as 'primitive'. Klamath suffixes alone, for example, are said to be able to denote a variety of meaning that would be impossible for single words in English: 'to begin, continue, cease, to be accustomed to do…to move in a zigzag or in a straight line, to go up, along the ground, or below, to describe circles in the air, to come towards or to go away from (the subject or object being visible or invisible)', and a number of other details besides (p. 155). Lévy-Bruhl's general thesis, then, is that the intense detail of languages such as Klamath (and the various other language families he amalgamates) reflect an essential need for detail in daily life that is alien to the logical, abstract world of Europe and the United States of America. The languages he describes thus denote a mentality whose logical and grammatical categories are aligned, and which is held in opposition to the mentality of Lévy-Bruhl's own society.

I suggest that Pound agrees with this principle on the whole, as his citation of Lévy-Bruhl in Canto XXXVIII demonstrates. In fact, the exact passage to which Pound refers is to be found on page 174 of the chapter on language. Lévy-Bruhl quotes Brough Smyth's *The Aborigines of Virginia* to effect that 'in Western Australia, the natives "have names for all the conspicuous stars, for every natural feature of the ground, every hill, swamp, bend of a river, etc., but not for the river itself"' (p. 174). Pound underlines his faith in Lévy-Bruhl's argument that such languages register precise details but cannot generalise by paraphrasing Brough Smyth's quotation in his posthumously published 'How to Write' (1930). First, Pound summarises the argument, writing that 'Lévy-Bruhl points out the savage's lack of power to generalise', and claiming that 'he has forty verbs where we have two or three verbs and some adverbs'. The result of this, Pound writes, is that 'the savage language grades down into pantomime and mimicry', an argument that is deeply problematic due to the generalisation 'savage language', conflating many unrelated languages into one (a pitfall of Lévy-Bruhl's approach), and also to the hierarchical notion of a 'graded down' language. Pound continues, claiming that this 'savage language' contains a kind of natural vitality that all good writers should aspire to rediscover in their own language:

> What Lévy-Bruhl says about the verbs of savages, what Fenollosa says about verbs in Chinese, what I had written about Dante's verbs before I had heard of Fenollosa all joins up. The good writer need not throw over anything humanity has acquired but he will in the measure of his genius try to recover the vividness of Dante, Li Po and the bushman. The savage to whom the wood or the bend in the river is not a wood or a bend but one particular stretch of wood, one particular bend in that river.[131]

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[131] Ezra Pound, 'How to Think', in *Machine Art: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 97-109 (p. 90).

Pound's poetics of concretion and precision of language lead him to a position whereby he celebrates the 'vividness' of so-called 'primitive' languages at the expense of the languages of societies he believes to be more advanced. Pound appropriates a primitivist theory which chimes with his *Cantos*' returns to the ancient past and the primordial world of the gods, a return which aspires to a language which he clearly believes bears traces of the linguistic strategies and mental processes of the ancients. Pound's poetry only gestures towards this.

Interestingly, Pound does not specify which languages Lévy-Bruhl refers to in particular. This is perhaps due to the nature of Lévy-Bruhl's thesis and the agenda behind his practice. *How Natives Think* suggests that the distinction between 'logical' and 'prelogical' mentality is such that it readily divides the people of the world (and their languages) into two distinct camps. Any one member of Lévy-Bruhl's categories can be taken for the whole, and differences between groups are either ignored or taken to be an anomaly in relation to a fixed, general rule. Thereby, wholly distinct languages (with little in common) are amalgamated in one evidential strand. Native American, Australasian and African languages, all of which are unrelated (and, are indeed composed of various families themselves), are taken to be evidence of the same social reality and opposed to 'logical' mentalities in Europe and America. As such, Lévy-Bruhl can hardly be considered a relativist as Boas or Sapir would understand the term, and Bernd Weiler has described his theories 'axiological relativism', directly opposing them to the cultural relativist approaches taken by Boasian thinkers.[132] The terms 'prelogical' and 'logical' certainly imply a kind of evolutionary progression.

Pound, then, is to be aligned with the kind of axiological relativism espoused by Lévy-Bruhl, though it is clear that he neither believes the gap between 'logical' and 'prelogical' thought to be one of great value, nor does he seem to believe the two to be completely separate, as he encourages writers to 'recover' the ability to represent such detail. It is this attitude that is enhanced by his reading of Frobenius.

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[132] Bernd Weiler, 'Cultural Relativism', in *The Blackwell Encylopedia of Sociology*, 11 Volumes, Volume 2, ed. by George Ritzer (Malden, M.A.: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 908-910 (p. 909).

Leo Frobenius's Theory of Culture: Language and *Paideuma*

The exact details of Pound's first engagement with Frobenius's work are difficult to determine. According to Noel Stock, Pound first encountered Frobenius's work in 1929, through reading the works of Oswald Spengler, who relied heavily of Frobenius's research, and by 1930, he had bought the seven volumes of Frobenius's magnum opus, *Erlebte Erdteile,* and had taken a special interest in the fourth volume, which had been published separately in 1921 as *Paideuma*. [133] On the other hand, Pound suggests in an undated fragment of a manuscript at the Beinecke entitled 'Frobenius', that it was Jo Bard who first recommended Frobenius to him, but Pound's phrasing is unclear.[134] What is clear is that Pound's first significant engagement with Frobenius's work is in late 1929 or early 1930. On 3 March 1930, Pound wrote to the Director of the Frobenius Institute asking for the 'translations right of Frobenius['s] "Paideuma".[135] Later in 1930, Pound travelled to Frankfurt to see George Antheil in concert. There he met Frobenius and invited him to the concert, and began a long correspondence with the Frankfurt Institute of *Kulturmophologie*. By the mid 1930s, this took place primarily in English with Frobenius's assistant, Douglas Fox. Fox was of vital importance to Pound for a number of reasons: first, as an American, he enabled Pound to engage with Frobenius's ideas in English; second, he was enthusiastic about the correspondence and was thus keen to discuss anthropological theories in detail; third, he was aware of Pound's standing in artistic circles and encouraged Pound to view Frobenius's work from a literary (and linguistic) standpoint.

Pound was first contacted by Douglas Fox on 17 December 1933, having been forwarded one of Pound's letters to Rhotert. Fox outlined his enthusiasm for working with Pound on a translation and despite making his own deficiencies clear (he had only been at the Institute for a year, and had only been able to read German for that length of time), he outlined his usefulness to Pound's project: Frobenius' personal impression of him, the fact that his step-father, Walter Otto, was a philologist who was close to Frobenius both personally and professionally, and his own interest in pursuing the translation project on which Pound proposed embarking. Pound's response, undated though probably written between December 1933 and January 1934, was equally enthusiastic, telling Fox 'you are obviously what I want'. Pound's intention was to produce a series of pamphlets with the design of 'turning F[robenius] into high class JOURNALISM'. His sense of frustration at his failure to encourage interest in Frobenius in the United States is obvious:

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[133] Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 284.

[134] Ezra Pound, 'Frobenius', Undated, YCAL MSS 43, Box 104, Folder 4336, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[135] Ezra Pound, Letter to the Director of the Frobenius Institute, 3 March 1930, YCAL MSS 43, Box 17, Folder 774, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> I have been booming and batting and cursing for 5 years at least re/ Am/ edtn/ Frobenius. Langston Hughes and I even had a go at the black universities. Hughes is a civilized man, and a damn good one, to judge by his letters.[136]

It is notable that Pound and Hughes attempted to interest 'black universities'. Part of the reason for this may have been Pound's sense that culture and race, and, indeed, language, are all interconnected. Frobenius's writing on the supposed fundamentals of African cultures, Pound seems to have felt, belonged as much to those whose ancestry dated back to the continent hundreds of years previously as it did to those people who inhabited its countries in the 1930s. This is a fascinating insight into Pound's understanding of Frobenius: cultural values persist in people as a kind of blood type, passed down through generations, and that even if these values become lost they are recoverable as they are fundamental.

In an undated letter, probably sent between December 1933 and January 1934 judging from its place in the correspondence, Fox advised Pound to approach Frobenius's work from the standpoint of his own area of expertise: literature and language.

> It also seems to me that as poet, critic, musician, scholar there are other things you could talk about. If you took a deep breath and spoke about American education it might go big. But it is one thing to curse one's country at home, another to damn it abroad. Still, you might find something good to say about the states [*sic*] although, as I gather from the 'Utter Farce' it would not be too easy. (that was a damn good article

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[136] Ezra Pound, Letter to Douglas Fox, 1933-1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 17, Folder 774, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> by the way. Half the institute has read it and Frobenius still has it. Will return it in a few days.) Purely as a question in dynamics in introducing F. to the U.S. would'nt [*sic*] it carry more weight if your ac/. rec/. were, shall we say, as a philologist?[137]

Fox's advice refers not only to the content of Pound's proposed articles, but also to their tone. By the 1930s, the tone of Pound's articles had become unrestrained, and the vitriolic bombast with which he engaged his correspondents in private found its way into his prose with increased regularity. As the majority of Pound's published references to Frobenius occur in a literary or critical context (in, for example, 'Canto XXXVIII', *ABC of Reading* or *Guide to Kulchur* as I explore below), it would appear that Pound took Fox to heart.

Pound's visit to Germany and Austria in 1930 is one of the central events described in Canto XXXVIII, a feature that has much in common with Pound's account of his visit to Emil Lévy in Canto XX, and which indicates Pound's desire to introduce elements of critical authority into his 'tale of the tribe'. In his description of Pound's visit to Frankfurt, J.J. Wilhelm describes Frobenius as a 'noted anthropologist' but his position in academic circles is rather more complicated. By 1930, Frobenius was a somewhat marginalised figure, and although he had much currency in Germany, his ethnological studies were far from the forefront of anthropological research.[138]

Frobenius's work did not go unnoticed in British and American anthropological circles. A.H. Keane, an Irish linguist, amateur ethnologist, and fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, wrote a favourable review of Frobenius's *Geographische Kulturkunde* (1904) in *The Geographical Journal*, introducing his work to a wider British audience.[139] In addition to this, Frobenius's work received attention in *American Anthropologist*, establishing his reputation as an authority on the ethnology of various African cultures and on cultural diffusion more generally.[140] In 1909, Keane translated *The Childhood of Man,* a book that outlines Frobenius's evolutionist approach to ethnology, and which chimed with his own approach to anthropology. In *The Childhood of Man*, Frobenius is careful to distinguish between different cultures, arguing that anthropology's focus on particulars discerns between cultures within geographical regions, not simply across them. These noticeable differences, he argues, are clearly to be seen in the 'outward forms' of each cultural group, and Frobenius dedicates considerable attention to discussing dress, gesture, language, music, and art. *The Childhood of Man*, in other words, is a study in cultural artefacts, the outward forms that a culture imparts. This is the essential aspect of Pound's appropriation of the term *paideuma,* a term which encompasses the description and categorisation of culture on the basis of the traces that it leaves. This is a crucial part of Frobenius's approach to ethnology.

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[137] Douglas Fox, Letter to Ezra Pound, undated [1933-1934], YCAL MSS 43, Box 17, Folder 775, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[138] J.J. Wilhelm, *Ezra Pound: The Tragic Years, 1925-1972* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 44.

[139] A.H. Keane, 'The Earth and Man', *The Geographical Journal*, 24:1 (1904), 89-90 (pp. 89-90).

[140] See Alexander F. Chamberlain, '1876-1906, L'Ecole d'Anthropologie de Paris', *American Anthropologist*, 10:1 (1908), 142 (p.142).

The Childhood of Man is also significant from a linguistic point of view, as Frobenius outlines his thoughts regarding the role that language plays in the study of culture. Frobenius uses 'language' to stand for general semiotic practices (as well as speech), distinguishing between 'dress language', or the meaning that certain garments and accessories take on when worn, 'sign and gesture language', which he believes to be the origin of speech, and 'drum language', or drum telegraphy. The latter two in particular interested Pound. According to Frobenius, 'long before man had learnt to make himself understood afar off by written symbols, he was already using the most diverse means of explaining things without employing articulate speech', and the most prevalent, he argues, was gesture language. [141] Although this is conjecture, Frobenius explains it by means of a Tylorian 'survival', drawing evidence for his argument from the fact that sign-language and gesture are common practices in most cultures around the world, regardless of whether he considers those cultures 'high' or 'low'. The chapter concludes with illustrations of Hidatsa sign-language. Frobenius's description of the 'drum language' in *The Childhood of Man* is the first account of a phenomenon that occupies an important place in Pound's reading of his work. In this case, Frobenius explains how the people of Central Africa have developed a means of communicating over great distances with the use of drums. 'The language', he explains, 'is introduced and specialized by beats on different parts of the drum. There are four distinct notes, which may be imitated with the mouth, and then produce a language which differs absolutely from that in daily use'.[142] This allows communication and interpretation over a great distance, and for Frobenius it is a practice common in many parts of the world:

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[141] Leo Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man*, trans. by A.H. Keane (London: Seeley and Company, 1909), pp. 71-72.

> And this language, an independently developed form of speech, indicates a very great treasure in the hands of the not very numerous primitive peoples who possess it. It would appear to be most highly developed in the western parts of equatorial Africa, although scarcely less widespread in Oceania, that is, in the insular lands lying north-west and north-east of New Guinea. In New Pomerania itself the different villages communicate over wide areas by means of the drum-telegraph, which has also a wide range in the Amazons valley and in Mexico. The North-west Americans, too, possess similar instruments.[143]

Frobenius implies that the ubiquity of the drum telegraph as a means for communication indicates that it is a key moment in the 'development' of more 'advanced' linguistic practices. Furthermore, the fact that this practice is so widespread equally implies Frobenius's alliance with a belief in the 'psychic unity' of mankind. It is the similarity of various groups that is emphasised here, not the differences and nuances in the use of drum telegraphy. Yet, in spite of his interest in the practice of drum telegraphy, Frobenius does not theorise on its significance. Instead, he dedicates two chapters to describing the physical characteristics of the drums, and discussing the practicalities of their use.

Indeed, Frobenius's reputation outside Germany depended more upon the detail contained in his ethnography than on his theories. In a 1909 review of *The Childhood of Man*, Barbara Freire-Marecco, an English anthropologist and folklorist, argued that the book was more useful as 'a selection to illustrate certain theories' than as a comprehensive explanation of mankind's origins. Freire-Marecco notes Frobenius's popularity in Germany, but continues to argue that *The Childhood of Man* is difficult to place in relation to English anthropology due to a number of structural and theoretical problems:

> If any English anthropologist has influenced Frobenius it is probably Tylor: the validity of "survivals" is implied throughout. To English readers his work must be at least a

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[142] Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man*, p. 85.
[143] Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man*, p. 86.

> refreshing change from the stale old clichés of anthropological illustration, verbal and graphic. Yet it is difficult to see exactly what place the book is to fill. It is not quite a scientific work (for one thing it gives no references): not quite a First Reader for the student, whose teachers will hesitate to enter him on a book which ignores the geographical factor in cultural evolution; and as a *travail de vulgarisation* it has (besides being expensive) this grave fault, that, by neglecting the material and economic side of culture, it gives the impression of savage life as essentially fantastic and bizarre, rather a lunacy than a Childhood of Man.[144]

It is true that much of Frobenius's theoretical outlook is reminiscent of Tylor's notion of 'survivals', with his argument that the cultures he studies form a 'childhood of man' dependent upon the ubiquity of practices and their similarity to certain aspects of western cultures. Freire-Marecco is also correct in suggesting that Frobenius's research and authority does not extend to academic rigour, and his work serves more to highlight certain details of various cultures than it does to provide anthropological cohesion.

In fact, in the years following the publication of Keane's translation of *The Childhood of Man*, Frobenius's work came to be seen as more of a compendium of ethnographic information, and less as an authoritative account of African cultures. Franz Boas refers to Frobenius's work a number of times in his 1914 essay, 'Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians'. He praises Frobenius's contribution to the study of cultural dissemination, but casts doubt on the validity of his evidence of actual connections between cultures.[145] A decade later, the Boasian anthropologist Melville Herskovits, who worked primarily on African influences in African-American culture, exemplified Frobenius's position in ethnological research. Herskovits used Frobenius's research for the value of his details and descriptions, but not as a theoretical force, making use of instances of ethnographic information, but only to illustrate his own arguments.[146] While A.R. Radcliffe-Brown summarised the academic attitude to Frobenius in the nineteen twenties, arguing that while he shows 'a much keener appreciation of what does and does not constitute evidence than many of the writings of similar schools of ethnology', his work comes to rest upon a theoretical scheme that is too simple for the complex processes that he describes.[147] By the time Pound became interested in Frobenius's work at the end of the nineteen twenties, then, he was not representative of current debates in anthropology. In many ways, Frobenius's ethnological output was a remnant of nineteenth century evolutionism that had long since come to be displaced by Boasian historicism in the United States and functionalism in Britain, and which struggled to displace the popularity of J.G. Frazer in artistic circles.

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[144] Barbara Freire-Marecco, 'Review – Culture: The Childhood of Man: A Popular Account of the Superstitions, Manners, Games, Arts, Occupations, and Folklore, &c., &c., of Primitive Man', *Man*, 9 (1909), 125-126 (pp. 125-126).

[145] Franz Boas, 'Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 27:106 (1914), 374-410, (p. 384).

[146] Melville Herskovits, 'A Preliminary Consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa', *American Anthropologist*, 26:1 (1924), 50-64 (p. 62).

That is not to say, however, that Frobenius remains an insignificant or obscure figure. Suzanne Marchand has argued that Frobenius's work in fact marks an important engagement with, and disavowal of, the cultural and colonial assumptions of the west. Marchand sees Frobenius as composing a sustained critique of Eurocentric values, and argues that his ethnography was motivated by a great admiration of African culture, using it as a counterpoint to the decadence of the West, and Frobenius's own discomfort with the *fin de siècle* values he encountered in his home country. This aspect of his work, combined with his general theory of culture as Pound encountered it in the late nineteen twenties, explains why Frobenius's *paideuma* becomes a central thread in the *Cantos*' tapestry. *Paideuma* has been a notoriously difficult concept to define, but Frobenius himself describes it as the 'essence of culture'. In other words, *paideuma* represents the essential elements of a cultural group, their unique cultural behaviours and outlooks, which remain representative of that group throughout history. As a means of exploring the history of a culture, *paideuma* chimes with Lévy-Bruhl's axiological relativism, as it is dependent upon a separation between types of culture on the basis of their 'stage' in the progression of cultural evolution. As Lévy-Bruhl separates people into 'pre-logical' and 'logical' mentalities, Frobenius conceives of a 'childlike' culture (or *paideuma*) prevailing in non-western societies, as opposed to the 'adulthood' of the west. Frobenius, in fact, saw much to admire in the ‘childlike’ civilisations as he characterised them, deploring the greed and materialism of the west. Nevertheless, his position depends upon the same assumptions and prejudices as Lévy-Bruhl’s, namely that the cultural artifacts and languages of non-western people are representative of a supposedly inferior mental state to western people. Frobenius argues further that cultures pass through various evolutionary stages: mythology, religion, philosophy, and materiality. Marchand explains that these stages can be aligned to Frobenius’s general historical outlook, which held that ‘cultural forms passed through a series of organic stages, from childhood, to adulthood, to old age; or from the daemonic, to the idealistic, to the factual’.[148] Frobenius explicitly linked this to the development of language:

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[147] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'Review: *Atlas Africanus. Belege zur Morphologie der afrikanischen Kulturen herausgegeben im Auftrage des. Forshcungs-Institut für Kulturmorphologie* by Leo Frobenius, Ritter V. Wilm;*Das Unbekannte Afrika; Aufhellung der Schicksale eines Erdteils* by Leo Frobenius; *Hadschra Maktuba; Urzeitliche Felsbilder Kleinafrikas* by Leo Frobenius, Hugo Obermaier', *American Anthropologist*, 27:2 (April 1925), 325-329 (pp. 327, 329).

> The childlike-genius Paideuma, the daemonic creativity, therefore develops independently from the circle of language, and speech, just as every other form of meaningfully structured communication is accordingly a newly acquired cultural item that, like any other, undergoes development through three periods: spontaneous & sporadic variability, harmonic organicity, and inorganic mechanics. These three stages run through all languages. The greatest variability in sounds is obtained in the earliest period (especially languages of pitch, such as Sudanese).[149]

In this sense, Frobenius’s work is closer to Tylor’s, in that he formulates a way in which a culture may pass through one stage to another in a ‘civilising’ progression and that language is an ideal expression of this. Boas and Sapir expressly reject the notion that there are more or less developed languages from both a scientific and a moral perspective, but Frobenius clearly comes to rest upon such an assumption. The language of a culture reflects that culture’s stage of civilisation, according to Frobenius’s classification, a position aligned with Lévy-Bruhl’s general linguistic thesis, and a rejection of the dominant linguistic research of the period. Nevertheless, this earlier stage is characterised as having more variability and expressiveness, and it is this side of Frobenius’s argument that Pound evokes in Canto XXXVIII, that the ‘ragged Arab spoke with Frobenius and told him/ the names of 3000 plants’ and Lévy-Bruhl’s discovery of ‘some languages full of detail’ but without the capacity to generalise, not in spite of an allegedly more ‘primitive’ state, but precisely because of it. It is this argument that motivates what Pound referred to as the 'returns to the primitives', an attempt for poetry to discover lost vitality, and to recover for language its lost expressive power.

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[148] Suzanne Marchand, ‘Leo Frobenius and the Revolt Against the West’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32:2 (1997), 153-170 (p. 165).

[149] Leo Frobenius, *Paideuma*, (Munich: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1921), p.80. Translation my own.

Like both Tylor and Lévy-Bruhl, this categorisation of world cultures allows disparate groups to stand as evidence for one cultural group: for example, Frobenius uses artefacts and rituals from North America alongside gesture languages from Central Africa to stand for one stage in human civilisation, supposedly the 'childhood of man'. Unlike Tylor and Lévy-Bruhl, however, the notion of *paideuma* within a culture (as opposed to across cultures) is also able to account for individual variation. *Paideuma*, as the essential stock of values belonging to a culture or culture-area, accounts for the particularities of certain groups, and is used to mark what makes each culture unique, as much as it may indicate the universality of human behaviour and thought. The flexible aspect of *paideuma* as a means of looking at culture as a whole, or specific cultures in detail, was one of the most attractive aspects of Frobenius's approach for Pound, in spite of the contradiction at the centre of it.

For his part, Pound does seem to have grasped the most important aspects of Frobenius's work and theories. Fox wrote to Pound in late December 1933 informing him about Frobenius's approval of Pound's interpretation of his work in a selection of articles that Pound had sent to the institute.

> Frobenius delighted about articles, says you are one of the few who really understand what he is driving at. As you probably know, his admiration for you is tremendous; says you are worth more than three Oxfords and as many Cambridges; adds, rightly, that I'm damn lucky to have a chance to work with you.[150]

It is particularly interesting that Frobenius was, according to Fox at least, so enthusiastic about Pound's interest in his work given the lack of corroboration that Pound received for his use of other figures. Frobenius received little attention in English and American anthropological circles, and scholarly treatments of Pound's use of his work have been necessarily limited by a scarcity of material. Unfortunately, Fox does not go into further detail (he does not, for example, outline the particular aspects of Pound's writing of which Frobenius so approved), but this note does validate many of Pound's claims for appropriating Frobenius's theories successfully.

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[150] Douglas Fox, Letter to Ezra Pound, 27 December 1933, YCAL MSS 53 Add, Box 6, Folder 154, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The correspondence with Fox also gave Pound grounding in wider anthropological trends and traditions. Pound appears to have sent Fox, and we assume by extension Frobenius as well, a copy of his 'Abject and Utter Farce', which first appeared in *Harkman Hoot* (a magazine based in New Haven, Connecticut) in November 1933, in which Pound writes of his 'ideogrammic method'. Fox took the opportunity to outline a short summary of the relationship between Frobenius's work and the history of anthropology:

> I assume rashly that the difference between ideogramic [*sic*] and the logical methods can, roughly, stand for the difference between the method of Frobenius and that of Tyler [*sic*] (Fraser is too prone to fiction). Each man, we can say, is the product of his time. And the method of each is the result of his Ausgangspunkt. Tyler's [*sic*] was a logical one. His world was a naturwissenschaftliche world, natural science held the absolute answer to everything. Darwin was a god and man was a reasoning creature, culture the product of his mind. Tyler was a thorough workman, a careful, logical thinker. He could even write. From the Nineteenth Century (and in America from the Twentieth Century) viewpoint there is little to be said against his method or conclusions (Primitive Culture, 2 vols).
>
> Go back a few more years to the time when the world was gerichtet by God. Then every phenomenon, natural, physical, cultural, was given a religious explanation – which was also right for those times, that Ausgangspunkt.
>
> Today in Europe (or at least in Germany) there is quite another Ausgangspunkt. Logic and natural science have failed to answer every question. Man is thought to be primarily moved by Ergriffenheit. Begriffenheit or conscious thinking comes later. Culture is believed to have a gestalt of its own. It is thought to have a life, from and growth of its own independent of human influence, that it influences man rather than being influenced by him – an idea which would not have been tenable in Tyler's time and which will not be easily accepted everywhere now. So we have the idea of Kulturmorphologie/ als Ausgangspunkt and from that the culturemorphological method.
>
> Following this line it is hard to see how one can apply the ideogramic [*sic*] method to literature or anything else when the Ausgangspunkt in most English speaking countries is still the naturwissenschaftliche or logical one. Seems to me the Ausgangspunkt re. culture, literature, life and every other darn thing will have to undergo an alteration before a new, comprehensible method can be introduced.[151]

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[151] Douglas Fox, Letter to Ezra Pound, 17 January 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 17, Folder 775, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Fox clearly presents Frobenius as a kind of paradigm shift in anthropological thought and methodology. He implies that the origins ('ausgangspunkt') of Tylor's anthropological outlook, based as they are in the natural sciences ('naturwissenschaftliche') are weighted in favour of 'logical' methodologies and evolutionary theories that no longer apply to the demands of the modern world. Frobenius's anthropology, by contrast, contends that humanity's first instinct is towards emotion ('Ergriffenheit') and that this is then followed by understanding or comprehension ('Begriffenheit', or 'conscious thinking' as Fox translates it). Culture operates as a separate phenomenon, a notion that is anathema to Boasian anthropology as well as to Tylor's universalist school of thought. Culture and language, therefore, are considered by Fox and Frobenius not as the result of human activities, but as a separate, organic form in and of itself. This then serves to constitute the behavioural and cognitive processes of human beings. The differences between this way of conceiving the relationship between culture and individuals and the more cultural relativist school of thought are alluded to in Fox's admission that this idea would not 'be easily accepted everywhere now'. Fox's challenge to Pound's assertion of the correctness of the 'ideogrammic method' revolves around the idea that the paradigm shift initiated by Frobenius's theories has not spread far enough. In other words, Fox suggested to Pound that the 'logical' thought processes against which the 'ideogrammic method' was defined would have to be dismantled prior to its acceptance. Pound's increased use of Frobenius's theories from the mid 1930s indicates his agreement with Fox's assessment.

Lévy-Bruhl, Frobenius in *The Cantos*: Reading 'Canto XXXVIII'

Canto XXXVIII, written in 1933, largely concerns Pound's presentation of corrupt arms dealerships juxtaposed to the Douglasite theories that Pound felt would serve to produce a kind of economic rectitude in western society. It may seem odd, then, that Pound introduces his readers to Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius in a canto dedicated to an exploration of economic theory. However, Peter Nicholls and Richard Sieburth have both demonstrated the extent to which Pound conceived economics and language as analogous systems, both networks of semiotic practice that require a functional rectitude which would bring them more in line with natural process. As Sieburth shows, Pound's interruption of his economic passages with commentaries on language and the natural world is consistent with his writing during the middle period of his career:

> Pound's economic writing of the thirties and forties combine a prophetic denunciation of the golden idols of the marketplace with a rather eighteenth-century (and typically physiocratic) concern for the analytical classification and representation of natural wealth and order….Pound's economic writings, which return again and again to the problem of the "monetary representation" or "money picture" of extant goods in the context of what he terms economic "orthography" or Confucian "rectification of names," are shaped by similar Enlightenment assumptions concerning the twin semiologies of language and money.[152]

It is clear, then, that Pound draws a kind of analytical equivalence between his theories of language and of economics. Sieburth draws out the contingencies between the twin theories and argues that there is a kind of semiotic superstructure that lies behind Pound's conception of both. However, it must be pointed out that Pound did not himself amalgamate the two, however closely related scholars have later shown them to be. His understanding of language and his understanding of economics were only brought together by analogy, and while Sieburth and Nicholls demonstrate the reasons for this analogy becoming so privileged in his work, the two theories remain independent of each other. Furthermore, while it is true that many aspects of Pound's (and Lévy-Bruhl's and Frobenius's) linguistic and cultural theories share in Enlightenment assumptions and values, the very presence of the two figures in this poem suggests an engagement with twentieth century ethnology, the significance of which needs outlining.

Economics certainly dominates the canto, and the majority of it is dedicated to the revelation and litany of economic sins. The primary example is a character named Matevsky, whom Pound identifies in a letter to Lawrence Binyon as the arms dealer Basil Zaharoff. Pound highlights how language, and in particular conversation, is used to manipulate economic dealings and to encourage corruption:

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[152] Richard Sieburth, 'In Pound We Trust: The Economy of Poetry/ The Poetry of Economics', *Critical Inquiry*, 14:1 (1987), 142-172 (p. 155).

> Don’t buy until you can get ours.
> And he went over the border
> and he said to the other side:
> The *other* side has more munitions. Don’t buy
> until you can get ours.
> And Akers made a large profit and imported gold into England
> Thus increasing gold imports.
> The gentle reader has heard this before.
> (XXXVIII.187).

Pound clearly makes the point that language is the medium by which corruption is transmitted. Usurious and corrupt political activity is upheld by conversation, discourse and argument. Thus, in response, Pound formulates a different mode of presentation in order to reveal the corruption inherent in the language of business, politics and economics.

Canto XXXVIII is saturated in economic detail, and the flashes of lyrical beauty that often penetrate Pound’s denser, more economic or historical cantos are absent. In their stead is C.H. Douglas’ ‘A + B theorum’, which functions as a kind of divine revelation, performing the central role often taken by the Eleusinian mysteries. In addition to Douglas’ revelation, Canto XXXVIII makes it clear that the use of language, specifically generalised and intentionally misleading arguments, divorced from particulars, is the method by which such corruption is obscured. This canto is notable for articulating a theory that Pound would repeat consistently throughout the decade: that corrupt and usurious activity is inextricably bound to a language system that does not take care to fix its meanings and limit the power of its generalisations.

This can be seen in the central episode of the canto, which refers to Pound’s visit to Vienna in 1930, and alludes to the material he was reading at the time, as well as to his excursion to meet Leo Frobenius:

> And Schlossmann
> suggested that I stay there in Vienna
> As stool-pigeon against the Anschluss
> Because the Ausstrians needed a Buddha

(Seay, brother, I leev et tuh yew!)
The white man who made the tempest in Baluba
Der im Baluba das Gewitter gemacht hat…
        they spell words with a drum beat,
"The country is overbrained" said the hungarian nobleman
in 1923. Kosouth (Ku' shoot) used, I understand
To sit in a café – all done by conversation –
It was all done by conversation,
        possibly because one repeats the point when conversing:
"Vienna contains a mixture of races."
wd. I stay and be Bhudd-ha?
(XXXVIII.189)

Pound's satirical portrayal of Austrian and Austro-Hungarian culture belies the seriousness of the point he is making. The 'overbrained' nature of this society is contrasted with the 'ragged Arab' who 'spoke with Frobenius and told him/ the names of 3000 plants'. The comparison between central European culture, in the years preceding the war felt to be one of the bastions of western civilization and what was, relatively, a less well-known culture is not simply anecdotal. Pound's critique of western discourse, and even, to a great extent, its language, implies that there are in other languages and cultures, the ability to register specifics and details that make ambiguity and disagreement less likely, and thus bring about a cultural unity.

This idea is linked not only to Frobenius' research, but also to Lévy-Bruhl's notion of 'collective representations' which he hypothesises govern the cultural activities of the civilizations he discusses. Indeed, it is Lévy-Bruhl's research that is then evoked in response to the 'overbrained' and corrupt culture of the western world:

        Bruhl found some languages full of detail
Words that half mimic action; but
generalization is beyond them, a white dog is
not, let us say, a dog like a black dog.

This reference to Lévy-Bruhl, though short, is of great significance, and requires explanation. It is, in fact, the only explicit reference to his work in *The Cantos.* The language referred to is probably Klamath, with its wealth of descriptive detail, and the chapter which is the source of Pound's reference to Lévy-Bruhl in 'How to Write' also contains a number of speculations on the role of gesture in language. The most significant of Lévy-Bruhl's arguments makes note of how these physical 'ideograms' influence the descriptive qualities of the language to which they are linked:

> Moreover, the "ideograms" which serve to denote persons, things, and actions, are nearly always descriptive of movement…In short, the man who speaks this language has at his disposal a great number of full-formed visual motor associations and the idea of persons or things, when it presents itself to his mind, immediately sets these associations going. We may say that he imagines them at the moment he describes them. His verbal language, therefore, can but be descriptive also. Hence the importance given to contour, form, situation, position, method of movement, visual characteristics of persons and things in general; hence the classification of objects according to whether they are standing, lying, seated, etc. (Lévy-Bruhl, *HNT*, p. 147).

We can but accept that Pound agrees with Lévy-Bruhl's thesis, and for this reason he cites these languages as a vital and expressive capacity of mankind to articulate details that cannot be distorted. The lack of generalisation in the Klamath language, for example, is seen to be due to its descriptive detail. The juxtaposition of the corrupt activity of arms dealers, and the 'overbrained' culture of Austria-Hungary, to the detailed and gestural languages of Lévy-Bruhl's so-called 'primitives' not only dramatises the axiological relativism of *How Natives Think* (implying as it does two different mentalities), but also establishes a capacity for language to register details that Pound believes has been lost to western society. The effort of the *Cantos* is thus to recover humanity's lost linguistic vitality as much as possible.

On first reading the references to Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius seem somewhat disjointed from the rest of the poetic sequence. Victor Li argues that the disjunction between the economic passages and this linguistic anecdote as a vital component in the 'ideogrammic' structure of Canto XXXVIII:

> To the lies and gossip of Western capitalist society, Pound opposes, in almost Rousseauistic fashion, the verbal precision and rectitude of primitive societies whose languages are so close to natural objects and actions that they are incapable of deceits built on hollow generalizations or empty locutions. Leaving aside the question of the fallaciousness of a linguistic theory which believes in "a natural connection between thing and sign," what is important to note is that Pound sees in the linguistic researches of anthropologists like Frobenius and Lévy-Bruhl, an opportunity for moral intervention, a way of combatting social diseases as verbal ones, and by prescribing a

> linguistic cure, Pound makes of the writer a medicine-man and regains for him the importance and authority he had lost.[153]

This is, I believe, an accurate account of this passage's place in the canto. It is undoubtedly meant to be read in opposition to the misleading terminology of Pound's financiers and armaments manufacturers. Due to the alleged impossibility of verbal infamy, the speakers of these tribes are, Pound would seem to imply, incapable of deceit. It must be stressed that Pound nowhere argues for a return to a previous linguistic state. Rather, language is a symptom of a usurious culture. Words are used to mislead people, and in a language like English which has many abstract categories, such disingenuous argument is more readily possible than in a language near-solely comprised of concrete detail (as Pound and Lévy-Bruhl believe Klamath and its related languages to be). In response to the obfuscation of meaning that Pound believes to have taken root in English he offers up the instances of cultures whose very language resists the acts of generalisation and logical analysis which result in an overflow of abstraction.

The drafts of Canto XXXVIII, and the traces of the editorial process behind the production of the final version, reveal the importance that Pound attached to the juxtaposition of "logical" and "prelogical" mentalities. Similarly, the collection of drafts demonstrate the importance that Frobenius and Lévy-Bruhl held in Pound's conception of the overall sequence of *Eleven New Cantos.* The earliest handwritten drafts of the poem solely concern the presentation of twentieth century European society, but by the time of the second typescript, Pound added references to Frobenius and Lévy-Bruhl and the poem began to take on a completed shape:

> The ragged arab spoke with Frobenius, and told him
> the names of 3000 plants,
>   Bruhl found the language full of details
> of words that half mimic an action, but
>   systhesis [*sic*] is beyond them. a white dog is
> not, let us say
>   a dog like a black dog.
> such things do not happen, Romeo and Juliet, do not
>   happen
> Unhappily I have lost the cutting of that fait divers

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[153] Victor P. H. Li, 'Philology and Power', p. 202.

> but apparently such things do still happen,
> he suicided outside the door while they were
> preparing the funeral.[154]

‘Systhesis’ is, as later drafts reveal, obviously a mistyping of ‘synthesis’ (or ‘sinthesis’ as Pound spells in the later typescripts).[155] The change from ‘language full of details’ to ‘languages so full of detail’ may have been for aesthetic and rhythmic reasons, but the plurality in the latter suggests a more widespread phenomenon than an individual example would. Despite its myriad references, the poem very clearly divides cultures into a modernised, western camp and a ‘primitive’, non-western camp. The second typescript also contains more information on the reference to ‘Romeo and Juliet’, which was clearly a contemporary event which resembled the plot of Shakespeare’s play. Although Pound’s contention is unclear, by using this event immediately after referring to the detail and clarity of individual words in the languages detailed in Lévy-Bruhl’s work, it would seem that he is suggesting that the nature of abstraction and generalisation in Indo-European languages leads to fundamental (and fatal) misunderstandings. As opposed to the rigour and detail of the languages explored in Frobenius’s and Lévy-Bruhl’s accounts of non-western societies, western culture’s dependence on ‘synthesis’ and abstraction is reflected in its language. Pound’s task, then, is to recover the sense of detailed clarity he assumes the languages of non-western cultures to reflect. This, of course, depends upon an axiological relativism which considers the cultures (and languages) of non-western peoples to be ‘primitive’ and thus closer to the originary, primordial conditions of language. Pound is implying that the power of ‘synthesising’ and abstracting, useful as these practices may be for philosophical and scientific analysis, has come at a price.

Indeed, by the time of the fifth typescript, Pound changed ‘synthesis’ to ‘analysis’, which he clearly felt to be a term that encompassed the logical practices that he believed lay behind western culture's philosophical and linguistic divisions.[156] It was finally changed to 'generalisations are beyond them' in the final typescript for the American edition.[157]

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[154] Ezra Pound, Canto XXXVIII autograph ms. and typescript/ n.d., YCAL MSS 43, Box 73, Folder 3268, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[155] Ezra Pound, Canto XXXVIII autograph ms. and typescript / n.d., YCAL MSS 43, Box 73, Folder 3271, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The drafts for the sequence itself also contain more material on Frobenius, but it is unclear to which canto Pound intended to add the passages, and they do not find their way into the published edition of the poem. The pages are an elaboration of the anecdote that lies behind the line 'the white man that made the tempest in Baluba':

> that made the tempest in baluba
> and in … Kashan walking over the hump of the ruin
> and a bundle of rags walked towards him
> and these rags had no outer possessions ;
> but the mind full of the names of plants
> //
> and here in ////
>   have they a manner of drummin
> to each day and ea[c]h hour its motiv[e]
> to each hill and each plant its name
> a name called on the flute   do la do la,
> so do fa la, la si mi do; that the call the frond
> of the palm tree;
>
> and when /// forgot his paper,
> wa ban beat on a tree trunk, and over ten miles and twenty
> came the answer,
> we have found the box of the zinc sheet behind the door
> in his cabin, and we are bringing the paper;
> so la do la, do la so fa;
>
> and they have a word for a fat man walking and
>   shaking his rump up and down and they have a
> word for a thin man walking like that jackass Woodrow Wilson
> and they have a word for a/the way a man
> talkis [*sic*] when he looks like a lemon, kiskibashija.
>
> //The poetry is the
>   workings.[158]

The references to Baluba and the 'names of plants' clearly indicate that this fragment is an earlier draft of the material that was heavily condensed for Canto XXXVIII. Pound may well have intended to use other material from the passage elsewhere in *Eleven New Cantos*, but the vast majority of the lines were ultimately discarded. There is also evidence of his inclination towards providing a counterpoint to the confused ‘conversation’ of central Europe in the languages of non-western societies, although at this point the example is drawn from Frobenius’s work, suggesting that this fragment predates the inclusion of the Lévy-Bruhl references in the second typescript. Nevertheless, the point remains the same: that there remains in non-western societies a tendency towards specificity and detail that is preserved in the grammar and vocabulary of the languages. Pound is not making a case for a natural connection between signs and objects, but is rather arguing that the conventions of these languages are indicative of a society that is careful not to rely on abstraction and generalisation. This proclivity towards concreteness, Pound assumes, means that the misleading of the populace by arms dealers and politicians through ‘inexact’ terminology, for example, cannot occur as easily.

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[156] Ezra Pound, Canto XXXVIII autograph ms. and typescript /n.d., YCAL MSS 43, Box 73, Folder 3271, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[157] Ezra Pound, Canto XXXVIII autograph ms, and typescript/ n.d., YCAL MSS 43, Box 73, Folder 3284, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[158] Ezra Pound, Cantos 35-39: notes and drafts; autograph ms. and typescript, with 4 clippings, YCAL MSS 43, Box 73, Folder 3258, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The passage largely concerns an anecdote that Pound repeats a number of times in both his work and his correspondence: Frobenius was exploring in the jungle with some local guides and discovered that he had left his notebook in his tent. His guides suggested that they contact the camp using drum telegraphy, and Frobenius was struck by the breadth of detail that they were able to convey in the drum beats, with their correspondents at the camp able to locate the notebook and bring it to him. Pound was clearly similarly impressed by the sophistication of drum telegraphy as a means of communication. His inclusion of references to this episode in Canto XXXVIII draws an interesting parallel with Marconi’s radio, implying that communication over distance is, whilst a significant achievement, not solely the preserve of western societies.

In a sense, Pound would appear to be drawing equivalence between western and non-western cultures in a way that runs counter to the thrust of the more racialised elements of Pound’s theories discussed in this chapter. However, this is not strictly the case. While Lévy-Bruhl’s thesis revolves around a fundamental separation between “logical” and “prelogical” cultures, there is an evolutionary continuum implicit in the very terms. Similarly, Frobenius’s theory of *kulturmorphologie* revolves around the notion of societies changing over time due to a variety of historical factors such as cross-cultural interaction, as well as the inevitable mutability of what is, for Frobenius at least, the autonomous organic nature of culture itself.

Where Frobenius departs from Lévy-Bruhl's implicit evolutionism is in his cyclical approach to history. Pound elaborates on this further in *Guide to Kulchur* in 1938, but elements of the idea are present in his earlier references to drum telegraphy. On 26 February 1934, Pound wrote to Douglas Fox with a summary of his interpretation of Frobenius's theories. He wrote of his intention to produce 'an ideogram of the ESSENTIALS of Frob/'s thought…in condensed CONCRETE cases illustrative' for which Fox would provide the introduction.[159] The 'ideogram' would cover five areas of Frobenius's thought: first, that the 'form of objects is DUE to CAUSES', a notion that Pound takes to mean the historical, cultural and biological forces that lie behind the production artifacts and artworks and the forms they take; second, making the case that a child inquiring as to whether 'the T was the tail of the cat' (or in other words, whether shape of words mirrors the natural forms of their referents). This is an anecdote that Pound repeats in *A.B.C. of Reading*, and it is worth pointing out that he is not endorsing the child's argument but merely suggesting that this question is a healthy disposition to take. For Pound, while the child is mistaken about the word cat (as part of an Indo-European, alphabetic language), his question applies to the ideogrammic structure of Chinese written characters, and thus his inquiry is valid. The third aspect of Pound's discussion would revolve around 'spatial and temporal' or 'in and out' cultures, divisions which seem somewhat arbitrary and unexplained, but it is likely Pound is referring to civilizations which have lesser and greater effects in the spread and transfusion of beliefs, practices, objects and systems across cultures. Disturbingly, Pound also considers these cultures as reflective of female and male reproductive organs, a position which speaks perhaps to the underlying sexism of both the poet and the age. The fourth aspect of Frobenius's work is similarly unclear, as Pound writes of 'art in/vs material', a subheading which includes the 'arab botanist' with his knowledge of plants 'all in his head'.[160] It may be the case that Pound wishes to discuss the differences between western reliance on written material and the (apparent) ability of non-western cultures to rely on memory, but it is difficult to see how this relates to 'art'. As this is an item of private correspondence, Pound may not have felt the need to elaborate further and Fox may have been aware of his meaning.

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[159] Ezra Pound, Letter to Douglas Fox, 26 February 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 17, Folder 775, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The final item on Pound's list is the most interesting from both a historical and linguistic point of view. Frobenius's treatment of history as a series of cycles revolving around the rise and fall of civilisations was attractive to Pound, and it particularly allowed him to promote the idea of his *Cantos* as an attempt to diagnose the state of contemporary European and American culture (with regard to a potential collapse). Ruins are, after all, a recurring image throughout the poem and serve, like the 'falling towers' of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, as a forewarning against modern civilisations' own ruinations. For Frobenius and Pound, then, part of an ethnologist's role is to measure the health and state of an individual culture. Moreover, the notions of 'advanced' and 'less advanced' civilisations can be considered as much stages in the organic life cycle of individual cultures as they can a means of cross-cultural comparison (as in the work of Tyler, for example).

> traces of high civilization (as in drum
> telegraph
>
> and language of (not exactly
> melody but at lea[s]t thematic material
> as vocabulary.
>
> "nothing is without efficient cause".[161]

Although only a few lines long and vague with regard to details, this segment is both curious and telling. Pound's use of 'traces' is the most fascinating from a cultural perspective. As Frobenius's conception of history and the mutability of culture's organic nature allows for rise and fall, or growth and decay, it is not clear whether these 'traces' are of a lost 'high civilization' or one to come. While this is, of course, an erroneous and deeply problematic understanding of culture, it is slightly more nuanced than the history of civilisations being a progression from ‘low’ to ‘high’ culture. According to Pound’s view, taken from Frobenius’s *kulturmorphologie*, the teleological flow can move backwards along the scale as well. In other words, drum telegraphy in Pound’s view may not be indicative of the equivalence of non-western cultures to western ones, nor is it necessarily an example of the development of communicative practice, but it may be a remnant from a collapsed civilisation. It may, along with language, be part of a civilisation’s *paideumic* structure: that which is fundamental and immutable; recoverable even after the civilisation itself has decayed or even disappeared. In the case of language, poets such as Pound are analogous to ethnologists like Frobenius, reading into words the *paideuma* of the culture or civilisation from which they came. The ‘words so full of detail’ bear traces of *paideumic* structure more clearly than the ‘generalisation’ or ‘synthesis’ of western culture, and may be evidence of the persistence of cultural values even after civilizational decay. While Pound’s conception of culture is bound up with an erroneous vision of anthropological thought at best – and disturbing racialist tendencies at worst – it is more nuanced than his use of terms such as ‘primitives’ and ‘savages’ would suggest.

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[160] Pound, Letter to Douglas Fox, 26 February 1934.
[161] Pound, Letter to Douglas Fox, 26 February 1934.

Linguistic Relativity and Race in *ABC of Reading* and *Guide to Kulchur*

ABC of Reading is a difficult book to define: part aesthetic theory, part literary essay, it comprises a series of fragments that give an insight into how Pound conceives the relationship between language and literature. The study of language, and the history of its development, is at the forefront of Pound’s discussion, but beyond his dedication of the book to Gaston Paris and Salomon Reinach, both eminent philologists from Pound’s years at university, he does not cite any contemporary linguists. Instead, Pound has recourse to Fenollosa’s and Lévy-Bruhl’s speculative theories, and applies them in the place of linguistics, which in the years since Pound’s time at university had become ever more professionalised.

> You speak to an animal with a few simple noises and gestures. Lévy-Bruhl's account of primitive languages in Africa records languages that are still bound up with mimicry and gesture.
>
> The Egyptians finally used abbreviated pictures to represent sounds, but the Chinese still use abbreviated pictures AS pictures, that is to say, Chinese ideogram does not try to be the picture of a sound, or to be a written sign recalling a sound, but it is still the picture of a thing; of a thing in a given position or relation, or of a combination of things, It *means* the thing or the action or the situation, or quality germane to the several things that it pictures (*ABC/R*, pp. 20-21). [162]

From this passage we can reconstruct Pound's understanding of the history of language and, in particular, the development of writing. First, Pound seems to advocate a theory that Max Müller dismissed as early as 1864 as the 'bow wow theory', or the idea that language originates in the imitations of natural or animalistic sounds. This is further conflated with the gestural theory of language, advocated by numerous figures such as Tylor, Wundt and latterly by Marcel Jousse, whose influence on James Joyce is widely known.[163] Then, Pound believes, an analogous written system developed out of the spoken system, depicting the immediate sensory perceptions and experiences available in mankind's early speech. This is eventually replaced by a phonetic system, representing sounds and not images, and thus makes use of greater and greater abstraction, distancing itself ever further from the primordial experiences at the root of humanity. This goes a long way to explaining Pound's erroneous reading of Chinese characters, as well as his interest in Frobenius's and Lévy-Bruhl's writings on 'the primitive': in studying people whom the ethnographer or philosopher believes to be indicative of humanity in its earliest stages, Pound believes he can reconstruct that which is immediate and essential in our interaction with nature and the vital universe, a vitality that can, in this sense, be represented in language as much as possible.

Pound further divides his study of language into spoken and written forms, discussing the former in terms of a perceived animalistic past, and the latter in terms of 'ideographic' and alphabetic writing. It is notable that Pound sees speech as uniformly belonging to the same rules and constructions as regards its phonetic elements, whilst writing is divided into two discrete parts:

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[162] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1934), pp. 20-21. Subsequent textual references are to this edition.

[163] See Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 160.

> Spoken language is noise divided up into a system of grunts, hisses, etc. They call it 'articulate' speech.
>
> 'Articulate' means that it is zoned, and that a number of people are agreed on the categories.
>
> That is to say, we have a more or less approximate agreement about the different noises represented by
>
> a, b, c, d, etc.
>
> Written language, as I said in the opening chapter, can consist (as in Europe etc.) of signs representing these various noises.
>
> There is a more or less approximate agreement that groups of these noises or signs shall more or less correspond with some object, action or condition.
>
> cat, motion, pink.
>
> The other kind of language starts by being a picture of the cat, or of something moving, or being, or of a group of things which occur under certain circumstances, or which participate a common quality (*ABC/R*, pp. 28-29).

It is not quite clear who 'they' might be, though it is more than likely that Pound is referring to the grammarians and philologists of the American education system of his youth, a group consistently targeted in Pound's criticism, rather than the linguists of the period. It is clear from this passage that Pound fully accepts the language of his poetry to be part of a system of symbols. Despite Max Müller's rejoinder that 'if the constituent elements of human speech were either mere cries, or the mimicking of the cries of nature, it would be difficult to understand why brutes should be without language', both Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield, Professor of Germanic Philology at Chicago and one of the pre-eminent linguists of the 1930s, at one point or another agreed that language would appear to have evolved from primitive noises.[164] In his *An Introduction to the Study of Language* (1914), Bloomfield sketches the idea that language may have developed from an initial system of gestures, to which certain sounds were attached. A sound-symbolism would then have been developed amongst a social group. Bloomfield articulates this development in a narrative that implies, like Pound, that language, in moving away from its supposed natural origin, loses its vital meaning:

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[164] Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language* (New York: Scribner, 1862), p. 370. By 'brutes', it must be made clear, Müller means animals.

> After the sound, however, had entered into association with the gesture (and thus, with the experience), it gradually usurped the more important place, owing to the advantages already set forth, and finally came into independent use, without the gesture. This use of the sound alone opened the road for unlimited transferences of meaning of the same kind as those which produce symbolic gestures. In the case of the latter the predominant direct connection between an experience and a gesture, - a connection obvious to all and constantly refreshed, - forbade too divergent a development. In vocal speech, however, where direct connection between experiences and sounds was never felt, the further development by means of associational shifts of meaning has been unlimited. The connection between sound and meaning, thus, which cannot even in its origin have been a direct one, is further destroyed by the freedom of transference due to the lack of any immediately felt connection between experience and utterance, such as prevents too free a development of symbolic gestures. [165]

Bloomfield's intention is to speculate on the arbitrary nature of the link between words and meaning, and not to trace the remnants of primordial and immediate experience as Pound does in *ABC of Reading*, and his conjecture is based on scientific studies. He continues to suggest that at no point can one say with confidence that language began *here*. In an expanded version of the above text, his 1933 book *Language*, published the year before the *ABC of Reading*, Bloomfield is far less certain about the role of gesture, which he believes possibly develops as an accompaniment to an initial sound-symbolism. He does, however, reassert his belief in the evolutionary origin of language. 'Doubtless the production of vocal sound by animals, out of which language has grown, originated as a response-movement…which happened to produce noise', he writes, but then makes clear that 'in the further development , language always ran ahead of gesture'.[166] While there is no suggestion that Pound was aware of Bloomfield's work, it is still worth noting that his theory as to the origin of language concurs with that of one of the period's pre-eminent linguists.

In fact, Pound's treatment of the origin of language is remarkably similar to Danish linguist Otto Jespersen's explanation in *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (1922). Jespersen, an important linguist and philologist who was read by both James Joyce and C.K. Ogden, advanced a hypothesis that one potential source for the origin of language is in early mankind's appropriation of certain sung notes and sounds, that were, originally, meaningless.

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[165] Leonard Bloomfield, *An Introduction to the Study of Language* (New York: Henry Holt, 1914), p. 15.
[166] Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 39.

> Our remote ancestors had not the slightest notion that such a thing as communicating ideas and feelings to someone else was possible. They little suspected that in singing as nature prompted them they were paving the way for a language capable of rendering minute shades of thought; just as they could not suspect that out of their coarse pictures of men and animals there should one day grow an art enabling men of distant countries to speak to one another. As is the art of writing to primitive painting, so is the art of speaking to primitive singing. And the development of the two vehicles of communication of thought presents other curious and instructive parallels. In primitive picture-writing, each sign meant a whole sentence or even more the image of a situation or of an incident being given as a whole; this developed into an ideographic writing of each word by itself; this system was succeeded by syllabic methods, which had in their turn to give place to alphabetic writing, in which each letter stands for, or is meant to stand for, one sound. Just as here the advance is due to a further analysis of language, smaller and smaller units of speech being progressively represented by single signs, in an exactly similar way, though not quite so unmistakably, the history of language shows us a progressive tendency towards analyzing into smaller and smaller units that which in the earlier stages was taken as an inseparable whole.[167]

Jespersen's argument is characterised, overall, by a universalist tendency that, like Lévy-Bruhl, for all its attention and close reading of certain examples denies the uniqueness of individual languages. He refers to 'savages', not to individual and merely different civilizations, whom he characterises as evidence of the origin of human behaviour and speech, in a way that undermines his citation of Boas as one of his sources. Like Pound, Jespersen argues in favour of two distinct tendencies in the development of writing, 'one based on sight, the other based on sound'. It is also unlikely that Pound had read Jespersen as he does not mention him anywhere in his critical writing, even when focusing on language. However, that Pound's formulation of the development of language should have so much in common with a renowned linguist is of vital importance. It demonstrates that Pound's understanding of the origin of language was at least partly consistent with his linguistic contemporaries. While the source of Pound's remarks remains unknown, their comparison with Jespersen points to an unacknowledged correspondence in the inquiries of modernist literature and modern linguistics.

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[167] Otto Jespersen, *Language,* p. 437.

It is of course somewhat misleading to imply that Pound develops an understanding in certain passages that is entirely comparable to the work done across the pages of more professional figures, and the subject of the *ABC of Reading* is literature specifically, and only more generally about language. Yet it is in his study of literature that Pound approaches a relativism that goes beyond Lévy-Bruhl's axiological worldview, and in fact stretches back to the more Romantic tradition of Friedrich von Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Pound writes of how 'if a nation's literature declines, the nation atrophies and decays', in a sentence that expresses not only the organic terminology applied by Frobenius in his consideration of how civilizations rise and fall, but also hints at the influence of the totalitarian and nationalist mentality espoused by Benito Mussolini. It is also reminiscent of Friedrich von Schlegel's assertion that 'a nation whose language becomes rude and barbarous, must be on the brink of barbarism in regard to every thing else. A nation which allows her language to go to ruin…testifies her willingness to cease to exist'.[168] Wilhelm von Humboldt, in what is often identified as a potential origin for linguistic relativity, similarly believed that 'language, in whatever shape we may receive it, is always the mental exhalation of a nationally individual life', although it must be stated that he held this to be related to a universal set of linguistic laws.[169] Schlegel and von Humboldt, who as early nineteenth century philologists took a literary as much as a linguistic view of language, can be seen as early exponents of the kind of theory to which Pound briefly alludes in the *ABC of Reading*.

This is not, however, to suggest that Pound's treatment of language is limited to the expression of a poet's sensibility, repeating the Romantic theories of the previous century. Once again, the work of Edward Sapir suggests a more contemporary precedent for Pound's literary approach to language, and the relativism inherent in his approach. Sapir, who had written that 'single Algonkin words are like tiny Imagist poems', balanced poetic sensibility with linguistic science in developing his definition of language as the 'symbolic guide to culture'.[170] Each literature, according to Sapir, is inextricably bound to the 'genius' of the language (or perhaps more accurately the culture) in which it is written.

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[168] Friedrich Schlegel, *Lectures on the History of Literature: Ancient and Modern*, volume II (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1818), p. 56.

[169] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, ed. by Michael Losonsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 51.

> Language is the medium of literature as marble or bronze or clay are the materials of the sculptor. Since every language has its distinctive peculiarities, the innate formal limitations—and possibilities—of one literature are never quite the same as those of another. The literature fashioned out of the form and substance of a language has the color and the texture of its matrix. The literary artist may never be conscious of just how he is hindered or helped or otherwise guided by the matrix, but when it is a question of translating his work into another language, the nature of the original matrix manifests itself at once. All his effects have been calculated, or intuitively felt, with reference to the formal "genius" of his own language; they cannot be carried over without loss or modification.[171]

The failure to translate fully from one language or culture to another, the expression of a national 'genius' in literature, and the sculptural analogy are all points that Pound himself could have made. Although Sapir's definition of 'culture' is far more in line with traditional discourses, and he was a professor in American University departments of the kind that Pound so often criticised, there is a correspondence between their work that requires further exploration.

Sapir's interest in crossing the boundaries of literary and linguistic circles makes his work a useful vantage point for scholarship looking at the relationship between the two disciplines in the modernist period. Sapir explored his understanding of the relationship between an individual writer and the cultural and linguistic matrices within which they write in a 1925 review of H.D.'s poetry in *The Nation*. Answering apparent claims that her poetry is un-American due to its Hellenism, Sapir's review, though brief, is a passionate defence of her work, insightfully writing that in H.D.'s poetry, 'each world is symbol and nostalgia'. He sees the spirit of her work to be particularly American in temperament, in fact, and that 'the impatience of the rhythms and the voluptuous harshness and bleakness of the sea and shore and woodland images manifest [that temperament]'. Sapir concludes, on the subject of the non-American subject matter of the poems, that 'H.D. is of those highly characteristic and most subtly moving American temperaments that long for an emotional wealth of expression...that they cannot wholeheartedly desire – and must not, if they are to be true to themselves'.[172] It would appear that Pound did not read Sapir's work but there are undoubted connections in their work that could have proven fruitful; in the modernist nexus, theirs is one of the more regrettable missed connections.

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[170] Edward Sapir, *Language,* p. 244.
[171] Edward Sapir, *Language*, p. 237.

In spite of his lack of knowledge of (or indifference towards) his compatriot, Pound's conception of artists as 'antennae' chimes with Sapir's beliefs, with the added caveat that Sapir's approach is today far more palatable than Pound's (it is not linked to race, for example). Nevertheless, the particularity of each language and culture is a position Pound explicitly adopts in the *ABC of Reading*, acknowledging (albeit grudgingly) the failure to fully translate the ideas of one culture and language to another:

> The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.
>
> This is a very unpalatable and bitter doctrine. But I cannot omit it.
>
> People occasionally develop almost a fanaticism in combating the ideas 'fixed' in a single language. These are generally speaking 'the prejudices of the nation' (any nation). (*ABC/R*, p. 35)

Although Pound's primary interest is in the sum total of human knowledge, the implication in this statement is that the world's knowledge differs according to each language spoken or written. If no one language is capable of registering the totality of human existence, it follows that each language contains a kind of knowledge unique unto itself, or at least a shade of difference from other languages so as to mark its values as distinct and relative. Yet, this is where the comparisons with Sapir's work end, as Pound continues his discussion with a racial dimension expressly rejected by Boasian anthropology and linguistics.

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[172] Edward Sapir, 'An American Poet', *The Nation*, 121 (1925), 211-212 (pp. 211-212).

While Pound’s pronouncements on the relationship between culture, race and language in *A.B.C. of Reading* are unsettling, he does not draw any specific links between them and his entrenched support for Mussolini’s regime. The racial element of Pound’s thought becomes more pronounced in the years following the publication of the text, and he eventually comes to an understanding of Frobenius’s work as representative of a ‘totalitarian’ sensibility and cultural outlook. As David Barnes has noted, Pound adapted the cultural practices of Mussolini’s regime into his aesthetic, where ‘the fragile negotiation of past and future deployed in Italian cultural projects of the 1920s and 1930s reflected back to Pound the concerns of his artistic practice’. Furthermore, Barnes writes, Pound’s engagement with the regime ‘provide[s] a fascinating and disturbing view of the intersections of art and totalitarian politics in Mussolini’s Italy’.[173] His employment of the term ‘totalitarian’ with regard to Frobenius’s ideas reveals the extent to which Pound saw equivalence between Mussolini’s regime and Hitler’s in Germany. Similarly, Pound’s broad interest in culture became narrower, focusing on Western Europe, the United States and China. The culmination of Pound’s thought in the latter half of the 1930s is *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), where his interest in Frobenius’s work reaches its fullest expression.

The best introduction to the linguistic and anthropological aspects of *Guide to Kulchur* is perhaps an article that Pound published in 1937 in the *North American Review*, a year before Faber & Faber brought out the book. In what is a largely tangential discussion of the period of European history from the middle ages to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, Pound delineates what he believes to be an ‘anthropological dissociation’ of the European *paideuma*. Specifically, Pound is interested in what he refers to as a ‘Mediterranean’ dedication to order. This he traces from Sparta, through Byzantium and the Holy Roman Empire, before reaching its fullest expression in the Dante’s *Commedia*, and its ‘sense of gradations’: its concept of a stratified and hierarchical cosmological order. Here, Pound explains his rationale behind the adoption of Frobenius’s phrase over more traditional discursive terminology. ‘I have found it helpful and clarifying to adopt the word *paideuma*,’ he explains, ‘a term resurrected from the Greek by the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius to denote “mental formation and inherited habits of thought” as opposed to a statal *weltanshauung*’.[174] *Weltanshauung*, commonly translated as ‘worldview’, is often credited in its initial usage to Willhelm von Humboldt, and Pound’s rejection of the term reaffirms his animosity towards philology as a discipline. Pound then repeats the argument that he makes consistently in the 1930s, that a process of linguistic decay set in since the Middle Ages, wherein modes of discourse, neglecting careful attention to meaning, became increasingly corrupted:

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[173] David Barnes, Barnes, David, ‘Fascist Aesthetics: Ezra Pound’s Cultural Negotiations in 1930s Italy’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34:1 (2010), 19-35 (p. 32).

> The implications of this Dantian concept [the cosmological order] are extensive. They include about everything that made the Middle Ages great. This sense of relative order is symbolized in the great cathedrals and in the scholastic dialectic. Because to the minds built of this stuff the Word was necessarily holy. I will take that statement out of any possible jargon and translate it for the present emergency: Words, an exact terminology, are an effective means of communication, an efficient modus operandi, *only* when they retain meanings. Such a confusion of terminology as infects the language of ideas today would have been impossible in the *paideuma* that produced Dante. [175] [Parenthesis mine]

The relationship between language, meaning and a cosmological order (manifested in art, politics and philosophy) is central to *Guide to Kulchur*. As the language of the Mediterranean *paideuma* decayed, so the representation of it decayed, as well. In following Frobenius’ belief that cultures are organisms that live and die, Pound is identifying the state of European culture. In advocating a ‘New Paideuma’ as he comes to do in *Guide To Kulchur*, Pound is signalling the end of the last one.

In fact, Pound’s first real engagement with language in *Guide to Kulchur* is essentially a repetition of the above point. Again, Pound argues that a process of linguistic decay has set in, and that this is the direct result of a loss of the cultural value of a fixed cosmological order.

> There flourished during the best age of “scholastic thought” a very great and high verbal culture. Having almost nothing but words to deal with, the ecclesiastical doctors

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[174] Ezra Pound, ‘The Jefferson-Adams Correspondence’, *The North American Review*, 244:2 (1937/1938), 314-324, (p. 316).

[175] Pound, ‘The Jefferson-Adams Correspondence, 317.

> cared for (that is took care of) their terminology. A method of using words, a method of definition arose, or was kept, tended, developed, and we, today, lose a great deal by not knowing it, I mean by not knowing it as deeply and finely as they did.[176]

The 'scholastic' care for the word, which as Pound points out is inevitably 'holy', is inseparable from God. Language, or rather words and their fixed meanings, is a direct gift from the divine and individual words are registrations of divine truth, whether concrete or abstract in meaning. Pound, certainly not an advocate of monotheistic religion, clearly separates the value of having a language composed of fixed meanings from its religious context when arguing for its revival.

The Mediaeval care for terminology is then contrasted to a nameless and surreptitious force that wilfully obfuscates the meaning of words.

> We know that there is one enemy, ever-busy obscuring our terms; ever muddling and muddying terminologies, ever trotting out minor issues to obscure the main and the basic, ever prattling of short range causation for the sake of, or with the result of, obscuring the vital truth. Captans annonam etc. (that is to say hogging the harvest, aiding the hoggers and so forth). (*GK,* p. 31)

Given the development and consolidation of his anti-Semitism in the years surrounding the publication of *Guide to Kulchur*, this passage is deeply unsettling, particularly in light of the anti-Jewish propaganda widespread in the totalitarian states Pound admired. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Pound's statements on race, and Jewish people in particular, later in the book would seem to suggest that Pound is not necessarily refering to Jews in this passage. It is more likely that Pound is referring to usurers, regardless of ethnic background, or perhaps in particular the warmongering financiers targeted in Pound's appropriation of Douglasite economics. What must be remembered, however, is that Pound's criticism of usury and his anti-Semitism often emerge together, particularly in the late 1930s. As a result, while there is, of course, no explicit racial element to the above statement, it cannot be ruled out altogether.

Pound's diagnosis as to who is to blame for the supposed decay of language was not consistent across his career, and at various points he targeted journalists, philologists, financiers, politicians and even material scientists. Despite this, in *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound proposes a solution for establishing a mode of cultural analysis that owes as much to the form of his *Cantos* as it does to the work of Leo Frobenius:

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[176] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938), p. 26. Subsequent textual references are to this edition.

> We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time.
>
> There is no ownership in most of my statements and I can not interrupt every sentence or paragraph to attribute authorships to each pair of words, especially as there is seldom an a priori claim even to the phrase or the half phrase.
>
> You can write history by tracing ideas, exposing the growth of a concept. You can also isolate the quality or the direction of a given time's sensibility. That means the history of an art. (*GK,* p. 60).

There are three related points that Pound makes in this statement. First, that the experience of history, taken at the juncture of any moment across time, is felt as a cycle of repetition and variation, and is only felt to be a linear process from an academic point of view. Second, because of this, all language belongs to this process of repetition and variation, and originality in literature is largely due to how one uses the wealth of historical material. Finally, against this cyclical process, what one can measure to a great extent is the development of artistic modes, or processes of thought. Undoubtedly, Frobenius's non-linear treatment of history is a major influence, but this is an approach that Pound had taken for two decades, as Canto IV, written two decades before the publication of *Guide to Kulchur*, makes clear:

> 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.

(IV.13)

In an Ovidian metamorphosis, Pound unifies two separate myths, seeing not only the 'subject rhyme' of the two as a curious case of literary alignment, but also highlighting his belief that the culture of Eleusis persisted from Greece, through Rome, to the troubadours of Provence. It is thus important to note that for all of his faith in Frobenius's work, Pound approaches him with his own defined set of ideas regarding culture and history.

As *Guide to Kulchur* is not fully coherent with any one particular theory of culture or language, it is difficult to draw conclusions on the book as a whole. However, the most dominant aspect of the book is the extent to which Pound outlines his cultural theory in Frobenius's terms. This is a faith in a particular kind of ethnography that interprets culture according to two facets: the value of the culture at any one time in relation to its own history, and what is unique about the sensibility of each individual culture. In addition to this, though far more implicit than explicit, is the comparison made between cultures, which, like Lévy-Bruhl's unintentional hierarchy of values, unavoidably asserts the superiority of some cultures over others. Indeed, one could go so far as to argue that while Frobenius uses African sources to support his study of Africa, Pound reinterprets his work to use it as evidence of his study of western civilization:

> The study of savages has in our time come to be regarded as almost the sole guide to anglo-saxon psychology. If we reflect on African and oriental vagueness as to time, if we reflect on what is often called "feminine" lack of punctuality among our more irritating acquaintance, it shd. not unduly astonish us that the idea of a MEASURE of value has taken shape slowly in human consciousness. Savages or small boys swapping jack knives. . . Mischung von Totemismus. . . Papua Sprachen . . . die Idee eines Wertmessers noch nicht scharf ausgepragt (Helmut Petri, *Die Geldformen der Sudsee*). The idea of value not yet sharply defined. (Auspragen also monetize or coin.). (*GK*, pp. 162-163).

By using 'anglo-saxon', Pound achieves a dual meaning. He is referring to both the general culture of Britain and America in the twentieth century, as well as evoking the origins of that culture. This tendency, by no means unique to Pound, to see civilizations in Africa or North America as analogous to an earlier form of western culture is not only disturbing from our perspective, but was also precisely the kind of conception of culture that Boas, Lowie, and others, had spent the best part of the century arguing against. In fact, I believe that, unacknowledged though it is, Pound's earlier interest in Lévy-Bruhl shows its influence. For all of Pound's, and by extension Frobenius's, arguments in favour of certain relative values of other cultures, they are all amalgamated into a non-western mentality that is then used to measure, value, and in many ways, uphold, the alleged superiority of his own culture.

Despite this, Pound makes no claims towards an explicitly racist outlook, and argues that a hostile attitude towards people who are simply different is not only pointless, but incorrect. The following passage has often been used to defend Pound against the charges that his anti-Semitic writings and broadcast have necessarily brought him:

> Race prejudice is red herring. The tool of the man defeated intellectually, and of the cheap politician. No one will deny that the jews have racial characteristics, better or worse ones. "Every Polish nobleman had his jew."
> The use, and more than use, the NEED of Frobenius' dissociations shows at this juncture. Whatever one thinks of his lists of symptoms, Hammite, Shemite, etc. he rhymes with Dante "che'l giudeo fra voi di voi no ride". It is nonsense for the anglo-saxon to revile the jew for beating him at his own game. The nomad in search of cattle, the romantic tradition. Happy is the man who inherits a rich field and a strong house and can take up a classis "Anschauung" with no inconvenience (to himself). (*GK*, p. 242).[177]

As his letter to Langston Hughes, speaking out against the Scotsboro trial, makes clear, Pound's view of race is complex and nuanced, but there is a vast difference between denouncing racial prejudice and denouncing racialism.[178] This passage is in fact Pound's most explicit argument in favour of racial distinction and classification. The phrases which are most disturbing include 'better or worse', which characterises the potential of one culture to be superior to another, and 'it is nonsense for the anglo-saxon to revile the jew for beating him at his own game'. Pound is presumably referring to capitalist practices, and once again testifies to his belief in much of anti-Semitic propaganda of his time.

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[177] See, for example, Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 465. Kenner attempts to use this passage to exonerate Pound from charges of anti-Semitism.

[178] Ezra Pound, Letter to Langston Hughes, 18 June 1932, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 241.

The discussions of Frobenius in *Guide to Kulchur* give great insight into the extent to which Pound engages with his anthropological contemporaries, and testifies to the importance that culture was to play in his later work. The organic view of culture is Frobenius's most enduring legacy in Pound's work, and it is a view that Pound does not seem to abandon. It is also clear, when reading certain passages of *Guide to Kulchur* in light of these organic metaphors, that Pound is searching for some kind of cultural justification:

> Obviously the need for nutriment indicates incompleteness in the moving animal. It is not self-sustaining, it is not completely autonomous.
>
> The tree picks up roots and turns them inward to walk. How convenient to stick one's foot into the earth and be nourished? At sacrifice of the freedom to be nomadic?
>
> Frobenius' list of characteristics of races leave one with inability to accept for oneself unconditionally, either a patriarchal or a matriarchal disposition. I prefer a lex Germanica to a lex Salica. My predisposition (at least in youth) being nomadic. It is not for me to rebuke brother semite for similar disposition. Happy the man born to rich achres, a saecular vine bearing good grapes, olive trees spreading with the years.
>
> The question whether I believe Frobenius right or wrong in any given point seems to me frivolous. He cd. be wrong in 40 points and still bear gifts above price.
>
> That a man find a car of Persephone in a German burrow is already a mental property. That one's roots are not a disease but parts of a vital organism is worth feeling. (*GK*, p. 244)

There is an implicit disdain for anthropology as a science in Pound's understanding of the discipline, as were an ethnographer to truly be 'wrong in 40 points', according to the principles established by Tylor and developed by Boas, this would largely invalidate the work. Pound, on the other hand, gleans more significance in the establishment of a method of cultural measure. Pound's insistence of the enduring value of the early presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in the cantos written at this time can be seen as an attempt to establish the roots of that 'vital organism'.

After he had written *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound wrote an article entitled 'Significato di Leo Frobenius', which appeared in the Italian periodical *Indice*. It was later reproduced in Siegfried de Rachwiltz's translation of Frobenius's *The Lute of Gassir* into Italian. This piece is in fact a more detailed explanation of the references to Frobenius found in *Guide to Kulchur* and elsewhere. Ostensibly an introduction to Frobenius's work, Pound's preface is more a justification of his own adaptation and application of Frobenius's ethnographic method. Nevertheless, it affirms Pound's belief in both the methodology and validity of Frobenius' work, and is an important insight into Pound's often opaque use of the term *paideuma*, as well as providing a more sustained commentary on the influence the theories outlined in *Erlebte Erdteile*.

Following the *A.B.C. of Reading* and *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound continues his use of organic metaphors in his discussion of culture and language. The most consistent in this essay is the discussion of history and culture (and language, by extension) in terms of the causes and symptoms of disease. This, he states clearly, is the direct influence of Frobenius, and the most significant aspect of his research. 'The importance of Leo Frobenius', Pound writes, 'consists in his having demonstrated that when art is sick, the evil is not art alone. Art can be a symptom', an argument that he maintains consistently.[179] Thus, he believes, the role of the modern critic is to use the symptom to trace the cause. Pound then argues that a crucial mistake is misdiagnosis based on reading symptoms for causes, as 'attacking the symptom without first seeking the cause is the procedure of the savage. The symptoms are studied. The basic causes of a disease are cured by fighting or repairing'. Frobenius' methods and theories are thus posited as hygienic and diagnostic. The separation between 'primitive' and 'civilized' mentalities, undoubtedly drawn from his earlier interest in Lévy-Bruhl as much as his continued engagement with Frobenius, is here maintained. By identifying a 'primitive' mentality with misdiagnosis, Pound clearly asserts the superiority of what he assumes to be 'civilized' society.

As his preface demonstrates, Pound is not interested in ethnography as mere curiosity, nor does he seem to read Frobenius' work on its own terms, preferring to recontextualise it within economic, political and artistic domains. Pound sees precedence for methodologies of study in other fields, and links this explicitly to the example set by Frobenius' field work and later academic career.

> Frobenius truly represents the crisis *of* and not *in* the system. And to us, who do not have the benefit of his direct instruction, he provides collateral for the new totalitarian

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[179] Ezra Pound, 'Significato di Leo Frobenius' (1938), reprinted in *Il Luto di Gassire, Legenda Africana di Leo Frobenius, con due scritti di Ezra Pound* (Milan: Vanni Schweiller, 1976)., p. 9. Translation my own.

> philosophy. The totalitarian state creates, but in the state are active elements or idle elements or those just passive (bromides).[180]

Pound's insistence on the relevance of anthropology and archaeology to the totalitarian state is unsettling, particularly in light of Pound's allegiance to Mussolini, his casual acceptance of Hitler, and the growing ferocity of his anti-Semitism. Frobenius' notion of *paideuma*, that which denotes the persistence of certain cultural traits, inclusive as it is of a myriad of artistic and practical attributes, is also by its nature exclusive. The ethnologist, according to such a method, must decide upon the genuine and valuable aspects of a culture, and dismiss those undesirable elements.

Nevertheless, the remark that Frobenius 'represents the crises *of* and not *in* the system' goes some way to explaining Pound's lack of interest in more reputable anthropologists such as Boas or Malinowski, both of whose work would have been readily available to him should he have required it. If, as Pound believed, Frobenius' work is incompatible with the perceived failures of his contemporaries, and if his theories are to be accepted, he seems to have seen little gain in investigating the field further. This paves the way for further criticism of nameless anthropological positions, with Pound declaring that 'Frobenius' archaeology does not anatomise death and the past'. Presumably, Pound is referring as much to the treatment of history as to anthropology or archaeology (he refers to the two disciplines interchangeably). Furthermore, Pound argues, Frobenius' approach is not 'affected by savagery. He studies the primitive races with the same method by which Koch studied his guinea pigs'. As disturbing as such lines are today, Pound's intention is probably an insistence upon a biological method of research, rather than a direct comparison between 'primitive races' and guinea pigs.

'Significato di Leo Frobenius' is not just an important insight into Pound's reading of Frobenius, however, and it contains a number of remarks that serve to underline and explain Pound's understanding of culture, history and language. For example, Pound believes that another aspect of Frobenius' significance for the modern world is his understanding of how history unfolds:

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[180] Ezra Pound, 'Significato di Leo Frobenius', pp. 6-7.

> By treating history in cycles rather than in a linear way, Frobenius comes to predict hidden diseases: Perhaps seeing the losses of great "cultures" clearly will help to predict and prevent analogous catastrophes in the future.
>
> Drum telegraphs are something more than an interesting curiosity. The line of Beninian [?] sculpture does not deserve idolatry, but deserves study.[181]

Pound is more interested in the application of anthropological evidence to western civilization than he is in anthropology as such. This is a history that repeats itself, a history made up of permanent, recurrent and casual elements. This is undoubtedly one of the methods of Pound's *Cantos*, where subject matter drawn from disparate epochs and civilization is juxtaposed, coerced into a kind of correspondence whereby the repetition of history can be discerned. At the same time, Pound seems to also demand focus on the particular. Drum telegraphy, which would appear – superficially at least – to be a curious anecdote at the heart of Canto XXXVIII, is deserving of study in its own right, with Pound asserting its uniqueness, although he never fully explains what he sees to be its significance.

Frobenius fits in with what Pound will later term the 'live tradition' which he 'gathers from the air', and is an invaluable figure in understanding Pound's definition of culture, tradition and civilization. For all that, even in this preface, Pound fails to fully explain Frobenius' work, quoting only short passages and leaving the reader with half-defined adaptations of his theories. What little clarity there is, then, is of great importance to Pound scholarship. In both this preface and in *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound offers Frobenius as in opposition to the work of J.G. Frazer. Pound was not well read in anthropology, and thus this comparison, however brief, is of great significance:

> he disturbs retrospective archaeology. Frazer and many others never arrived at a statement as clear as:
> "Whenever we found these drawings on the rocks, we found water no more than two metres beneath the surface of the earth"
> This indicates not only the past of tribal inhabitants long since disappeared , but also indicates the possible paths of reclamation for tomorrow. (*GK*, p. 272).

Pound would appear to be exaggerating this aspect of Frobenius, and once again we see the conflation of archaeology with ethnology. What is the case, however, is that Frobenius is a departure from the evolutionism inherent in Frazer's work, as well as from the relativist methods of the

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[181] Ezra Pound, 'Significato di Leo Frobenius', p. 7.

Boasian school. Frobenius' archaeological and anthropological methods are valuable to Pound because they represent a means of thinking about and interpreting past culture as still vital, as useful.

Frobenius, Pound argues, is in fact quintessentially modern, and responds precisely to the needs of his contemporary society. Pound uses the preface as another platform to address his particular concerns with regard to history and, most significantly, language.

> However, in much higher degrees, Frobenius' practical purpose agrees profoundly with today's needs, the needs of totalitarian perception. He offers us the tools for totalitarian research and in a large part a *method* for the intelligent study of history. Beginning with primitives, who alone today hold the keys of the distant past that serve to open up cultural elements of more advanced civilizations, his system would serve to study the whole of history. In China, for example, over twenty centuries ago, a healthy and constructive dynasty can be seen as founded upon the basis of Confucius' philosophy.
>
> The decline of the European visual arts coincided with a rise in the tolerance of usury. With obscurantism and obfuscation of the significance of words, of terminology, so too decayed the perception of borders and the limits of plastic form. The moral domain declined, too. The dissociation of ideas weakened, and this weakness of spirit infected all human manifestations.[182]

There are two major points that Pound makes in this passage, and both of them need to be fully drawn out. First, the reason for Pound's interest in Lévy-Bruhl's and Frobenius' work becomes clear from this passage: Pound clearly has an evolutionist (and thus universalist) tendency that sees civilizations that his contemporaries deemed 'primitive' cultures as less advanced than western civilization, reading them as evidence of an less developed stage of humanity. This is a more developed version of Pound's commentary in *Guide to Kulchur*. The 'primitive' subjects of Lévy-Bruhl's and Frobenius' research have value, according to Pound, because they are to be read as a living and vital embodiment of what is immediate in human experience. Their languages, 'bound up with mimicry and gesture', are seen to be closer to the original linguistic discoveries of mankind, and are not studied as developed languages in their own right, as Sapir and Bloomfield have done so notably.

Second, and in light of the fact that this is one of Pound's most repeated point, the exact relationship between *paideuma* and language is explained. Language, made as it is to 'serve thought', is only ever studied by Pound in relation to something else. He does not study language as language itself, but always alongside culture, literary expression or economics. Language is not, in other words, a cause but a symptom. Just as Pound believed it to be possible in the future for the economic health of a culture to be discernible in its artforms, language is seen to be the relative expression of a culture. This relativity, however, is axiological, reliant upon a hierarchy of cultures, measured according to the values Pound attaches to certain cultures. What is clear from his reading of Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius from 1928 to 1938, is that Pound's understanding of language is more complex than the opposition of Fenollosa's sinology to western alphabets, and that it is expressly linked to debates around Pound's interest in fascism, his racial views, and to the cultures explored in his *Cantos*.

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[182] Ezra Pound, 'Significato di Leo Frobenius', pp. 8-9.

Furthermore, Pound's thesis in *A.B.C. of Reading* and *Guide to Kulchur* essentially comes down to an argument that language is the primary artefact by which we are able to discern the *paideumic* structures of civilisations. The fragmentary nature of the *Cantos* draws together the words and phrases of disparate figures and in doing so becomes a space of cultural interaction, with the *paideumic* structures intermingling to form the texture of the poem. Pound not only sought to tell the 'tale of the tribe', but brought together the tales of various tribes. It is clear, however, that the *Cantos* cultural outlook is not one of equality as a detailed investigation of their author's anthropological sources reveals. In order to fully appreciate the extent to which Pound's political sympathies influenced his writing, it is useful to turn to his engagement with a major figure in the philosophy of language in the 1920s and 1930s: C.K. Ogden.

Chapter 3: Pound/Ogden: Basic English and Interlinguistic Poetics, 1935-1938

On 31 January 1935, Ezra Pound wrote to E.E. Cummings expressing his opinion that 'the only bks worf a damn that I have seen coming from Eng/ apart from econ/ are Ogden's series (about one in four) Orthological, what the helluva word fer a bloke sposed to interest in langwitch'.[183] C .K. Ogden, founder of the international auxiliary language Basic English, had contacted Pound with a view to assisting him in the completion of an article for the *New English Weekly*. Basic English was essentially a response to 'artificial' universal languages such as Esperanto and Novial. Rather than composing a new language from scratch, Ogden adapted and simplified English, arguing that using an existing, natural and widely spoken language as the means for international communication made more sense from both pragmatic and linguistic perspectives. Ogden initially sent Pound seven books from the *Psyche Miniatures*, a series of volumes in or about Basic English. Furthermore, Pound was sent a number of issues of *Psyche*, a journal on psychology and linguistics Ogden had edited since 1920. The correspondence marks a serious engagement with Ogden's theories and offers a fascinating insight into the way in which Pound conceived of language working within his own project, and how this may relate to the projects of his contemporaries.

Prior to 1935, Pound's theoretical interests, particularly those texts dealing with language, tended towards polymath figures either from the past or from the periphery of the academic community. The most significant is Ernest Fenollosa, whose *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, originally published posthumously in 1918 and edited by Pound, argues that Chinese written characters are not arbitrary, conventional signs like the letters of alphabetic western languages but are pictographic representations of natural processes. This would become an influential belief in Pound's understanding of oriental cultures and languages, and between 1934 and 1936 he prepared Fenollosa's text for re-publication, whilst also encouraging many of his correspondents to engage with Fenollosa's theories. By the end of 1934, Pound had published his own book on poetry and language, the *ABC of Reading*, a text which underlines his faith in the Chinese character (or ideogram) as opposed to the arbitrary signs of western literature as the ideal symbolic medium for poetic expression. However, despite his association with Fenollosa, Pound's understanding of the semantic function of language remained conventional. In an article for *G.K.'s Weekly*, for example, he defined 'the word as a conveyor of meaning; Language as the registration of idea'.[184] Pound's understanding of language is at this point flexible enough to be able to absorb a number of theories. It is at this crucial moment that Pound prepares his article on Ogden.

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[183] Ezra Pound, Letter to E.E. Cummings, 31 January 1935, *Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E.E. Cummings*, ed. by Barry Ahearn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 49

Basic English began in earnest with the foundation of the Orthological Institute in 1927. Orthology, or the study of the correct use of language, was the vehicle by which Ogden promoted his reformed and condensed version of English. Basic English was designed for two primary uses: as an introductory form of English for speakers of other languages, and as an international language. Alongside other attempts, such as Esperanto, Ido, and Otto Jespersen's short-lived Novial, Basic English belongs to a period of linguistic thought in which the development of an international language was a serious concern.

Ogden first reduced the vocabulary of English to eight-hundred and fifty Basic words, as well as variations on those words, whilst encouraging simpler syntactic structures, and radically reducing the verb stock to sixteen Basic 'operators' (come, get, give, go, keep, let, make, put, seem, take, be, do, have, say, see, send, may, and will). Ogden believed that the most common case of language betraying thought was in the use of verbs, a notion that he had taken from Jeremy Bentham, and he enshrined the noun as the central focus of linguistic communication.[185] Ogden began the process of developing 'panoptic English', as he first called it, from 1924 to 1927, when he established the

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[184] Ezra Pound, 'Such Language', *G.K.'s Weekly*, XX (1935), 373 (p. 373).

[185] C.K. Ogden, *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930), pp. 52-53.

Orthological Institute for the purpose of developing and propagating the language. In line with this, he also edited the journal *Psyche*, which became his chief medium for psychological and linguistic discussion. Signatories to Ogden's permanent petition for an international auxiliary language (Basic English) placed at the end of each issue of *Psyche* included John Dewey, A. Lloyd James (linguistic advisor to the B.B.C.), H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw. Ogden also entered into correspondence with a wide range of philosophical, literary, and linguistic figures from the period, writing to Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ezra Pound, Otto Jesperson, Edward Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield, to name but a few. By 1935, the Orthological Institute had representatives in thirty countries.[186]

As his biographer W. Terrence Gordon attests, Ogden is a notoriously difficult figure to define. According to Gordon, 'when Ogden died in 1957, casual commentators and serious eulogists alike resorted to labels in describing him: polymath, monologist, intellectual entrepreneur'.[187] In the early nineteen twenties, Ogden became famous for co-authoring *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) with I.A. Richards. *The Meaning of Meaning* is both a survey of linguistic thought and a sustained discussion of semantics, and its publication allowed Ogden to build upon his developing reputation at Cambridge as editor of *The Cambridge Magazine* and chair of The Heretics Society. These roles brought Ogden into close contact with the ideas of several figures in philosophy, literature and economics, many of whom would come to be synonymous with the modernist period. The Heretics hosted discussions by Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Virginia Woolf and T.E. Hulme, amongst others.[188]

Although he was not a professional linguist, Ogden dedicated his life to the study of language and was appreciated in certain linguistic circles. Edward Sapir, for example, wrote a favourable review of *The Meaning of Meaning*, praising its discussion of semantics and its treatment of symbolism (or the way that signs symbolise meaning).[189] *The Meaning of Meaning* is a survey of linguistic arguments in the relationship between language and thought, and it includes a notable early English language engagement with Ferdinand de Saussure's model of the sign. Ogden and Richards do not dedicate much space to Saussure in *The Meaning of Meaning*, drawing their semiotic heritage from Charles Sanders Pierce instead, and they are largely dismissive of his work. Like Saussure, however, Ogden and Richards take inquiry into the relationship between signs and meaning to be the essential aspect of linguistic study. They propose a triadic model of sign relation, whereby a symbol refers to a reference (or thought) which in turn refers to an object (or referent).[190] This is rendered in what has come to be known as the 'semiotic triangle':

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[186] W. Terrence Gordon, *C.K. Ogden: A Bio-Bibliographic Study* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1990), p. 48.

[187] Gordon, *C.K. Ogden: A Bio-bibliographic Study,* p. 4.

[188] Damon Franke, *Modernist Heresies: British Literary History 1883-1924* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), pp. xiii-xiv

[189] Edward Sapir, 'An Approach to Symbolism', *The Freeman*, 7 (1923), 572-573 (pp. 572-573).

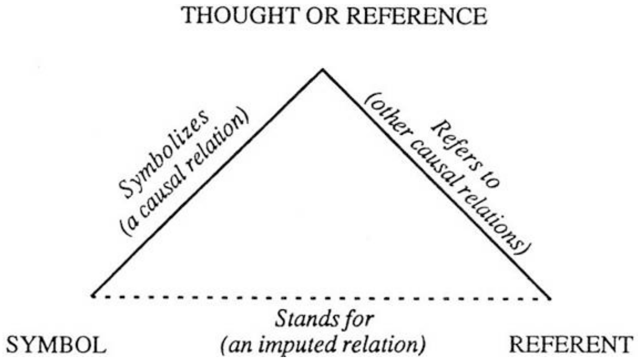
THOUGHT OR REFERENCE
Symbolizes (a causal relation)
Refers to (other causal relations)
SYMBOL
Stands for (an imputed relation)
REFERENT

Fig. 1.[191]

While this appears to bear little difference from Saussaure's relationship between signifiers, signifieds and objects or ideas, unlike Saussure, this model explicitly includes the referent in the process of signification. According to Ogden and Richards, the only analysable parts of sign-relation are the link between symbol and reference (in Saussurian terms, signifier and signified), or the link between a reference and its referent. The difference between such a theory and the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure is that while the object itself is a key component in the conception of any given sign-situation, and a fundamental part of any given sign, there are a series of analysable causal relations that link the symbol and the referent in any give 'sign situation'. For Ogden and Richards, arbitrary convention is, of course, the primary motivation for the linkage between words and meanings, but the objects of linguistic inquiry should be expanded to include psychological and philosophical processes as well. The most important innovation (from Ogden's and Richards's perspective) is the argument that symbols stand for references not for referents (another similarity with Saussure's semiological theory). Words are signs of a cognitive reference and only signify objects by means of convention and association. The analysable relation in this case is between words and referential meaning, and not words and the objects for which they stand.

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[190] I shall use Ogden's and Richards's terminology in this chapter where possible.

[191] C.K. Ogden, and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of The Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1923), p. 14.

While unchallenged by Sapir, Ogden's and Richards's theories were not wholly accepted in linguistic circles. In an article of 1927, Leonard Bloomfield criticises the triadic model for its inclusion of thought in sign-relation. Bloomfield argues that Saussure's model is preferable and more complex than Ogden's and Richards's, as he believes the study of meaning should focus on the correspondence between utterances and objects, which he believes to be socially, and not mentally, determined.[192] Bloomfield continues to demonstrate that semantics is only a part of linguistic inquiry, stressing the importance of the phoneme, which he defines as 'an abstraction obtained from a series of utterances'.[193] Study of the phoneme, which has over the course of history explored creativity and variety in language, is arrested by Basic English, with its fixed word list and rigid syntax.

Yet, this is complicated by Ogden's engagement with Pound, for whom the word is essentially a vehicle for meaning; a process which the authors of *The Meaning of Meaning* assert has an important mental and creative component. Interestingly, Basic English engaged with literary experimentation as much as with linguistics. In 1929, Ogden was asked to write the introduction to James Joyce's *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun*. In his introduction, Ogden compared the literary method of Joyce's 'Work in Progress' (later *Finnegans Wake*) with the intentions of Basic English, and even arranged for both a Basic translation and recording of the 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' section of Joyce's project. Ogden writes that 'Mr. Joyce appears as a promised liquidator where the machinery of literature has been clogged by the ministrations and minutiae of an ossified propaedeutic'.[194] Though ostensibly at odds with a restrictive vocabulary, Ogden sees writers such as Joyce, Stein and Eliot as a counterpart to his project. Ogden, Damon Franke explains, 'approached Joyce's work judiciously and saw the latter's linguistic experimentation as an illustrative contrast to his own language system. The feeling was mutual'.[195] Between Joyce's 'abnihilisation of the etym' and Ogden's reduction of the English language, the literary condition of the word in modernity is outlined: namely, that language is material and thus alterable, deformable and submitted to reformation.[196] These are the circumstances in which Pound approaches Ogden's work.

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[192] Leonard Bloomfield, 'On Recent Work in General Linguistics', *Modern Philology*, 25 (1927), 211-230 (pp. 215-216).

[193] Bloomfield, 'On Recent Work in General Linguistics', p. 216.

In this chapter I will explore two aspects of Pound's engagement with Ogden: first, how Pound came to understand and appreciate Basic English, and how Ogden responded to Pound's interest; second, I wish to evaluate the extent to which Ogden can provide us with a model for reading Pound's *Cantos* from a semiotic and linguistic perspective.

Pound's Approach to Ogden

Although Pound refers to his having met Ogden in London between 1930 and 1931 on a number of occasions throughout his correspondence, the first notable registration of his interest in Ogden's work is in numerous letters written at the end of December 1934. Pound wrote to Frank Morley, a fellow American and close colleague of T.S. Eliot's on the board of Faber & Faber, discussing his theory that a process of terminological decay had set in during the Renaissance, and he identified Ogden and Richards as potential modern allies in an attempt to arrest the supposed lack of care in language. Pound is far more interested in Ogden than in Richards, as the letter makes clear. Pound admitted to Morley that although he felt the need to mention Richards, he 'didn't want to READ [him]' as he couldn't imagine that he had 'ever done or said anything of interest'. By contrast, Pound's initial assessment of Ogden's Basic English project was that there was 'something to be done with that'.[197] Morley's reply goes some way to explaining Pound's later antipathy towards Richards's work in comparison with Ogden's. Morley writes that 'of course Basic English could be used as bag, but it's more like a tackling dummy. The venerable Richards doesn't look to me a lively pardner [*sic*]'.[198] It must be stated that it is not clear from Pound's correspondence during this period whether he had actually read any of Ogden's work prior to December 1934, nor exactly what it was that piqued his interest during this period.

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[194] C.K. Ogden, 'Preface' in James Joyce, *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun: Three Fragments from Work in Progress* (Paris: The Black Sun Press, 1929), pp. i-xv (p. 2).
[195] Damon Franke, *Modernist Heresies*, p. 203
[196] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 353.

On Christmas Day 1934, Pound also wrote to Hugo Fack stressing that 'terminology [is] VERY important' in both writing and economics, and inquired as to what Fack knew about Basic English. Pound claimed that 'all propaganda wd/ gain by using Bas/ Eng/ as much as poss.', by which he presumably meant to imply that the explanation of economic theories would achieve a wider audience if they used simple, more precise language, and he was not, therefore, referring to political propaganda alone. In the letter to Fack, Pound outlines what he already knew about Basic English, noting (erroneously) with approval that it was a 'vocab/ of 800 words (proposed for world language), with supplementary vocabularies for special and technical subjects. Very important that the econ/ vocab/ should be decently articulated'.[199] On the same day, Pound wrote to Philip Mairet, the literary editor of *The New English Weekly*, explaining that he wanted to write an article on Ogden as a means of demonstrating that 'the ARTICULATION of terminology had been neglected since Economics began'.[200] Pound clearly saw Basic English at this point as a potential means for unifying his linguistic and economic theories, much in the same way that his appropriations of China and Fascist Italy were able to unify his cultural and historical interests with his political and economic sensibilities.

Ostensibly the correspondence between Pound and Ogden begins with a letter dated 17

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[197] Ezra Pound, Letter to Frank Morley, YCAL MSS 43, December 1934, Box 35, Folder 1482, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[198] Frank Morley, Letter to Ezra Pound, December 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 35, Folder 1483, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[199] Ezra Pound, Letter to Hugo Fack, 25 December 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 16, Folder 701, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[200] Ezra Pound, Letter to Philip Mairet, 25 December 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 32, Folder 1346, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

January 1935, sent from Ogden to Pound. Ogden explains that Mairet had suggested that he send Pound a number of books on Basic English to assist the poet in the completion of an article on the subject. Of the seven books initially sent by Ogden, we can identify four from the draft of Pound's article 'Debabelization and Ogden', which contains a short bibliography not included in the published version. Ogden had sent Pound his own *Debabelization* (1931) and *Opposition* (1932), which analysed the social and psychological implications of the language, respectively, as well as A.P. Rossiter's *Statement and Suggestion* (1935), which outlines Basic English in relation to poetic form. Ogden also sent Pound Leonora Lockhart's *Word Economy* (1931), which relates the work of the Orthological Institute to linguistics more generally. From later letters we can infer that Pound also had in his possession I.A. Richard's *Basic Rules of Reason* (1933), as well as a number of issues of *Psyche* sent to him by Ogden throughout the correspondence. It is also likely that Pound was sent a copy of *Basic English* (1930), as his knowledge of the language reflects the foundational tenets outlined in Ogden's first publications, although these were restated in less detail in other texts. The ensuing written discussions, many of which contain Pound's objections to certain aspects of Basic English, were thus well-informed.

The first letters represent Pound's genuine enthusiasm for the Basic English project. He suggested that if Ogden were to follow up his article and encourage a response from I.A. Richards (on whom Pound nevertheless cast a number of aspersions), he would attempt to interest T.S. Eliot, as well as the American educationalist W. Wilbur Hatfield, editor of the influential *English Journal*. Pound also offered to contact members of the Italian government on Ogden's behalf. Presumably, this would constitute the dissemination of Basic English and its theoretical implications to a wider academic audience in both Britain and the United States. Eliot's tripartite role as poet, critic and publisher would be complemented by Hatfield's position of influence in educational circles, and by the implementation of state policy in Italy. No doubt these efforts were due to the fact that Basic English represented for Pound a break from the established intellectual climate prevalent in Britain at the time:

> God knows the number of people who take any interest in thought (as distinct from the Christ/Dostoievsky/D.K. [*sic*] Lawrence SOUP) is small enough; so that the initial cube of the substance (however small) the interested shd/ be able to focus, communicate, and participate in the cognate amenities.[201]

Pound clearly dissociates the writers of the Orthological Institute from British and American academia, consistent targets of his criticism from the outset of his career. Pound's article, as he envisages it, would precipitate new and effective discussion. Pound's aims were particularly grandiose at this point: on the one hand, it would represent a new departure in his thinking on language, and on the other it would constitute a repositioning of Anglo-American philosophy.

Pound immediately followed up on his promise to contact Eliot, Hatfield, and members of the Fascist government. He wrote to Hatfield first, on 21 January 1935, and Pound explained the ways in which he felt Ogden's project could benefit from his own personal expertise alongside Hatfield's influence.

> Heard from Ogden yesterday/ hoping I wd/ emit re Basic English. Seems likely the New English Weekly will let loose. At any rate the Basers follow up my lead.
> You [m]ight watch for results. AND: what about Eng/ Jrnl/
> What about having the whole set of Basic books TREATED by someone (ONE, namely Ez P'O) who know something about langwidg which [t]hese blokes do not.
> (as so far as I have gone, they ignore Fenollosa, Chinese, Levy=Bruhl [*sic*], Frobenius ???/
> and the prof/ I am now reading uses 'literature' to mean PUNK literature, and has apparently never encountered any other.
> Also limited knowledge of specific languages shows through, and makes this their broth. They been readin hun profs/ and not people who knew enough about language to use it.[202]

The letter to Hatfield is fascinating for Pound's assessment of the linguistic competence of the Orthological Institute. Pound's insistence on specific languages (as opposed to language as a purely abstract concept) as the focus of linguistic study clearly owes much to his philological background as well as to his poetic practice. The letter also shows that Pound did not approach Ogden in order to learn about language, as he clearly felt that he was superior in this regard, but in order to collaborate. In this sense, Pound was not hoping that Ogden would become one of his sources, but rather vice versa, and his interest in Ogden's work was one of mutual benefit. This sets Ogden apart from Fenollosa, Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius, to whom Pound was consistently deferential on linguistic and cultural matters. Hatfield, regrettably from Pound's perspective, felt that an article on Ogden in *The English Journal* would not generate enough interest and he was reluctant to engage with Ogden's work further.

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[201] Ezra Pound, Letter to C.K. Ogden, 21 January 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1603, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[202] Ezra Pound, Letter to Wilbur Hatfield, 21 January 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 15, Folder 688, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Where the letter to Hatfield is interesting from a linguistic perspective, Pound's letters to Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son in law and the Minister for Propaganda in the Italian government, reveal the political importance that Pound attached to Basic English.[203] He made it clear in these letters that he saw the language as a starting point for non-native speakers of English as well as an important training ground for writers by virtue of its clarity and precision. He also outlined the benefits to Italy for adopting Basic English as a state-sponsored means of learning English, with Pound feeling that it would give the Italian government an advantage over rival nations:

> In the mean time I wish you could get the Capo del Governo ['Head of State'] to give ten minutes consideration to BASIC ENGLISH.
>
> This is a very serious proposition. Ogden has, by years of work, and very serious consideration of the MEANING of words, reduced the necessary English vocabulary to 850 words plus special vocabularies for specific sciences. It is not an "artificial or freak language like Esperanto", but real English, and can be used [to] understand all discipline[s].
>
> It wont enable a man to appreciate psychological poetry, but can be used for all necessary TRANSMISSION; all commerce. The translation of the Duce's speech (made in English in 1931), into this BASIC, is given in "Debabelization", and you can see that it retains ample force.
>
> The first European nation to use BASIC, as the basis of their teaching of English in schools, will get an immense advantage over all other[s].
>
> I shall be publishing an article on it in the New English Weekly, next month. (Considering it as a discipline for writers).
>
> You can SAY anything you like in it.

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[203] Pound's letters to Ciano are deeply fascinating beyond the immediate scope of this project. Ciano was a prominent figure in Mussolini's government and personal life, and Pound's correspondence with him indicates that he did have a number of important channels into the workings of the Italian state. After volunteering to fight in the invasion of Abyssinia, Ciano was rewarded with a promotion to Foreign Minister, and was regularly responsible for negotiations and summits with the Axis powers. After opposing the formation of the Saló Republic – for which Pound, incidentally, declared his support – Mussolini had Ciano executed. Pound's correspondence with Ciano held by the Beinecke ends just prior to his promotion to Foreign Minister, but it is certainly revealing that Pound had extensive contact with such a high-ranking member of the government.

> I can have some books on it sent you. With the new Minister of Education. I take it a non-sentimental and practical idea is more likely to get into action, than it would under some aesthete or literary sentimentalist.[204]

Interestingly, Pound seems to have been uncertain about the literary merits of Basic English, as the line 'can be used [to] understand all discipline[s]' is an altered version of the original 'can be used as literary discipline', which he crossed out. Nevertheless, he seems to have established three main aspects of his interest in Basic English: first, that it is a means of translation, in the sense that it translates complicated discourse into simple language as well as translating from foreign languages into English; second, that it can become a simple and useful language of commerce and trade; and third, that it is a useful foundation point for both native-speaking writers and foreign students beginning to learn English. Once again, however, Pound was frustrated in his efforts to elicit influential interest in Basic English, although he does claim to Ciano that he had been invited to Budapest to give a lecture on the language in the summer of 1935.[205]

Despite Pound's numerous efforts to encourage support for Basic English in political and cultural spheres, his enthusiasm for Ogden's project was tempered by one particular reservation. He asked Ogden why the *Psyche* authors had made neither use nor mention of three figures important to him during the period: Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Leo Frobenius and Ernest Fenollosa. Ogden responded by asking for further information as to the particular relevance that these figures all have to Basic English, to which Pound replied:

> I cant [*sic*] rewrite all Fenollosa's essay, which is the MOST important item on my list
> of what you dont [*sic*] KNOW.
> Re/ Frobenius and Bruhl.
> Bruhl just a professor, Frobenius THINKS.
> both of 'em wd/ enrich sis What's her names culture, and enlighten her a lot more

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[204] Ezra Pound, Letter to Galeazzo Ciano, 28 January 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 9, Folder 401, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[205] Ezra Pound, Letter to Galeazzo Ciano, April 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 9, Folder 401, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. I have found no further evidence of Pound's claim, and he did not travel to give the lecture, but that is not to say that the invitation was not genuine.

> than the 47 varieties of bone head whom she does mention.[206]

Pound's disdain for established academic disciplines is evident here. 'Sis What's her name' most likely refers to Leonora Lockhart, whose *Word Economy*, a detailed discussion of the linguistic arguments underpinning Basic English, represented a particular irritant to Pound in his study of Ogden's project. Among the most distinguished figures cited in *Word Economy* are Otto Jespersen and Edward Sapir, both of whom represent not only the professional discipline of linguistics, but also stand for professorial and academic expertise, an anathema to Pound. In proposing Fenollosa, Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius, his opposition to current thought in Britain and the United States, where all three were by that point outside the spectrum of academic study, is made clear.

Ogden's response to Pound's suggestion of these figures is surprisingly well-informed, and demonstrates that Pound's interest in them does not isolate him fully from modernist philosophy and science. Ogden dealt with Pound's grievances methodically, first explaining that the Orthological Institute had in fact been responsible for many applications and disseminations of Lévy-Bruhl's work, being forced to eventually 'pass it off elsewhere as passé'. He then explains that he had read Frobenius' *Und Afrika Sprach* (his account of his travels in Africa) but that despite the consideration of his work for publication, it was ultimately felt to be 'too unreliable'. Ogden in fact distanced the remit of Basic English from the work of Frobenius and Lévy-Bruhl, arguing that 'interesting though they are, sign-languages and codes require the separate treatment for which they scheduled'.[207] The focus of the Orthological Institute was neither the origin nor the variety of the world's various languages, but rather the adaptation and reform of English. Ogden's linguistic theories are all by this point focused towards this end.

Interestingly, Ogden indicates that he is aware of Fenollosa's work, having been introduced to it at the 1933 Yale Linguistics Conference by one of Fenollosa's relatives, though he appears not to have read it himself. The fact that Fenollosa's work should have been discussed at such a prestigious conference is remarkable, given that it was so thoroughly discredited by linguistics, and in many ways directly opposed to the discipline. In answering Pound's queries thoroughly, he ensured that the article Pound was to produce would be focused on Basic English. Pound did not seem to have been dissuaded in his support for Ogden by his lack of interest in his suggested sources, writing to Mairet in the week before his article was published that for all of his perceived limitations, 'Og/ has at least heard of one or two foreign countries and of logical processes'. Pound also claimed that he could be a positive influence on Ogden with regard to literary and economic sources, writing that 'he don't happen to know any econ/ or literature/ and has had BAD economic company, from which I want to delouse him'.[208]

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[206] Ezra Pound, Letter to C.K. Ogden, 28 January 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1603, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[207] C.K. Ogden, Letter to Ezra Pound, 11 February 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1604, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.

Pound's choice of 'Debabelization and Ogden' as his title is particularly apt. Ogden's term simultaneously denotes a dismantling of the mythic and spiritual aspects of language whilst also seeking to redeem the chaos of international unintelligibility. According to Edward Sapir, the 'debabelizing' aspect of Basic English reflected the situation of modernity, as 'no national language really corresponds in spirit to the analytic and creative spirit of modern times. National languages are all huge systems of vested interests which sullenly resist critical inquiry'.[209] In *Debabelization*, a text heavily influenced by Sapir, Ogden himself explains why Basic English is superior to other international auxiliary languages:

> it allows a maximum utilization of the economic tendencies of the present, and a minimum departure from the linguistic tendencies of the human race. It capitalizes the progress of five centuries, and it further develops the analytic tendency of the most adaptable language the world has yet seen.[210]

An obvious criticism is that this has an imperialist tendency that to a great extent undermines Ogden's claim that English is the most 'adaptable' language in the world due to its analytic structure.

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[208] Ezra Pound, Letter to Philip Mairet, 21 February 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 32, Folder 1347, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[209] Edward Sapir, 'The Function of an International Auxiliary Language' in *International Communication: A Symposium on the Language Problem* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), pp. 4-15 (p. 87).

[210] C.K. Ogden, *Debabelization: With a Survey of Contemporary Opinion on the Problem of a Universal Language* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 28.

Ogden does not dedicate much attention to the convenience of using a language which spread around the globe due to political reasons. It is rather the case that it English is one of the most widely-spoken languages due to the political power of its speakers, being the official language of both the British Empire and the United States of America, rather than any intrinsic value of the language itself. Nevertheless, Pound agrees with Ogden's statement, writing '[Basic's] immeasurable superiority to all languages invented ab initio is that it already has a full racy idiom, comprehensible to hundreds of millions of people'.[211]

The expediency of Basic English received some attention in political circles. Just under ten years later, Basic English was even endorsed by Winston Churchill in a letter sent to Franklin Roosevelt on 20 April 1944. Churchill wrote of his 'conviction' that if the United States were to lend their support in promoting the language, 'Basic English will then prove to be a great boon to mankind in the future and a powerful support to the influence of the Anglo-Saxon peoples in world affairs'.[212] It is worth noting that Pound, who despised Roosevelt and Churchill by this point, endorses exactly the same view in 'Debabelization and Ogden'. Within the discipline of linguistics, however, Basic English met with hostility throughout its lifespan. In a methodical review of the language in 1945, W.E. Collinson takes particular issue with the 'adaptability' of the language. Due to the immense difficultly non-natives have with both spelling and pronunciation (particularly with stressed syllables), Collinson argues that 'it is hazardous to set up rules if the products are to remain within the bounds of standard English'. [213] Equally, Collinson criticises Ogden's verbal reforms, explaining that 'the virtual elimination of the simple verb in favour of the verb-noun phrase makes heavy demands on the ingenuity of the English user and still heavier on the memorizing powers of the foreigner'.[214] The article even implies that artificial languages such as Esperanto, Novial or Ido have advantages over Basic English due to their more easily pronounceable phonetics, a system of speech with a minimum of inflections, and a more rationalised orthography. Furthermore, and perhaps most damaging for Basic English, Collinson describes the ideal universal language as devising ‘a system of word-building by affix and composition (or grouping) of such a kind that the meaning of the derivate or composite word is the resultant of a combination of the meanings of the separate components whether bound or free’.[215] Basic English, which derives meaning from a series of fixed idioms, does not allow for phonological creativity within a language.

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[211] Ezra Pound, 'Debabelization and Ogden', *The New English Weekly*, 6:20 (1935), 410-411 (p. 411).

[212] Winston Churchill, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, Volume 3, ed. Warren F. Kimball (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 105.

[213] W.E. Collinson, 'Basic English as an International Language: A Linguistic Analysis', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 44:1 (1945), 121-136 (126).

[214] Collinson, 'Basic English as an International Language', 129.

Ogden and Richards, at the outset of their career, sought to solve what they saw as the ‘language problem’ but did so only by considering the relationship between words and meaning. They centralised the problem of meaning as fundamental in understanding the influence of language on thought, but they rarely relate this to linguistic categories beyond semantics. Phonetics, phonology, morphology, the history of language change and stylistics are all subsumed into their semiotic theory, itself studied only as a vehicle of meaning. In the development of Basic English, the variety and polyphony of language is reduced to single vehicles of semantic value.

Nevertheless, in ‘Debabelization and Ogden’ Pound is less interested in the language as a whole and more interested in its literary and social implications. He outlines what he sees as the usefulness of Basic English:

> I. As training and exercise, especially for excitable yeasty youngsters who want so eagerly to mean something that they can’t take out time to think: What?
> II. As sieve. As a magnificent system for measuring extant works. As a jolly old means of weeding out bluffs, for weeding out fancy trimmings, and leaving Kipling and Hardy possibly somewhat improved. If a novelist can survive translation into basic, there is something solid under his language.
> …IIIdly, this is our specific opportunity: the advantages of BASIC vocabulary limited to 850 words and their variants, plus the specific technical vocabulary for individual sciences, for the diffusion of ideas is, or should be, obvious to any man of intelligence.[216]

The key phrase in Pound’s statement is ‘for the diffusion of ideas’. As a mode of scientific discourse, Basic English would be severely limited, but it is perhaps more useful as a means of explaining scientific discourse to non-scientists. Pound clearly has this point in mind when he insists to Stanley Nott in May 1935 that 'readability in ECON. Comes from GOOD WRITING, it comes from ORTHOLOGY. (in my sense, as ameliorated from Ogden)'.[217] Basic English provides a foundational language into which technical terminology can be introduced temporarily. The fundamental aspects of what any one discipline wishes to convey is contained within fifty or less technical terms supplementing an already fixed idiom.

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[215] Collinson, ‘Basic English as an International Language’, 134-135.
[216] Ezra Pound, ‘Debabelization and Ogden’, 411. Ellipsis mine.

'Debabelization and Ogden' demonstrates Pound's grasp of the central thesis of Basic English, namely that it is simultaneously a reduction of English to its core essentials whilst also an attempt to imbue the language with new creative capacities. However, whilst celebrating Basic English in theory, Pound was to find its practice less compatible with his aesthetic.

Word Economy

Ogden takes the noun to be central to language, and argues that language itself is in essence the communication of names for objects or ideas. One of the aims of Basic English, as Ogden writes in *Debabelization*, is 'the elimination of verbs as a linguistic luxury' and their replacement with 'operations'.[218] The 'thing', or the referent, is the primary condition of language. Around the world, Ogden claims, 'there may not be 'nouns', 'adjectives', 'verbs' or 'pronouns'; but everywhere there are things. So the first and most natural question about a language is, "what names has it for *Things*?"'.[219]

Despite their apparent similarity in developing a new relationship between complexity of thought and simplicity of expression, Pound and Ogden here began to take divergent paths. Linguistically, Basic English comprises not only a reduction and contraction of language, but also a further separation of the grammatical categories, despite eschewing the established taxonomies of

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[217] Ezra Pound, Letter to Stanley Nott, May 1935 , *One Must Not Go Altogether With The Tide: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Stanley Nott*, ed. by Miranda B. Hickman (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), p. 164.

[218] C.K. Ogden, *Debabelization*, p. 151.

[219] C.K. Ogden, *A.B.C. of Basic English* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 2.

'noun', 'verb', 'adjective' and 'adverb'. The noun, though renamed as a 'name', retains its given primacy, and is held by Ogden to be the origin of language:

> Even without the names of things, we might, no doubt, get a long way by pointing, and by our acts and signs…But if we have a knowledge of the *names* of things, it is much more probable that our hearers will be in a position to see from the signs on our faces, or from our behaviour, what we would have said if we had made use of other sorts of words.[220]

The contrast with Fenollosa and Pound is clear, as both advocate the primacy of the verb, which they conceive as an indicator of natural processes in action. Where Ogden begins with the existence of things, Fenollosa and Pound do not believe that isolated things, separate from their actions, can exist in the natural world.

The semiotic theory evinced by Ogden and Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*, however, functions best when exemplified with nouns – and it may be for this reason that Ogden consistently asserted their primacy. The link between a symbol, the word 'tree' for example, the thought or mental image of that tree and an actual tree in the world is easier to analyse than a verb. To an extent, a verb is a purely grammatical construct, used in the predicate to describe the actions of subjects. In effect, its function is to activate the noun. Basic English, in basing its language on the naming of things, seeks to replace this verbal dimension in particular. W. Terrence Gordon explains that this was a significant part of Ogden's intention:

> the key to that simplification was the elimination of verbs – a legacy from Bentham, who viewed them as the slippery eels of language. *The Meaning of Meaning* had also convinced Ogden that language, for all its pitfalls, could be controlled, thus ensuring effective communication, international understanding, even with a view to eliminating war. Ogden's conviction was confirmed by his study of Bentham's writings on language. Guided above all by Bentham's warning that understanding is confounded by verbs, Ogden spent two years pairing down the verb stock of English to a core of eighteen. Applying the same rigor to other parts of speech, he produced the 850-word system of Basic English, intended as an international auxiliary language.[221]

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[220] Ogden, *A.B.C. of Basic English*, p. 3.
[221] W. Terrence Gordon, *C.K. Ogden*, p. 47.

Ogden did this by replacing verbs with ‘operators’ and allotting the function of verbs to derivatives of nouns (a noun taking the ending *–er* or *–ing*). Ogden justifies himself in *Basic English* by suggesting that ‘verbs involve a wasteful vocabulary in the preliminary stage; by using the operators to the fullest possible extent, nouns and adjectives can be made to do double work’. Even more pertinently, he argues that ‘verbs, like all stylistic contractions, may lead to confusion of thought at any stage of symbolization’.[222] This may have more to do with Ogden’s theory of symbolisation, which relies heavily on nouns, than it does with the capacity of a language user to understand verbs.

Pound seems to have struggled with the verbal dimension of Basic English, finding it unclear. The publication that Pound criticised most heavily was L.W. Lockhart’s *Word Economy*. Lockhart’s text constitutes not only a survey of the developing discipline of interlinguistics, but also a critical study of how linguistic theories affect Basic English. *Word Economy* is the most detailed outline of the linguistic situation to which the Orthological Institute responds. Its chief concern is the economy of language: the essential effects on the transmission and cultivation of meaning by the reduction of words. ‘Economy’, Lockhart suggests at the start of the text, ‘is possible at three different levels: it may be achieved by the contraction of ideas, of vocabulary, or of words’.[223]

Lockhart expands her discourse beyond a justification of Basic English. She engages in detailed linguistic argument, attempting to legitimise the function of the language in itself. The justification for the linguistic reform carried out by Basic English is at once linguistic and semiotic: if language is a system of symbols, and the relation of those symbols to external objects or concepts, then the source of the potential for more economic language use must be established. Lockhart writes:

> Before constructing the foundations of an ideally analytic system, it must be decided whether the analysis which reflects itself in language is fundamental in the sense that the simpler units correspond in some way to a schematic disintegration of the universe, or whether it is purely a symbolic convenience, governed by more of less *ad hoc* considerations. If there does exist a primary set of facts or ideas into which all our

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[222] C.K. Ogden, *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 53.

[223] L.W. Lockhart, *Word Economy*: *A Study in Applied Linguistics* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 10.

> complex cognitive and perceptive experience may be resolved, then presumably the efficiency of a vocabulary may be measured by the extent to which it conforms with such an analysis. If, on the other hand, linguistic generalization can be carried to no *a priori* conclusion, and is merely a matter of effectively disposed symbols, then there arises the question: what exactly takes place when we eliminate one word by combining two or three others together?[224]

This question is to a great extent rhetorical, although Lockhart's sustained answer is the economising of semantics. The argument here not only advocates the use of analytic systems in the creation of language, but also establishes that such systems require an economising reform regardless of whether or not they contain universal laws. The replacement of various symbols and methods of symbolisation either increases the efficiency of language in relation to universal processes, or it has no effect on meaning. This argument is perhaps the most effective outlined in *Word Economy*, since it neutralises attacks on Basic English from a number of directions.

It is an argument with which Pound could not have disagreed. In his 'Debabelization and Ogden' he explicitly calls for the kind of economising suggested by Lockhart. Pound's distaste for Lockhart's work, however, was expressed in a number of other places.[225] He outlined his disagreements with Lockhart in an undated letter to Ogden in 1935. Pound began by criticising Lockhart's writing style and concluded with a strong disagreement with the verbal taxonomies of Basic English as a whole:

> I note a lack of articulation in Lockhart. Word Econ/ p. 24.
>
> Better GROUP those verbs acc/ their families
>
> come/go　　be/seem　　do/make
>
> get/give,　　take, have, keep, put, send
> let,
> say
> see

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[224] Lockhart, *Word Economy*, pp. 46-47.

[225] In letters to Ogden, as well as Stanley Nott and E.E. Cummings, he pejoratively refers to L.W. Lockhart as 'Miss What's her name' or variations thereof.

> question of parity between see/ hear/feel/smell not yet clear to me.[226]

Given that page 24 of *Word Economy* continues Lockhart's argument that analytic languages are more effective in transmitting meaning than synthetic ones, it is unlikely that it is this point with which Pound took issue. Rather, it is more conceivable that Pound refers to the paragraph on the page following, as it argues in favour of Ogden's replacement of all English verbs with sixteen operators and two auxiliaries. Lockhart justifies this as the culmination of a tendency in modern English to replace the majority of 'elaborate' verbs with a form combining simple operations (*put, take, go*) with spatial and directional adverbs or prepositions. As Lockhart suggests,

> This tendency has been used as the first principle of simplification in Basic English, an experiment which will be discussed at some length in these pages because of the lesson in Applied Linguistics which it provides. In Basic English the verb system has been reduced to sixteen operators or verb –forms (*come, get, give, go, keep, let, make, put, seem, take, be, do, have, say, see, send*) and two auxiliaries (*may* and *will*). These operators, in combination with twenty-one prepositions or directives, act as substitutes for about 4,000 common verbs. The reduction of auxiliaries is effected by means of various circumlocutions. Thus *ought* = 'it is right' *can* = 'be able', *must* = 'have to'.[227]

Lockhart is here in fact doing little more than summarising Ogden's explanations in *A.B.C. of Basic English* and *The Basic Vocabulary* (1930), yet Pound found her articulation inadequate nonetheless. To an extent, Pound used Lockhart's work as a means of criticising Ogden's work by proxy. He suggested to Ogden that Lockhart was little more than a 'diligent pupil'. If Pound is correct and Lockhart was merely Ogden's disciple, then in attacking Lockhart he is also criticising Basic English. Ogden, dismissing Pound's criticisms of Lockhart, seems to have understood it this way. One could well argue that *Word Economy* is in fact the most sustained and measured argument in favour of Basic English published by the Orthological Institute; in its critical engagement with the ideas of both Sapir and Jesperson it far surpasses the attempts made by Ogden to relate Basic English to linguistic theory, where the aforementioned are cited only in passing.

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[226] Ezra Pound, Letter to C.K. Ogden, 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1604, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The content of the letter makes it clear that it was written after the completion of 'Debabelization and Ogden' but prior to its publication on 28 February. I estimate the date of the letter to be between 11 (when Ogden sent his last response to Pound before the article was published) and 25 February 1935 (three days before the publication).

[227] Lockhart, *Word Economy*, pp. 24-25.

Pound's correspondence with Ogden became increasingly fraught and strained with obvious frustration in the weeks following the publication of 'Debabelization and Ogden'. Pound had repeatedly suggested that Ogden, or one of his colleagues, follow up the article with a response indicating its usefulness to the Orthological Institute, or disagreeing with its claims. In any case, Pound was keen that their future correspondence take place in the space provided by *The New English Weekly* and not simply in private. He expressed his frustration to T.S. Eliot on 28 March 1935, writing 'what about Og/ why aint he bin in Crit/?? Too slow, and stuck and constipé, so can only do one little egg per annum'.[228] As Ogden was a prodigiously hard worker, it seems unlikely that laziness on his part was the reason that no follow-up article was provided. Rather, Ogden quite simply seems not to have been interested in Pound's view of the Orthological Institute. Despite Pound's questions and criticisms of the group in the correspondence, Ogden seems reluctant to engage with him. Pound assumes that this is because Ogden has become 'stuck' or 'petrified' and has failed to build on Basic English's early promise, but in reality it may just have been that Ogden did not share Pound's enthusiasm for collaboration. Alternatively, Pound speculated to Philip Mairet that Ogden may have distrusted the article for its appearance in *The New English Weekly*, which was the main British organ for Social Credit economic and political theories. According to Pound, Ogden was 'probably shy – thought he was *only* being wooed for Social Credit'.[229]

At the same time as his engagement with the Orthologicial Institute, Pound was preparing Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* for re-publication with the London-based publisher Stanley Nott. With his potential collaboration with Ogden, Lockhart, and others, not proving as fruitful as he had hoped, he outlined his proposal for a 'post-Ogden' series of pamphlets to be named the *Ideogrammic Series* in a letter of May 1935.

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[228] Ezra Pound, Letter to T.S. Eliot, 28 March 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 15, Folder 664, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[229] Ezra Pound, Letter to Philip Mairet, 7 March 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 32, Folder 1348, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> This series is not run in opposition to C.K. Ogden. It is not a comment on his Psyche series, but it is definitely offered in CONTRAST. A number of the pamphlets are basic in a sense older than the special one associated with Ogden's simplified vocabulary. If the [intellectually] lively reader us one set Ogden's tool as lever he may here find a useable fulcrum. The whole series is for drives toward ORTHOLOGY.[230]

Despite his differences with Basic English, and his criticism of Lockhart, Pound seems to have still held hope in May 1935 that he and Ogden could work towards the same ends, if not collaborate directly.

Indeed, on the re-publication of *The Chinese Written Character* in 1936, Pound dedicated his short preface to a discussion of Basic English. Before offering his own suggestions for improvement, Pound makes two criticisms of the language:

> My respect for Fenollosa's essay is very great; in reprinting it at this time, its bearing on Basic English is at least twofold:
>
> (I) Many of the nouns in the Ogden list of 850 words could very well serve as verbs, thereby giving considerably greater force to that brief vocabulary.
>
> (II) Part of Ogden's simplification is more apparent than real, in so far as considerable idiomatic knowledge is required to grasp the shades of meaning inherent in its several simple verbs when used with adjunct prepositions.
>
> I also suggest that the limited gamut of actions included by Ogden in this essential vocabulary might be considered almost as declension of a yet briefer set of main root possibilities.[231]

The criticisms that Pound offers here are in fact more sophisticated than his praise of Ogden in his article for the *New English Weekly*. The question of whether the nouns could function as verbs is only a natural conclusion to Fenollosa's argument that 'a true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature'.[232] With the basis of Ogden's theory of language being the noun and not the verb, a separation between Pound's and Ogden's respective understandings of linguistic fundamentals occurs.

Reiterating his criticisms of Lockhart in the letter to Ogden a year earlier, Pound then turns his attention to the 'operators'. As well as believing the verbal quantity of Basic English to be too little, Pound clearly takes issue with Ogden's failure to group verbs accordingly.

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[230] Ezra Pound, Letter to Stanley Nott, May 1935, *One Must Not Altogether Go With the Tide*, p. 114.

[231] Ezra Pound, 'Foreword' in Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: An Ars Poetica*, ed. Ezra Pound (London: Stanley Nott, 1936), p. 5.

[232] Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character and a Medium for Poetry*, p. 14.

> Seeing their sixteen verbal activities printed as follows, the reader may get my point:
>
> *be* *do* *let* *make*
>
> *seem* *say*
> *see*
>
> *get* : *take* : *have* : *keep* : *put* : *send* : *give*
> *come* *go*
>
> To *seem* is the false case of *be*. It is the passive of the verb to *see*. To *do* is the more active mode of to *be*. To *let* is the permissive of *do*. To *make* is the formative of *do*: it is a doing that leaves a concrete result. To *say* is a kind of making, leaving but a trace in the air.
> *Come* and *go* are opposites of motion.
> *Get, take*, are almost doublets: *have, keep,* also almost doublets.
> To *take* is more active *getting*, to *keep* more retentive *having*.
> And, to these, *put, send, give,* are relinquishings, standing in the possessive gamut, as *go* to *come*, in relative motion.
> All this will seem very simple to anyone trained in ideogram. The running legs and the gripping hand of the Chinese pictures will give considerable vividness to the meanings and their relation.[233]

What is most interesting here is Pound's attempt to synthesise the pragmatic decisions of the Orthological Insitute and Fenollosa's theories about the relationship between linguistic categories and natural processes. Pound clearly recognised that Ogden's selection of 'operators' was somewhat arbitrary and required a firmer explanation of the reasons behind the individual choices. Furthermore, Pound felt that the operators were too isolated from one another and required linkages between them in order for the Basic English system to be usefully operational.

Ogden did not respond to Pound's criticism, constructive as its intention was. Pound's objection to Basic English would appear to be its limited creative potential. Writing in the preface to a book that takes poetry as its central concern, it is perhaps unsurprising that Pound's drive is to attempt to make Basic English more inherently creative. The word list and fixed grammatical structures of Basic English allow for the substitution of one word for another but the generative quality of the language, the ability of the speaker to create new imagery for example, is limited. Pound offers Fenollosa's notion of the ideogram – the Chinese character which he believes to be stylised picture of natural images – as an equally orthological alternative. Pound's suggestion of Fenollosa, and Ogden's silence, both constitute the end of any chance of collaboration; both men retreated into idiosyncrasy.

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[233] Ezra Pound, 'Foreword' in Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, pp.5-6 (p. 6).

'Debabelization' in *The Cantos*

Canto XLV, otherwise known as the 'Usura Canto', is one of Pound's most recognisable and celebrated pieces of writing. Although it was first published in 1936, Pound's letters show that he had completed the poem by late November 1935. Pound was keen that the poem reached the widest possible audience, and was not confined to the readers of his usual organs, as a letter of 2 December 1935 to J.P. Angold demonstrates. He encouraged Angold to write to Harriet Monroe on his behalf, and suggested that *Poetry Magazine* would be a suitable place for publication as 'New Democ[racy] cant pay, and besides the Usury canto ought to go to the Unconverted'.[234] Pound clearly recognised that for all of Canto XLV's importance to the sequence of the *Fifth Decad of Cantos* as a whole, the poem could stand independently as a statement of many of the themes that he wished to address in the section overall. In fact, Pound saw the poem as having an important propagandist use, as he explained to Angold in a subsequent letter. 'The only use of my writin', Pound explained, 'is to make the damn thing more readable to the pubLICK/ and possibly CLEARER to the Cobbett club', a statement that is somewhat supported by the simplicity of his typography, and the accessibility of his references in Canto XLV as opposed to other sections of the poem.[235] As Betsy Erkkila explains, Pound's poem did reach a wider audience than much of his poetry at the time, and was reviewed in *Time Magazine* in 1936, although it should be stated that the tone of the review was gently mocking of Pound's political ambitions for the poem.[236]

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[234] Ezra Pound, Letter to J. P. Angold, 2 December 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 2, folder 64, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[235] Ezra Pound, Letter to J.P. Angold, 14 December 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 2, Folder 64, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

For Jean-Michel Rabaté, in this poem Pound combines insights into what he perceives to be the shared nature of language and economics, which is ideally figured as 'an organic totality of life, of 'wholeness' which has been impaired by usury'.[237] Pound develops, according to Rabaté, a means of finding the source or 'root' of usurious corruption in order to expose it and purify both the natural and human worlds, a technique gleaned from philological and etymological practice. The archaic language and incantatory mode that Pound employs in the poem can be read as a kind of performance, an exorcism of usury's effects by way of outlining its litany of sins. It is also simultaneously an invocation of a return to a period of European history when usury's supposedly insidious nature held less sway over political and economic institutions. For Pound, this was culmination of years of thinking about the nature and history of language, as he explained in a letter of December 1934 to W.H.D. Rouse:

> I have been for two years in a boil of fury with the dominant usury that impedes every human act, that keeps good books out of print, and pejorate everything
> //
> need for terminology/ for articulation of terminology/
> (for control of language)
> decadence of thought, due to lack of observation of words.[238]

It is clear, then, that Pound saw Ogden's work as part of a wider attempt to 'control language' and to purify terminology for the sake of both his economic and literary projects. Canto XLV is part of the same linguistic project as 'Debabelization and Ogden', despite the obvious differences in the pieces of work.

The use of redundant forms such as 'hath', 'findeth' and 'stayeth' in Canto XLV are a good example of the way in which Pound uses language to make wider socio-political and economic points, adopting an invented form of diction that inhabits the time period and place just as usury, Pound believed, began to take hold of European culture. Pound uses archaic language to simulate a historical mode, and thus the suffixes serve both a practical and poetic purpose. Pound fits, furthermore, his half-invented dialect to an incantatory rhythm that is balanced by the repetition of the refrain 'with usura'.

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[236] Betsy Erkkila, *Ezra Pound: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. xxxix-xl.
[237] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 186.
[238] Ezra Pound, Letter to W.H.D. Rouse, 30 December 1934, YCAL MSS 43, Box 45, Folder 1944, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> With usura hath no man a house of good stone
> each block cut smooth and well fitting
> that design might cover their face,
> with usura
> hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall
> *harpes et luz*
> or where virgin receiveth message
> and halo projects from incision,
> with usura
> (XLV.229)

It is curious that Pound, whose religious belief system tended to revolve around either a literary sensibility derived from Graeco-Roman divinity or the moral rectitude of Confucianism, begins from a point of Christian perspective. The chanting mode of the poem is certainly derived from a Christian tradition, and the repetition of the Latin phrase 'usura' would seem to indicate that Pound drew inspiration from Italian Catholic services (as opposed to the Presbyterian sermons of his youth). In this sense, although the language that Pound deploys has its roots in Mediaeval and Renaissance English, the poem speaks to a southern European religious (and, equally, artistic) tradition in keeping with the international nature of the poem.

What is clear, then, is that the use of archaic terms and the insistence on the Latin 'usura' rather than English 'usury' is an inextricable part of the poem's message. It is not difficult to see where Pound's and Ogden's projects, particularly with regard to the use of language, diverge on this point. Although Pound insisted to Angold that the point of his writing is to make things clearer, his clarity is derived from principles of poetic accuracy with regard to objects and sensibilities and not necessarily the simplest possible communication of ideas. If Pound's assumptions about the infiltration that usury has made into communication are to be taken seriously in relation to the poem, then each word, carefully chosen as it was, is an essential part of *The Cantos*' attempt to rectify linguistic impurity. Translating the poem into Basic English, for example, without losing its essential message is impossible as that message is bound up in precisely the kind of linguistic flexibility that Ogden's project fundamentally rejected. The final section of the poem illustrates this point well:

> It [Usura] rusteth the craft and the craftsman
> It gnaweth the thread in the loom
> None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;
> Azure hath a canker by usura; cramoisi is unbroidered
> Emerald findeth no Memling
> Usura slayeth the child in the womb
> It stayeth the young man's courting
> It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth
> between the young bride and her bridegroom
> CONTRA NATURAM
> They have brought whores for Eleusis
> Corpses are set to banquet
> at behest of usura.
> (XLV.230).

Undoubtedly, the overall sense of certain lines could be preserved by translation into more modern language and then into Basic English, but this would be at the expense of the rhythm. All of the archaic forms ('gnaweth', 'learneth', 'hath', 'canker', 'findeth', 'slayeth', 'stayeth', 'lyeth') could be altered to take modern suffixes permissible by Basic English but the translator would be forced to sacrifice the essential act of historical mimicry represented by the older forms. Even with these concessions, the poem presents a greater challenge in Pound's allusions and references, as well as his choice of examples. The frame of references belongs distinctly to the early stages of the European Renaissance, between the founding of the Monte Paschi di Siena and the alleged development of a usurious banking method in the following centuries. Ogden's allowance of fifty technical words would cover 'cramoisi', 'Memling', or 'Eleusis' but the density of these references in such a short poem, as well as their interaction with the form in which they are used, would serve to create a disjuncture between the (necessary) rigidity of Basic English and the referential mode it seeks to represent. Such a translation would thus be rather pointless, as the straining between the poem's frame of references and the language which carries them would cause not only the fluency of the poem to collapse, but its meaning as well. A language designed for the development of clarity would in fact result in a confusion of the poem's original aims, and this would be a direct result of the medium straining against subject matter.

However, this only explains why Pound and Ogden did not produce a translation of a canto, and it only partly indicates why Pound was unable to provide the Basic canto that he suggested he would. While it is true that translating a pre-existing canto would have been immensely difficult due to the density of Pound's references and the careful attention paid to language (and, indeed, languages) in the poem, it does not follow that Pound would have been unable to make an exception and compose an entirely new canto in Basic English. The reasons that this did not happen are, of course, a matter of speculation, but from the correspondence (both between Pound and Ogden, and Pound and numerous others) it is clear that Pound's enthusiasm for using Basic English as part of his project was not matched by Ogden, whose tone remains professional, yet cordial, throughout. In one sense, their potential collaboration did not generate enough interest in both parties.

It is important to recognise, however, the ways in which such a collaboration would have been possible and the ways in which it would have been difficult. First, Ogden's distrust of verbs was resolutely not shared by Pound, whose faith in the verb as a metonymic evocation of poetry's essential basis in natural processes had long since been established in his reading of Fenollosa. This is a point that Pound emphasised in his correspondence with Rouse, writing 'is, copula/verb of little action and no colour/ Fenollosa is excellent on this topic/ Dante's strength in his verbs/ condense metaphoric expression in CHOICE of verb/ gt/ strength in English. Saves words'.[239] Yet, for all of Pound's intrinsic faith in verbal processes, his poetry tends to revolve around nominal details (although it must be said that Canto LXV contains numerous examples where the actions of verbs – 'rusteth', 'stayeth', 'findeth' – drives the poem). The descriptive modes of Canto XLVIII, which Pound also published in the *New English Weekly* in 1935 and which was therefore directed at the same readership as his 'Debabelization and Ogden', are remarkable for their stillness and not for their swift movements and actions:

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[239] Ezra Pound, Letter to W.H.D. Rouse, 29 April 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 45, Folder 1949, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> From Val Cabrere, were two miles of roofs to San Betrand
> so that a cat need not set foot in the road
> where now is an inn, and bare rafters,
> where they scratch six feet deep to reach pavement
> where now is wheat field, and a milestone
> an altar to Terminus, with arms crossed
> back of the stone
> Where sun cuts light against evening;
> where light shaves grass into emerald
> (XLVIII.243).

Much of this passage could be carried over into Basic English without much alteration. Ogden's 'operators' would be able to do the work of phrases such as 'where they scratch six feet deep to reach pavement' or 'where sun cuts light against evening'. While there would of course be a loss of lyrical beauty in translating the text to Basic English, the overall sense and the tranquil qualities of the images would be retained. The following passage, however, presents greater difficulties:

> Falling Mars in the air
> bough to bough, to the stone bench
> where was an ox in smith's sling hoisted for shoeing
> where was spire-top a-level the grass yard
> Then the towers, high over chateau -
> Fell with stroke after stroke, jet avenger
> bent, rolled, severed and then swallowed limb after limb
> Hauled off the butt of that carcass, 20 feet up a tree trunk,
> Here three ants have killed a great worm. There
> Mars in the air, fell, flew,
> Employed, past tense; at the Lido, Venezia
> an old man with a basket of stones,
> that was, said the elderly lady, when the beach costumes
> were longer,
> and if the wind was, the old man placed a stone.
> (XLVIII.243)

As a lyrical mode, this passage is extraordinary for its compilation of sounds and rhythms, from the Anglo-Saxon qualities of the alliteration in 'smith's sling hoisted for shoeing' to the prosaic 'that was, said the elderly lady, when the beach costumes were longer'. The poem deploys Pound's characteristic shifting of metrical forms, and it is difficult to outline an overall pattern, but for the balanced distribution of stresses across the passage. In many ways, translating into Basic English is difficult for the above reason that the language already shares many of the properties that Ogden attempted to employ in his project. However, Pound's vocabulary and his shifting registers means that the overwhelming prosaic and static nature of Basic English is ill-suited to the visionary nature of the descriptions. The line 'spire-top a-level the grass yard' is perhaps too condensed to unpack in Basic English. In reality Basic English, for all of its insistence on simplicity, revolved around the complex process of pulling apart phrases and replacing them with various components, and not on condensation. The looseness of metrical contracts, the clarity of phraseology and the density of vision that are so characteristic of Pound's poetry are very much at odds with the forms Basic English is capable of rendering, if not with the linguistic principles upon which the language is founded.

Nevertheless, Ogden's work remains an essential counterpart and counterpoint in discussing the linguistic aspects of Pound's poetry in the 1930s. In 1936, Pound's Canto XLVI, composed in 1935, appeared in an anthology entitled *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*. This anthology was the first publication of the New Directions publishing company founded by James Laughlin, a Harvard graduate encouraged by Pound to become a publisher. As a result, Canto XLVI appeared alongside work by Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Wallace Stevens and numerous other writers of the period. It is a fine testament to the literary experiments of the 1930s and is dedicated to the founders of *Transition*, the magazine responsible for the publication of much of Joyce's 'Work in Progress'.

The relationship between linguistic reform and literary experimentation pervades the volume. From the disruptions of syntactical norms in Gertrude Stein's 'A Water-fall and a Piano' to the irregular typographies in the poetry of Louis Zukofsky, E. E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams, new forms of language – specifically the English language – are attempted in this volume. Pound himself begins Canto XLVI with an explicit reference to his use of language:

> And if you will say that this tale teaches . . .
> a lesson, or that the Reverend Eliot
> has found a more natural language . . . you who think you will
> get through hell in a hurry. . .
> That day there was cloud over Zoagli
> And for three days snow-cloud over the sea
> Banked like a line of mountains.
> Snow fell. Or rain fell stolid, a wall of lines,
> So that you could see where the air stopped open
> and where the rain fell beside it
> Or the snow fell beside it. Seventeen
> Years on this case, nineteen years, ninety years
> on this case (Inspector!).[240]

The direct address to the reader, the stark presentation of images with a scarcity of verbs or definite articles, and the idiosyncratic use of punctuation are all consistent features of Pound's poetry during this period. The *New Directions* anthology emphasises the experimental and influential nature of Pound's poetry by placing him alongside other writers of the period all engaged in the 'revolution of the word'.

The first volume of the *New Directions* anthology is also significant as it testifies to the importance of Ogden's theories in the modernist period. In his preface, Laughlin alludes to *The Meaning of Meaning*, using it as his primary example of a linguistic theory. He explains:

> Language controls thought – as the Church Fathers knew when they insisted on continual care of terminology – as Ogden and Richards knew when they wrote "The Meaning of Meaning" – and the fluidity and flexibility of thought depends upon the fluidity and flexibility of language.[241]

The allusion to Ogden and Richards reflects their position amongst literary circles. It is clear from Laughlin that Ogden's and Richards' theories have a privileged place in the relationship between literature and linguistics during this period. To a great extent this is at the expense of professional linguists such as Jespersen and Fritz Mauthner, important figures for Joyce and Beckett, but omitted entirely by Pound and Laughlin.

Perhaps what is most significant about Laughlin's endorsement of Ogden's and Richards's theories is that their work is seen as being part of the process by which the 'fluidity and flexibility of language' is enacted. A proposal to reduce an extensive and varied lexicon to a list of eight-hundred and fifty words would surely be considered an increase, not a relief, to linguistic rigidity. Laughlin, however, sees this as a process of purification, the act of, in Pound's words, 'chucking out useless verbiage'.[242] It is at this point that the influence of the latter is felt most readily:

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[240] Ezra Pound, 'Canto XLVI' in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, ed. by James Laughlin (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1936), p. 13.

[241] James Laughlin, 'Preface: New Directions', vii-xii (p. ix).

> Basic English has a distinct national as well as an international value, of which I am sure its backers are aware. Its method of word selection stems from Bentham, and although it cannot turn English into an ideographic language where the material-metaphorical origin of every sign is *visible* in its structure, it can, by its limitation of the vocabulary and simplified syntax, shatter the old sound track to pieces. As Ezra Pound has already said, you can be reasonably sure that a "philosopher" is really a philosopher and not another unwitting logodaedalist if he can make his ideas substantial in Basic.[243] [emphasis in text].

Laughlin's statement places the work of the Orthological Institute as the occidental counterpoint to Pound's use of ideograms. Where the ideogram is seen as representative of thought in that its meaning is to an extent self-evident (and inherently unambiguous), Ogden's project focuses on reducing the ambiguities that have developed in alphabetic languages, such as English. Basic English is thus allied with experimental writing, which Laughlin explains on the same page 'is of even greater value in that it attacks more radically the visual and conceptual fronts of the congealed associations as well as the oral one'. In the 'revolution of the word', Ogden's theories and practices are an essential weapon in that they provide modernist experimentation with a consolidated foundation upon which to build, as well as defining its sign model.

It must be stressed that in Laughlin's and Pound's understanding of both ideogrammic and alphabetic systems of writing, language is still composed of signs. According to the theory outlined in *The Meaning of Meaning*, the nature of a sign is a question of degrees of adequacy with regard to reference. Ordinarily, Ogden and Richards explain, 'between the symbol and the referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent'. This is, according to their theory, the usual case in any linguistic situation. However, they explain in a footnote, 'an exceptional case occurs when the symbol used is more or less directly like the referent for which it is used, for instance, it may be when it is an onomatopoeic word, or an image, or a gesture, or a drawing'.[244] Such situations are referred to by C.S. Peirce as either iconic (a pictorial image) or indexical (when the sign itself bears an actual relation to the thing signified, such as a smoke-signal, or a footprint), and are thus non-symbolic. [245] In other words, they are an active trace of the thing signified rather than an arbitrary symbol standing in for it. These distinctions are useful in understanding the Chinese character as Pound sees it. Even though he believes that the ideogram is a more accurate mode of expression, relying not on arbitrary marks but on diagrams, it is still a sign nonetheless.

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[242] Ezra Pound, Letter to C.K. Ogden, 7 February 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1604, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[243] James Laughlin, 'Preface: New Directions', p. x.

Orthology and 'Right-naming'

Studies relating Pound and linguistics are rare, and they often focus on the influence of Ernest Fenollosa, whose own area of interest was not language as a whole, but rather the particular nature of Chinese writing. Furthermore previous studies have focused primarily on a Saussurian understanding of language and read Pound accordingly. I will demonstrate, on the other hand, that Ogden and Richards provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the purpose of relating Fenollosa's notion of the ideogram to Pound's understanding of language as a whole.

Philip Kuberski sees Pound's work as the product of what he terms 'sign anxiety', or the 'suspicion that human representations are grounded – not in "nature" or "vision" – but by the force of a rhetoric deploying empty words'.[246] This suspicion is tempered by Pound's faith in the ideogram, which is perceived as fundamentally non-rhetorical. Thus, Kuberski argues, the *Cantos* are characterised by the tension between motivated and unmotivated signs; in other words, between ideographic, iconic signs and arbitrary, symbolic signs.

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[244] Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 15, p. 15n.

[245] Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume II*, ed. by N. Houser, and C.J.W. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 163.

[246] Philip Kuberski, *A Calculus of Ezra Pound: Vocations of the American Sign* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1992), p. x.

> If an unmotivated or vagrant signifier is the figure of modernist poetic discourse, Pound's disregard for the *copula* (following Fenollosa, *CWC*, 15), conventional syntax, and narrative sequence may be seen as an attempt to fabricate a massive, complex ideogram to replace an alphabetic discourse that has no necessary ties to nature. If *usura* prevents the precise erection of a house of stone, then an unmotivated sign cannot organize a unified poem. Pound's only recourse is to continue writing and make manifest the divergence inherent in the alphabetic elaboration of a nonalphabetic principle of ordering, thus deepening the ideogrammic muteness and obscurity of his *Cantos*.

Undoubtedly, the ideogram is an important poetic principle for Pound and Kuberski's reading is skilfully informed by its application, and his summary of the *Cantos* as 'the alphabetic elaboration of a nonalphabetic principle of ordering' is both eloquent and apt. Yet, far from disregarding grammatical and syntactic conventions, Pound in fact re-appropriates their function within new kinds of discourse. This is, moreover, part of a wider modernist programme of linguistic reform which seeks to control the semiotic nature of language, not replace it with a system of ideograms.

As a post-structuralist interpretation of a modernist work, Kuberski's work inevitably reads Pound retrospectively and with a post-Saussurian gloss. Seen this way, the multiplicity of signs that appear in the *Cantos*, from Chinese characters to hieroglyphs, can be reduced to a dyadic relationship between a signifier and a signified. However, the influence of Ogden and Richards is incompatible with a Saussurian reading of Pound, not least because they chastise Saussure's semiology for its pre-conceived agenda:

> The author begins by inquiring, "What is the object at once integral and concrete of linguistic?" He does not ask whether it has one, he obeys blindly the primitive impulse to infer from a word some object for which it stands, and sets out to find it.[247]

Ogden's and Richards' reservations about Saussure have two sources: they (largely erroneously) believe that that his sign theory too directly links words and things; secondly, they argue that the dyadic model of sign-relation does not account for the process of interpretation necessary in any given sign-situation (the process of thought or reference).

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[247] Ogden, and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 5.

Victor P. H. Li's study of Pound's theories of language, on the other hand, argues that he is a linguistic idealist, believing language to retain traces of natural processes. The assumptions of linguistic idealism, Li explains, are manifest in three ways: '(1) language is secondary to some primary reality…(2) language's role is to represent or communicate aspects of that reality; and (3) language is most effective when it can communicate the real in the most unmediated and transparent way possible'.[248] Li's main argument for Pound's idealism rests on his interest in Fenollosa's theories. These erroneous beliefs, however, were reasonably commonplace in the early part of the twentieth century. The linguist and philologist Otto Jesperson wrote of 'primitive picture-writing' as being the basis of Chinese characters.[249] Saussure, similarly, separates written language into phonetic and ideographic systems, showing the division to be a relatively common assumption even within the discipline of linguistics.[250]

Li is of course not professing to offer a synchronic study of Pound's beliefs and is merely situating him diachronically in the history of the relationship between philology and linguistics. Yet Li does come to engage with Pound's interest in Ogden. He sees Pound's understanding of Basic English less as a positive event of linguistic reform and more as compensation for language's inherent failings.

> In a review of C.K. Ogden's *Debabelization* (1931), Pound tries to balance his belief in a language based on the direct observation and transmission of the real with his awareness that language must serve a social, communicational function and thus must be pedagogically regulated. He sees Ogden's concept of Basic English, with its restricted core lexis, as performing the latter function and thus enabling the former belief.

Li then continues, explaining that this leads to a contradiction:

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[248] Victor P. H. Li, 'Philology and Power', p. 189.

[249] Otto Jespersen, *Language,* p. 437.

[250] Making assumptions similar to Pound and Fenollosa, Saussure argues that 'In an ideographic system each word is represented by a single sign that is unrelated to the sounds of the word itself. Each written sign stands for a whole word and, consequently, for the idea expressed by the word. The classic example of an ideographic system of writing is Chinese'. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin, ed. by Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 25-26.

> A contradictory logic inserts itself between Pound's correspondence theory of language and the educational function served by Basic. That is to say, though Pound acknowledges that language is adequate to truth, this adequacy is not self-evident and needs to be explained, taught, propagated. But linguistic pedagogy or propaganda is a mediated form of discourse, and the truth it offers is not immediately felt or experienced but educationally derived, supervised into comprehension. The natural, referential, self-evident truths of language become the socially trained and supervised forms of correct usage. The truths that require no "verbal tradition" (Canto 87) need Pound's massive pedagogical effort for their efficacy, as a glance as the titles of his work will suggest: "How to Read," *ABC of Reading, Guide to Kulchur*.

Li's point is sophisticated and captures to a great extent the paradoxes critics have found in Pound's work. Li reads Pound's theories of language as reduced to one single ideal, the ideogram. He therefore reads all of Pound's writing on language through the prism of his writing on ideograms, yet Pound – as Li himself acknowledges at a number of points in his essay – often marks the separation between ideographic and alphabetic writing. Pound does not, as Li implies, approach Ogden's work with the intention of forcing Basic English to function as an ideogram. Undoubtedly, Pound praises ideographic writing for the 'direct observation and transmission of the real', but his praise of Basic English is largely based on its rectification of ambiguities in language. Where Pound uses the ideogram as an example of how a language can register natural processes, Basic English is seen as arresting the semantic decay that allegedly set in 'when Europe excited by the dawn of material science, drunk on Baconian greed for proof by experiment, jettisoned the care for *the word*' [emphasis in text].[251] Pound's ideal here is not a spiritual understanding of language at its original moment in nature, but rather the mediaeval church, with its careful regulation of words and their meaning.[252] That is, Pound believes in language's capacity to signify meaning in different ways. After the wide application of Saussure's work after the Second World War, criticism of the kind written by Kuberski and Li focuses on only one model of semiotic function, Saussure's dyadic semiology.

Using Ogden's and Richards' model of sign-relation, we can see how the ideogram and the alphabetic script could be unified within one semantic theory. Their semiotic triangle is a flexible enough model that it could theoretically account for Pound's understanding of both alphabetic scripts and ideograms. As a result, we can imaginatively render the implications of Pound's understanding of language in an Ogdenian diagram:

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[251] Ezra Pound, 'Such Language', *G.K.'s Weekly*, p. 373.
[252] Pound, 'Debabelization and Ogden', 410-411.

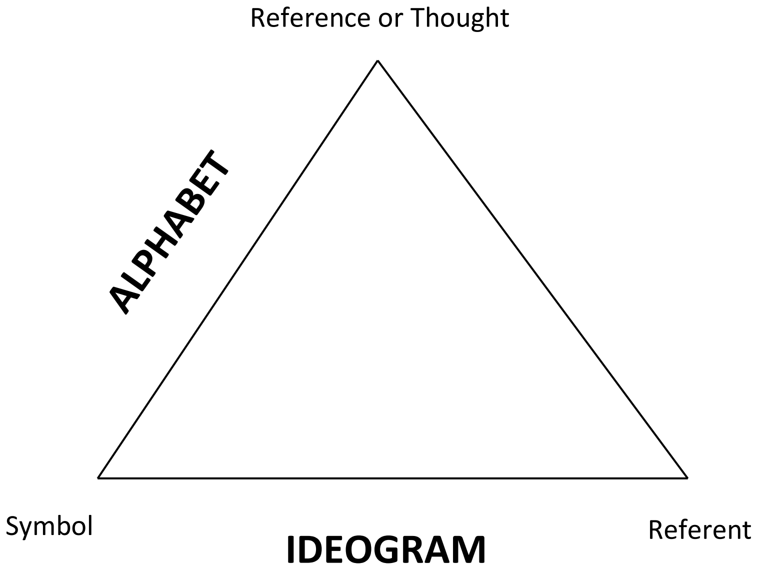

Fig 2.

The word transmits meaning by way of standing in for references or thoughts. In Saussurian terminology this can be called the relationship between a signifier uttered (or written) and a signified implied. On the other hand, Pound and Fenollosa suggest that the ideogram enacts a direct relation between symbol and referent, bypassing the processes of reference upon which the languages of the west rely for the generation of meaning.

Seen this way, one can more readily appreciate how Pound juxtaposes ideographic and alphabetic writing, yet does so within a single linguistic theory. The ideogram and the word are often directly contrasted in Pound's poetry but are assimilated within one act of poetic composition. As they appear in proximity on the page, the two different types of sign are believed to perform the same linguistic function: the transmission of meaning. The difference between them, Pound believes, is the degree of accuracy with which the signs point to referents. A symbol such as the word is at a remove from its referent, and requires the process of interpretation; the ideogram – as Pound and Fenollosa conceive it – is a stylised, pictographic representation of its referent, and is thus a far more accurate method of signification.

With this in mind we may turn to the *Cantos*. Pound's understanding of the ideogram informs his appropriation of the Confucian doctrine of 'right-naming', represented most often in the text as 正名 (or 'Ch'ing Ming'). As Feng Lan has demonstrated, Pound's use of the term is peculiar, and largely takes it out of its original context. *Zheng Ming*, as Lan in fact transliterates it, originally appears to have referred to the rectification and fixity of certain feudal codes, such as those between rulers and subjects or fathers and sons. In other words, if the terminology of law is well-defined then the application and distribution of rules and law will be effective.[253] Pound's interpretation differs in that he uses the ideogram as a linguistic principle as well as a social doctrine. Lan explains that 'while Pound's revisionist version of *ming* reduces the feudalistic specificity historically deposited in the Confucian *ming*, it widens the scope of the term's application to ordinary instances of linguistic activity'.[254] What remains to be determined, however, is whether or not Pound's interpretation of 'right-naming' is the foundation of his linguistic principles or merely an extension of them.

The character appears most regularly in the 'Adams Cantos', where Pound narrates the foundation and early history of the United States through the biographical details of its second president, John Adams. He is praised for his moral character, the attention to detail in his laws, and the precision with which he inscribes those laws. Thus both the social and linguistic aspects of 'right-naming' are invoked in Pound's treatment of John Adams. This is made most clear in Canto XLVIII, where Pound refers to Adams' insistence on the necessity of careful inscription of American laws and codes:

> that I had intention of going to Amsterdam
> no arguments but force respected in Europe…
> to show U.S. the importance of an early attention to language
>
> Ching
> Ming

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[253] Feng Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: Remaking Humanism in the Face of Modernity* (London: University of Toronto, 2005), p. 46.

[254] Feng Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism*, p. 51.

for ascertaining the language

正名

(LXVIII.400).

Pound uses the ideogram in three ways in this passage: as an example of Adams's insistence on close attention to language; as an analogy in another culture and time; and as the overarching and determining doctrine of what constitutes good government. The *Cantos* juxtapose different languages, places and eras, and the ideogrammic method is a means by which direct contrast and comparison attempt to reveal fundamentals. In the very difference between two linguistic systems, or two cultures, unity may be sought.

In this passage, English is combined with Chinese to demonstrate a principle. Yet, it is not clear whether Pound derives a theory of language from the ideogram or uses it to demonstrate one. Hugh Kenner argues that 'the Ching Ming ideograph has levels of signification beginning with orthography and ending with the most intimate moral discriminations'.[255] As Lan argues, it would appear to be the other way round, that 'Ching Ming' began as a principle of morality and was then applied as a principle of linguistics, notably by Pound himself. As a result, it may be seen that Pound came to the Confucian doctrine with a preconceived notion of orthography, allowing its original context to follow. This is the view taken by Peter Makin in his interpretation of 'right-naming'.

> All Pound's discussion of right naming shows that he understood it to mean a stability in the relation between word and concept, to be achieved by explicit defining; and a conscious grasp, by anyone using words, of this relation. And this defining and this conscious grasp of defined and definable meanings concern individual words.
>
> It must be understood that the campaigns for *ch'ing ming* and for precise definition, as they operate together, are a campaign for definition, not only *by* words, but *of* words. That is a critical distinction.[256]

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[255] Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1985), p. 38.

[256] Peter Makin, 'Ideogram, "Right Naming," and the Authoritarian Streak' in *Ezra Pound and China*, ed. by Zhaoming Qian (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 120-142 (p. 125).

Makin believes that Pound's interest in this doctrine begins in around 1935, the precise moment at which he is most fully engaged with Ogden's orthology. [257] Coupled, these two theories indicate that Makin is correct in his assertion that Pound is interested in definition 'not only *by* words, but *of* words'. One might even say of 'the word', which Pound defined as 'a conveyor of meaning', the means of which are the association of symbols and references. 'A theory of definition', Ogden and Richards argue, 'must follow, not precede a theory of signs'.[258] The implication of this is that any doctrine of 'right naming' would have to follow an already established theory of how one comes to name correctly; orthology is an example of such a theory.

Pound attempted to gain a number of things from his engagement with Ogden's work: first, he sought a kindred thinker who agreed that language could and should be rectified; second, he hoped that Ogden would provide him with a list of British contemporaries who were broadly allied to Pound's way of thinking; third, Pound wanted to expand the influence of his economic and linguistic thought; and finally, Pound saw Ogden's work as a potential point of synthesis for his political, economic and cultural interests. In all of these senses, then, Pound's correspondence with Ogden was a relative failure. In 1936, Pound asked Herbert Read for a similar list of British writers and thinkers who would enrich Pound's knowledge and influence, and wrote, reflecting on the correspondence, that 'Ogden merely died' (by which Pound of course means he stopped engaging with him).[259] It would appear that it was Ogden's deeply held belief in orthology that affected Pound the most during their correspondence. In 1935, following the publication of 'Debabelization and Ogden', Pound wrote two further articles for the *New English Weekly* entitled 'Towards Orthology' and 'Toward Orthology: Sargent Florence', appearing in the issues of 11 April and 20 June, respectively. In them, he outlines the necessity of clear and precise definition of terminology in order not to 'confuse perception of facts and relations'.[260] Between 1936 and 1938, the term appears in the headlines of a number of his contributions to periodicals. The first is a short note in the 3 December 1936 edition of the *New English Weekly* reminding readers that 'as an intelligentzia we shall get *nowhere* until we start checking each other's actual terminology'.[261]

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[257] Peter Makin, 'Ideogram, "Right Naming," and the Authoritarian Streak', p. 120.
[258] Ogden, and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 26.
[259] Ezra Pound, Letter to Herbert Read, 3 May 1936, YCAL MSS 43, Box 44, Folder 1849, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Following these articles, Pound promoted his 'economic orthograph' in the Italian press, writing 'Verso Un'Economia Ortologica' and two further articles entitled 'L'economia Ortologica: Il Problema Centrale' and 'Economia Ortologica: Le Basi Etiche' , both of which appear in the Italian economic magazine *Rassegna Monetaria* in the July 1937 and September 1937 editions respectively. In these articles Pound reiterates for an Italian readership many of the points regarding an accurate terminology made in the *New English Weekly*, calling for 'un nucleo coerente di tecnici pronti ad assumersi una responsibilità lessicografia' ['a nuclear core of technicians ready to assume lexicographic responsibility'].[262] Ogden's name does not appear in any of these articles, although he is undoubtedly the source of Pound's use of the term.

A year later, however, on 24 September 1938 Ogden wrote to Pound challenging a remark in his *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) concerning Basic English. Pound had written of 'Ogden's scholars, often lucid in sentence, but feeble in concrete illustration. I mean they talk of language, of style, etc. and don't know it when encountered'. [263] Offended, Ogden demanded that Pound explain himself. Pound's response was vicious, addressing Ogden he told him 'you did not stand up to my remarks in Chinese Written character/ you did NOT mix and converse when I gave you the chance'. Ogden's response to this was that he had not seen any evidence that he should have replied and that Pound had not made this clear in his publications. In fact, Pound had explicitly stated this at the end of 'Debabelization and Ogden', as well as in their correspondence. The major grievance Pound had with Basic English was that he did not believe the contentions made in the *Psyche* publications, written by people he erroneously believed to be Ogden's students, had been backed up with concrete examples (presumably literary or economic). Pound repeated the remark made three years earlier to Stanley Nott that Ogden was 'stuck' for his benefit, 'you had a good START with yr/ Basic propaganda/ and then you petrified', he wrote. [264] In his response, Ogden ignored this remark, choosing to focus particularly on Pound's belief that he had students, 'has someone at sixth remove told you that I am at Cambridge?' he asked, highlighting Pound's perceived ignorance.[265] Ending thus in acrimony, the refusal of both men to cooperate on each other's terms put to rest any chance of collaboration.

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[260] Ezra Pound, 'Towards Orthology', *New English Weekly*, 6:26 (1935), 534 (p. 534).
[261] Ezra Pound, 'Orthology', *New English Weekly*, 10:8 (1936), 159 (p. 159).
[262] Ezra Pound, 'Verso Un'economia ortologica', *Rassegna Monetaria*, 34:5/6 (1937), 389-398, (p. 398). Translation my own.
[263] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, pp. 127-128.

Ogden does in fact appear in a 1939 article Pound submitted to *The Japan Times*. In the article (which refers to him as 'noted scholar of Noh'), Pound outlines his belief that all interlinguistic attempts at a universal language have failed, and proposes his own solution:

> I propose a tri-lingual system for world communications. None of the schemes for Esperanto or other universal language is at all satisfactory. Ogden's proposals for basic English could be developed. He has not the necessary tact or humanity to apply them. The greatest practical, that is possible, simplification would be a triple system: Ideogram, with the Japanese sound (syllabic) comment, Italian and English.[266]

It is clear from this article that Pound believes Ogden had failed, although he would appear to acknowledge the lasting relevance of his theories, despite their argument in 1938. Pound does not elaborate on how such a system would be developed or implemented, nor does he explain how Ogden's theories could be developed in line with this. The article is in fact rather introspective and refers primarily to an idea that Pound suggested to Erminio Turcotti, a professor of 'Eastern languages' at Milan. Turcotti had organised an Anglo-Italian symposium in 1938, the proceedings of which were published in *Fascist Europe – Europa Fascista* (1938), which included Pound's

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[264] Ezra Pound, Letter to C.K. Ogden, September 1938, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1604, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[265] C.K. Ogden, Letter to Ezra Pound, 18 October 1938, YCAL MSS 43, Box 38, Folder 1604, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[266] Ezra Pound, 'Tri-Lingual System Proposed for World Communication: Noted Scholar of Noh Suggests Bilingual or Trilingual Edition of Hundred Best Books on Japanese Literature', *Japan Times and Mail* (15th and 17th May 1939), p. 4, in 'C1510a', *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose Contributions to Periodicals,* ed. by Lea Baechler, A. Walton Litz, and James Longenbach (London: Garland, 1991), VII: 450.

'Ubicumque Lingua Romana' and a review of *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*. Pound wrote to Turcotti in January 1938 outlining his belief in a tripartite structure for a new world language:

> I think for practical purposes. If you consider the combined populations of U.S.A. and Brit Empire you wd. do better to aim at a three language system.
> Chinese Ideogram, comprehensible to all China and Japan.
> Italian, gradually freed of a certain amount of academic red tape/
>
> and American, as middle ground.
> I mean that structurally Chinese ideogram is TOO FAR from the spirit of latin grammar to be translatable into Italian.
> whereas a literal American (English) version is comprehensible to several hundred million people.
> Who in turn who could quite easily learn Italian
> (a slightly OCCIDENTAL form of Italian...Occidental really brings in only Spaniard)
> an Italian with slightly freer grammar wd/ be as easy for Germans, Scandinavs and all speakers of English.[267]

Presumably, Pound is advocating a less inflected form of Italian, reformed along the same lines that Ogden reformed English. As for 'Chinese Ideogram' being comprehensible to 'all China and Japan', Pound is probably aware that this is a gross and disingenuous oversimplification of a complicated issue. With his knowledge of language, and particularly of language history, Pound's statements in both the *Tokyo Times* article and the earlier letter to Turcotti seem curiously uninformed from a linguistic point of view. However, when considered from a personal, pragmatic point of view, the logic behind Pound's suggestion becomes clearer. The three languages Pound proposes are the most common of his *Cantos*. Rather than prescribing a model of interlinguistic systems for the modern world, he in fact describes the interlinguistic system of his poetic attempt to render that world. Therein may lie the true development of Ogden's theories, as a significant part in the advancement of a modernist poetics.

W. Terrence Gordon remarks that the collapse of the Orthological Institute in 1956 'was a blow from which [Ogden] did not recover'.[268] He had been unable to leave a fully functional interlinguistic system as his legacy. Instead, as his library of over fifty thousand books and his extensive correspondence testify, his legacy is in his involvement with the artistic and cultural movements of his era. Unable to outlive its founder, Basic English is perhaps the register not of a widespread and coordinated semantic project, but remains one voice's response to 'the language problem'; it is a voice that is particularly modernist, expressing the concerns of the era and engaging with some of the most influential figures of the time, both literary and linguistic. The correspondence between C.K. Ogden and Ezra Pound is thus one of modernism's key demarcations in the understanding of how linguistics and literature intersected and interacted during the period, even if their contact proved unfruitful.

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[267] Ezra Pound, Letter to Erminio Turcotti, 9 January 1938, YCAL MSS 43, Box 53, Folder 2392, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[268] W. Terrence Gordon, 'Introduction' in C.K. Ogden, *From Significs to Orthology*, ed. W. Terrence Gordon (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. xvii-xxviii (p. xxvi).

Chapter 4: Pound's Pragmatic Aesthetics: Universality and the End of *The Cantos*, 1940-1960.

Where I have outlined the progression of Pound's linguistic theories up until 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War and its aftermath mark a period of consolidation that would continue up until the end of Pound's career.[269] The previous three chapters have focussed primarily on instances of Pound's engagement with individual linguistic practices, theories, or problems. This chapter, however, explores the final phase of Pound's career, a period in which the development of his thought on language is somewhat arrested due to various factors that I outline below. This is also a period in which Pound attempted to synthesise his thought on language, politics, philosophy and economics into a coherent vision of both literary aesthetics and paradisiacal harmony. Both Pound's personal life and career end gesturing towards silence, and I suggest that this is partially due to the collapse of Pound's faith in the ordering principles of his poem, the difficulty in expressing the natural worl in language, and his failure to relate his work to a comprehensive and coherent aesthetic theory.

While Pound has often been characterised as an ideological thinker with regard to both poetry and language, his career also indicates a strong tendency towards pragmatic decisions. To this end, Pound outlined the main principles of his aesthetic theory in a rough draft of a text entitled 'Pragmatic Aesthetics', which was written during the Second World War. Pound's identification with a pragmatic approach to poetic practice and artistic thought is certainly in keeping with the breadth of his interests and subject matter. As Stephen Sicari has pointed out, it is not only Pound's poetic form that is flexible and mutable, but also the central figures of his poem, with people and places occurring and recurring in different contexts with different meanings and in distinct forms. The loose metrical contract of the poem allows Pound to shift between poetry and prose, to negotiate between different languages, and to move from one particular to another. Marjorie Perloff, amongst others, has celebrated the variety of Pound's formal achievements and the mutability and plurality of the *Cantos*' content. Even then, Perloff notes the way in which Pound's poem increasingly tends towards a greater degree of separation between each particular as, according to her reading of the poem, his 'verbal composition was continuum rather than artefact. Increasingly as he wrote *The Cantos*, the question of genre was subordinated to the question of finding the appropriate phalanx of particulars'.[270] This was not, I argue below, for want of an attempt to find a universal theme to tie the particulars together, and it is clear that Pound's intention was not to delight in moving from particular to particular, but to build the poem up into an eventual generality. That this did not happen can be due to a combination of reasons.

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[269] Marking the end of the *Cantos* is itself a difficult task. In various ways, Pound abandoned his project in 1959, but was forced to constantly return to it by occasional moments of willing, by the increased attention paid to the poem by critics and fellow poets, and by acts of encouragement by those around him. What results from the final period of Pound's career, however, are simply scraps and fragments, as the title final section of the poem, *Drafts and Fragments,* makes clear. As Peter Stoicheff and Ron Bush have demonstrated, however, this final section has a complicated composition and publication history, and the extent of Pound authorial control over what was finally published is uncertain. When I refer to the 'end' of Pound's project, chronologically I mean to suggest the final date given in the New Directions text, 1966, although it may be pertinent to speak of his project coming to an end around 1960.

First, Pound's progress in developing a programme of reading and research in politics, economics, anthropology and philosophy is interrupted by the Second World War. Wartime austerity and poverty (in which Pound was both materially and intellectually starved) resulted in restricted or deficient access to the information from which Pound had previously benefited. It also meant that he was forced to write articles out of financial necessity rather than work solely on his poem. This was, of course, the case throughout his career, but the balance between his two kinds of work was severely tipped in favour of journalism and propaganda during the war. Second, the circumstances of Pound's eventual arrest and imprisonment had an effect on the direction of the poem. Prevented from having regular access to his books, Pound was forced to engage with memory and the natural world, both of which had a profound effect on the aesthetic and linguistic thrust of the poem. Indeed this resulted in a crisis of language, which played a significant role in the poem's (and author's) enduring gestures towards silence at the end of the nineteen fifties. Third, during

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[270] Marjorie Perloff, *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 78.

Pound's incarceration in St Elizabeth's Hospital, he became the subject of both visits and studies from a number of scholars, and his critical reputation was re-established. In a sense, this resulted in Pound's poem and its sources entering the academy in a way that he could not have envisaged, and in a sense this gave both renewed affirmation and scrutiny to Pound's critical outlook. Furthermore, the interest of poets such as Charles Olson, Robert Lowell and Robert Creeley in the work of Ernest Fenollosa and Leo Frobenius resulted in something of an affirmation of his linguistic theory. Equally, the physical circumstances of Pound's arrest prevented him from having the critical freedom that he had previously enjoyed in his various studies. All of these factors add up to result in the arrest of Pound's linguistic theories and bring about a period of reinstatement, and eventual collapse, of their fundamental principles.

By the end of the 1930s, Pound can be seen to be developing a sense of unease with regard to the overarching themes of the *Cantos*. His readings in anthropology and philosophy indicate a desire to articulate a universal, absolute framework upon which the various particulars of his poem can come to rest. This is most evident in his discussions of language: ideally, Pound would develop an overarching theory of language which would cause the individual languages that he uses in the poem to cohere fully. In effect, Pound seems to desire an ideological basis upon which the particularities and peculiarities for which his work is celebrated ultimately depend. The main catalyst for Pound's interest in aesthetics is an encounter with Daniel Cory, a young scholar who was in correspondence with the philosopher George Santayana. I explore the ways in which Pound's and Santayana's outlooks have a shared sensibility which overrides their fundamental discrepancies.

Questions of Language and Philosophy in the Pound/Santayana Correspondence

Both John McCormick and Noel Stock have written of Pound's fundamental misunderstanding of Santayana's philosophy, demonstrating that their relationship was built upon a personal fondness for each other, rather than admiration for each other's work. Pound, according to this view, assimilates Santayana within his general list of contacts, and from a philosophical point of view their correspondence is a failure, even if Santayana leant his personal support to Pound in his later years. While this is undoubtedly true, it does not necessarily account for Pound's interest in approaching Santayana in the first place. Pound was introduced to Santayana's philosophy by Daniel Cory, Santayana's student and protégé, who was visiting Rapallo at the time. Relaying his meeting with Pound to Santayana via letter, he received a mixed response, with Santayana writing to Cory: 'capital that you should have come to know so characteristic a man as Ezra Pound at close quarters'. Santayana added, however, that he could not see 'how [Pound] connects his sympathy with Eliot and with Mussolini with his otherwise extreme romantic anarchism'. Both romanticism and anarchism were anathema to Santayana's philosophy, and he was temperate in his praise for Eliot, his former student at Harvard, and ambivalent towards Mussolini, even during the war.

Pound first appears in Santayana's correspondence in a letter sent to Cory on Christmas Day, 1933, referring to lectures given by T.S. Eliot earlier in the year. Santayana and Cory are most likely referring to the Turnbull lectures that Eliot delivered at Johns Hopkins University. The letter in many ways reveals Santayana's scepticism about modernist poetry in general, as well as his reservations about Eliot and Pound:

> What you say about Eliot's lectures is exactly what I felt. He wasn't inspired. He didn't make the subject personal enough. If he had explained why Ezra Pound is "magnificent", and why he himself would prefer an illiterate public for his poetry, it might have been enlightening: and he would have had plenty of occasions to show how this newly discovered essence of living poetry, which had been running underground from Guido Cavalcanti to Ezra Pound was suppressed or possibly occasionally burst out unintentionally even in the interval. But Eliot is entangled in his own coils.[271]

The personal aversion to modernist poetry, or at least, to the kind of aesthetic and historical arguments that modernist poets made was the result not of Santayana ignoring literary practice, but rather from his engagement with it. He was a poet himself, and he read *The Criterion* frequently. He also refers in a letter on 19 January 1935 to the American poet Sylvia H. Bliss to reading Pound's *Quia Pauper Amavi* (1919), describing its author as a 'real modern' compared to Bliss, though it is clear from his comment that her 'restrained voice' is the more memorable that Santayana was not intending to complement Pound with the use of the term. In a letter to Robert Shaw Barlow, on 3 November 1936, Santayana explained his regret over an uncomplimentary review of William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and suggests that his aspersions would be more appropriately cast on 'someone like Ezra Pound'.[272] Prior to their first letters, then, Pound was not a figure whom Santayana held in great esteem, even if he did recognise the weight and gravity attached to his name.

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[271] George Santayana, *Letters of George Santayana*, Volume 5, Book 5, p. 71.

Two weeks after Cory had written of his meeting with Pound, he sent Santayana another letter, explaining that Pound wished to send him one of his books. Santayana replied that he desired under no circumstances to read Pound's book, and stated that Cory was to prevent Pound from sending it to him, as he would only return it unread or forward it to Harvard's library. In his detailed account of their correspondence, John McCormick explains that Santayana's marginal notes on *Quia Pauper Amavi* clearly indicate his distaste for Pound's poetry.[273] Santayana did inform Cory that while he was more than happy to provide money for Pound if he required it, he did not wish to read the work of poets he considered 'eruptions and abortions'. The harshness of his tone and language is certainly not reflected in Santayana's letters to Pound himself, nor in their conversations, and it is possible that Santayana admired Pound's position in literature, as well as his force of conviction, if not the work itself.

The cordiality of their personal relationship was established in Pound visiting Santayana unannounced in Rome in January 1939. Santayana's previously antithetical stance softened and he describes Pound in detail in his letters to Cory, although he makes it clear that they did not discuss philosophy:

> He is taller, younger, better-looking than I expected. Reminded me of several old friends (young, when I knew them) who were spasmodic rebels, but decent by tradition, emulators of Thoreau, full of scraps of culture but lost, lost, lost in the

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[272] George Santayana, *Letters of George Santayana*, Volume 5, Book 5, p. 401.

[273] John McCormick, 'George Santayana and Ezra Pound', *American Literature*, 54:3 (October 1982), 413-433 (p. 414).

> intellectual world. He talked rather little (my fault, and that of my deaf ear, that makes me not like listening when I am not sure what has been said), and he made my breaks, such as he indulges in in print. Was he afraid of me? How odd! Such a dare-devil as he poses as! I had just been reading his article in the *Criterion*, so that I felt no chasm between us – "us" being my sensation of myself and my idea of him.
>
> We mentioned Rimbaud, and he immediately (was it telepathy) said "*L'Auberge Verte*! He never got to anything better than that."
>
> His beard is like a painter's and his head of hair (is it a wig?) like a musician's. On the whole, we got on very well, but nothing was said except commonplaces.[274]

The letter is fascinating for its revelation of the breadth and longevity of Santayana's career, spanning from late nineteenth century New England and the inheritors of the transcendentalists to the aftermath of war torn Europe in the nineteen fifties, when Pound was working on *Rock Drill*. That Pound would remind Santayana of people once 'full of scraps of culture but lost, lost, lost in the intellectual world' is telling, and is consistent with his assessment of Pound's philosophy in correspondence. Whether Pound was afraid of Santayana is naturally difficult to tell, but his account of this initial meeting is in keeping with Pound's generally deferential tone, which is itself rare during a period in which Pound's epistolary style becomes more and more fraught with authoritarian language.

Pound's interest in a correspondence with Santayana becomes clearer late in 1939. Santayana had written to Pound on 30 November from Venice, explaining that he was considering visiting him in Rapallo, and informing him that he had finished his 'opus maximum', *The Realm of Spirit*. Pound's reply was relatively self-effacing, jocular, and enthusiastic, clearly delighted at having been contacted by Santayana, and in it he reveals the reasons for his interest in the first place:

> You have obligingly finished the *opus* at the earliest date I cd. read it. I have also got to the end of a job or part of a job (money in history) and for personal ends have got to tackle philosophy or my 'paradise,' and do badly want to talk with some one who has thought a little about it. There is one bloke in England, whose name escapes me, who has dropped an intelligent aside in a small book on Manes. Otherwise you are the only perceivable victim.[275]

Pound's identification of 'paradise' with 'philosophy' is interesting, as it suggests that Pound conceives providing the *Cantos* with a unifying absolute; that the paradise of the poem will not be a narrative device but rather a totalising and unifying essence. Unlike his interest in Fenollosa, Lévy-Bruhl, Frobenius, and Ogden, Pound's background in a philological discipline was not enough for him to respond to the work and he clearly felt that he needed external guidance in the subject. In turning to Santayana, Pound is not relying on idiosyncrasy, but is rather seeking the kind of pedagogical guidance of the kind which he gave to Louis Zukofsky, Basil Bunting, and James Laughlin.

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[274] Santayana, Letters, Volume 5, Book 6, p. 195.

[275] Ezra Pound, Letter to George Santayana, 8 December 1939, YCAL MSS 43, Box 102, Folder 202, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Pound sent Santayana copies of 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry' and his translation of *Ta Hio, the Great Learning of Confucius*, which he had published in 1939. Santayana replied on 15 January 1939, explaining that he read both but had a number of reservations. Fenollosa, he wrote, gave him 'his first glimpse of what Chinese hieroglyphics are and how they are composed'; he wished that there had been 'more about them and less about romantic metaphysics'. He accepted Fenollosa's theory that the characters are stylised pictures of natural processes, although he also added that he believed that convention must play an important role in establishing exactly what form the images should take in order to be communicated to others. He admitted that he did not share Pound's faith in either the fundamental vitality of the ideogram, nor his belief in Confucian philosophy more generally.

> If action is all…ideograms would be a most unfortunate medium of expression, since they are static. Spoken words would do better, and inflected and elaborately corresponding words, as in Latin, would do best of all. Substances and pictures are there but terminal points in a mesh of developing relations – just what romanticism loves.
>
> This, and your Confucius, makes me think that the Chinese are not romantic at all, but only highly refined prosaic sensualists. What could be more platitudinous, as an abstract thought, than "be good and you will be happy?" But the illustration may be beautifully simple and pregnant. So much does this proverbial eloquence dominate, that truth itself is sacrificed to moral monition. Marcus Aurelius didn't, by his virtue, make Commodus virtuous or the Roman Empire. He wasn't dethroned or assassinated, but he was conscious of being a dismal failure as a prince, and hid to compose his meditation in the Greek language. I should be inclined to think that the inner virtue that Confucius made so fruitful and fundamental was rather the reflection inwards of an outer order. The monarch or father would be good if he were pure father or pure monarch, that is, if he was lost in his art and shaped by it, without either private vices or private aspirations. Is this wrong? His beneficent influence would then be tautology,

> because he would be simply a focus where influences met, in so far as they were good.
> You see I am floundering in your philosophy, badly but not unpleasantly.[276]

Two aspects of Santayana's philosophy strain against Pound's conception of Confucius and Confucianism. First, his relativism leads him to think of both historical and abstract instances where the doctrines of good government as Pound outlines them have not worked and could not work. [1] Pound does not actually refer to this point in his reply, but his intellectual response is easy to determine. He would see the failure of the principles of good government to be employed as neither a fault in the philosophy nor in the philosopher-king, but rather with a corrupt society. Where 'usurious' or 'avaricious' activity works in a society, the principles of good government would be arrested. In this sense, Pound's idealism, as well as his lack of knowledge about Chinese history, strains against Santayana's position. The second way in which Santayana's philosophy is at odds with Pound's is in its fundamental pragmatism. Although Pound was always keen to stress the importance of practical benefits in any ideological position, Santayana is taking issue with the necessary abstraction needed to formulate notions of good government. Rather than a process whereby a person orders first their thoughts, then their language, and then, eventually, society, Santayana argues that Confucian order works the other way round: to have order within an individual person, they must respond to an external order.

Pound was undeterred by Santayana's doubts, and responded at length. There are three particularly interesting remarks that Pound makes in his response of 16 January 1940. First, he explains what he perceives to be the development of the Chinese written character: 'one ideogrammic current is from picture often of process, then it is tied to, associated with one of a dozen meanings by convention'. This remark suggests that Pound's distinction between alphabetic script and ideograms is part of a linguistic theory that still holds convention, rather than linguistic idealism, as the primary way in which meaning is signified. Using terminology gleaned from his readings in Lévy-Bruhl and Frobenius, he suggests that it is part of a 'whole process of primitive association, but quite arbitrary, as: two men, city, night= theft'. These arbitrary, conventional elements that Pound reads into the Chinese character are an important moment in the development of his linguistic theory, as is his admission that it was ‘not the picturesque element [he] was trying to emphasise so much as the pt. re. western man ‘defining’ by receding’. He states also that he is ‘not sure the lexicographers back [Fenollosa] up’. Whether Pound’s faith in Fenollosa had not been as total as he implied in the first place, whether it had waned over the two decades since he published ‘The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry’, or whether his faith was shaken in the face of Santayana’s doubts is unclear.

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[276] Santayana, Letters, Volume 5, Book 6, pp. 316-317.

The third remark that is of particular interest from a linguistic point of view is Pound asking Santayana whether he had indicated to him his ‘letch toward *teXne*’ which he claims to conceive as a ‘kindred tendency’. Pound defines his interpretation of ‘techne’ as moving ‘from the *thing* to the grouped things, thence to a more real knowledge’.[277] It is significant that Pound indicates this interest in the Aristotelian notion of *techne* (or a practical, useful form of knowledge, such as the making of items, that Pound associates with art and creation) in a passage discussing language. Language was Pound’s medium, and his aesthetic theory is undoubtedly based in his understanding of his art. It is unclear, however, from which aspects of Santayana’s philosophy Pound derived his notion of a ‘kindred tendency’ towards *techne*. He may have understood this in conversation with Daniel Cory when first told about Santayana, or it may have been from reading Santayana’s work itself. Pound indicated a willingness to read the *Realms of Being* once Santayana had finished it, but there is no evidence that he was able to – although the war and his subsequent trial and arrest may have prevented him from doing so. It is possible, therefore, that Pound had read parts of Santayana’s work. Aesthetics is given its fullest and deepest treatment in the five-volume *The Life of Reason* (1905-1906), with specific focus given to the subject in the second volume, *Reason in Art.*

As is evident from McCormick’s and Cory’s accounts, as well as from Pound’s and Santayana’s correspondence, the two men were brought together more by circumstance than intellectual affinity. This did not, however, prevent their conversations from being intensely fruitful for Pound's later work. As Pound admitted to T.S. Eliot in a letter of 6 March 1940, it was the force of Santayana's personality and status rather than his philosophy that drew Pound to him, writing that 'it is Geo's delightfully low opinion of some of the blighters that inspires me'. The 'blighters' presumably refers to academics, as Pound and Eliot were trying to encourage Santayana to help them write a series of pamphlets deploring the state of the American university. In the same letter, Pound expressed his hope that Santayana would assist them, though he was doubtful that he would be interested, writing that 'whether the chance of summarizing his own philos/ will appeal or not, it OUGHT to'.[278] Pound also admits in the Eliot correspondence that Santayana's questions are a direct result of his own lack of clarity, with Pound self-deprecatingly writing to Eliot that 'he iz askin QUESTIONS cause az uzual I aint made myself CLEAR'. This is a rare expression of self-doubt at a time when Pound's letters most often reflect him at his most vitriolic. The letter of 11 March 1940 also carries an admission of defeat in their attempt to convince Santayana to write a piece against the American university, but Pound nonetheless makes Santayana's importance clear by suggesting that there was 'no use waitin fer him. I dont see as any else cd/ replace him in the wholley, not woolley trinity'.[279] As his encouragement for Santayana to take a role in a potential series on education reflects, Pound was drawn to Santayana's status more than his philosophical outlook. However, this is not to suggest that philosophical and aesthetic concerns were not also a priority for Pound.

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[277] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 333.

A month later Pound wrote to Eliot again, this time to discuss the potential publication of a book on Leo Frobenius and sociology, a project soon dismissed thanks to a combination of wartime austerity and a lack of enthusiasm on Eliot's part. Pound's enthusiasm for the project is evident, but given that it did not come to fruition, the letter of 18 April 1940 is more interesting for Pound's suggestion that he is searching for a means of generalising his critical interests into a wider discussion of reality:

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[278] Ezra Pound to T.S. Eliot, 6 March 1940, YCAL MSS 43, Box 15, Folder 671, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[279] Ezra Pound to T.S. Eliot, 11 March 1940, YCAL MSS 43, Box 15, Folder 671, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> Any sentence uttered in general terms wd/ need elucidation, thus no matter what
> form you had used, the basic question of REALITY wd/ be far more to the point --
> in fact it wd/ be
> necessary to get at yr/ concept of same before forming conjecture at what yr/ actual
> or reputed estimate of my lack of sense of same wd/ imply.
>
> certain specific FACTS of history, wd/ presumably enter the picture,
> and the relativity wd/
> depend on which of those facts, if any, you prefer to exclude from yr/ concept.[280]

The balance between relativities (or particulars) of specific historical facts, or indeed individual languages, phrases, cultural events and artifacts and an overarching general theory of not only aesthetics but epistemology, is a central concern in the Pound-Santayana correspondence. Although language is not explicitly named as a central concern here, Pound's theory of poetry and his theory of language are so deeply intertwined that a concern with a means of generalising whilst also remaining wedded to principles decrying linguistic abstraction is a tension at the heart of Pound's interests. It is also at the heart of the pragmatic view that Pound tries to derive from his correspondence with Santayana.

Language in Santayana's Epistemology

In reading Pound's and Santayana's views on language together, we can discern the ways in which their ideas correspond. Indeed, for all the political, literary, and philosophical differences between the two, the affinities between much of their aesthetic and linguistic ideas are striking. Santayana's assertion that Pound jumps too readily between the particulars that make up the bulk of his poetic material reveals a great deal about Pound's initial interest. For all of his mass of material, for all of the poetic, political, economic, and linguistic traditions, Pound had not fixed the *Cantos* with a universal, governing principle. In determining an aesthetic, the linguistic particulars would cohere in relation to a general vision, couched, presumably, in the paradisiacal terms to which Pound felt his epic now gestured. This is a structural issue that, ultimately, defeats Pound's generalising aim in *Thrones* and, particularly, *Drafts and Fragments*, as the poem ends with Pound's gesture towards silence. Twenty years earlier, however, the universalising intention of the poem was very much an active pursuit. Pound is, in this sense, using Santayana as a sounding board for his philosophical intentions, measuring his own views, and his understanding of his sources, against those of an established philosophical authority. This may, in part, explain Pound's deferential tone.

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[280] Ezra Pound to T.S. Eliot, 18 April 1940, YCAL MSS 43, Box 15, Folder 672, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

In many ways, Santayana's underlying views on language function are not original, but rather a restatement and synthesis of much of the general thought of the philosophical and (theoretical) linguistic work of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He implicitly agrees with Whitney and Peirce that language in its spoken form is a symbolic system of arbitrary signs attached by convention to the things, qualities, and emotions that it is used to represent, although his work does not schematise and categorise linguistic structures in the way that philological and pragmatist work does. He suggests that analogous relationships between symbols and referents (in Santayana's example 'vocal sounds' and 'things') are possible, for example in the case of onomatopoeia or short, sharp sounds used to represent decision – the fitting, in other words, of form to content, which is not to be taken as indicative of a fundamental and causal link between words and the objects they describe.[281] However, this analogy does, Santayana stresses, play an important role in ways in which language speakers represent the world. These analogies are not true in and of themselves, but they may be the true expression of an individual's vision, and are subject to relative values ascribed by the person drawing the analogy. They thus have an illustrative function, helping language speakers to communicate the world, or rather their understanding of it, to others. 'An intense, inhospitable mind, filled with a single idea, in which all animal, social, and moral interests are fused together,' Santayana writes, 'speaks a language of incomparable force' (*Reason in Art,* p. 88), and this force derives its strength from the analogies and links that a speaker draws between language, culture, and the world.

Santayana is not only interested in the relationship between the world and an individual's understanding of it as represented in language, but also in the ways in which a language community determines the relationship between mental and linguistic structures. He claims that the grammatical categories according to which we divide our language reflect individual logical categories, writing that ‘we distinguish the parts of speech, for instance, in subservience to distinctions which we make in ideas’ (*Reason in Art*, p. 78). According to this view, the distinction between nouns, verbs, and adjectives reflect actual distinctions between things, processes, and qualities, and are not attributable solely to syntactic and grammatical categories of convenience. Pound’s and Fenollosa’s assertion that the isolated noun does not exist in nature precisely because things are always in motion is of course at odds with Santayana’s description. It should be added that Santayana is making the point that linguistic categories follow and reflect mental categories, rather than positing a naturalistic theory of grammar.

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[281] See George Santayana, *Reason in Art* (New York: George Scribner, 1905). Subsequent textual references are to this edition.

One of the most interesting assertions that Santayana makes is that language has a tendency to reassert itself over the logical processes and categories imposed upon it. One example of what Santayana means by this is the way in which language and gender work together. Although this issue is highly contested today, Santayana believes that there is a logical process behind the separation of different words for different genders, *man* and *woman*, for example, as they represent different concepts. A problem in English, Santayana believes, arises in adjectival forms: it is pure convention that the word *handsome* is applied to a man, and *beautiful* to a woman (*Reason in Art*, p. 79).[282] Although Santayana accepts that different genders require different words (or at least different morphemes), the agreement of adjectives and articles is evidence of ‘a syntactic structure apart from any intrinsic significance thereby accruing to its elements’ (*Reason in Art*, p. 80). This is what he means by the medium of language reasserting itself: what was once a linguistic nuance reflecting distinctions in thought and in reality (or assumed distinctions) moves beyond the control of a speech community and is in fact determined to a great extent autonomously by the grammar of the language spoken: language, in other words, expands beyond the control of its speakers. In 1914, Leonard Bloomfield speculated that gender in language was the result of original emotional associations between things and gender amongst the early members of a speech community, rejecting notions such as Santayana's that they have a logical basis. He concludes that 'we cannot expect the associational habits of speech-communities, which underlie these morphological classifications, to coincide with the results of conscious scientific study of the universe'.[283] Santayana's point, though possibly erroneous, is intended to illustrate the way in which language moves beyond a speaker's control.

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[282] It is strange that Santayana would choose English as his example here, when his native Spanish, being a Romance language, would make the gendering of language far more obvious. In Italian, for example, one says *professore* for a male teacher, and *professoressa* for a female teacher. It is not clear, however, why *scuola* (school) is a feminine noun.

He believed that language is inherently 'wasteful', as it 'overloads itself, and being primarily music, and a labyrinth of sounds, it develops an articulation and method of its own, which only in the end, and with much inexactness, reverts to its function of expression' (*Reason in Art*, pp. 80-81). Though Santayana did not necessary cast aspersion on abstraction as such, seeing it as a necessary and logical method of philosophy, he argues that ordinary speech, rather than 'grammatical fancy' or 'poetic confusion', 'draws [language] back towards convenience and exactitude' (*Reason in Art*, p. 81). This should not be interpreted as Santayana decrying poetic function; rather, he is suggesting that there is an inherent tension within language. On the one hand, there is rhetoric (which Santayana, unlike Pound, identifies with the tendencies of poetic tradition), which drives language into further tangents and abstractions; on the other, there is utility, which attempts to fix language for ease of commerce in daily life. For Santayana, these two poles act as 'centripetal and centrifugal forces on a planet', and they meet in the creative expression of both reason and art, and it is this which constitutes one of Santayana's key aesthetic theses:

> Reason, too, by bringing the movement of events and inclinations to a head in single acts of reflection, thus attaining to laws and purposes, introduces into life the influence of a representative medium, without which life could never pass from a process into an art. Language acquires scope in the same way, by its kindly infidelities; its metaphors and syntax lend experience perspective. Language vitiates the experience it expresses, but thereby makes the burden of one moment relevant to

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[283] Leonard Bloomfield, *An Introduction to the Study of Language* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1914), p. 109.

> that of another. The two experiences, identified roughly with the same concretion in discourse, are pronounced similar or comparable in character. Thus a proverb, by its verbal pungency and rhythm, becomes more memorable than the event it first described would ever have been if not translated into an epigram and rendered, so to speak, applicable to new cases; for by that translation the event has become an idea.

Fundamentally, Santayana argues that language is the medium and process whereby events in the world become transformed (or translated) into ideas in the mind. In other words, it is a method for interpreting the world, and this method, he believes, finds its fullest expression in literature.

Santayana accords literature a higher status than the mere record of spoken language, for him ‘literary art rejects all unmeaning nourishes, all complications that have no counterpart in things or no use in expressing their relations’ (*Reason in Art*, p. 83). This is an idealised literary state, and he does not name any authors in particular, though the affinities and correspondences with Pound’s, Flint’s and Hulme’s writing in the decade that followed *Reason in Art*’s publication are clear. There is a particularly striking similarity between Santayana’s beliefs about poetry and the kind of aesthetic that Pound develops in the later *Cantos*. First, Santayana claims that poetry has a mimetic function that represents the mysteries of nature, and his example is in birdsong: ‘those ancient sages who are reported to have understood it very likely had merely perceived that it was not meant to be intelligible; for it is not to understand nature to reduce her childishly to a human scale’ (*Reason in Art*, p. 84). In other words, the relative autonomy of birdsong must be preserved in order for poetry to represent reality, as birdsong is a communication beyond human understanding. In a similar vein, Pound writes ‘in nature are signatures/ needing no verbal tradition’ in Canto XCI, channelling the work of the seventeenth century Neoplatonist and occultist John Heydon. However, while Pound’s poetic form prevents him from building a traditional, philosophical discourse out of Heydon’s argument, Santayana builds upon this by suggesting that the interpretation of birdsong as unintelligible leads to a deeper understanding of reality, and when it is presented in art, or in literature, the reality of the world (dependent on the vision of the artist, rather than objective reality) is made clearer to the reader., even if understanding is not provided.

Pound's Pragmatist Aesthetics

Santayana's most notable wartime contribution to Pound's thought is undoubtedly his influence in the development of a draft of a text entitled 'Estetica pragmatica di Ezra Pound', or 'Pragmatic Aesthetic of Ezra Pound, as Maria Luisa Ardizzone translates it. Ardizzone dates 'Pragmatic Aesthetics of Ezra Pound' between 1940 and 1943, and suggests that it is primarily a response to his interest in Croce and Santayana.[284] It is immediately clear from the text both that Pound assesses the development of his life's work in relation to his philosophic principles and that he is attempting to define a future philosophical project. The text is in note form, and prior to Ardizzone's publication of *Machine Art* in 1996 was not published. Pound largely delineates the history and facets of his aesthetic theory in note form, and it is possible that he intended to produce an extended essay based on the notes. It is significant that the notes were originally written in Italian rather than English, which might suggest that Pound intended to publish them in an article for one of the journals for which he was writing in the war years. From 1940 to 1943, Pound contributed a large number of articles to the Rome-based journal *Meridiano di Roma*, writing on diverse topics from the significance of cinema, to the problems he felt pervaded the American university system, to fascist and anti-Semitic propaganda. Language was a constant, if not focussed, concern for Pound throughout, testing a number of his linguistic theses on an audience that may not have read his poetry, let alone his critical writing. The series of articles that he produced allowed him to expand upon many of the linguistic and literary ideas he had been exploring in English and American publications for decades. In 'Cinema=Movimento', for example, Pound conceives of the cinematic form as a model for both language and thought, claiming that 'il verbo *kineo* non significa vigna, non significa canzone o lirica, ma significa fotografia artistica. Tutte queste cose sono buone, e devono entrare nel cinema proporzionalmente. *Kineo* non significa sentimente, ed il sentimentialismo è il nemico numero uno del cinema' [the verb *kineo* does not signify a vineyard, it does not signify songs or lyrical poetry, but it signifies artistic photography. All of the above things are well and good, and they must enter the cinema proportionately. *Kineo* does not signify sentiment, and sentimentality is the number one enemy of cinema]'.[285] These articles, reflecting Pound's long held concerns, would seem to be a logical place for him to write on aesthetics.

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[284] See Ardizzone's 'Notes on the Text' in Ezra Pound, *Machine Art: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years*, ed. by Maria Luis Ardizzone (London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 164-165.

Much of Pound's literary and linguistic efforts during the war focussed less on engaging with Italian intellectual life on its own terms, and more on simply translating the literary-linguistic programme he had developed over the previous decades in English language print. He wrote to Curzio Malaparte in April or May 1940 outlining his theories and their usefulness to an Italian literary programme:

> Caro Malaparte,
>
> La poesia odia le parole inutile.
>
> The Imagist Movement aveva per programma il dovere di staccare parole inutile [*sic*]. Un buon traduttore non traduce ogni parola dell originale, egli presenta solamente ogni parola dell originale con una parola della lingua che riceve la traduzione. Egli mette sulla pagina italiana solamente le parole italiana [*sic*] che sono necessarie alle senso [*sic*]... la sintattica è mezzo non fino.
>
> la struttura grammaticale è mezzo non fine.
>
> [Dear Malaparte,
> Poetry hates useless words.
>
> The Imagist Movement had for a programme the duty to remove superfluous words. A good translator does not translate every word of the original, he only presents every word of the original by means of a word from the language that receives the translation. He puts on the Italian page only the Italian words which are necessary for sense…syntax is a means not an end.
>
> grammar is a means not an end].[286]

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[285] Ezra Pound, 'Cinema=Moviment', *Meridiano di Roma*, 5:5 (4 February 1940), 1 (p. 1).

[286] Ezra Pound to Curzio Malaparte, April-May 1940, YCAL MSS 43, Box 32, Folder 1355, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

This letter to Malaparte is representative of Pound's Italian writing at the time. He is generally restating for his audience themes which are perhaps new to them, but well-practised for the author, and which in reality resulted in a consolidation of Pound's themes. In effect, Pound's intellectual interests become somewhat introspective in this period, and his articles often refer to his past literary achievements, whether in the publication of authors and poets such as Joyce, H.D., and Eliot, or in his own critical writing, much of which he paraphrases in the pages of *Il Meridiano di Roma*. The narrative of continual intellectual renewal of his linguistic interests in increasingly new and diverse figures and theories that I have outlined in the previous three chapters does come to something of an end at the outbreak of the Second World War.

After the collapse of Mussolini's government, and the establishment of the Salò Republic, however, Pound seems to have no longer had a column at *Il Meridiano di Roma*, and he began writing for the overtly fascist *Il Popolo di Alessandria* in 1944. While Pound was able to write occasionally on Confucius or economics, the majority of his articles have titles such as 'Razza o malattia' ['Race or Illness'] and are essentially fascist propaganda pieces. Whatever the reason that 'Pragmatic Aesthetics' did not get polished into an article, it nevertheless contains a number of interesting notes on how Pound saw his aesthetic theory.

Pound suggests that although he has not written a treatise on aesthetics as such, he has produced a number of works that constitute an outline of his aesthetic thought. He writes that 'there exists an aesthetic system, coherent, not born perfect and completed in 1910 but developing continually and coherently from the early attempt…to the present', and names 'Prolegomena' (1912), 'The Serious Artist' (1913), and 'How to Read' (1929) as the main points in that development. *The Spirit of Romance* was published in 1910, and it is presumably to this that Pound refers. His use of 'system' is curious, as Pound's treatment of aesthetic matters is by and large not systemic up until this point, in his earlier career he focused instead on certain literary and linguistic aspects, periods, or authors (or all three) without recourse to a named system. What is most consistent in Pound's aesthetic practice is his methodology, rather than his subscription or development of systemic totality. In ‘A Retrospect’, Pound writes of his literary creed (or ‘credo’):

> *Rhythm.* - I believe in an 'absolute rhythm', a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.
>
> *Symbols.* - I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk.
>
> *Technique.* - I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity; in law when it is ascertainable; in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse.
>
> *Form.* - I think there is a 'fluid' as well as a 'solid' content, that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase. That most symmetrical forms have certain uses. That a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely, and therefore not properly rendered in symmetrical forms.[287]

The four tenets that Pound outlines are expressions of beliefs that he repeats throughout his career, even when the medium and subject matter of his expression change. Although the forms that these views take change, the fundamentals of his aesthetics remain, and are thus consistent. Pound’s use of ‘absolute’ in his description of rhythm is somewhat misleading from a philosophical point of view, as it in fact depends upon the particular qualities that the poet wishes to express, and he is using the word in the sense that the rhythm is perfect or pure according to the desired meaning. Daniel Albright has pointed out that Pound’s notion of an ‘absolute rhythm’ refers to two different ideas: ‘first, as a principle of a kind of science of *Affekt*, according to which a specific emotion naturally must terminate in a specific rhythm’, a theory that can have universal application; and ‘second, as a principle in the graphology of style, according to which a writer’s rhythms are a direct reflex of his unique sensibility, as valid a mode of identification as a fingerprint on a manuscript’, which tends towards particularity.[288] The notion of an ‘absolute rhythm’ thus depends on two opposing representative strands: an impersonal, emotional rhythm, and a personal, unique rhythm. As

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[287] Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, p. 9.

[288] Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics*, pp. 148-149.

Albright suggests, this represents an oversight in Pound's aesthetic theory, as 'absolute rhythm' as a theory would come to depend upon a position in which no two people can feel the same emotion.

The note on 'symbols' is the most interesting from a linguistic point of view, although Pound's comment refers specifically to 'symbolism' in the poetic sense, rather than the linguistic one. It is an injunction not to let natural objects stand for other objects (or qualities) without explanation. In combination with the preceding note on rhythm, it is reminiscent of Pound's statement that he '[believes] in an absolute rhythm just as [he] believe[s] in an absolute symbol or metaphor', a kind of artistic idealism in which 'the perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence'.[289] This is an aesthetic in which precision or accuracy is fundamental to meaning. It is not to say that words and rhythms have a natural correspondence to referents, but rather that for civilisation to function, for meaning to be truly and accurately communicated, they must have a fixed relation. Pound returns to this belief in his interest in Ogden's Basic English, as well as in his linking of language to good government in his reading of Confucius.

Pound's notion of technique as an indication of sincerity is another belief that remains steadfast throughout his career, and which had reached a focal point in Fenollosa's writing on 'ideograms'. Together with the imagistic principles outlined at the beginning of his career, and the succeeding notion that certain poetic subject matters demand treatment in certain forms and prohibit treatment in others, it forms part of a central part of Pound's call for specificity, precision, and accuracy – three principles that he associated with linguistic rectification in his correspondence with Ogden. It is also linked to his interest in the Aristotelian notion of *techne*, or the practical use of knowledge in making.

Pound's sources for the development of his pragmatic aesthetics, he indicates in a note at the top of the first page, are 'writings by the poet, letters to G.S. [George Santayana], conversations with G.S.', and he makes no note of having used any of Santayana's work. Nevertheless, using the adjective ‘pragmatic’ is significant when considering Santayana’s presence, and Pound delineates his use of the term:

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[289] Ezra Pound, *Translations* (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 23.

> E.P. Pragmatic Aesthetics
> which FUNCTIONS
> I. To nurture the discrimination, the judgement, to predict the contemporary works that will outrun time, like race-horses.
> II. And to stimulate the artists’ production and improve the works to be done.

The word ‘functions’ has two significant meanings in this context. Ardizzone believes that Pound is implying that his aesthetics is functional, in that it is linked to the act of making, rather than a kind of abstract knowing. In a linguistic sense, Pound’s aesthetics would thus be pragmatic in that he is interested in the conditions and contexts of language use, not simply its purely semantic value.

There is a second sense in which Pound may be using the word ‘functions’, which may relate to Santayana more specifically, and pejoratively. Given that Pound attempted, and failed, to convince Santayana to help him and Eliot outline a new educational programme for the United States, and their philosophical conversations and correspondence did not help Pound ultimately find a fixed, totalising philosophy of his own, he may consider Santayana’s notion of philosophy to be valuable, but ultimately non-functional. He might say, in other words, that it does not help a poet to develop poetry, and it does not help him, Pound, to diagnose historical processes and conditions. Pound’s pragmatic aesthetics, by contrast, are to be defined by their practical use, rather than their abstract truth. Just as Pound ameliorated the word ‘orthological’ from Ogden and used it in the late 1930s in his series of essays ‘l’economica ortologica’ [orthological economics], he may be ameliorating the word ‘pragmatic’ (or the more specific ‘pragmatism’ and ‘pragmatist’, appropriated into the more widely applicable ‘pragmatic’) from Santayana and using to his own ends. In this sense, Pound gains the kernel of a concept from his correspondence with Santayana, in lieu of the totalising philosophy that he had hoped to find.

In fact, Pound rather cryptically isolates a note saying ‘and also with the terminology of George Santayana of five years ago’. In the preceding note, Pound writes of his ‘discontent with the indefinite contemporary *terminology* and the terminology of the Renaissance’, so it seems safe to assume that he is including Santayana in his list of terminologies that do not satisfy his aesthetic values. The 'five years ago' remark is rather more difficult to explain. If, as Ardizzone suggests, this text was written between 1940 and 1943, then it places the origin of Pounds discontent with Santayana's terminology between 1935 and 1938. Santayana's novel, *The Last Puritan* was published in 1935 and *The Realm of Truth*, volume three of *Realms of Being* was published in 1937. In *The Realm of Truth*, Santayana departs from his otherwise pragmatist position, which would hold that the truth of a thing is only perceivable by our experience of it (in Peircean term, the practical effects that a thing has), and argues that truth belongs instead to certain essences that come directly from things, outside and beyond our immediate experience. As this is beyond our experience, it is also beyond our linguistic expression. A further possibility is that Pound is slightly incorrect about his dates, and that he is referring to their correspondence in early 1939.

Santayana nevertheless remained an important figure for Pound, and he appears in *The Pisan Cantos* as part of Pound's remembrance of his various correspondences. Tellingly, it is Santayana's manner of speaking to which Pound refers, rather than to his philosophy:

> George Santayana arriving in the port of Boston
> and kept to the end of his life that faint *thethear*
> of the Spaniard
>   as a grace quasi imperceptible
> as did Muss the *v* for *u* of Romagna
> and said grief was a full act
>   repeated for each new condoleress
> working up to a climax
>   (LXXXI.539)

The importance which Pound accords to accents and ways of speaking is a key part of his aesthetics to which I shall return later. That Pound chooses not to refer to aspects of Santayana's philosophy would suggest that he failed to find any agreement strong enough to form a coherent response to it, as the notation form of his 'Pragmatic Aesthetics' demonstrates. Santayana, in turn, remembered Pound fondly from a personal perspective and was pleased when Pound remembered him after his internment in St Elizabeth's, as he informed Robert Lowell in a long letter of 29-30 December 1949.

> I have been reading Ezra Pound's "Pisan Cantos" and have received a letter of his (which I didn't expect) with a Chinese character in the middle of the page, and below, in "traditional" English the maxim: "Respect the intelligence of a cherry that can make cherries." I am touched by his remembering me, as I have not answered one or two earlier letters that were wholly unintelligible. But it is a pity that he prints so many mistakes in his foreign languages, even in the Greek alphabet. I thought some passages in these "Cantos" very good; but why so much trash?[290]

Clearly, Santayana's respect for Pound as a person and as a literary figure still had not translated into an appreciation of his poetry. It is also strange that Santayana does not refer to his appearance in the *Cantos*, though this may well have been because he had not reached Canto LXXXI in the sequence.

Yet, as central as Santayana (as a figure) was to the development of Pound's pragmatic aesthetic, he is perhaps more useful for his reading of Pound, than vice versa, from a linguistic point of view. As has been shown above, Santayana held deep reservations about Pound's philosophic and aesthetic theories, and in outlining those reservations he came across what would be a central problem for Pound's vision of 'paradise' in the later cantos: the establishment of general, universal values upon which Pound's particulars come to rest.

> When is a thing not static? When it jumps or it makes you jump? Evidently the latter, in the case of Chinese ideograms, you bring your thoughts.
>
> And these jumps are to particulars, not regressive to general terms. Classifications are not poetry, I grant that, but I think that classifications may be important practically: e.g. poisons; how much? what number?
>
> There is another kind of regression towards materials causes, genealogies. Pudding may not suggest pie, but plums, cook, fire. These are generalities that classify not data but conditions for producing the data.
>
> When you ask for jumps to other particulars, you don't mean (I suppose) *any* other particulars. Although your tendency to jump is so irresistible that the bond between the particulars jumped to is not always apparent. It is a neutral grab-bag. A *latent* classification or a *latent* generic connection would seem to be required if utter miscellaneousness is to be avoided.[291]

Santayana was not able to read Chinese characters, and thus his interpretation of them is based on assumption (itself based upon a pre-existing aesthetic disposition), even more so than Fenollosa. However, in responding to Pound's tentative attempts to outline a general philosophy, he raises concerns that are at the centre of the second half of Pound's epic. By 'jump' Santayana is referring to the practical effect of Pound's 'ideogrammic method' on the reader, whereby the actual connection between references is left unarticulated. In Santayana's case, he is a first-time reader of the *Cantos*, and does not appear to have had the benefit of access to Pound's critical writing on 'luminous details' written over two decades earlier. The notion of a 'luminous detail' standing as a synecdoche of entire discourses, poetic dispositions, or even cultural events and epochs is useful in providing an exegetic methodology for critics and long-standing readers, but evidently Pound's method is not obvious to Santayana. Similarly, Pound explains in *A.B.C. of Reading* that what he interprets as a western tradition of 'definition by regression' is the precise opposite of the creative potential that he reads into the Chinese written character. For Pound this 'regression' does not result in the analysis of the various components making up an object, as Santayana's example of the pudding does, but instead leads to further and further abstraction. His anecdote about Agassiz and the fish, also in *A.B.C. of Reading*, suggests that such 'regressive' generalising results not in further understanding of an object, but in its loss of vitality. Yet, Santayana suggests, Pound's critical thinking has not led him to a general outlook which ties his poem together. As he writes, 'the bond between the particulars jumped to is not always apparent', and although this may be interpreted as a criticism of Pound's lack of clarity, Santayana's desire for Pound to outline a '*latent* genetic connection' would suggest that he believes there to be a lack of an underlying centrality or foundation to Pound's poetic vision.

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[290] Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana, Book 8, 1948-1952*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), p. 222.

[291] George Santayana, Letter to Ezra Pound, 20 January 1940, YCAL MSS 43, Box 46, Folder 2028, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Indeed, Santayana later suggested that Pound's poetic vision, and not an underlying political, scholarly, or aesthetic one, was the driving force of the entire poem. In 1953, Cyril Clemens wrote to Pound quoting a conversation with Santayana.

> I then suggested that Pound was more the scholar than the poet. 'No,' he said. 'Pound is not a good scholar: he merely uses what scholarship he has to bolster up his poetry. He is more poet than anything else.[292]

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[292] Cyril Clemens to Ezra Pound, 12 April 1953, YCAL MSS 43, Box 9, Folder 408, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

In this sense, he points towards the second definition of pragmatism as outlined in the introduction, arguing that Pound's entire aesthetic and philosophical theory exists simply for the purpose of generating poetic cohesion. Pound himself recounts on two occasions in *Rock-Drill de los Cantares* Mussolini asking a similar question of the poet during their meeting in 1932, suggesting not only that Pound's interest in Mussolini was a pragmatic decision as much as an ideological one, but also that the question of the order and coherence of the poem was an anxiety that persisted throughout its composition. First, Pound quotes Mussolini's question in Canto LXXXVII:

> "Why do you want to
> - perché si vuol mettere -
> your ideas in order?"
> Date '32.
> (LXXXVII.589).

Mussolini is not identified as the inquisitor until the question is repeated in Canto XCIII:

> or "Perché" said the Boss
> "vuol mettere le sue idee in ordine?"
> "Pel mio poema."
>
> (XCIII.646).

The answer that Pound gives is 'for my poem', a response which establishes the hierarchy of Pound's priorities. While developing a clear aesthetic and philosophical theory is of paramount importance, it is secondary to the development of Pound's poem. Santayana is correct, then, if somewhat reductive, in suggesting that Pound's scholarship simply supports the poem. This implies that the reason for Pound's interest in developing a general aesthetic philosophy is indeed pragmatic, and may even be seen as a kind of structural device. That is not to suggest, however, that Pound's political, economic and philosophical dispositions are not deeply significant in both reading the poem and understanding the poet. Rather, it is to illustrate that as much as the tenets of Pound's core belief system drive the content of the poem, they are themselves selected and presented according to principles of poetic necessity.

The place of language in Pound's search for generality is far less certain. Santayana's reading of Pound's 'jumps' between particulars raises questions about Pound's linguistic theory as much as it does his aesthetic one. Pound's faith in 'luminous detail', or the capacity for individual words or phrases to retain traces of their original meaning and context when recontextualised within the pattern of the text, is at the centre of his attempt to make the *Cantos* cohere from *Rock-Drill* to *Drafts and Fragments*. Such discussions have also been at the centre of critical appraisals of the final sections of *The Cantos*. In his critique of what he believes is Pound's negotiation between mimetic and structuralist models of language, Donald Davie writes that 'Pound's transition seem[s] to be frequently from *verbum* to *verbum*…with no appeal over long stretches to the *res* supposedly under discussion. Pound moves often from signifier to signifier, leaving the signified to take care of itself'.[293] Where Davie sees Pound's grip on the referential function of language loosening, Michael André Bernstein argues that Pound retains a common sense approach to language:

> Pound had far too sure a grasp of language to think any poem could literally be a "mapping" of the real world, could offer any one-to-one correspondence between the totality of the world and the words of his poem. The Agassiz/Frobenius method of the "luminous detail" was explicitly designed to guarantee that his selection of a few characteristic *exempla* from the tribe's entire heritage was a "scientifically" valid technique for isolating the necessary elements of a new cultural "program." Such an ambition requires, however, not only a very definite notion of what constitutes the required historical and ethical information, but also a view of language that assumes the communicability in verse of that knowledge.[294]

The question, according to Bernstein, thus becomes one of aesthetics rather than one of language. It is, furthermore, a question of genre. It is not whether a question of whether or not Pound can use language to articulate his points in the later *Cantos*; it is a question of whether or not poetry as a medium is capable of retaining language's social function whilst simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls of rhetorical discourse and making art. Language is not idealised itself but it is Pound's medium for poetic, political and philosophical idealisation: a principle that is illustrated throughout the *Pisan Cantos* and extended into the poem's final sequences.

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[293] Donald Davie, '*Res* and *Verba* in *Rock-Drill* and After, in *Ezra Pound's* Cantos*: A Casebook*, ed. Peter Makin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 205-220 (p. 205).

[294] Michael André Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe*, p. 127.

Language and Idealisation from the *Pisan Cantos* to *Rock-Drill de los Cantares*

Throughout the Pisan sequence, Pound makes consistent links between language and the divine, referring to a number of myths and religious texts that would seem to emphasise the intangible holiness of speech. The most prominent example at the beginning of the sequence is Pound's skilful combination of the Aboriginal Australasian myth of the Wandjina with the Christian tradition of the *logos*, with both underpinned by Odysseus' wordplay in the Cylops episode of the *Odyssey*:

> and Rouse found they spoke of Elias
> in telling the tales of Odysseus   OY TIS
>   OY TIS
> "I am noman, my name is noman"
> but Wanjina is, shall we say, Ouan Jin
> or the man with an education
> and whose mouth was removed by his father
>   because he made too many *things*
> whereby cluttered the bushman's baggage
> vide the expedition of Frobenius' pupils about 1938
>   to Auss'ralia
> Ouan Jin spoke and thereby created the named
>   thereby making clutter
> the bane of men moving
> and so his mouth was removed
> as you will find it removed in his pictures
>   in principio verbum
>   paraclete or the verbum perfectum: sinceritas
>
>   (LXXIV.446-447).

From the opening of this passage, Pound's reference to W.H.D. Rouse's research in writing a translation of the Odyssey establishes a metamorphic mode, whereby different mythical figures and events are able to fade into one another. In Rouse's case, the thrust of the research would indicate that there was an actual historical and cultural connection between the adaptation of the Odyssean myth for the figure of Elias (and vice versa), but for Pound's poetic purposes the distinction between actual, imputed, and interpretative connections is relatively blurred. The repetition of 'OY TIS' or 'noman' serves as a bridge between the Australasian myth and the Odyssean one, with the act of speaking itself resulting in creative action. In Wandjina's case, each speech act resulted in the creation of a named object, in Odysseus's the act of naming is negated, for to speak sincerely would be to endanger his life. Although they represent opposite tendencies, Pound's juxtaposition of the Wandjina and the Odyssean myths serve to gesture towards the sacrosanct importance of language. This is then supported by the introduction of two other civilisations, ancient China (represented by Pound's neologism, Ouan Jin) and Christian tradition. The link that Pound establishes between Wandjina's act of creation and the Gospel of St John's proclamation that 'in the beginning was the word' (*in principio erat verbum* in the Latin Vulgate, from which Pound quotes) is particularly interesting as it points to cross-cultural assumptions about the power of language in the act of creation. In effect, Pound uses the similarity of these creation myths to point towards a fundamental and universal truth: namely, that the power of creation lies in language.

As Bernstein suggests, however, Pound had a solid grasp on the social function of language (and functionality was one of the chief principles underlined in 'Pragmatic Aesthetics) and in reality the point that Pound is making is probably rather more subtle. In referring to a variety of mythic events across various cultures and timeframes, Pound is not necessarily endorsing language as an embodiment of divine potential, but is rather emphasising a kind of nominalist philosophical position. In emphasising the mythic status accorded language across time and across different civilisations, Pound is not endorsing a religious conception of the word, but is rather suggesting the absolute importance of language in understanding the world. The idealisation of language in this case is meant to emphasise Pound's principle that literature is 'language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree' and is a restatement of the importance of poetry in legislating the world. Where Pound emphasises the logical role of language in his criticism and prose, he turns toward mythic extremes in his poetry. Even at his most linguistic, Pound's *Cantos* rarely treat language as the material, conventionalised means of communication that his prose emphasises; perhaps this is because, as even Santayana suggested, 'classifications are not poetry'.

However, Pound is happy to use the *Cantos* to illustrate economic principles whilst also outlining the finer points of the economic or political discourses in which Pound was interested. It is curious, then, that he is seemingly uncomfortable applying the same principles to outlining his linguistic theory. Instead, Pound embeds his theory of language in his economic, political, philosophical and, most often, aesthetic theories. In the case of the *Pisan Cantos*, a mythic, quasi-religious treatment of language is the primary means by which Pound articulates his linguistic theories; in other words, it is treated more as an item of faith than philosophical, or even scientific, principle.

Where in Canto LXXIV, Pound links the mythic treatment of language to China simply by means of wordplay, by Canto LXXVI, he returns to an argument that runs consistently through the *Cantos*, namely that his conception of Confucian rectitude as beginning with designating exact terms for exact objects and expanding to an ordered society is the *Cantos*' chief social model. Such a model has linguistic concerns at its heart.

> the word is made
> perfect SINCERITY/PRECISION
> better gift can no man make to a nation
> than the sense of Kung fu Tseu
> who was called Chung Ni
> nor in historiography nor in making anthologies
>
> (LXXVI.474).

The notion of the word being 'made/ perfect' requires further elucidation. One may contrast this notion of a word being perfected with the Christian *logos* evoked alongside the myth of Wandjina in Canto LXXIV, where in both cases the word is itself already perfect (the 'verbum perfectum'). Indeed, the phrase 'SINCERITY/PRECISION' itself refers back to Pound 'sinceritas' at the end of the previous passage. Pound is closer here to the linguistic principles that he has outlined throughout his career. If a word is 'made/ perfect' then it is by a process of refinement, by a series of creative acts analogous to the religious potential of language but distinct from it in that humanity must employ rectitude in the maintenance of its speech community. Thus, for Pound, language is not to be treated as a gift from the gods, but as an essential and fundamental tool; a material that can be made to function well if careful attention is paid to it, and that will not function if due care and attention is not taken. Where in Canto LXXIV, we are presented with divinities creating the world by means of speaking, in the Confucian mode of Canto LXXVI, the thrust of linguistic rectitude comes from humanity: it is ‘man’ who makes the gift of verbal precision to a ‘nation’, to ‘historiography’ and to those who ‘mak[e] anthologies’.

This is not necessarily enough to defend Pound against Victor Li’s charge of linguistic idealism. Pound still falls into the fallacy of believing that language does have a fixed, idealistic state, and he also makes the mistake of believing that what is simply a combination of social forces affecting change over time is a kind of linguistic decay as a result of neglect. However, what these passages do show is that Pound’s idealism is an idealism of language as a conventional system, and not one that implies that there is an intangible, causal link between words and their referents. Nevertheless, Pound makes use of such a mythical view of language in order to illustrate his principle of precision, an attitude found elsewhere in the *Pisan Cantos* in his explanation of his paradisiacal modes: ‘I don’t know how humanity stands it’, Pound writes, ‘with a painted paradise at the end of it/ without a painted paradise at the end of it’ (LXXVI.456). Pound negotiates, then, between an idealised, mythical vision of language and his common sense emphasis on functionality.

The question of what generalised philosophy we may derive from Pound’s poem, and indeed what central cohering principles we may use to tie the various strands of the poem together, is one that plays on the mind of the author as much as it does on his readers. In Canto LXXIV, Pound suggests that the process of determining the central thread of the *Cantos* as a whole is intentionally delayed until the poem’s conclusion:

> or longevity because as says Aristotle
> philosophy is not for young men
> their *Katholou* can not be sufficiently derived from
>   their *hekasta*
> their generalities cannot be born from a sufficient phalanx
>   of particulars
>   (LXXIV. 461).

The issue of generalising from a 'phalanx/ of particulars' is particularly reminiscent of Santayana's letter of 1940, and we may take this passage as Pound's answer in lieu of Pound's actual response which is regrettably lost. As Pound does not continue to outline just what his 'philosophy' or 'generality' is, we may assume that the *Pisan Cantos* remain part of the process of laying down a sufficient number of particular events, all of which will coalesce into a singular, paradisiacal vision when the poem is finally concluded. Pound is seemingly satisfied with his methodology of 'jumping' (to use Santayana's phrase) from particular to particular in the assumption that those particulars will themselves eventually build to a complex coherence. Pound's justification for this occurs a few pages earlier:

> Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel
> but spezzato apparently
> it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage,
> the smell of mint, for example,
> Ladro the night cat
>
> (LXXIV.458)

'Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel', an rejoinder to Baudelaire's notion of 'Le Paradis artificiels' ('Artificial Paradises') in his eponymous poem, serves as one of many refrains throughout the Pisan sequence. In Canto LXXVI, for example, Pound writes that 'Les Paradis n'est pas artificial./ states of mind are inexplicable to us' (LXXVI.480). *Spezzato* can mean either 'broken' or 'jagged' and its combination with the word 'apparently' is beautiful in the way that it serves as an offhand, semi-rhetorical statement of resignation, whilst also referring to the way in which paradise appears, or is made apparent in Pound's poem. From a linguistic perspective, if paradise 'exists only in fragments', the language of the particulars that evoke the paradisiacal modes in the poem will be similarly broken and fragmentary, otherwise it would lack the precision that its author demands of it.

What is clear is that Pound focus on an aesthetics 'which FUNCTIONS' very much has a concern with language at its heart even if this is never fully articulated. In fact, a lack of separate explanation of the exact role played by language in Pound's work may be precisely the linguistic point that he wishes to make. Bernstein writes of the peculiarity of Pound's failure to outline his exact theory of language fully, noting that '*The Cantos'* assumptions about the nature of language govern all of its procedures without ever receiving a programmatic articulation', a point that is borne out in the vast majority of Pound's prose as well as his poetry.[295] This failure to explain may, paradoxically, constitute Pound's best explanation nonetheless, particularly when considered in light of the notes made for 'Pragmatic Aesthetics'. The focus on artistic and linguistic 'function' – that is to say both how language is used in a practical sense and what language can be used for – means that it is always entirely inseparable from social purpose. It may be for this reason that Pound's most illuminating statements on language are often found in his economic, political or literary discussions rather than purely linguistic ones: language is so central, so fundamental to Pound's various discourses, that to discuss it at length in isolation would be to misrepresent its essential, functional nature. For Pound, language is a social tool and to discuss it on its own terms would be an act of abstraction that would obfuscate the true nature of language. Where Pound appears to erect a mythical status for language in the *Pisan Cantos*, he in fact points towards its intractable and inextricable nature.

Bernstein in fact gestures towards a conclusion of this sort, suggesting that part of the reason for Pound's shifts in tone, genre, language and style are a result of the direction of his poem at groups of small audiences, rather than a general audience. For example, Bernstein claims that aspects of the *Cantos* speak on the one hand to people who can put Pound's 'ideas into action', and on the other to scholars, or engaged readers, who can connect the details of his own life to the movements of the poem. Towards the end of the poem, this balance if disrupted in favour of the latter, but 'irrespective of the practical obstacles to an immediate comprehension of its discourse, and even independent of Pound's changing attitudes towards his audience, *The Cantos*' language always remained, in principle, committed to a signifying world and a communicable *praxis*'.[296] Implicitly, at least, then, both the referential and indexical functions of language are preserved and reinstated time and again throughout the *Cantos*, even through the poem's myriad changes.

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[295] Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe*, p. 128.
[296] Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe*, pp. 148-149.

Pound’s commitment to language as a means of signifying the world of referents is perhaps most apparent in the moments when language breaks down in the face of inexplicable natural events. This is a thread that runs from the Pisan sequence through to the collapse of the poem in *Drafts and Fragments*. In the *Pisan Cantos*, Pound explicitly acknowledges the importance of his personal situation in a way that he had not done in previous sequences of the poem. Pound’s imprisonment outside and his subsequent time in the prison camp infirmary is perhaps what led him to speculate on how ‘the rain is part of the process/ the wind is part of the process’, and the continuation of his economic, political, aesthetic and literary themes is interrupted by celebrated lyrical observations drawn from the natural world. Where Pound’s ideogrammic method before elided the union of separate people, events, or concepts built around a central theme, as in Canto XXXVIII’s discussion of C.H. Douglas’s economic theory, natural events either draw Pound’s attention because they act as memorial cues, or they become foci in their own right, described and discussed on their own terms, or even alluded to and then not discussed at all. Canto LXXVII contains a good example of the former:

> As Arcturus passes over my smoke-hole
>   the excess electric illumination
>   is now focussed
> on the bloke who stole a safe he cdn’t open
>   (interlude entitled: periplum by camion)
>   and Awoi’s *hennia*   plays hob in the tent flaps
>   k-lakkk…..thuuuuuu
>   making rain
>   uuuh
>
> 2,   7,   hooo
>   der im Baluba
>
>   Faasa   !   4 times was the city remade,
> now in the heart indestructible
>   4 gates, the 4 towers
> (Il Scirocco è geloso)
>
>   (LXXVII.485).

The sound of the wind moving the tent flaps reminds Pound of a character in the Noh play *Aoi no Ue*, the wind communicating with him in a way that he assumes is similar to Frobenius's encounter with drum telegraphy with Africa. This, in turn, he links with the tale of the Lute of Gassir. The *Cantos*' method of moving by swift relations between one point and another remains unchanged but for the natural dimension which inheres not only as an intellectual concept or a spiritual disposition, but as the real physical condition of the speaker.

Elsewhere in Canto LXXVII, Pound restates the dialectic mandate of both his poem and his long history as a critical thinker and writer:

> To communicate and then stop, that is the
>   law of discourse
>   to go far and come to an end
>
> (LXXVII.514)

Compared with the passages of the poem in which the natural elements weave in and out of the poem's pre-existing tapestry, the wind figuratively moving through the pages, Pound's statement that he should 'go far and come to an end' seems somewhat distorted as the poem has moved beyond the bounds of discourse. In fact, the poem seems to point towards a tension between that which language can contain and represent, and that which it cannot. This disjuncture is most apparent in the vision of the natural world, as Canto LXXXII makes abundantly clear:

> Till the cricket hops
>   but does not chirrp in the drill field
>   8th day of September
>   f   f
>   d
>   g
>   write the birds in their treble scale
> Terreus!   Terreus!
>
> (LXXXII.545).

What is particularly extraordinary about this passage is that Pound does not appear to ascribe any particular meaning or significance to it beyond his impulse to turn the natural scene into a passage of poetry. It is a moment of strange stillness in the eddying movement of what is for all intents and purposes a war poem. This scene is particularly striking for its combination of visual and musical nature. Although the cricket does not make a sound, Pound combines the visual resemblance of the birds on the barbed wire surrounding the camp to notes on a treble scale with an attempt to encapsulate the notation of their birdsong (the four letters the birds both physically resemble and 'write'). Pound makes extensive use of dates in the *Cantos* but they are usually either for the purpose of providing a historical chronicle or for drawing attention to explicit comparisons between previous eras and Pound's own temporal situation. In this case, Pound seems to be drawing on both but the act of dating is rather more banal than similar uses elsewhere. While the passage is undoubtedly an extraordinary performance in language, particularly the way that the letters f,d, and g are used as both pictorial and signifying marks, it neither communicates nor functions in the way that Pound's 'law of discourse' demands. It is a moment of intense stillness that gestures beyond the capabilities of the poem's discursive modes. Eventually, the birds remind Pound of the myth of 'Terreus' and the natural scene is returned to the literary in a way reminiscent of Eliot's use of 'Tereu' in section III of *The Waste Land*.

John Xiros Cooper reads this passage as a good example of Pound's use of the musical technique of the counterpoint as a poetic and discursive mode. He argues that this passage combines the 'silent music' of the natural order with the 'discursive order with its chorus of historical voices' in order to create a counterpoint 'from which the whole poem's sense proceeds'.[297] Cooper's definition of the counterpoint, and its usefulness as a means of reading and interpreting Pound's poetry, certainly chimes with the formal elements of the *Pisan Cantos*.

> Counterpoint maintains elements in an active relationship, but always distinct one from the other, a process that we might call tonal diffusion; the poet puts the parts, the tonal units, of a poem to some degree apart, rather than together, the expected practice, not only in poems but in language generally. This results in a poetic texture that is discontinuous when compared to conventional poetic discourse with its carefully construed thematic and tropic continuities, its consistency of point of view and diction, and, finally, the gravitational pull of the syntax of the conventional

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[297] John Xiros Cooper, 'Music as Symbol and Structure in Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos* and Eliot's *Four Quartets*' in *Ezra Pound and Europe*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Claus Melchior (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 177-189 (p. 178).

> sentence. Contrapuntal thinking maintains things in their separate orbits, and, like the "old Dynasty's music," thinking does not become clotted.[298]

Pound's difference between the mode of the natural world and the discursive modes employed in the rest of the poem is not a disjuncture but rather an intentional formal decision and an essential component of his poetic composition. While this may be true for the poem as form (or language as system), it does not necessarily fit with an aesthetic of practical function. One of the supposed benefits of the method of 'luminous detail', or the discursive mode that an ideogrammic or contrapuntal technique would develop, is that it is shorn of the rhetorical, purely linguistic, flair that Pound sees as surrounding philosophical and critical discourses. It presents only the objects, and even then only the essential objects, for discussion. The thrust of Pound's language in *The Cantos*, as Bernstein suggests, is to move us away from contemplation in the realm of language, and to focus instead on the world of referents. When we are faced with the natural world, the discursive mode of the poem reaches something of an impasse (and this impasse may well be intentional), the thrust of its argument and its verbal traditions are arrested in the face of a nature it struggles to capture.

The resolution between the world's verbal and non-verbal traditions is one of the central concerns of the remainder of Pound's poem. In *Section Rock Drill*, Pound seeks to re-affirm the historical and economic themes of the poem, interrupted as they were by the unavoidably contemplative, subjective moods of the *Pisan Cantos*. However, Pound's reassertion of the dominant discursive modes of the poem, supported once again by the relative availability of external sources once his trial was over, is similarly interrupted by moments of gesturing to a world beyond the necessity of language.

> Only sequoias are slow enough.
>   BinBin "is beauty".
> "Slowness is beauty.":
>   from the

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[298] Cooper, 'Music as Symbol and Structure', pp. 178-179.

三 San
孤 Ku
to Poictiers.

The tower wherein, at one point, is no shadow,
and Jacques de Molay, is where?
and the "Section", the proportions,
lending, perhaps, not at interest, but resisting.
Then false fronts, barocco.
"We have", said Mencius, "but phenomena."
monumenta. In nature are signatures
needing no verbal tradition,
oak leaf never plane leaf. John Heydon.
SELLOI sleep there on the ground
And old Jarge held there was a tradition,
that was not mere epistemology.

(LXXXVII.592).

The passage opens with evocations of Pound's own 'verbal traditions', referring to subjects explored in earlier cantos, as well as correspondents such as Lawrence Binyon ('BinBin'). The passage concludes, however, by gesturing beyond the tradition that Pound himself sets up across the poem. In nature, the 'signature' of the oak tree is left in the uniqueness of its leaf, and the purely abstract notion of a 'plane leaf' simply cannot exist. A verbal tradition, which makes more or less use of abstract terms, would simply obfuscate natural process: language, and particularly the language of poetry as Fenollosa conceives it, may imitate nature but can never share in its process. This recalls Pound's conversations with Santayana, invoked by the term 'old Jarge', and it brings Pound's insistence on 'the intelligence in the cherry stone' particularly to mind. It should be remembered, however, that Santayana rejected Pound's notion of a natural intelligence. In 1953, Daniel Cory wrote to Pound on this exact topic, around the same time that Pound was composing the drafts of *Rock-Drill*, explaining that the 'intelligence' of nature is a misguided concept, writing to Pound: 'You ask how S[antayana] knows whether or not it's "unconscious." He doesn't! But the chances are that the external world at large is not very "intelligent", anymore than we are when we are asleep'.[299] In fact, Santayana is generally ambivalent towards both discourse and the natural world in his most extensive treatment of epistemology and nature, *Scepticism and the Animal Faith*:

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[299] Daniel Cory, Letter to Ezra Pound, 24 December 1953, YCAL MSS 43, Box 10, Folder 454, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

> It is true that, quite apart from living discourse, a set of axioms and postulates, as simple as we like, may be posited in the air, and deductions drawn from them *ad libitum*; but such pure logic is otiose, unless we find or assume that discourse or nature actually follows it; and it is not by deduction from first principles, arbitrarily chosen, that human reasoning actually proceeds, but by loose habits of mental evocation which such principles at best may exhibit afterwards in an idealised form. Moreover if we could strip our thought for the arena of a perfect logic, we should be performing, perhaps, a remarkable dialectical feat; but this feat would be a mere addition to the complexities of nature and no simplification. This motley world, besides its other antics, would then contain logicians and their sports. If by chance, on turning to the flowing facts, we found by analysis that they obeyed that ideal logic, we should again be beginning with things as we find them in the gross, and not with first principles.[300]

As Pound only refers to having read *The Realm of Spirit*, there is nothing to suggest that he had read any others of Santayana's philosophical *oeuvre*, but what *Scepticism and the Animal Faith* does demonstrate is a shared sensibility that refuses abstraction as a foundation of thought. Pound may not necessarily have fully understood Santayana's philosophy, but he is certainly vindicated in allotting him a position as an authority appealing for a focus on 'phenomena' or, as Santayana writes, 'flowing facts'. Their difference, as their correspondence makes clear, lies in Pound's failure to articulate a coherent general philosophy, but their sensibility is certainly aligned in this case.

Pound does in fact record Santayana on the cusp of his 'paradise' in the final canto of *Rock Drill*, first published in 1955. It is difficult to determine exactly what part of their correspondence or conversation Pound refers to, but it would appear to be a reference to either Santayana's letter about Chinese written characters, or to an otherwise unrecorded conversation:

> "Something *there*."
> sd/ Santayana
> Responsus:
> Not stasis/
> at least not in our immediate vicinage.
>
> (XCV.666).

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[300] Santayana, *Scepticism and the Animal Faith: An Introduction to a System of Philosophy* (London: Constable and Co., 1923), pp. 2-3.

The notion of 'something there' may refer to Pound's philosophy (as he believed Santayana saw it), as if Santayana had not grasped what it was that he attempted to outline in the letters, but that he recognised what Pound calls a 'kindred tendency'. Or it may be that Santayana recognises something fundamentally true about Fenollosa's work on the written character, even if he disagrees with his style and argument. Either way, by placing Santayana in the middle of a sequence that introduces his attempts to outline paradise, Pound seems to be recognising at least superficial contiguities between Santayana's 'philosophy' and his own 'paradise'.

The existence of a tradition beyond 'mere epistemology' (a frank dismissal that perhaps chimes with Pound's aversion to 'mere philology' outlined in Chapter 1) is explored elsewhere in *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*, with Pound seemingly insistent on using a language of reference to point towards places where verbal tradition collapses. In Canto XCIII, for example, Pound casts doubt on discourse's ability to represent fully the mystical intricacies that may lie at the very heart of the poem:

> A foot-print? alcun vestigio?
>   thus was it for 5 thousand years
>   thus saith KATI (Kati).
> and as for the trigger-happy mind
>   amid stars
>   amid dangers; abysses
> going six ways a Sunday,
>   how shall philologers?
> A butcher's block for biographers,
>   quidity!
>   Have they heard of it?
> "Oh you," as Dante says
>   "in the dinghy astern there"
> There must be incognita
>   and in sea-caves
>   un lume pien' di spiriti
>   and of memories,
> Shall two know the same in their knowing?
>   You who dare Persephone's threshold,
>   Beloved, do not fall apart in my hands.
>
>   (XCIII.651).

The passage opens with references to foot-prints and traces (‘alcun vestigio’ translates as ‘any vestige’ or ‘trace’). According to Peirce’s taxonomy, such signs are ‘indexes’ bearing the physical likeness or even remnant of the thing they represent. They are, in effect, tangible signs as opposed to the purely symbolic nature of language. Pound is pointing the reader carefully into a non-verbal tradition. This is not a tradition that can be quickly elucidated by the ‘trigger-happy mind’, which would suggest a critical tendency to adopt a position which diverges into as many as ‘six ways’ and distracts from the fundamental quiddity needed to understand what might be called the mystical heart of the poem. This chimes with Pound’s evocation of Lawrence Binyon’s dictum that ‘slowness is beauty’ as well as his warning that ‘you cannot get thru hell in a hurry’. This is furthermore a rejection of an epistemological, philological and literary tradition which fails to alight on fundamentals, and prefers instead to focus on a multitude of details, a criticism that Pound has made consistently since his early abandonment of academia. Rather, Pound argues, ‘there must be incognita’; there are things that criticism and the western epistemological tradition (as opposed, perhaps, to mystical intuition) simply cannot know. Pound does not reject the western scholarly tradition as such, as *The Cantos*, and indeed this very canto in particular, makes extensive use of existing scholarship and verbal traditions (written as it is in highly stylised and lyrical language), but what Pound does reject is the notion that humanities scholarship provides an adequate explanation for the entire universe. He suggests that we may investigate the known world, but that there must remain an unknown world, transmittable not by language but by the ‘light [which] is in sea-caves’. At these moments, the verbal tradition, indeed language itself, breaks down as an explanatory device, and can instead merely point to luminous details. It is this point that Pound emphases in *Drafts and Fragments*, suggesting that there is an impasse between language and the natural world, or the world of paradise:

> Do not move
> Let the wind speak
> that is paradise.

(‘Notes for CXVII et seq.’.822)

It is a paradise that we cannot know by epistemological or linguistic tradition, and instead we must use those traditions in order better to point the way towards a contemplation of the mystique at the heart of the universe. For all *The Cantos*' lyrical modes, speech acts, combinations of languages, intensive investigations of humanity's various discursive techniques and the pitfalls therein, Pound finds the poem's ultimate profundity leads him to an injunction for human silence.

Another important reason for the arrest of Pound's intellectual forays into linguistic matters may be that by the mid nineteen fifties he had attained a place in the American academy. Pound's work, perhaps due to media and popular attention focusing on his political activities, had begun to be discussed more formally in academic environments, and a young generation of scholars across the country interested in contemporary poetry were beginning to approach various aspects of his work. Most significantly, Norman Holmes Pearson at Yale had arranged for the collection of Pound's letters and manuscripts. This formed the basis of what is now the Beinecke's extensive archive. In a letter of 1953, Pearson outlines the extent of the academic attention on Pound's work:

> But the E.P. as the base of the graduate seminar; the English Institute series of four this fall; the meeting at the College English Association; what would have been the Pound seminar at the Vermont Critical Studies, if they hadn't cancelled; the checklist, quietly; help to Sussman who want to reprint the *New Age* essays (I hope you'll let him), etc etc. All this, so to speak, from what little position I may have, and the persona of the Hawthorne scholar.[301]

Pearson was instrumental in much of this activity, responding to academic requests for information on Pound's work, a role in which he was well-practised as he had been acting as H.D.'s literary executor. Donald Pearce at the University of Michigan, for example, had been asked to create a local television programme on Pound in October 1953. It was to be broadcast to an estimated audience of 1 million people. Pearson asked Pound for advice on content, but Pound's response is regrettably not in the collection. Pearson enquired as to whether the emphasis of the programme should be on

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[301] Norman Holmes Pearson, Letter to Ezra Pound, 3 August 1953, YCAL MSS 43, Box 40, Folder 1674, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

'the Poundian centrality in twentieth century *lettres*' or on his 'present situation' at St Elizabeth's.[302] Pearson continued to receive requests of this kind, with another example being Richard P. Goldman's request to Pearson on 29 September 1956 for permission to use Pound's poetry in his WYBC radio broadcast, 'A Tribute to Ezra Pound', which Pearson granted on 8 October.[303]

In addition to this, Pearson began to run a series of postgraduate seminars and study groups revolving around the *Cantos*, drawing attention to the thrust of Pound's later work. Pearson gives an insight into the extent to which Pound was studied at Yale by outlining the attendance of his graduate seminar on the *Cantos*:

> Seminar here well into cantos, and profiting thereby. Much too large: 28-30 regularly attend, which is no seminar. People able but not so interesting in minds as in last year's group. However one or two who I may send to you. viz: a John Montague, Irish poet, reviewer etc, who apparently like all good Irishman thinks the Eire is smoggy and stinks intellectually; also one German, from Bonn, who for two years sat in that voluntary EP circle on cantos I told you about. A rather frightened Italian whom I don't know about yet; plus another German a little too accedamic [*sic*].[304]

It is notable that part of Pearson's engagement with his students involves the opportunity for some (presumably those either most conducive to Pound's aesthetic or cultural arguments) to visit the poet himself. This opens not only Pound's work up to a new generation but also the possibility of Pound having personal influence over their education. The numbers attending, presuming that Pearson is accurate, testifies to the interest that Pound's work had generated in an academic environment.

What this intensification of interest suggests is that both Pound and his sources entered into the American academy at a crucial time in the poem's development. The Pisan sequence is far more introspective than previous sections of the poem, and *Section Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*, which were being composed at this time, retain a strong element of consolidation while opening up to new avenues. In a sense, academic attention on Pound's work led to a thorough investigation of the very sources that Pound felt American academia required for reinvigoration at the very institutions that he felt required invigorating. As a result, the *Cantos*'s final period of composition occured at a time of relative vindication for Pound's steadfast faith in his sources, no matter how obscure they had seemed previously. In effect, why would Pound turn from Fenollosa, Frobenius and Confucius when a new generation are fascinated by his interest in them? From a linguistic point of view, Pound's writing on language gained a new audience – in fact, it finally gained the audience he had wanted it to have– and this may partially explain the consolidatory nature of Pound's linguistic theory in the later part of his career.

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[302] Norman Holmes Pearson, Letter to Ezra Pound, 27 August 1955, YCAL MSS 43, Box 40, Folder 1673, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[303] Richard P. Goldman, Letter to Norman Holmes Pearson, 29 September 1956, YCAL MSS 43, Box 40, Folder 1678, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[304] Norman Holmes Pearson, Letter to Ezra Pound, 26 November 1953, YCAL MSS 43, Box 40, Folder 1674, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Another example of Pound's increased prominence in literary studies was the 1953 publication of *Motive and Method in* The Cantos *of Ezra Pound*, edited by Lewis Leary, then of Columbia University. The text was based on a seminar at Columbia University's English Insitute which Leary chaired. The seminar was second in the institute's programme for September 1953. The first seminar was on 'German Literary Criticism During the Romantic Age', which was directed by René Wellek and included a paper by Emil L. Fackenheim on Pound's former professor, Felix Schelling. The third seminar in the series was entitled 'Some Linguistic Problems in Literature'. The philosopher Susanne Langer gave a paper on 'Some Aesthetic Considerations of Language', Frederick G. Cassidy, who would go on to become chief editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English* spoke on 'The Dialect Axis', while the Shakespearean scholars Helge Körkeritz's and Alan McGee gave papers on 'Rhetorical Punning in Chaucer' and 'Proper Names in Jane Austen's Comedy', respectively. The fourth seminar was on Comedy as a Literary Form. It is of considerable significance that Pound's work was discussed in a series that attracted a variety of eminent scholars, particularly in light of the discussion of language and literature in the second seminar of the programme.

What is perhaps most interesting about *Motive and Method in* The Cantos *of Ezra Pound* is the critical acceptance of his terminology. Although the focus on Pound's favoured thereotical sources, Agassiz, Fenollosa, and Frobenius, for example, is important, it is the way in which Pound's work is assessed on his terms that comes across in the text. In his contribution to the collection, 'The

Broken Mirror and the Mirror of Memory', Hugh Kenner explains the significance of individual textual references in *The Cantos*, writing for example that 'Homer is not just a Greek document, he contains, incarnates, a paideuma'.[305] Kenner's remit is, as with the other contributors, to outline Pound's 'motive and method', in other words an act of exegesis, rather than placing his literary, linguistic and cultural assumptions under intense scrutiny, but there is an element of agreement with Pound's theoretical outlook. His eloquent explanation of Pound's insertion of musical notation into the Pisan sequence similarly points towards the adoption of aspects of Pound's artistic sensibility and theoretical disposition:

> Canto LXXV is a brief parable on creation and re-creation: like the Homer that passed through Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon, Janequin's choral bird-music (the motifs of which, Pound has elsewhere suggested, are vastly older than Janequin) is transcribed for Francesco da Milano's Renaissance lute and Gerhart Münch's twentieth-century violin and piano; even in the violin part alone the birds are still audible. The piece nowhere mimics the songs of birds: it is imitation, something similar done in a different medium. The original feat of artifice was absolute, whether Janequin performed it or someone earlier than he. Once done, it can survive metamorphosis after metamorphosis. But it remains bird-music: it has some sort of sanction in the natural order.[306]

Not only does this passage outline Kenner's tacit agreement with Pound's pragmatic aesthetics (pragmatic, in this case, because metamorphosis demands formal flexibility), but it also contains within it an important critical acceptance of the truth of Pound's method. Kenner does not deny that language is an arbitrary or conventional system, but instead explores the process whereby an object or event passes into representative modes. Rather than explore the process in terms of signification, Kenner points towards a 'natural order', focussing his argument on the retention of reality through metamorphosis. While it must be stressed that Kenner's motivation is exegetic, he does not investigate or problematize the validity of Pound's assumptions about representation, signification or mimesis. His authority comes from Pound's vision, and it is in this sense a strong endorsement of the *Cantos*' linguistic and semiotic practices.

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[305] Hugh Kenner, 'The Broken Mirror and the Mirror of Memory' in *Motive and Method in* The Cantos *of Ezra Pound*, ed. Lewis Leary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 3-32 (p. 4).

[306] Kenner, 'The Broken Mirror and the Mirror of Memory', pp. 28-29.

What is striking is that for a poet so often associated with radical poetics, Pound's focus is the way in which language is used to represent the world beyond it, and not language as a system itself. Although the relationship between language and representation is an essential part of structuralist and post-structuralist criticism, Pound's faith in language's ability to portray objects, events and ideas more or less adequately is a central part of his poetic theory. Pound was not necessarily a linguistic idealist. The 'sanction in the natural order' to which Kenner refers is a statement of support for language as a system of representation. Pound's 'pragmatic' aesthetic, coupled with his pragmatic approach to language, leads ultimately to a defence of linguistic systems: a sense that for all the problems outlined throughout this chapter, the system works.

It is for this reason that Pound's theoretical outlook is largely incompatible with post-structuralist criticism. Derrida mistakenly places Pound within a tradition of 'radically decentered' writing, but this is not his intention. *The Cantos*, as their author admits, has a lost centre but the poem is not a rejection of centrality. Indeed, the very artificiality of language itself allows for the process of 'metamorphosis after metamorphosis' that Kenner describes. But the subject matter of the *Cantos* is only partially language. In most cases, Pound's intention is for language to reach beyond itself and into those traditions 'which have no verbal signature'; there is a gap between language and the world, but part of Pound's intention is to close it as much as possible. Although Pound's language may be artificial, it still seeks 'sanction in the natural order'. Similarly, the poem revolves around this search for order, what Kenner calls 'attempts to educe stability from the flux', an attempt that, though it may fail in the search, retains faith in the idea of a central, organising force. Pound's outlook is openly authoritarian, his theories of language denote faith in stabilising the relationship between word and world (or at the very least, faith in the functionality of language despite its conventional and arbitrary origins), and his aesthetic concerns by his own admission aspire towards value judgements. In many ways, Pound's conclusion is indicative of the totalitarian order he endorsed: he argues that the world, though it may be in chaos or flux, simply needs re-ordering, not that our very idea of order is an unstable concept. Pound’s *Cantos* do not simply dramatise chaos, they seek to find a way through it to a language of stability and order.

Conclusion: Language Poetry and Pound's Legacy

In Chapter One, I explored the ways in which Pound developed a kind of post-philological poetics, distancing himself from the academic worldview whilst ameliorating aspects of its techniques and linguistic assumptions, namely: language as history; etymological fascination; interest in biographical detail; and, perhaps less importantly but still significant from the point of view of textual history, research techniques. Pound continued these aspects of his philological background, whilst employing more creative freedom with all of them. In this way, the *Cantos* are invested with a broader philology than that of the academic discipline which Pound attacked throughout his career. Philology provided the basis of Pound's understanding of language and, despite all of his attempts to remove it from his approach, he had constant recourse to it.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the potential linguistic implications of Pound's interest in anthropology in the 1930s. While language was always at the centre of my discussion, I drew on broader cultural concerns in order to demonstrate that Pound rarely separated language as art from language's social role. Essentially, Pound saw language as the most potent *paideuma* of individual cultures. Where different languages meet, their relative differences expose cultural differences. Pound can be seen as espousing a kind of dark cultural relativism, one in which different groups are not held in equilibrium but employed in the *Cantos*' hierarchy of values. Language, according to Pound's view, thus becomes the primary means of cultural values becoming embedded in culture. *The Cantos* can similarly be read as an excavation of this.

The specificity of my discussion in Chapter Three is to be held in contrast to the broader concerns of the preceding two chapters and the one succeeding it. Although my approach differs, the general concern follows on from Chapter Two: how does language relate to relative individual and cultural concerns? The failure of the Pound-Ogden correspondence can be put down to two major differences: first, their projects have rival aims, as Pound's attempts to negotiate between cultural differences (whilst simultaneously emphasising them) in order to explore the world in all of its complexity, Ogden's Basic English programme attempts to reduce cultural differences in order to draw on mutual points of contact. While Ogden's and Pound's intentions may have important similarities, not least an attempt to bring about cross-cultural communication, their methods differ too radically. Second, Basic English depends upon a linguistic system of rigidity whereas Pound's poetic project derives great value from the flexibility of its author's aesthetics. This difference of approach ultimately led to a formal incompatibility between their projects. What they both shared, however, was a concern for a fixed referential understanding of, and approach to, language despite its fundamentally arbitrary and conventional nature. Ogden's language, and Pound's poetics, manifest this referential desire.

In Chapter Four, I explored Pound's attempt to invest his "phalanx of particulars" with a universal generality, with a particular focus on another of Pound's fruitless correspondences with a philosophical figure: George Santayana. Pound's poetry is not, as post-structuralist discourse would have it, decentered by intention. His *Cantos* do indeed search for a central point or theme that will tie of its Odyssean wondering and Protean forms together. In effect, the *Cantos* fail because they register the failed search for a 'centre', something that Pound lost by his own admission 'fighting the world'.[307] By the time Pound realised this himself, he had reached the end of his career and thus the poem and its author end in silence. This silence does not testify to the failure of language in and of itself, however, and though Pound's faith in his own words collapses, this is largely due to an aesthetic and epistemological failure on the part of the author. His faith in language remained, by and large, intact.

What these four chapters have in common, then, is a kind of post-philological concern for the relationship between culture, language, and individual creativity. While Pound has been seen as one of the precursors (at least formally speaking) of the deconstructionist ethos of post-structuralist approaches to language and postmodernist approaches to the world, his view of language remains intensely positive: that is, language does, more or less, succeed in functioning as a system of communication, a means of reference, and as a creative act. In this final section of my thesis, I explore the ways in which the linguistic aspects of Pound's legacy might be seen in the poetic tradition that came after.

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[307] Ezra Pound, 'Notes for Canto CXVII et seq.', *The Cantos*, p. 822.

In 1977, the poet and scholar Steve McCaffery edited a significant portion of the journal *Open Letter*, with half of the issue dedicated to a symposium on L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry entitled 'The Politics of the Referent'. McCaffery and his contributors sought to explain both the rationale and theory behind the form and content of Language Poetry and to trace its development throughout the twentieth century. Naturally, McCaffery and others saw their poetic output as a combination of philosophical, linguistic and artistic breaks from the prevailing models of language:

> The attempt here is to bring to a wider audience theoretical notes on language-centered, de-referential writings: terms which apply to a particular thrust in recent writing (1970+) seeking in diverse ways to investigate and elucidate the dialectical drives and the inner contradictions within language.[308]

The notion of a 'language-centered, de-referential writing' owes as much to the development of post-structuralist literary theory as it does to the individual poets' creative practice, but what is clear is that McCaffery sees poetry (and Language Poetry specifically) as a kind of linguistic investigation brought about by artistic innovation. McCaffery suggests that where all previous thought on language, including philosophy, literature and linguistics, has focused on the relationship between signs and referents, Language Poetry focuses entirely on the material nature of the linguistic sign. As Ron Silliman argues in his 'For Open Letter', 'the historical function of language-centered writing is to achieve, to the greatest possible extent, a post-referential writing'.[309] That is, a poetry which draws upon the artistic potential of language as a system and its physical manifestations, rather than on its use in pointing towards non-verbal meanings.

In many ways, the Language Poets tread a path familiar to scholars of modernist poetry.

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[308] Steve McCaffery, 'Introduction', The Politics of the Referent, Essays edited by Steve McCaffery, *Open Letter*, 3:7 (Summer 1977), 60, (p. 60).

[309] Ron Silliman, 'For Open Letter, *Open Letter*, 2:7 (Summer 1977), 89-93 (p. 89).

Their argument revolves around a crisis being reached in language itself, and they position their own literary activity as a kind of linguistic redemption. Language Poetry is notoriously difficult to define and, like many of the twentieth century's literary movements, its practitioners are drawn together by loosely shared principles rather than dogma. As McCaffery himself writes in his own essay in the collection, 'The Death of the Subject', the contributors to 'The Politics of the Referent' all share a desire to rectify a crisis point in both language and literature:

> There is a group of writers today united in the feeling that literature has entered *a crisis of the sign*; that the explications of literatures have merged with the implications of language and that the foremost task at hand – a more linguistic and philosophic than 'poetic' task – is to demystify the referential fallacy of language.[310]

Those writers – in the case of the summer 1977 issue of *Open Letter,* McCaffery, Silliman, Charles Bernstein, Bruce Andrews, Ray Di Palma, and Ellsworth Snyder – all shared a determination to break poetry free from what they saw as the prevailing semantic thrust of modernism and reposition literary art around semiotic thought. In a sense, their poetic thought is materialistic, referring to the physical properties of language and not to abstractions of meaning, nor to the 'world of things' (which they believed to also rely on an abstract process). The conviction of the Language Poets, then, was one in which 'language is above all else a system of signs and that writing must stress its semiotic nature through modes of investigation and probe, rather than mimetic, instrumental indications'.[311]

McCaffery traces a theoretical genealogy beginning with Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, passing through the Russian Formalists, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and reaching a focal point in the work Jacques Derrida. The 'referential fallacy' to which McCaffery refers concerns the notion that the primary role of language is to represent objects or ideas, and that it does this successfully. In many ways, this is the same 'crisis' in language that C.K. Ogden and Pound identified in the 1930s, but with a radically different conclusion. For Pound and Ogden, the solution was a more tightly regulated linguistic system, a more established process whereby words are assigned to their referents: in a sense, the arbitrary nature of language allowed its deformation and reformation along the lines advocate by Ogden and Pound. The Language Poets, however, conceive of the arbitrariness of language as its fundamental characteristic, and argue that the nominalist approaches taken by those such as Ogden and Pound rely upon what Derrida called the 'transcendental signified', or an ultimate authority that assigns meaning - but an authority which is ultimately unreachable and indefinable.

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[310] Steve McCaffery, 'The Death of the Subject: The Implications of Counter-Communication in Recent Language-Centered Writing', *Open Letter*, 3:7 (Summer 1977), 61-77 (p. 61).
[311] McCaffery, 'The Death of the Subject', 61.

Instead of positioning poetry around images, descriptions, meanings, thoughts or feelings, the Language Poets chose to avoid what they saw as the theoretical and ideological flaws of their immediate poetic forebears and instead focused on the artistic potential of the signs themselves:

> Clearly, then, language-centered writing involves the most determinate poetics yet proposed in the history of writing. Determinate because it avoids the central contradiction of the Linguistic Sign – the use of an absence to re-present a present. Reference is that absence, leading out from a present sign to an extrasemiotic state: the imposed self-destruction of language in the world 'of real things'.[312]

McCaffery's problematisation of language's use of presence to represent absent things has a particularly Derridean thrust. From a linguistic point of view, McCaffery argues, what remains once the referential fallacy has been exposed is a 'highly complex play of signifiers detached from stable signifieds; a language no longer representing a world outside of itself, but a language obeying its own constitution and dynamic'.[313] Bruce Andrews's 'Text and Context' also draws on the terminology of post-structuralist criticism in arguing that 'language is an Other which imposed meanings attempt, luckily unsuccessfully, to disguise for us'.[314] The poet's role, then, is to expose the disguise and leave language naked for readers to draw meanings for themselves and not have meaning imposed from without by established systems of referentiality. As Andrews writes, 'references *evacuate* the sign. In its place, intentionality fills it up'.[315] In this case, he is referring to both the intention of the writer and the reader, neither of whom is given authorial preference.

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[312] McCaffery, 'The Death of the Subject', 68.
[313] McCaffery, 'The Death of the Subject', 76.
[314] Andrews, 'Text and Context', 83.
[315] Andrews, 'Text and Context', 83.

Derrida's notion of an 'irreducibly graphic poetics' seems far more applicable to the Language Poets than it does to the influence Ernest Fenollosa had on Pound's work, as the term was originally applied. Charles Bernstein's 'Thinking I think I think' is a particularly good example of the ways in which theory and practice meet in Language Poetry. Its opening line seems to set a challenge to its own expectation that the rest of the poem then purposefully fails to meet:

> What are aesthetic values and why do
> there appear to be lesser & fewer of
> them? Quick: define the difference
> between arpeggio & Armani. The baby
> cries because the baby likes crying.
> The baby cries because a pin is
> sticking into the baby. The baby
> is not crying but it is called
> crying. Who's on first, what's
> shortstop. The man the man declined
> to be, appraised at auction at
> eighty percent of surface volume.[316]

At a first reading, Bernstein's poem appears densely meaningful and referential, as if each line is an answer to its opening question. In reality, Bernstein answers the opening question by emphatically refusing to give a logical answer, the poem itself ridiculing the 'aesthetic values' that it seeks to address. The final three lines of this passage demonstrate Bernstein's skilful approach. 'The man the man declined/ to be' is an extraordinarily lyrical line, and the balance of the iambs (although Bernstein may reject the scansion) would not be out of place in more traditional poetic forms. It is then followed by the more prosaic 'appraised at auction at/ eighty percent of the surface volume', a series of lines that ultimately refuse to continue both the expectation of the meter and the meaning. The line becomes both comic and pointed, its openness leaving both the meaning and the 'aesthetic values' of the poem up to the reader to decide. In a sense, Bernstein's work (and the work of others such as Silliman) is an extreme form of the 'praxis' that drives the rapid succession of images and voices in Pound's work, even if the theoretical thrust is markedly different.

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[316] Charles Bernstein, 'Thinking I Think I Think' in *With Strings* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 3-5 (p. 3).

There is a stark difference between the Language Poets' semiotic, 'de-centered' poetry and Pound's continual attempt to use lyrical and descriptive modes to reach beyond the linguistic. Nevertheless, the Language Poets saw their roots in modernist practice. Ray Di Palma's 'Crystals', an approving collection of quotations drawn from a wide variety of twentieth-century thinkers and artists, has a clear modernist thrust: Pound's 'Bad writing comes from insufficient curiosity' is quoted alongside phrases of Wyndham Lewis, Gertrude Stein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, James Joyce, Ernest Fenollosa, Hugh Kenner, and William James. The modernist period is also represented by Carl Jung and Ludwig Wittgenstein.[317]

Silliman argues that modernism is best seen as a failed attempt to break the capitalistic structure of the relationship between language and thought, where language itself has been subsumed within a broader practice of 'commodity fetishism'. Silliman approves of modernism's attempt, arguing that 'every major type of modernism can be seen as an attempt at eliminating the repression of the commodity fetish in language'; in other words, modernist practice was essential in opening up a debate that the Language Poets are able to continue.[318] However, Silliman argues, because modernist writers such as Joyce, Stein and Pound, still retained faith in the referential function of language (linked expressly in Silliman's view to commodity fetishism), their work ultimately falls short of providing the kind of 'de-referential writing' that the contributors to 'The Politics of the Referent' demanded. For Silliman, this is 'because they start within the commodity fetish of language, they can quickly be reduced to commodities in turn', while McCaffery laments in his introduction that 'Joyce backtracked into etymology and Stein opted for the psychological path of entity rather than the political path of de-reference'.[319]

One interesting feature that these Language Poets share with their modernists predecessors is a return to a kind of primordial consciousness; that the primal motivation of poetry has remained the same throughout human history and that a poet's role in society has an indelible link to ancient practices. Ron Silliman argues, in terms not dissimilar to Pound's in 'How to Read' and *A.B.C. of Reading*, that poets have an important role to play in returning language to its primordial state in order to take full advantage of its creative potential:

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[317] See Ray Di Palma, 'Crystals', *Open Letter*, 3:7 (Summer 1977), 86-88.
[318] Silliman, 'For Open Letter', 91.
[319] Silliman, 'For Open Letter', 92; McCaffery, 'Introduction', 60.

> At an early historical stage, poems were the shared language events of small tribal groups. The value of the poem was one of exchange and use. It was the product and common property of the tribe and not the speakers. The language of the poem was physical and alive to its speakers. It has its own integrity and recognized the separate integrity of the world. It was empowered to discuss the world but did not presume to describe it.[320]

Silliman's argument assigns poetry a central role not only in the development of language and thought, but also a key function in society. Where Silliman differs from Pound, however, is in the notion of description. Pound's work is full of lyrical descriptions of the natural world, whereas Silliman perceives poetic attempts to describe the world (rather than discuss it) as falling into a referential fallacy. For Silliman, describing the world in language is impossible as there is a fundamental disjuncture between linguistic systems, based as they are on arbitrary signs and the use of a presence to denote an absence, and the world beyond language which, as Silliman and Bernstein both argue, is unreachable.

A further difference between the Language Poets and Pound is in the pragmatic and functional approach that the latter took towards language throughout his career. Where the Language Poets wear their theory quite obviously on their sleeves, Pound's linguistic thought tended to be embedded in his discussions of a variety of other subjects. One reason for this is that Pound often conceived of language as a means and not an end in and of itself. As such, Pound's discussion of language often refers to its functional capacity, be that in obscuring political and economic corruption, in detailing and describing natural processes or images, or in the articulation of meaning. By contrast, Bruce Andrews argues that 'words hover above usage. Meaning is not use, or is not all use'.[321] This separation of language and meaning – OR of language and its social function – is curiously opposed both to the theoretical thrust of Pound's writing as well as to the field of sociolinguistics, which was developing throughout the nineteen seventies.

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[320] Silliman, 'For Open Letter', 89.

[321] Bruce Andrews, 'Text and Context', *Open Letter*, 3:7 (Summer 1977), 78-85 (p. 81).

Bernstein's 'Stray Straws and Straw Men' is the essay in the collection which articulates the position of Language Poetry most clearly. Bernstein sets out the importance of investigating language in poetry, arguing that 'there are no thoughts except through language, we are everywhere seeing it, limited to it but not by it', a position that clearly emphasises the importance of Wittgenstein's 'language games' to both the theory and practice of the poets brought together in 'The Politics of the Referent'.[322] Bernstein's argument rests upon a loose definition of writing that leads, finally, to an exposé of language as an artificial delusion:

> Writing necessarily consists of attaching numerous bits & pieces together in a variety of ways. & it comes to a point where you feel any composition is an artifice & a deceit. & the more 'natchural' the look the more deceptive. That any use of language outside its function of communicating in speaking is a falsehood (c.f. Laura Riding). Or even, that language itself – everywhere conditioning our way of seeing & meaning – is an illusion (as if there were some thing outside language!).[323]

The use of 'natchural' may be a pointed reference to both Pound's idiom and his approach to language. For Pound, the more natural language appeared the more it was preferred (although it must be remembered that Pound nowhere claimed that this 'natural' appearance was anything but an artifice itself); for Bernstein, the more natural language appears the more illusory it is. Poetry's essential role, then, is not to recover some lost linguistic vitality, but rather to expose the true primordial state of language: its erection as a system of arbitrariness and artifice.

The difference between Pound's approach to both language and poetry, and that taken by the Language Poets is clear, then. By 1977, only five years after Pound's death, it would appear that his influence on the debate about the role of language in poetry was minimal, and that the figures and sources upon which he had relied so heavily were being overlooked in favour of what we now recognise as an established canon of semiotic thought. However, this would be an oversimplification. While the debate around the role that language played in poetry may have drifted far from the parameters established by Pound in his critical writing, his place in establishing the role that poetry plays in understanding language can be far more firmly fixed. In his *ABC of Influence*, Christopher Beach outlines the importance of Pound’s work for the generations of poets who followed him:

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[322] Bernstein, 'Stray Straws and Straw Men', *Open Letter*, 3:7 (Summer 1977), 94-99 (p. 99).

[323] Charles Bernstein, 'Stray Straws and Straw Men', 98-99.

> Pound's work foregrounded for younger poets the importance of understanding language and form beyond the traditional concerns of poetry (diction, tone, and rhyme) so as to encompass the structural, etymological, and sonic properties of language, as well as the implicit social and political structures language contains. Pound's application of ideogrammatic structure to Western poetry was of central significance, as were his introduction of the idea of the "tone leading of vowels," his use of accentual meters and musical structures as a means of "breaking the pentameter," and his direct quotation of heterogeneous registers of language in the poem. Equally important to later poets was Pound's idea of an "absolute value" in language—that is, an "energy" or a "charge of meaning" within language that links it directly to an experience of the world and gives it a status independent of its existence within an arbitrary linguistic code. Following Pound's logic, poets explored the idea of the "perfectibility" of language: the notion that an intensified and attentive "sincerity" in the use of words can function as a critique of the misuse of language in a society, a misuse directly related to the other problems that society may face.[324]

Beach explores Pound’s influence on the Black Mountain School, particularly Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, and Denise Levertov, as well as on poets as diverse as Gary Snyder and Charles Bernstein. In the case of the Language Poets, although their linguistic theory differed from his greatly, their concern with poetry’s role in understanding language, culture and society was markedly similar to Pound’s own. Indeed, the claims of the Language Poets to be considering language in and of itself as a system of signs in ‘The Politics of the Referent’ largely fall down with the application of Marxist political and economic theory in the case of McCaffery and Silliman, and the use of philosophical speculation in Bernstein. While the ideology of their approach may differ considerably from Pound’s, the mechanics by which they present their theory are remarkably similar.

In order to understand Pound’s legacy with regard to language, however, it is useful to trace his influence a little earlier. William Carlos Williams, Pound’s longstanding friend and rival, offers an approach to language that differs significantly from Pound's, despite formal similarities. They both share a broadly nominalist approach to the creation of poetic images, with Pound's famous dictum that poets should 'go in fear of abstractions' and Williams's injunction that readers of his long poem *Paterson* seek 'no ideas but in things' being central tenets of the modernist project. Equally, the repetition of the phrase 'the language!' (either alone or as part of larger sequences) throughout *Paterson* serves as a reminder that, much like the *Cantos*, the very matter of which the poem is made up is of central concern. The passage of *Paterson* that I used to explore a wider modernist approach to language in the introduction to this thesis is once again useful in illustrating this point:

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[324] Christopher Beach, *The ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of the American Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 22-23.

> The language, the language
>   fails them
> They do not know the words
>   or have not
> the courage to use them
>   - girls from
> families that have decayed and
> taken to the hills: no words.
> They may look at the torrent in
>   their minds
> and it is foreign to them.
>
> They turn their backs
> and grow faint – but recover!
>   Life is sweet
> they say: the language!
>   - the language
> is divorced from their minds,
> the language   . . .   the language![325]

Williams seems to point towards a link between societal (and even natural) decay as a result of a schism between language and thought, a position adopted by both Pound and C.K. Ogden in the 1930s, and supplemented by the former's Confucian convictions. However, this passage also points to a fundamental difference between Pound's and Williams's respective approaches. For Pound, language loses its potency when it has been betrayed or corrupted, whereas in *Paterson* language itself is given relative agency. 'The language/ fails them' and not the other way round.

At the end of the poem which, like the *Cantos*, remained unfinished, Williams conducts a short question and answer session with himself. As he had throughout much of his career, he explains the importance of writing in the 'American idiom', a language and frame of references particularly representative of one side of the Atlantic, rather than in a more generalised English.

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[325] William Carlos Williams, *Paterson,* pp. 11-12.

> We poets have to talk in a language which is not English. It is the American idiom. It has as much originality as jazz. If you say "2 partridges, 2 mallard ducks, a Dungeness crab" – if you treat that rhythmically, ignoring the practical sense, it forms a jagged pattern. It is, to my mind, poetry.[326]

What is interesting here is that Williams seems to privilege the sound and rhythm of the words over their meaning, a divorce that Pound in *ABC of Reading*, for example, quite simply does not permit. Williams defines poetry as 'language charged with emotion', a phrase which recalls Pound's own 'poetry is language that is charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree' in *A.B.C. of Reading*. The privileging of emotion over meaning is a further example of where *Paterson* and *The Cantos* diverge. That is not to suggest that *Paterson* does not hold the relationship between language and meaning as central to its composition and discourses, but rather that the essentialness of the link between the two is broken down more intentionally than it is in *The Cantos*.

What is clear, however, from both the tone and phraseology with which Williams discusses language, is that although there is fundamental disagreement about the nature of language, both Pound and Williams share a conviction that poetry has a societal duty to provide linguistic investigation. The importance of this conviction, and its legacy throughout late twentieth-century letters, cannot be understated in a period of history when linguistic research and theory was driven by either an increasingly scientific approach in linguistics or by the philosophical revolutions of structuralist and post-structuralist theory. What Pound and Williams carve, then, is a poetic third way in the discussion of language, one based on pragmatism and intuition, drawing from various traditions, but always maintaining that poetry has both a right and duty to discuss language in its own terms.

This third way is continued by Charles Olson n his influential 'Projective Verse' (1950), in which the importance of individual vision and ‘breath’ are stressed over traditional metrics. Olson similarly made use of the notion of language in poetry as a transfer of energy. Although Olson’s writing style differs significantly from Pound’s, the latter’s voice is clearly echoed in the claim that ‘a poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader’[327] Olson in fact credits Pound with the establishment of the syllable, rather than the metrical foot, as the main unit of poetic craft: ‘Let’s start from the smallest particle of all, the syllable’, a unit chosen, he argues because, to begin with syllables is ‘to step back here to this place of the elements and minims of language, is to engage speech where it is least careless. [328] By syllable, it is likely that Olson meant something close to a combination of ‘morpheme’ and ‘phoneme’, combining meaning and sound. Where Olson departs from Pound and Williams is his insistence on breath as the primary poetic act:

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[326] Williams, *Paterson,* p. 224.

> Nature works from reverence, even in her destruction (species go down with a crash). But breath is man’s special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts. And when a poet rests in there as they are in himself (in his physiology, if you like, but the life in him, for all that) then he, if he chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size.[329]

Olson’s use of ‘breath’ combines both the unique voice of the poet with an act of primordial vitality, shared by all humans across time (in making clear that ‘breath’ is a human quality, it may be assumed that Olson is not using the term literally). ‘Projective Verse’ brings together poetic analysis, philosophical thought, and etymological speculation in a way that is strikingly reminiscent of Pound’s critical writing, particularly ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ and later works such as ‘How to Read’. While Olson’s style differs significantly, it can be seen as a continuation of the establishment of poetry and poetic voices as a commentary on the state of language more broadly.

Denise Levertov’s ‘Some Notes on Organic Form’ is in many ways a continuation of Olson’s theme, exploring the relationship between poetic form, content, and language itself. Levertov paraphrases Robert Duncan's claim that 'organic form' is simply 'the poetry of the linguistic impulse', a phrase combining unique poetic vision and the drive towards a concern with language. In this sense, organic form, much like Imagism, is a poetic movement that can be applied backwards across history as much as it is a manifesto for future practice. Levertov explains the 'linguistic impulse' in 'organic form':

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[327] Charles Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (London: University of California Press, 1997), 239-249 (p. 240).

[328] Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, p. 241.

[329] Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, p. 247.

> It seems to me that the absorption in language itself, the awareness of the world of multiple meaning revealed in sound, word, syntax, and the entering into this world in the poem, is as much an experience or constellation of perceptions as the instress of nonverbal sensuous and psychic events. What might make the poet of linguistic impetus appear to be on another tack entirely is that the demands of his realization may seem in opposition to truth as we think of it; that is, in terms of sensual logic. But the apparent distortion of experience in such a poem for the sake of verbal effects is actually a precise adherence to truth, since the experience itself was a verbal one.[330]

Levertov aligns the poetic impulses of the Black Mountain School as much with the innovations of Gerard Manley Hopkins (from whom Levertov borrows the term 'instress', or the process which holds a variety of complex perceptions and presentations together) as with Pound in this passage, but the general argument of the essay can be placed in the same ethos as Olson's and Pound's critical work. Levertov argues that the 'apparent distortion of experience' in poems such as *The Cantos* or Olson's *Maximus Poems*, driven as they are by praxis and not by the conventions of discourse, may appear to run counter to logic, but they are in fact attempts to discern a more fundamental logic, one closer to the world as it is, and not as it has been made to appear. This is, she argues, the result of a close attention to language, and the veracity of each poet's vision of the world is not measurable by the conventions handed down to us by logic and rhetoric, but instead by a reader's immersion in that poetic world. Poetry for Levertov, as for Pound and Olson, reveals fundamental truths about the world and language unreachable in any other medium.

Robert Duncan, reflecting on the tradition handed down by modernist poetry in *The H.D. Book* (written 1960-1961), writes that 'the poetic urge, to make poetry out of a common language, is to make room for the existence of the poet, the artist of free speech'.[331] In other words, what Pound, and others such as Williams, H.D., and Gertrude Stein, have most fully achieved is not only do poets remain, as Shelley once claimed, 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world' but they become its primary investigators and arbiters as well. The modern poet is not caught somewhere between a shaman and a linguist, but is instead a figure drawing on the traditions of both in order to investigate language on poetry's own terms: this is Pound's enduring linguistic legacy.

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[330] Denise Levertov, 'Some Notes Towards Organic Form' in *New and Selected Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 67-73 (p. 73).

Although the Language Poets may seem to be a break with a poetic tradition beginning with modernism and continuing throughout the Black Mountain School, there is a strong current of poetic justification that owes much to Pound's work. Christopher Beach concludes his *ABC of Influence* by arguing that the poets themselves have underestimated their debt to their predecessors:

> Clearly, the practices and beliefs of Bernstein and other Language writers differ significantly from those of Olson, Duncan, Creeley, and other poets of the 1950s and 1960s. The most significant change in emphasis, if not in orientation, is in a greater receptivity to the ideas generated by literary, social, and political theory.[4] Nevertheless, the Language poets have continued to look to predecessors within the Pound tradition for models of poetic composition. In many cases, direct lines of descent can be traced: from Zukofsky to Bernstein; from Olson to Barrett Watten; from Creeley to Larry Eigner, Clark Coolidge, and Robert Grenier; from Duncan to Michael Palmer; from Jack Spicer to Ron Silliman. Such lineages do not necessarily entail direct stylistic and formal influences, but they do indicate important continuities in the articulation of poetic projects and stances.[332]

Those 'poetic projects and stances' all share a focus on language. Not only do all of the poets mentioned by Beach draw attention to their medium, but they all imply that the proper place of poetry is not only as an art form made out of language, but also as a continuous and rigorous investigation of its material. Although the work of Ezra Pound and Robert Creeley appears markedly different in both style and content, both poets share a deep concern with language and a firm conviction that poets have a right and duty to lead humanity's investigation into it.

In 1999, Charles Bernstein published an article entitled 'Pound and the Poetry of Today' in which he returned to Pound's work after a long period of dismissing it. In fact, although he and

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[331] Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book* (London: University of California Press, 2011), p. 364.
[332] Beach, *ABC of Influence*, pp. 239-240.

Fenollosa are mentioned, Pound is conspicuous by his absence in the majority of the essays in 'The Politics of the Referent', and in many ways Bernstein's later article redresses the balance. Interestingly, Bernstein claims that it was due to a trend in Pound criticism in the late eighties and nineties to discuss Pound's poetry in the context of his fascism, particularly the work of Peter Nicholls and Robert Casillo, that renewed his interest in his work. Assessing both the history of Pound criticism and Pound's legacy in modern poetry, Bernstein reaches two conclusions. The first is that all aspects of Pound's work must be understood as operating according to its semiotic system: Bernstein writes that 'a poem including history means we must read the history too, and this history is writ in the style, in the symbolic/semiotic economy of the poem, in the material means of production, as much as Pound's "disembodied" "ideas"'.[333] Second, and most importantly for considering Pound's legacy in terms of poetry, rather than literary history, is that Pound's assumptions, be they about politics, language or poetic practice, must be fully investigated in order to either claim a place in a 'Pound tradition' or to distance oneself from it:

> The significance of "the Pound tradition" requires that we interrogate the assumptions of poetic lineage not just to acknowledge their effects but also to counteract their effects. And let's not forget that one aspect of this elective tradition is a commitment to difficult writers and difficult writings.[334]

The commitment to 'difficult writing', both in terms of its practice and its reception, outlines a place for Language Poetry in this 'elective tradition'. For Bernstein, Pound's notorious 'difficulty' emerges from his tangled complex of references as well as his reliance on a system of referentiality from which the Language Poets sought to distance themselves. And yet, what is clear from 'Pound and the Poetry of Today' is that Pound haunts poetic discussions of language in such a way that poets such as Bernstein feel the need to either embrace him or to exorcise his spirit.

Words: 93,885

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[333] Bernstein, 'Pound and the Poetry of Today' in *My Way: Speeches and Poems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 155-165 (p. 157).

[334] Bernstein, 'Pound and the Poetry of Today', p. 159.

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